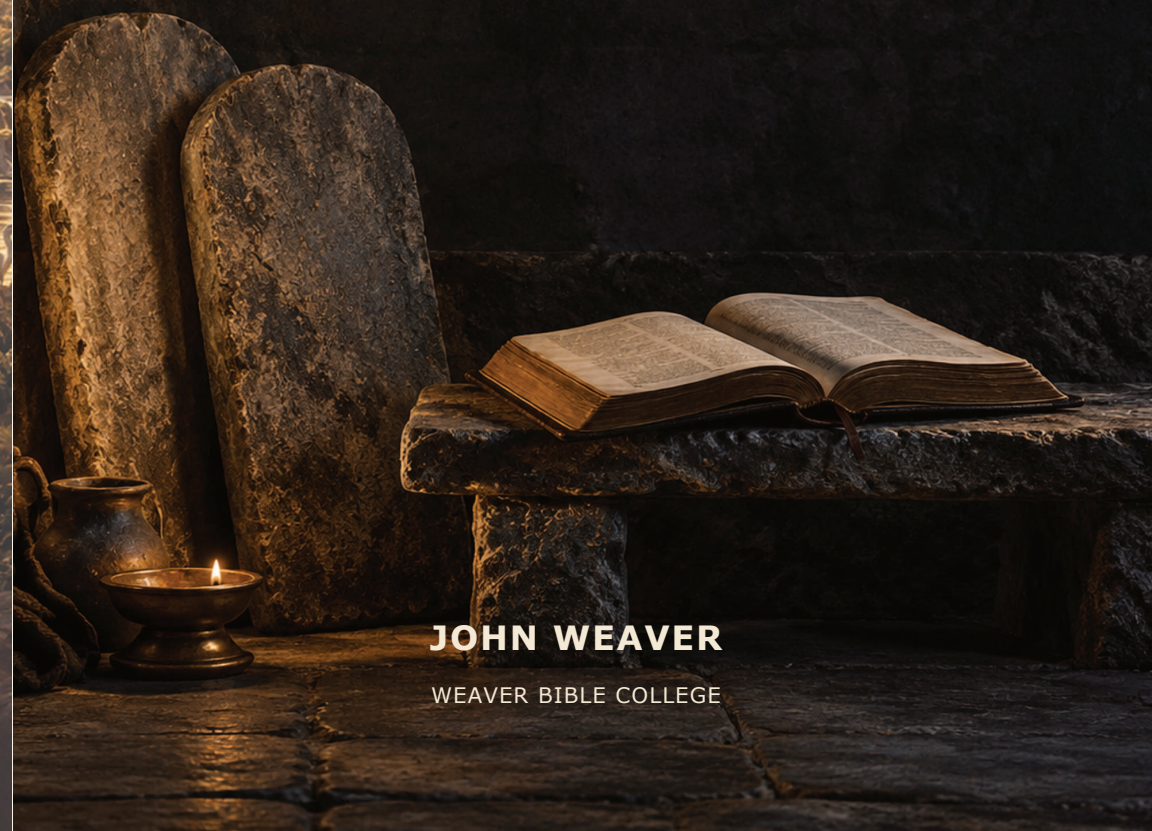
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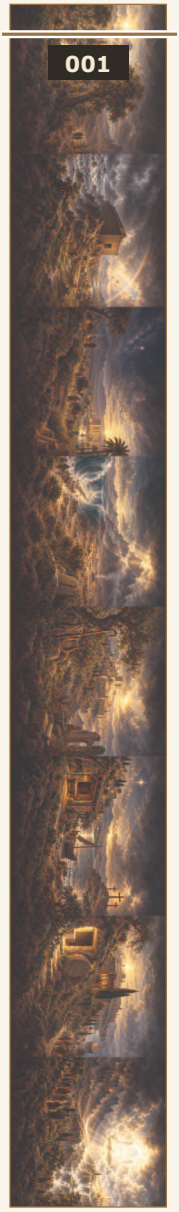
*"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,*
*and a light unto my path."*

PSALM 119:105



**JOHN WEAVER**

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



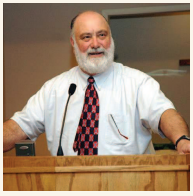

*Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

**PSALM 119:96, EXCERPT**

Biblical law calls for more than familiarity with a list of commands. John Weaver considers the Ten Commandments and their practical implications through sermons on worship, rest, speech, responsibility, and obedience. These messages invite readers to examine both principles and applications, measuring outward conduct and inward motives by the standard supplied in Scripture.

*"Love is an excellent summary of God's law, but it certainly does not replace the law of God."*

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# The Ten Commandments

John Weaver

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Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Complete revised edition - October 5, 2026. The full February 18, 2024 sermon has been restored as Chapter 8. Its previously included opening excerpt has been consolidated into that chapter. Chapter numbering, contents, indexes, and companion-study reading assignments follow this edition.

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CHAPTER 1

# Application & Practicality of Biblical Law

August 19, 2000

As good as each one of you here tonight, we probably had some folks here last night like some folks I met years ago. I was preaching in a little town in southern Alabama at the Baptist Church. Right beside the Baptist Church, probably no further from here than the first cars parked out there—in fact, closer—was a Methodist church. They were right side by side.

I had some good friends at that time who were about an hour and a half away, and he pastored an independent Methodist church. They came down to hear me preach one night, and the pastor's wife said, "Well, Brother Johnson, let me ask you a question." I said, "OK." She said, "Have any of our good Methodist folks been over to hear you?" I said, "Well, they came one time and they haven't been back." "Oh," she said, "Brother Weaver, you don't understand. We Methodists have a unique ability. We're like sponges. We can soak up enough in one night that'll last us for a month. We just don't have to go to church as often as the Baptists." I said, "Hey, I know a lot of Baptists like that too."

## Introduction: The Need for Case Law

Maybe we had some last night that got all they could handle, but that's all right. I know better. Open your Bibles tonight to Matthew chapter 5. We're going to read the passage that I preached from last night. I'm not going to preach from this text tonight; I'm going to read it because we're going to be looking at a lot of text, because of the nature of the message. I'm going to be dealing with what is known as case law in the Bible.

Look in Matthew 5, verse 17. Jesus Christ says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law of the prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." May I remind you that last night I preached a message on the abiding validity of the law, where our Lord says very plainly in verse 17, "Do not even begin to think that I've come to destroy the law or the prophets. I've not come to destroy, but to fulfill," or to put it into full force as continuous. The truth is, all of God's law is applicable to God's people today.

Now many people will balk at the extent of God's law. What many people try to do is limit the law of God to the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are an excellent summary of God's law. They are major principles that summarize God's law, but a summary does not cancel out the whole.

I've taught college courses and high school courses. Many times I would ask my students to do a book report or a summary of a book. They would come in with four or five tight written pages of a book that was perhaps 200 pages long. That summary may have summarized the book, but it certainly did not cancel out the entirety of the book. So the Ten Commandments are indeed a summary of God's law, and they do not cancel out the totality of God's law.

If you will look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 22, I'll show you another summary of the law of God, beginning there with verse 35. In fact, love is a summary of the law of God. The Bible says, "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Watch this statement: "Which is the great commandment in the law?" What a tremendous question. Jesus said of him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbors thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." When Jesus Christ was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He did not say, "Thou shalt not have any other gods before me." He did not say, "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image." He did not say, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord by God in vain," or "Remember the sabbath day," or "Honor thy father."

He never quoted any of the Ten. He said, "The first and great commandment is this: 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. You remember I showed you last night where love is the fulfilling of the law. Love is an excellent summary of God's law, but it certainly does not replace the law of God.

Although most of us know the Ten Commandments, you cannot comprehend the extent or fullness even of the Ten Commandments until you understand the case law given to us in the Bible. It is absolutely essential that we understand case law. You say, "What are you talking about?" Let me give you an illustration, one that everyone can understand.

Let's suppose that Greg Stiles and I get into a fight. He starts it, of course. I never start anything like that. Greg starts it, all right. Suppose Greg hits me first, and hits me so hard that he knocks out a tooth. Maybe I hit him back a time or two, but finally somebody separates us. I say, "Look, Greg, you're the one who started this fight. It's going to cost $250 to get my tooth replaced, and it will take a day's work that I will have to miss, so say another $150. Greg, you just need to give me $400 or $500, and we'll call it even."

He says, “Oh no, I’m not going to do that.” I say, “Now, Greg, listen to me. You’re going to have to do this, or I’m going to take you to court, because you’re the one who started this thing.” I go to see a lawyer and tell him what happened. I say, “Greg won’t pay me.” He says, “Wait a minute. He hit you first?” “That’s correct.” “He started the fight?” “That’s correct.”

“And how many witnesses do you have?” “Seventy-five. Everybody in here will testify to it. And how much damage is done?” “Five hundred bucks.” He said, “You can substantiate that?” I said, “I surely can.” He said, “You know, there was a case just like this nearly a year ago. It was a case called Wardlaw versus Wilson, where two fellows by the name of Wardlaw and Wilson got into a fight. Wilson started it. Wardlaw sued him, and he had witnesses to testify.”

The judge ruled in his favor. Since the circumstances were the same in this case, probably the judge would rule in his favor as well. “Yeah, I'll take this case, and we'll win it.”

Now, what did that lawyer just do? In that lawyer's office, he has a bunch of law books, and those law books are full of what is known as case law—cases that have already been tried and adjudicated. He understands the broad principle of the law, thinks about a specific illustration that has happened, perhaps the one I have told him, and then considers the application that the judge will probably make. In the Bible, there is that which is known in case law as the same principle.

I have heard people say, “Brother Weaver, I wish the Word of God covered everything.” The truth is, it does. What most people want is a Bible that will spell out everything in detail. If you had a Bible that could spell out everything in detail, you would never be able to read it all, and you could not carry it with you. God's Word does cover everything, but it is there in principal form. God expects you to take those broad principles, look at the specific illustrations that illustrate them, and then make the application to your personal life.

What in the world is case law? First of all, in case law, you have what is known as a broad principle or a broad truth, such as one of the Ten Commandments: Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness. Then, secondly, in the Bible, you

will always have a specific illustration or a specific case that will illustrate that broad principle, and then you will always have an application.

If you do not understand case law, if you do not learn this, then your definitions of God's law and your understanding of God's law are going to be basically pharisaical. That is, you are going to take the letter of the law and apply it externally, and you will never see the real intent, the real extent, and the real application of God's law. To not understand case law, then, is to be limited and act like a Pharisee in our understanding.

Remember this: Circumstances change, but principles never change. There are many principles in the Old Testament. We are not having the same circumstances today as they had in the Old Testament, but the principles are still the same exact truth today as they were 4,000 or 5,000 years ago.

## The Sixth Commandment: Preserving Life

What I want to do tonight is give you three illustrations of case law in the Bible. I am going to proceed from the simple to the more complex, starting with one that I believe every one of us can comprehend and understand. We will look at them one at a time and then go to the more complex.

First of all, let us take Exodus 20 and verse 13. That happens to be the sixth commandment. It simply says, Thou shalt not kill. Anyone can read, Thou shalt not kill. There are no hard or big words in that commandment. If I were to ask you what it means when God's Word says, thou shalt not kill, most people would respond, “Well now, Brother Weaver, it means exactly what it says. It means it is never right to take life.”

Once you say that, I am going to ask you another question: Is it right to take life under certain circumstances? I am going to back you into a corner, and you are finally going to admit, “Well, yes.” Then I am going to say, “You just said, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ which means it is never right to take life.” Your interpretation must undoubtedly be wrong, because you have admitted, based upon certain Scriptures, that it is right to take life at certain times.

So, literally, what we are saying is this: when we read, "Thou shalt not kill," what we really understand is, "Thou shalt do no murder," or, more specifically, "Thou shalt not take life except on God's terms." Since God is the giver of life and the sustainer of life, God is the only one who can tell us on what grounds life may be legitimately taken.

It may surprise you to understand that there are eighteen reasons given in the Bible why life may be lawfully taken. I will grant you that most of these are given to the state as a minister of justice. The state is supposed to do the executing. Still, here are eighteen reasons that life can be taken on God's terms.

Number one: God says life can be taken for murder, but not for accidental killings. Exodus chapter 21, verses 12 through 14. You will also find that in the book of Numbers chapter 30. God says that the murderer shall be put to death. God said in Genesis chapter 6, "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Genesis chapter 9 it is: "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." So God says life may be taken for murder, but not for accidental killing. Secondly—and I will explain this one later—God says that life can be taken for striking or cursing a parent.

So life can be taken, number one, for murder; number two, for striking or cursing a parent; and number three, for kidnapping. The Word of God says in Exodus 21:16 and Deuteronomy 24:7, "Whosoever stealeth a man shall surely be put to death."

Fourthly, adultery. Leviticus 20:10–21 says that adultery merits the death penalty. There is a lot to be said concerning that, but basically God still said in this passage that the adulterer wants to be put to death. Number five, incest: Leviticus 20:11–12 and verse 14.

Child abuse is one of those growing concerns today. I know that there is such a thing as child abuse. I understand that. I can assure you, though, that a lot of what is called child abuse today is not child abuse at all. In fact, you can get reported for child abuse just for striking or spanking your child the way you were spanked when you were a child.

I was in a store the other day. A mother had a little child in her basket, and the child was, I do not know, five or six years old,

screaming to beat the band. She pushed him over to her husband, and I heard her say, “Here, you take him. I cannot control him.” He wanted a toy that he already had. You know what I wanted to say? “Lady, give him to me. I know how to control him. I can stop that.”

But God says someone who is guilty of incest and all this kind of stuff is to be put to death. You take someone who brutalizes a child like that, especially one of their own, and put him to death, and he will never abuse another child. It will stop him, and it will cut down on it for other folks as well. So incest is one reason that you can put someone to death. Number six, bestiality. Exodus 20, verse 19.

Leviticus 20, verses 15 and 16: “…whosoever lies with a beast, as with womankind, shall surely be put to death.” Sodomy is addressed in Leviticus 20, verse 13: “…whosoever lies with man, as with womankind, shall be surely put to death.” Number 8 is unchastity, Deuteronomy 22, verses 20–21. Number 9 is the rape of a betrothed virgin, Deuteronomy chapter 22, verses 23 through 27. Number 10 is witchcraft, Exodus chapter 22, verse 18: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” Number 11 is offering human sacrifice, Leviticus chapter 20, verse 2. Number 12 is an incorrigible delinquent, Deuteronomy 21, verses 18–21. Blasphemy is addressed in Leviticus 24, verses 11–14, and then verses 16 and 23. Number 14 is propagation of false doctrine, Deuteronomy chapter 13. Number 15 is sacrificing the false gods, Exodus chapter 20 and 22, verse 20. Number 16, which we will cover tomorrow night, is refusing to abide by the decision of a biblical court of law, Deuteronomy 17, verses 8 through 13. Number 17 is failing to restore the bail or the pledge, Ezekiel 18, verses 12–13. The eighteenth reason why life may be lawfully and legitimately taken on God’s terms is self-defense.

There are two messages on the biblical doctrine of self-defense that cannot be preached tonight, but consider this: when God says, “Thou shalt not kill,” every negative has a positive, and every positive has a negative. Many times, when we consider truth, we do not consider its opposite. “Thou shalt not kill” is a negative, but there is a positive: “Thou shalt preserve life.” You have the responsibility to preserve your life, the life of others, and the life of your family. Self-defense is therefore obligatory according to the sixth commandment.

For instance, if Kevin were to come up to me tonight, stick a pistol between my eyes, and say, “Brother Weaver, I’m fixing to blow your brains out,” and I answered, “Kevin, you just do whatever spins your wheels. If it makes you happy, go right ahead. I’ll just go to heaven,” then, if I allowed him to kill me, I would be guilty of participating in my own murder. I would be murdering myself at the hands of another. I am obligated before God and the sixth commandment to do everything I can to preserve my life, even if it means taking his life. The sixth commandment has the positive: “Thou shalt preserve life.” Now let me show you that. Look in your Bibles, first of all, to Deuteronomy, chapter 22.

We have just mentioned the broad principle, “Thou shalt not kill.” But the emphasis given to us in the Bible is not so much negative as positive. Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 22, beginning with verse 23:

“If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto a husband, and a man find her in the city and lie with her, then you shall bring them both out into the gate of that city, and you shall stone them with stones that they die. The damsel, because she cried not being in the city, and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor’s wife; so shalt thou put evil from among you.”

By the way, every time you find anything where God demands the death penalty, He will always use this phrase: “So shalt thou put the evil away from among you.”

Now watch verse 25: “But if a man findeth a troth damsel in the field, and the man force her and lie with her, then the man only that lay with her shall die. But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing. There is in the damsel no sin worthy of death. For as when a man riseth up against his neighbor and slayeth him, even so it is in this matter. For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her.”

God says that if a man finds a betrothed damsel in the city and lies with her, both are to be taken out and stoned. The man is killed because he has forced his neighbor’s wife and humbled her; the woman is killed because she did not cry out. But if a man finds a betrothed virgin in the field and forces her, only the man is put to

death. Have you ever stopped to wonder why God demands that both man and woman be put to death in the city, but only the man in the field? Here is why.

Verse 24 says, “Then you shall bring them both out into the gate of that city, and you shall stone them with stones that they die.” Why was the woman put to death? Because she had to have been consenting to the sin; otherwise, she would have cried out.

Anyone who had heard the woman cry out would have had the responsibility of preserving, protecting, and defending her. If she did not cry out, she must have been cooperating and consenting to the sin. But God said that if she had cried out, someone would have protected her. Why? Because the sixth commandment is, “Thou shalt preserve life.” That is the positive. When the woman was in the field, she cried out, but there was no one to hear or save her. Therefore, the woman was not to be put to death in the field; only the man was to be killed.

Do you realize what God is saying? You and I have a responsibility not only to preserve our own lives and the lives of our families, but also to preserve the lives of other people around us.

A number of years ago in New York City, there was a woman named Kitty Genovese. She was raped on the sidewalk and repeatedly stabbed until she died. She cried and screamed for someone to save her, while twenty-one people were either walking by, standing nearby, or looking out their windows and doors. Not one lifted a finger. Not one called the police.

The man was caught and punished. But according to the law of God, those twenty-one people who stood by and did nothing were just as guilty of murder as the man who plunged the knife into her heart, because they had a responsibility to preserve life, and they did not. I want to show you how fastidious God is about this.

Deuteronomy 22:1 says, “Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them. Thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother.” Here you are riding down the road, and you see your neighbor’s cow out along beside the road.

Evidently, the animal has jumped the fence, or the fence is broken. God says you cannot drive on by pretending you did not see

that cow out. You are obligated to stop, inform your brother, and help him get that cow back into the pasture. “And if I, brother, be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it into thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brothers seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass. So shalt thou do with his raiment, and with all lost things of thy brothers which he hath lost and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise. Thou mayest not hide thyself.”

“Thou shalt not see thy brother’s ass, or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them. Thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.” Now, why is God saying this? Is God just filling space in the Bible? Is it simply that all we are looking at is the big truth? All of these that I am reading are case laws for the sixth commandment, “thou shalt not kill.” God is saying that if you see your neighbor’s animal going astray, you are responsible to stop and help restrain that animal and possibly even save its life.

If you see your neighbor’s animal fall down—perhaps a horse stuck in mud—you are not to hide yourself. If you have never seen a horse stuck in mud, you are in for a treat, because it takes a great deal to get a horse out when he is stuck. I have had one stuck twice. God says, “If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help him.”

What in the world is God telling us? Many would say, “I would be willing to help my brother; I would be willing to help my neighbor.” But let us see how far God goes. “If thou meet thy enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.” It is not just your neighbor. It is not just your brother. Now it is your enemy’s animal.

God is giving us an argument in the Bible from the lesser to the greater: if this is true in the least, how much more is it true in the greater?

If you are obligated to help save the life of your neighbor's animal, how much more are you obligated to help save your neighbor's life? If you are obligated to help save the life of your enemy's animal, how much more are you obligated and responsible to help save his life?

God is arguing from the less to the greater. God has a unique way of making you practice what you preach.

I was preaching on this text one Sunday morning, explaining from the sixth commandment that God demands that we preserve life. I used these very texts concerning the animals. My wife and daughters went home a few minutes ahead of me after that Sunday morning, and I had a little counseling to do afterward. After about fifteen or twenty minutes, I was through, jumped in my truck, and started home.

Just as I got to where we would turn toward our house, I noticed my car parked over at the side of the road. I thought, "Oh, no, the car is broken down. I wonder what's wrong now." As I got closer, I saw my girls out beside the road with their arms around one of the dirtiest, ugliest, skinniest, stinkinest nanny goats you have ever seen. I stopped and asked, "What's going on?"

"Oh, Daddy, this goat is loose. She is in the road, and she almost got hit two or three times. Other people tried to catch her and couldn't." I asked how they had caught her. They said, "It's very simple. We just kneeled down and called her, and she came to us." They always had a way with animals.

"Daddy, we don't know who this goat belongs to. If we leave her, she is going to get killed. Can we take her home with us? You remember what you preached this morning, don't you?"

"Yes, I remember." So I had to pick up that old, stinking goat in my suit and put her in the back of the truck. The twins rode in the back with the goat until we got home. Once we got her into my yard, we began feeding her. I believe she had not eaten in fifteen months, it seemed. She ate everything around.

I called all my neighbors, trying to find out to whom the goat belonged, but I could not find anyone. I would not have claimed her either, if she had been mine, considering how bad she looked. We kept her for three or four days. Then one of my neighbors came and said, "I hear you've got a goat at your house."

"Sure do."

"Is the goat ugly and stinking and skinny—a bag of bones?"

He described her colors, and I said, “Sure is.” He replied, “That’s my goat. I bought her Saturday at the sale and was going to fatten her up, but Saturday night she got away.” I said, “Well, brother, you may have her. The greatest comfort of my soul—you may have her.” I gave her back to the man to whom she belonged.

The point is this: Why were we obligated to do that? Because God is saying, if I am responsible to save the life of an animal, how much more am I responsible to save my neighbor’s life?

Now I want to show you the application of this. Look in your Bibles to Mark 3. Remember, the broad principle is, “Thou shalt not kill,” or, literally, the positive: thou shalt preserve life. Here are specific cases that illustrate that—the woman who cried out The opposite was going astray, or the asset was going astray. Now we have an application from Jesus Christ Himself. Look in Mark 3, verse 1.

“And he entered again into 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. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.”

Now look what He says to these Pharisees: “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. Our Lord went ahead and healed him. He asked, “Is it lawful to save life, even on the sabbath day?” Of course it was. They knew it was, but they were not going to say so, because they would do nothing to encourage Jesus Christ. Thus Jesus Christ is saying that it is lawful to save lives.

You can make this as practical as you want to. When God says, “Thou shalt not kill,” the positive is, “Thou shalt preserve life.” That means you are required before God to do everything you possibly can to preserve your life. Whatever you do that shortens or destroys your life is contrary to the sixth commandment.

If you overeat, that is a sin. If you overwork, that is a sin. If you oversleep, that is a sin. God requires us to preserve our lives. We must eat right, exercise right, and work right. Somebody says, “Bless God, I’d rather burn out than rust out.” I do not want to burn out, and I do not want to rust out. I want to go as long as I can for God’s

glory and the good of His people. I had better use some wisdom. When you start hitting your fifties and sixties, you find out you are not twenty and thirty anymore. I am obligated before God to preserve my life, and you are obligated to preserve yours, whatever it takes. If you do not, you are violating the sixth commandment.

Now let us go to a second illustration. Look back in your Bibles, to Exodus chapter 20 and verse 15. Here is one very simple.

## The Eighth Commandment: Honest Labor and Giving

Surely everybody knows what the eighth commandment means. In Exodus 20:15, we read, "Thou shalt not steal." By the way, there is a positive there too, and the Apostle Paul gives it in Ephesians 4: "Wherefore, let him that stole steal no more, but let him labor, working with his hands that which is good, that he may have to give to him." God says there is a positive here. I am not going to deal with the positive as such right now, but have you ever stopped to ask, What does it mean, "Thou shalt not steal"?

If you do not understand case law, your definition of the law is like the Pharisees': limited to the externals. Most of us understand that if I reach into my pocket, take out my pocket knife, walk up to you, put it to your throat, and say, "Give me all your money," that is theft. If I throw a pistol between your eyes and say, "Hand it over or die," you understand that is thievery. But most of us never understand theft beyond that. Did you know—and I hate to say it, but it is the truth—that most Christians are thieves and do not even know it?

You say, "Brother Weaver, how can you say that?" Let me show you how. Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 25:4. Here is the case law for "Thou shalt not steal," black and white: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn." You say, "Brother Weaver, you have got to have flipped your lid, because what has that got to do with the eighth commandment, 'Thou shalt not steal'? In fact, that has nothing to do with anything because, number one, we do not have oxen, and number two, if we did have oxen, we would not use them to tread out corn. I would just go down to Winn-Dixie and get my cornmeal. I do not need oxen. Period."

Well, let me tell you something. This verse is quoted twice in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul himself, basing it on the fact, “Thou shalt not steal.” Turn, if you would please, to 1 Corinthians 9, and let me show you the first application of this. Let us begin reading, perhaps, with verse 7.

Paul's argument here goes through verses 1–14, but we will make it a little shorter tonight. Paul begins by setting folks up. He asks, “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?” The answer is no one.

As much as you may have disagreed with the Vietnam War, the fellows who went over there did not go at their own expense. As much as you may have disagreed with the Korean War, the fellows who went over there did not go at their own expense. The folks over in the Gulf are not over there at their own expense. No one goes to warfare at his own charges.

“Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?” If I have a grapevine, I am going to eat the grapes off that vine. It is just that simple. “Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?” If I have a herd of cows, I am going to drink all the milk I want and eat all the meat I want. They belong to me; I can do it.

Now watch what he says in verse 8: “Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?” Paul is quoting the law. He is quoting case law; he is not quoting the Ten Commandments. “For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.”

“Does God take care for oxen?” Let us stop there. The answer is yes and no. God does take care for oxen, but that is not why God said this.

Back in Bible times, they had two stones that would grind the meal, with a long pole extending out. An ox would pull that pole, turning the wheels and grinding the grain. Every now and then, some grain would fall between the grinding wheels onto the floor. The ox would stop and take a bite, walk another revolution, and perhaps stop for another bite. The owners began thinking, “We are losing some money like this. We will put a muzzle on this ox, sweep up the grain, re-grind it, put it in a sack, and make more money.”

God said, No, no; do not do that. You do not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn.

Why? Because the ox has a right to eat because he is doing the work. Paul asked in verse 9, “Doth God take care for oxen?” The answer is yes and no. Yes, He does take care of them, but no, that is not why this law was written. “Or saith it altogether, for our sakes, for our sakes, no doubt it is written, that he that plows should plow in hope, and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of that hope.”

Then Paul says, “If we have sown in you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” He goes on. His argument is this: You give the laborer his hire. You give the laborer his reward. In verse 14, he makes his application: “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

Paul gives the same principle again in 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 17. He writes, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox and treadeth out the corn.” Paul did not know anything about the law being done away with, did he? He gives the application: “The laborer is worthy of his reward.”

What does it mean when it says, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor”? An elder is a pastor. Ruling well is described as laboring in the Word and doctrine. These elders, these pastors who labor in the Word and doctrine, are to be counted worthy of double honor. What does that mean? Does that mean you walk up to your pastor, if your pastor is one that labors in the Word and doctrine, and look at him and say, “Pastor, Pastor”? Or, if he asks you to do something, say, “Yes, sir. Yes, sir.” Is that double honor?

No, that is not what he means. What is double honor? It is double pay. That is what he is saying: Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, or double pay, especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine. Why? For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn. And the laborer

is worthy of his reward. What is God saying? Here is a man who works. If he labors in the Word and doctrine, he is worthy of double pay.

You have a preacher who hardly does anything and hardly studies, and somebody says, "He makes five hundred dollars a week." You have a pastor who studies and labors in doctrine. God says, "Pay him a thousand." You say, "Oh, come on, Brother Weaver." That is what He is talking about.

Now, let me explain this. I said earlier that Christians were thieves. You know what we do? We always take the worst that we have, or the things we do not want, or the things we no longer need or can use, and give them to the ministry. Have you ever noticed that? The next time you take a missionary offering—not just money, but food, clothes, toys, or whatever—look at the things we give to people who are laboring for the Lord.

I have a pastor friend who was a missionary in a foreign land. He received a card saying that he had a package. He thought, "Customs due." There was a neat little package, about like that, wrapped up. He asked how much the customs tax was, and they said thirty-five dollars. It took everything he could do to scrape up the money, but he did not recognize the address or the name, and he did not know what was in the box. When he opened it, a lady from the States, a little Christian woman, had sent him—this is the absolute truth—a box of used tea bags. He could have bought a box of tea for three dollars.

That shows the mentality we have. Look at Christian school teachers. A public school teacher usually makes two to three times what a Christian school teacher does. You say, "Brother Weaver, we have to sacrifice." Is it not strange that it is usually the people in the ministry who do the sacrificing?

Do not misunderstand me. I am not averse to sacrifice; I believe in sacrificing. But if I have a hundred men, I want the hundred men to sacrifice with me. That is lawful. That is legitimate. Why should only one individual do the sacrificing?

I wish I had time to talk about the tithes tonight. There was more than one, and I will talk about them in just a minute. There was the

Levitical tithe, which was ten percent, and it went to the Levites. Do you know how it happened in the Old Testament? If they wanted a synagogue, as long as there were ten men, they could have a rabbi, master, or teacher. Why? Because those ten men tithed. The ten percent from each of those ten men would equal one hundred percent, and they would give it to their teacher.

The teacher was no better off nor any worse off than anyone who was paying. There was that average; everything averaged out just exactly right.

Now, let me get this down to brass tacks. There is a great deal more to "Thou shalt not steal" than just sticking a gun in somebody's head. Let me give you an illustration. Suppose I need my house painted, and I get an estimate from a professional painter. He tells me, "Brother Weaver, it's going to cost $1,500 to paint your house."

I think, "That's a lot of money. I don't want to pay $1,500." I thank him, but then I find out that Sean is out of work. He is a Christian brother and is pretty low financially; he needs help. So I call him and say, "Sean, I'll give you $500 to paint my house." He looks at me and says, "Oh, Brother Weaver, that's a big house. That's a lot of work. It's worth more than that." But he is hungry, has no food in the house, and is hard up, so he takes it. He works three days as hard as he can and paints my house. When he finishes, I say, "Oh, Sean, that is so good. That's as good as the other man could have done. Here's your $500."

What have I done? I have stolen $1,000 from Sean, because the laborer is worthy of his hire. There is a vast difference between my doing that and Sean coming to me—or my asking Sean about painting my house—and his saying, "Brother Weaver, man alive, this is a $1,500 job. But I love you and appreciate you, and I'll do it for $500."

There is a big difference between that and cheating someone out of a thousand dollars. When we defraud someone of his honest worth, of his honest labor, God says it is theft.

Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 24, beginning with verse 14. God says, "Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren or of thy strangers

that are in thy land within thy gates. Watch, at his day thou shalt give him his hire. Neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and he set his heart upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee."

What does that mean? Let me tell you what it means. Suppose I ask Sean to paint my house and offer him $500. He agrees, although he knows the work is worth $1,500, because he loves me. I tell him that I will give him his money on Friday. Friday comes, and he asks, "Brother Weaver, are you satisfied with the painting job?"

I say that I surely am. He tells me that he has finished and has come to collect the $500 because he has bills to pay. I answer, "Sean, you know what? I forgot to get the money out of the bank today. If you will come back next Wednesday at two o'clock, I will have it for you."

He may come back the following Wednesday at two o'clock, but what have I just done? I have stolen the use of his money from him from Friday until Wednesday at two o'clock. Why is it that you think you can ever get money from these humongous companies on time? These companies are worth billions of dollars and have money lying everywhere, yet it will take them six months to get a $29.95 refund check to you. I'll tell you why.

Because they are holding on to it, getting usury to the very last, nth day and nth degree, and refusing to send it to you until they absolutely have to, they are stealing the use of that money that is yours from you. That is theft.

Jesus Christ says it the same way in Luke 10:7. In fact, He is telling His disciples about going out preaching: "And in the same house remain eating and drinking such things as they give." Why? "For the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house." In other words, you go into someone's house and lodge there.

I am thankful that Brother Ron and his wife invited my wife and me to stay with them this week. Whatever she sets in front of me, I am going to eat. I do not care if it is a T-bone steak or a bowl of peas; I will eat it. God said I am not to go around saying, "Now, brother, stand up. Do you have a nicer house? Is your wife a better cook? Are you having a better meal? Well, I might just stay with you tomorrow

night." No, I cannot do that. Wherever you go, you eat and drink whatever is set before you, for the laborer is worthy of His reward.

When I sit down at His table, I eat all I want to eat. I do, because this is where God has me, and I am laboring and preaching. I feel just as comfortable eating everything that is set before me that I want to eat. That is part and parcel of it.

But when we defraud someone of his just due, that is theft. When we fail to pay our bills when they are due, it is theft. If I owe Brother Ron money and do not have it, I had better be beating a path to his door, explaining what has happened in the providence of God and asking for further consideration. I do not simply ignore him and pretend it is not due. That is theft. Isn't that interesting? "Thou shalt not steal."

The Apostle Paul makes the application in Ephesians chapter 4: "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good ... that he may have to give to him that needeth." When we are miserly, selfish, stingy, and unwilling to share, God says that is theft as well.

Let us argue from the lesser to the greater. If it is wrong for me to defraud Sean of his just pay—if it is theft for me to do that, and it is—how much more wrong is it for me to defraud God of His due? Remember what He said in Malachi chapter 3: "Will a man rob God?" Yet you say, "Where in he we rob God?" In tithes and offerings.

There were three tithes in Israel, not just one: a ten-percent Levitical tithe, a ten-percent festival tithe, and a ten-percent poor tithe, taken once every three years. Thus, those Israelites were literally tithing twenty-three and one-third percent per year. I grant you that ten percent of the festival tithe was used on themselves and their families, and I am not going to explain the festival tithe tonight. But it was still a tithe; it was still an offering.

We also rob God by failing to give Him the glory and honor due His name. Perhaps you have a near accident: you swerve, somehow miss another car, and say, "Wasn't I lucky." That was not luck; that was God's providence. Or you were sick and nearly died, but recovered, and said, "Wasn't I fortunate?" That was not fortune; that

was God's providence. God does things for us daily, yet we fail to give Him praise, honor, recognition, and glory. We are thieves, robbing God of His due.

When God says, "Thou shalt not steal," it means more than not sticking a gun in somebody's face. We must learn to deal honestly and openly, not to be stingy and miserly, and to give to him that needeth. I am not saying to give without wisdom or understanding, because there are certain people in the Bible whom God forbids us to give to. For instance, God said, "If any will not work, neither should he eat."

## Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother

If Chuck comes to me hungry and out of a job through no fault of his own—the providence of God having worked it out that way—I am more than willing to share with him and help him. But if he is out of a job because he is too lazy and too sorry to work, let him starve. That is what the Scripture says. You have to use wisdom, because there are some people whom God forbids you even to give to.

## The Fifth Commandment: Honoring Parents

Thirdly, look back in your Bibles to Exodus, chapter 20. Notice verse 12: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Honor thy father and thy mother.

Everybody certainly knows what that means, do they not? I can assure you that, in this day and time, most people do not. Most folks think it means simply saying, "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," and "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am." That is the way I was raised, and I certainly recommend it. But there is more to honor than that. Let me show you the case law in the Bible for honoring your father and your mother.

These passages contain case law, and you will be amazed at some of it. I think you will see how very clearly it comes together and points to the fifth commandment.

Exodus 23:19 says, "The first of thy firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God." Watch: "Thou shalt

not seethe the kid in its mother's milk." He said, "Brother Weaver, what's that got to do with the fifth commandment?" Just hang on. "Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk."

The same instruction appears in Exodus 34:26. This is the second time God says exactly the same thing: "The first of the firstfruits of thy lamb thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe the kid in his mother's milk." Interesting, God said exactly the same thing two times in a row. Then, in Deuteronomy 14:21, He says, "You shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself. Thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it. Or thou may sell it unto an alien, for thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk."

That is three times God has said exactly the same thing. How many times has God had to say something to make it true? Only once. Why would He say it three times? For emphasis. There is a reason the repetition is included in these laws.

Leviticus 22:28 says, "Whether it be a cow or a ewe, you shall not kill it and her young, both in one day." Are you ready? God forbids killing a mother and her baby on the same day. Did you know that God is a greater conservative than the state? He is a greater conservationist. Down in Georgia—and it is probably this way in South Carolina as well—we have so many deer. We can always kill a buck.

But then we have doe days. On those days, you can kill bucks and does. So here comes a big doe. Let us say she has her little one with her, and he has antlers sticking up above the hairline about a half inch. Very clearly, he is a buck. According to the state, I could kill the mother and then kill that yearling buck as well, because it is buck or doe. But according to God's Word, I cannot do that. I can take the mother and leave the young buck, or take the young buck and leave the mother, but I cannot kill them both in one day.

Have you ever wondered why? Deuteronomy 22:6 says, "If a bird's nest chanced to be before thee in the way in any tree or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, and the dam, that's the female bird, the mother, sitting upon the young or upon the eggs,

thou shalt not Take the dam with the young. But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee, that it may be well with thee, that thou mayest prolong thy days." Notice that He said to let the dam go and take the young. Why did He not say that one could take the mother and leave the young? Because if one took the mother and left the young, the young would die; they need the mother.

So God says, in this case, no: you can only take the mother or take the young. You have to leave the mother. Now compare this with Ephesians 6:1-3: "Children, obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, that thou mayest live long on the earth."

Now, wait a minute. You said, Brother Weaver, you have been reading case laws for the fifth commandment, and now you read the fifth commandment in the New Testament. That is correct. You say, "Well, I do not understand this."

What have all these animals got to do with families? First of all, God says, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk." The word seethe means to boil. If you have a young kid of a goat, you do not boil that young kid in his mother's milk to make it more tender, or to fry it, or whatever. If you are going to kill a young calf, you do not boil that young calf in his mother's milk. Why? You could say, "Well, Brother Weaver, that is very obvious. We are not supposed to take that which is a form of life and turn it into a form of death." That is very good, and it is true as well. But that is not why God says it. Why did God say not to boil a kid in his mother's milk? Why did God say you cannot kill the mother and the young on the same day?

## Application: From Animals to Families

Look back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 22, verse 6: "If a bird's nest chanced to be before thee in the way, or in any tree or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, or in the dam sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, thou shalt not Take the dam with the young, but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days." Now look at Ephesians chapter 6, verse 2: "Honor

thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth." What do these two passages have in common? Longevity, or the promise of long life. The promise in Deuteronomy 22, verses 6 and 7, is the same as the promise in Ephesians 6, verses 2 and 3.

When God says, "Don't kill a mother and her young on the same day," and, "Don't seethe or boil a kid in his mother's milk," He is not saying, "Look at me, I'm the great conservationist." God is that. This is His creation, and He certainly has the right to tell us on what terms we may take life. But what God is doing is this: He is saying, watch, here is an argument from the lesser to the greater.

I demand that you respect even the families of animals. If God demands that you respect the families of animals, how much more does God demand that you respect your own family and the family of others?

He who will be disobedient and disregard the lives of animals will be equally disobedient and disregard the lives of mankind. You say, "Brother Weaver, how can you say that?" I am going to show you in just a moment. The Bible says, "even the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," and, "The wicked man regardeth not the life of his beast."

Now turn in your Bibles, first of all, to Exodus chapter 21. This is in light of the fifth commandment. Exodus 21, verse 17: "...and he that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." I want to show you how most people dishonor their parents. God demands the death penalty for the man that curses his father and mother. You say, "Brother Weaver, what does it mean to curse father and mother?" I am going to show you in just a moment. Look in your Bibles to the book of Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 9: "For everyone that cursed his father or his mother shall be surely put to death. He hath cursed his father or his mother, his blood shall be upon him."

God says, you curse your mother and father, you deserve to die. Look in the book of Proverbs chapter 30, verse 17: "the eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother The ravens of

the valley shall pick it out and the young eagle shall eat it." In other words, he is going to be killed; he is going to die.

You say, "Brother Weaver, I am glad that is in the Old Testament." It is also in the New Testament. You will also find this in Mark chapter 7, but let us read it from Matthew chapter 15, beginning with verse 1. I will explain the passage, and then I hope you will understand what it means to curse your mother and father, what it means to dishonor your mother and father. "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?"

For they washed not their hands when they ate bread. But He answered and said unto them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Here's the principle: Honor thy father and thy mother, and he that curseth father and mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whosoever shall say to his father's mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honor not his father and mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

So they came to Christ and said, "Why do you not keep our traditions?" He said, "Why do you disobey the Word of God? God said, Honor thy father and thy mother. God said, He that curses his father and mother, let him die to death. You're dishonoring your father and your mother, and you're not being put to death."

Now, if you were to read Mark 7, the parallel passage, he tells you what these individuals were doing. They were going to the priest and dedicating their goods to the Lord. In other words, if you say it is korban—and the word korban means dedicated—hear what these young people were doing. These young adults were going to the priest, giving him a portion of their money or goods, and saying, "We want to dedicate all this to the Lord." The priest would get his portion, and the young family would take their other portion and keep it to themselves.

Then along came father and mother, now elderly, perhaps sickly or unable to work. They came to their son and daughter and said, "We've been sick. We haven't had any food. We need some help.

Would you please get us some food?" Those young sons and daughters said, "You don't expect us to take money that's been dedicated to God and use it for such a mundane purpose as buying food for my parents." You say, "Oh, Brother Weaver, folks would never do that."

I want you to look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 5. Let's look closely. 1 Timothy chapter 5. Note, if you would please, what the Word of God says. 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 4. 1 Timothy 5, verse 4. God says, but if any widow have children or nephews, Let them learn first to show piety at home and to requite their parents, for that is good and acceptable before God." Now, wait a minute. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home. Now, I don't know if you know what the word piety is. It's an old English word, and most of us have forgotten what it means. But piety is a synonym for godliness, holiness. God said, if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn to show holiness and godliness and piety at home and to requite their parents. Now the word requite, if you don't understand that one, it literally means to pay back. So God says, if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn to show God in his home and let them pay back their parents, for this is good and acceptable before God.

Now let me show you what God says. God says, I've got this thing worked out. If folks would just follow my law, I've got it worked out. How did God work it out? Well, our parents took care of us when we could not take care of ourselves. They fed us. They clothed us. They educated us. They changed our diapers. They took us to the bathroom. They took us everywhere.

They did everything for us. They paid all the bills. We could not do one thing for ourselves. If they had left us alone, we would have died. God says that when your parents get older and cannot do for themselves, you had better learn to pay them back and do it for them. I do not care whether it is giving them money, taking them to the doctor, or running errands. You have a responsibility before God to honor your father and your mother, and a responsibility not to curse them.

My father had been dead about three years, soon before. He was a farmer. When he retired from farming for medical reasons, he had to

have a garden—just had to have a garden. It was a two-acre garden. I planted it and plowed it, and my wife and I were the ones who harvested it. Mom and Dad would help some, but you do not expect a seventy-five-year-old person to help much, especially when the sun gets up. I forget how many quarts of corn my wife put up in one day—something like 150. She put up eighty-something quarts of beans in one day.

Something would go wrong at the house, and my father would call me: "Son, I need some help. Come over here and help me." Guess what I would do? I would go over and help him. My wife's father just died. He was eighty-nine and would have been ninety that July. When things went wrong at their house, they would call me, and I would go up and take care of it. He said, "Brother Weaver, you must have made a lot of money doing that." I did not make a dime. In fact, it cost me, because many times I paid for whatever was needed and never got it back from them.

You say, "Well, why did you do it?" Because it is my responsibility. It is my duty. It is my privilege. They did for me what I could not do for myself, and now, since they cannot do for themselves, I can do for them.

I had an uncle who lived sixty miles one way from me. He and his wife never had children, so he got some horses. Their hooves needed trimming: "Can you come trim my horse hooves?" The horses kicked the back of the barn down: "Can you come fix the back of the barn?" The wind blew the barn open.

A man once asked me to come underpin his trailer. He said, "Brother Weaver, why would you do that for your uncle?" Let us read the Bible again: "If any would have children or nephews." Whose primary responsibility is it to take care of mother and dad? It is the children's responsibility. It is not the government's, Social Security's, or Welfare's. It is your responsibility to take care of them. If there are no children, then it is the extended family—the nephews. He said, "Father Weaver, man, I would never do that for my family."

Skip down to verse 8: "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, he's worse than an infidel." Did you hear what I just read? God said that

if you fail to honor your parents, you have denied the faith and are worse than an infidel. You are cursing your parents, and God said you deserve death.

What is it to curse your parents? It is not merely to use God's name in vain and then reproach them, though that certainly is one way of cursing them. To curse them is to dishonor them, to fail to provide for them, to fail to help them, and to fail to treat them the way God tells you to treat them.

But what if there is a godly widow woman with no children and no extended family? It is still not the government's responsibility. Look at verse 16 in 1 Timothy chapter 5: "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged, that they may relieve them that are widows indeed." Guess whose responsibility it becomes? For godly widows, when there is no family, it is the church's responsibility—not the government's.

I want to clear up something. Inevitably, when I say this, somebody asks, "Brother Weaver, why should I support somebody I do not even know? Normally, I am not getting anything out of it." First of all, God lays down the qualifications for a godly widow, and I am not going to go over those; you can read them for yourself. But understand this: a godly widow is someone with a testimony that you know, or at least someone you know is a saint of God.

If you study the Word of God, you will find that these widow women do not get a free ride, although the church is taking care of them. The Bible says that a widow is one who serves God with prayers and fastings day and night. I do not mind helping support a woman whom I know is constantly praying for me and even fasting for me. Secondly, the Bible says that older women are to teach younger women to be good, obedient to their husbands, keepers at home, that the Word of God be not blasphemed.

We are living today in a generation where most young wives cannot sew or cook, have never made a biscuit from scratch, and do not know how to do anything. They do not know how to bathe their husbands or raise their children. God said it is the responsibility of older women to teach them. The widow whom the church supports

has a ministry as well: she has to teach the younger women. She is not getting a free ride, so to speak.

God says that we are to honor our father and our mother. What does that mean? It means more than saying yes sir and no sir, or yes ma'am and no ma'am. It means that we provide for them, take care of them, love them, and help them when they cannot do for themselves.

I realize there may be extenuating circumstances, but most Americans and most professing Christians, when their parents get old, simply put them in a nursing home and forget them. If you do that, remember that God has a law: you reap what you sow. Do not get upset when your children do that to you. God said, "Honor thy father and thy mother." There is more to it than merely saying yes or no.

God says that children have two responsibilities: first, obey your parents; secondly, honor your parents. There comes a time when, in one sense of the word, obedience to your parents ceases. What am I talking about? It is when you get married. "For man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and there shall be one flesh."

There came a time when I left my mother and father, married my wife, and became the head of my house. My daddy did not come over and say, "Now, son, you do this and you do that." He had no right to do that. I was now the head of my house. As a wise son, however, I would always consider what my father told me, ponder it, and ask his advice. I was the head of the house, but I had to make the decision.

Whenever I went back to his house, I remembered that he was the head of his house, and I was still his son, no matter how old I was. Whatever he asked me to do, I did my best to obey him. I even went with him one day when he said, "Son, let me show you my new hog pen." He was a farmer. We went down the pond dam, and I had a suit on. When we got there, he looked down and saw fifteen or twenty of those little chokes out running around. "Oh my," he said, "son, the pigs are out. Get in that hog pen and stop that hole up."

I jumped in with my suit on, stayed there, and stopped the hole to keep the rest from getting out. I did not stop to argue, “Daddy, you don’t understand.” He would have understood, I can assure you. You can always buy more shoes; you cannot buy more parents.

Although there may come a time when obedience ceases, generally speaking, there never comes a time when honor ceases: “Honor thy father and thy mother.”

## Conclusion: The Reach of God's Law

“This is the first commandment with promise, that your days may be long upon the earth.” The old scholars used to say that honoring your parents included at least several things.

Number one, children listen. You always stood when your parents entered the room. I remember as a boy in public school, we had to stand every time the teacher or any adult came into the room. We remained standing by our desks until the teacher or adult said, “You may be seated.” The old scholar said, first of all, you always stand when your parents are in the room.

Secondly, you never sit in a chair reserved for your parents. Daddy has his chair; Mama has her chair. You do not sit there. Thirdly, you never carp their statements. To carp means bellyaching, whining, and complaining. “Sugar, would you wash the dishes for mother tonight?” “Oh, Mama, why do you always want me to wash dishes?” That is carping. Or, “Son, would you go out and cut the grass?” “Oh, Daddy, don’t you know I have things?” No, you just go do it and shut up. You never carp.

Fourthly—and I like this one, though I never quite succeeded at it—you always refer to your parents as “my lord” and “my lady.” My wife, bless her heart, looked out the door one day. We had four daughters, including identical twins, and I had a hammock strung between two trees. One twin pushed the hammock one way, and the other pushed it back. Our oldest girl fanned me with a palm frond, and the baby dropped grapes into my mouth every time I came by. My wife said, “Boy, have you got it made.” But I never got them to say “my lord” or “my lady.”

We laugh at that, but the saddest commentary is that we have lost the true meaning and intent of God's law. Consequently, we have lost our families, our children, our parents, and our obedience to God. You cannot understand any of the Ten Commandments without understanding the case laws in the Bible. God always gives a minimal example so that you can see the maximum reach of His law.

Honor thy father and thy mother. And he that curseth mother and father, let him die the death. If you don't honor them, you are cursing them. May God help us to be obedient.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask tonight for Your grace. We must search our hearts because, Lord, in these three illustrations of case law, we have to confess that we fail to protect and preserve. We have failed, Lord, not to steal. We've defrauded, deceived, and beat people out of things, and have not even thought it was theft. We've dishonored our parents, complained and whined about helping them, murmured and bellyached, never remembering everything they did for us. Lord, help us remember that we who provide not for our own, especially those of our own household, are worse than an infidel. We've denied the faith. Enable us to honor Thee by honoring Thy law in every area of our lives. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

# The Sabbath Principle of Rest

March 11, 2001

## Introduction and Scripture Reading

The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. You shall keep the sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you. Everyone that defileth it shall surely be put to death, or whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done, but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest holy to the Lord. Whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth. On the seventh day he rested and was refreshed. And he gave unto Moses, when he had

made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

## Confusion Over the Sabbath Day

If you read Exodus chapter 20 and Deuteronomy chapter 5, you find that the law of God says we are to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. There is great confusion today over what the Sabbath day is. A group of professing Christians known as the Seventh-day Adventists believe that Saturday is indeed the Sabbath day. Therefore, they meet on Saturday and say that everyone interested in keeping the law of God, and being holy and righteous, must observe Saturday as the Sabbath day. Others in Christendom have taken the term Sabbath and turned it into mere legalism, ritualism, and ceremonialism.

This is what the Pharisees and the Judaizers were guilty of. There were certain laws and regulations concerning the Sabbath day, but the Pharisees took those things and perverted them. They said you could not walk so far on the Sabbath day; hence it came to be known as the Sabbath day's journey. A Pharisee would not even walk over grass on the Sabbath day because, if his foot happened to hit grass that had headed out and knocked some seeds onto the ground, he would be guilty of sowing on the Sabbath day. They added many extraneous, outward, and external things to the law of God, completely violating the principles God had laid down.

## The Essence of Sabbath: Rest, Not Worship

Others have taken the Sabbath day and regarded it as no particular day, turning it into what is known as licentiousness. Both extremes are condemned in the Word of God. I have heard all my life that we are “not under the law” and therefore the Sabbath is not for us today. I have also heard that it is the only commandment not repeated in the New Testament: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

There is a principle in the Word of God concerning the Sabbath day. It is true that we are not physical Israel, and that you and I are not commanded not to gather sticks on the Sabbath. But these technicalities are not merely what God was trying to point out; rather, the principles involved were. Most people have also

overlooked that the essence of the Sabbath was rest, not worship. In the Old Testament, those dates and Scriptures referring to the Sabbath show that what came first was rest, faith, and rejoicing. Worship was not its essence. The children of Israel did worship, but that which particularly had reference to the Sabbath was rest.

## The Principle of Sabbath Rest

The principle of the Sabbath was rest. Israel was in Egypt, where they were slaves of Pharaoh. They cried to God because of their groanings, affliction, and torment. When God came down to Moses, He said, “I have heard the cry of the children of Israel, I have seen their oppression, and I have come down to deliver them.”

Stop and think. In Egypt, Israel were slaves. They had no rest, no comfort; they had absolutely nothing. God delivered them, and when He gave them the law upon Mount Sinai, He said, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” The Sabbath, therefore, is a sign of liberty, freedom, and rest. We do have the Sabbath with us today, and in one sense we have the Sabbath penalties with us today, but it is in a spiritual sense and not in a physical sense.

## Biblical Law: Principles and Case Law

In our Bible class in high school and junior high, I have begun teaching a course in biblical law. I have gone over with the students what we know in the Bible as case law. The Word of God gives certain broad principles, such as the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are not the law. They are summaries of the law; they are not the law in itself.

If I have a cake and pick up the flour and say, “This is the cake,” you say, “No, Brother Weaver, it may be part of the cake, but it is not the cake in itself.” So the Ten Commandments, as we know them, are a summary of the law. But the summary does not take the place of the whole. Our Lord tells us that love is the fulfilling of the law. The first commandment is this: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might, with all thy strength.” The second is likened to it: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Although love is the fulfilling and summary of the law, love does not replace the law. The Bible therefore gives broad

principles, followed by specific cases or illustrations of those principles, which we refer to as case laws.

That is what every lawyer has in his office. If you go in with a problem and discuss it with your attorney, he may say, “There was a case almost identical to yours twenty years ago, and the judge ruled this way. Let me get that case, and we’ll see how it applies to your situation.” He is taking a broad principle, narrowed to a specific case, and making applications to you and your particular situation. That is exactly the way the Bible does it. In fact, that is where the attorney got his method: from the Word of God. There are broad principles. The broad principle I want to share with you tonight is, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” We will look at a specific case and then at some practical applications.

## The Sabbath as a Sign and the Various Sabbaths

As I was reading in Exodus chapter 31, this struck me: in verse 13, God said, “Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep, for it is a sign.” Notice the word sign. It is a sign between Him and them. In verse 17, He repeats that it is a sign. The Sabbath principle was to convey a certain truth and a certain principle. Notice also in verse 13 that He said, “verily my Sabbaths,” plural. There was more than one Sabbath.

Contrary to what many people believe, the Hebrew Sabbath and modern-day Saturday are not the same. You may call Saturday the seventh day of the week, and the word Sabbath may mean rest; in some cultures it may mean seven. But modern-day Saturday and the Hebrew Sabbath are not identical. The calendar of Israel was a solar calendar. Moreover, their religious year began April the 15th every year, or 15 Abib.

The Jews may be described in the paper as celebrating New Year’s, but what they are celebrating is a civil year, not a religious year. The Jewish religious year begins April the 15th. April the 15th, or 15 Abib, was a fixed Sabbath—a Sabbath every year. Also, seven sevens after that were fixed Sabbaths, because those were the feast days they had to observe.

Since the date was the same year in and year out, the day changed. You have a birthday. One year, September the 3rd comes on Monday; the next year, on Tuesday; the next, on Wednesday, until seven years pass and it comes around again. The Hebrew Sabbath began on April the 15th, so once every seven years, Saturday, as we know it, was a weekly Sabbath, but only once every seven years. Other days were weekly sabbaths as well. Thus, the Hebrew Sabbath and the modern day Saturday are not the same.

As you study the Word of God and read about sabbaths, understand that there were weekly sabbaths, and there were monthly sabbaths, sometimes known as the New Moon Sabbaths. These were different from the weekly Sabbaths. On the New Moon Sabbaths, you could work, but you had to sacrifice. On the weekly Sabbaths, you could not work, but sacrifice was not demanded.

Thirdly, there was the sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee. Every seven years was a sabbatical year; seven times seven is forty-nine. The forty-ninth year was a sabbatical year, and the fiftieth year was a jubilee, so two years of rest followed each other. The Lord had regulations concerning the sabbatical years and the year of Jubilee.

Fourthly, there was the Passover, a Sabbath in the sense that it was a feast day in which no work was to be done. Fifthly, there was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Exodus chapter 13 and verse 17 tells you that this feast lasted seven days. It began on a Sabbath, ended on a Sabbath, and no work was to be done therein, only feasting and rejoicing before the Lord.

Sixthly, there was the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, in Leviticus chapter 23; no work was to be done therein. Seventhly, there was the Feast of Tabernacles, which also lasted seven days in Leviticus chapter 23. Each of these days, each of these New Moon Sabbaths, each of these years, and each of these special feast days was known as the Sabbaths of Israel.

If you were to study each one of them, you would find that they emphasize three things. The first was rest, the second was faith, and the third was rejoicing. The Sabbaths were to be a delight to the

people of God, refreshing and blessing them. Remember, God gave them to Israel for a sign.

Because the Sabbath conveyed a special truth, there were very severe laws regulating the day. It was a general law that no work was to be done—not by you, your maidservant, your manservant, or any individual in your household. I believe it was Brother Wendish who was telling me—I forget who it was—that modern-day Jews in Jerusalem, when observing some of these special feast days, do not even turn on their lights or air conditioner, because that is work.

## Sabbath Regulations and Permitted Activities

So they invite a Gentile over and say, "It sure is dark in here. It sure would be good if you turned the air conditioner on." They will not do it themselves, but they will ask some Gentile dog to do it for them. Thus they have the benefit of modern-day conveniences without violating their Sabbath. You and I understand that this is a roundabout way to get what they want anyhow.

It was a general principle that no work was to be done on the Sabbath day. In Nehemiah chapter 13 and verse 19, Nehemiah ordered that the gates should be shut on the Sabbath day. You must remember that business in the Bible was conducted at the gates. Many merchants came and lodged around the gate. After he had ordered it shut, Nehemiah told them that if they came there the next Sabbath, he would lay hold on them—in other words, take them and beat them, literally. Thus he ran them off.

In Exodus chapter 16, God said that every man was to abide in his place and not even go out of his house on the Sabbath day. Nehemiah chapter 13, verse 15, says that no asses should be laden on that day. Jeremiah 17 says that no burdens were to be borne; Exodus 35, verse 3, says that no fires were to be kindled; and Nehemiah 13, verse 15, says that no sheaves were to be brought in on that day.

Numbers 15, which we will look at later, says that no sticks were to be gathered on that day. Nehemiah 10 says no victuals were to be bought or sold, and Nehemiah 13 says no wine was to be treaded in the presses.

These are things that could not be done on the Sabbath day. However, what most people do not understand or overlook is that there were many things that could be done. In Mark chapter 3, we read: “And he entered again into the synagogue, and there was a man there who had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man who had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on 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 unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched out, and his hand was restored whole as the other.”

The Word of God tells us that life may be saved on the Sabbath day. Anything that preserves life or blesses life may be accomplished on the Sabbath day, since redemption is the essence of the Sabbath. This can even mean the healing of the sick. Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 14 contain many passages concerning this.

In Matthew chapter 12, this principle is extended even to animals: “And behold, there was a man who had his hand withered, and they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day that they might accuse him? He said unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep? And if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore, it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.”

Although there were many restrictions, it was lawful to heal, to help, and even to help animals. So there were many great things that they could do.

In Matthew 12, verse 1, we find this amazing truth: “At that time, Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn, and his disciples were hungry, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day.”

Whenever you find a statement like that, you ought to ask yourself: Lawful according to whom? According to God, or according to the Pharisees' perversion of the law of God? "But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple."

"But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day." All the disciples were doing was plucking grain so that they might eat. Since the essence of the Sabbath is redemption, rest, faith, and rejoicing, our Lord is saying that it is legal and lawful to do what is necessary to preserve the body and rejoice in the Lord.

I know individuals who think it a great crime for women to prepare a full meal on the Lord's Day because they say no work ought to be done. But if this is what we are talking about—the essence of redemption, faith, preservation, and rejoicing—then our Lord says it is lawful to do this. You remember there were four hundred silent years between the Testaments, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

It was during this period that Judas Maccabeus and the Maccabean brothers led the Jewish revolt against Rome and against all of their enemies. Many Jews at that time were very strict, and their enemies discovered that they would not fight on the Sabbath. Therefore, they began to attack the Jews on the Sabbath day. Judas realized that since the Sabbath typified redemption, and since part of redemption was being redeemed from their enemies, it was lawful to fight on the Sabbath days for freedom. The next time the Romans attacked, Judas tore them to shreds. You remember that is what happened in 1967 during the Six-Day War. They got the Jews on the Jewish Sabbath, on Passover, thinking the Jews would not fight. Well, the Jews did fight. Why? It is the essence of redemption.

## Case Law: The Man Gathering Sticks

Now, I have said all that to say this: here is the broad principle we are dealing with—"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." There are many things that could be said about the Sabbath. Turn, if you would, to Numbers chapter 15, and look at this specific case. The penalties attached to violating the Sabbath day are very clear. In Numbers chapter 15, look at verse 30.

If the Sabbath penalty in the old sense were instituted today, there would be a great deal of trouble. You could not have doctors, policemen, or firemen. Individuals in those occupations would be lawfully excluded from any penalty for violating the Sabbath. Why? Because they are preserving life and offering life.

You see what I am saying? If we took men as a whole, and those Sabbath penalties were in effect today as they were in Israel, then we would not have too many people left. Look at this. Numbers chapter 15, beginning with verse 30: "But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him. And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day." All he was doing was gathering sticks. "And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron and all the congregation."

"And they put him in a ward because it was not declared what should be done to him." This is the first specific case of violating the broad principle. Verse 35 says, "And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death. All the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died as the Lord commanded Moses."

When most people read that, they ask, "Do you mean they stoned him to death just for gathering a few sticks?" Any other day he could have gathered the sticks without any problem. The issue is not simply that he was gathering a few sticks. Notice verse 31: "...because

he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment." When God had said to Israel, "thou shalt do no work on the Sabbath day," and a man who had heard the Word of God deliberately went out gathering sticks, he was, in essence, despising God and saying, "I am a rebel, I will not listen to God, I will not obey God, no, not even in the most minute details." This was not merely the case of someone gathering sticks, but of a heart of rebellion: "I will not have this man reign over us. And I will not have him reign over me."

The Church of Jesus Christ no longer observes the Sabbath as the Israelites did, nor does it have the power or authority to execute those who violate it. However, the Sabbath principle is still with us; and, spiritually speaking, the Sabbath penalty is still with us. We worship on Sunday, which we call the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, based upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Jesus Christ as the Believer's Sabbath Rest

The Bible speaks of three particular rests: the creation rest, the Hebrew rest, and the Christian rest. The creation rest commemorated the creation of the world. The Christian rest commemorates the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ—the finished redemption of our Lord.

God told Israel, "I have given my Sabbaths to you for a sign." He went on to say that whoever despised His word should be utterly cut off from his people: "That soul shall surely die."

Here is the broad principle: remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Here is the specific case: a man gathering sticks, and he was put to death.

What is the application today? Remember that the essence of the Sabbath is rest. In Matthew 11:28, our Lord says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." As the creation rest commemorated the creation of the world—the Lord said that in six days He created heaven and earth, and in the seventh He rested—so He said, "You remember the

Sabbath day to keep it holy." You rest, He told fleshly Israel. Now, in the new covenant, we have Jesus Christ, who is the sinner's rest.

Let me say it like this: Jesus Christ is the sinner's Sabbath. In Hebrews 4:9, we find an amazing statement. Those who have Greek New Testaments or interlinears will notice that the Greek says, "...there is remaining therefore a rest to the people of God." The word rest there is sabbatismos. There is remaining therefore a Sabbath for the people of God. Jesus Christ is our Sabbath. Do you not remember what Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 1:7? He said, "And you who are troubled, rest with us."

Did God demand rest in the Old Testament? The answer is obviously yes. Does God demand rest in the New Testament? The answer is obviously yes, but He demands that rest in Jesus Christ. Was the death penalty applied in the Old Testament to all those who violated His Sabbath? Well, yes, it was. Is there a death penalty in the New Testament for all those who violate His Sabbath? The answer is yes, it is, for Jesus Christ is the sinner's Sabbath.

Look in your Bibles, please, to Proverbs chapter 8. Notice the very words of wisdom personified. These are the words of our Lord. Our Lord is called the Wisdom of God. Notice what the Wisdom of God says in Proverbs 8:35: "For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul."

"All they that hate me love death." All those who sin against Christ, the Christian Sabbath, wrong their own soul. All those who hate Christ love death. They will not rest. That rest which God provided in the Old Testament—if a man did not rest in it, he was put to death. In the New Testament, if a man does not rest in that rest provided by God, he too is put to death.

Look in your Bibles, if you would please, to Revelation chapter 14. All those who refuse to rest in Christ will find that there is no other rest. Revelation 14, verse 10: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation."

"And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And

the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast in his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." Notice, they have no rest, neither day nor night. Those who violate the rest that God has provided shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God and shall suffer death.

Before I close, I want to take this one step further. I know it is true, and I will confess that one reason I am preaching this tonight is because I need it. I hope that you need it, too. One of the things that you and I fail to do, as we ought to, is rest in the Lord. Those are no idle words in Scripture when it says, “Rest in the Lord.”

## Practical Application: Resting in Christ Daily

What is he talking about? Turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 6. Keep in mind that this is part of our redemption, our right according to the Bible. Matthew 6, beginning with verse 24: “No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” At the same time, you cannot trust Christ and trust yourself. You cannot rest in Christ and rest in yourself. You cannot follow what Christ commands and follow what you think. It must either be Christ or you.

Then he says, “Therefore I say unto you”—notice therefore. After laying down the principle that you cannot serve two masters, and we who are Christians have professed that Christ is our master, he says, “Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.”

"Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feedeth them, are ye not much better than they? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothed the grass of the field which today is, tomorrow's cast in the oven,

shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Our Lord is not saying that we are not to be lazy and indolent. He is not saying, “Look at the birds; they eat and do not work, and they get by, so therefore you do not work.” That is not what He is saying. The Word of God has already said in 2 Thessalonians, “If any will not work, neither should he eat.” What, then, is He saying?

You and I have been called to a life of faith, a life of rest, and a life of trust. Our responsibility is to do whatever we are required to do, to the best of our ability, to the glory of God, and then rest in Him to work it out.

Let me give you the clue. Last year, when the drought hit so severely, before Glenn had his stroke, I looked at his soybeans, and they were awful. I said to him one day, “Glenn, I feel so badly concerning your soybeans.” I knew they were ruined; he was going to lose, and he knew it. He looked at me and said, “Well, you can only do so much.”

And after that, there is no use worrying about it. He came so close to biblical truth. That is the truth God is saying here: Our responsibility is to obey God in every area of life. That does not mean everything is going to work out for us. But whether it does or does not, we do what we are supposed to do, to the best of our ability, for the glory of God, and then rest in Him. That is all we can do, and that is what He requires us to do.

Beloved, you and I oftentimes spend many hours worrying, fretting, planning, conniving, and scheming. All our Lord says is to obey and then rest. You and I have the responsibility of keeping the Sabbath every day, for Jesus Christ is our Sabbath. He is our rest. Do you realize that when we refuse to trust Him in our problems, when we refuse to do what we are supposed to do and rest, we are guilty of violating our Sabbath?

Jesus Christ is our rest. We may quote it a hundred times, but until we begin to practice it, it really does not mean that much to us. When you read, and when you hear read, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose,” if we know that all things work together for good, and if we know that God is going to work everything out, then our responsibility is to do what we are supposed to do, and then rest and let Him work it out.

Philip Melanchthon was the successor of Martin Luther. To a large degree, the Lutheran Church today is not the product of Martin Luther, but of Philip Melanchthon, who compromised on a number of points that Martin Luther never would have compromised on. Before Martin Luther died, things were not going well for the Lutherans because they were being slaughtered right and left. They were being persecuted and pounded. Martin Luther’s own life was in danger practically all the time.

Philip Melanchthon walked back and forth, wringing his hands and rubbing his brow. He told Martin of all the problems the Lutherans were having, how the king was upset, and how Rome was attacking. There Martin Luther was, sitting calmly at the table and reading his Bible.

When Philip said, “How can you sit there like nothing ever bothers you? What's wrong? Don't you know the problems that we're facing?” Martin Luther looked up from his Bible and said, “Let Philip Melanchthon cease to rule the world and all shall be well.” What a statement. Now that's our problem. If you and I would cease to rule our lives and cease to rule our world, and trust Christ and rest in Him, all would be well, for Jesus is our Saviour.

Our Father, we bow to Thee. We confess to Thee that Thou hast provided a rest in Jesus Christ. That rest is not only for sinners, Father, it is for thy people. We are to come and cast all of our cares upon him, for he cares for us. He is the lover of our souls. Enable us, Lord, to his bosom to fly and to rest, for he indeed is rest. We give ourselves unto Thee and ask You, O blessed Lord, to enable us to trust Thee and rest in Thee. In Christ's name we ask it. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

# Preaching Profanity

April 17, 2005

## Introduction: The Third Commandment and Common Views of Profanity

Turn to Exodus chapter 20 and verse 7. The Lord willing, after next week I am going to begin the series on how God destroys nations. But today I am bringing a message entitled “Preaching Profanity.” Listen carefully: preaching profanity. I think you will understand before I finish.

Here, of course, we find the third commandment: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. So the message is entitled “Preaching Profanity.”

Everyone knows what profanity is, right? If you really do not know, all you have to do is go into some of these special meeting places—and I am using quotations there; I could just say pool halls—and they will usually have a sign saying, “No Profanity Allowed.” Interpreted, that simply means no cussing, no dirty or foul

language. Sometimes we even include what we know as slang language as profanity.

## The Prevalence of Foul Language in Society

Every one of us has, from time to time, heard and been exposed to bad and foul language. Not just from sailors—that is where we get the expression “to cuss like a sailor.” We also hear foul language from French folks, because Americans always say, “Pardon my French,” when they say something like that. We hear foul language from every strata of society.

It used to be—and it is still true—that a real gentleman would never use any type of bad or foul language around a lady. Today men do so, and unhappily, sometimes women can curse worse than men. They can hold their own with the best of them, or should I say, the worst of them. The amazing thing today is that even small children can use horrible, horrible language.

I remember, probably twenty-five or thirty years ago, being in a home with Brother Melvin Stringer. A little three- or four-year-old boy came up and cursed Brother Stringer. My mouth fell open; I could not believe it. I looked at Brother Stringer and said, “Did you hear what that kid said?” He replied, “Yeah, I heard him.” Since he was not our child or anywhere near it, I said to his grandmama, “Did you hear what this child said?” She just laughed and said, “Yeah, isn’t it cute?” I said, “No, ma’am, it’s not cute.” Yet we hear that all the time.

Profanity, bad or foul language, has been problematic down through the years. Consider an order issued and signed by General George Washington: "The General is sorry to be informed that the foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing, a vice hitherto little known in our American Army, is growing into fashion. He hopes that the officers will, by example as well as influence, endeavor to check it and that both they and the men will reflect that we can little hope of the blessing of heaven on our army if we insult it by our impiety and folly. Added to this, it is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character detests and despises it." Signed George Washington.

Up until that point, cursing had been relatively unknown in the American army. But now, he said, it was a growing vice, and he called on all the officers to check it immediately.

When it comes to our language, Scripture is exceedingly clear in Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." Rather, let that which is good minister grace to the ears. The positive side is found in Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech always be with grace seasoned with salt that you may know how you ought to answer every man."

On the one hand, negatively, Scripture says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." On the other hand, positively, it says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." All of us should always be concerned with our language, just as the Bible says to give no appearance of evil. Likewise, we should give no sound of evil as well.

## Limiting Profanity to Words Frees Us to Live Profane Lives

Most of us are totally lost when the subject of profanity arises because we normally think of profanity only as cursing or using God's name with other slang words. We have never really understood the implications or the extent of profanity. Listen carefully, because this point will be proved before the close: when we limit profanity to words or expressions, it frees us to live a profane life without ever being troubled about it. Do you realize that there are a number of preachers in this country who preach profanity and never realize it?

I am going to give you an illustration this morning for which I am sure, sooner or later, someone will call me to task. But that is all right. I am using this illustration to prove a point. Many times you will hear men, and unhappily, Southern men, use the expression, “It’s not worth a damn,” or, “I don’t care a damn.” For the record, I do not use that expression, even though it is not profanity. You say, “How can it not be profanity?” Originally, that expression was an expression of economics. The phrase, “It’s not worth a damn,” was literally brought into our language from two specific sources.

## Illustration: The Expression 'Not Worth a Damn'

First of all, it came from England, where you had pots and kettles and tinkers who went around mending them. Many times, these unscrupulous tinkers would take a pot that had a crack in it, get clay, make a small dam, and cover the crack in the pot. Then they would take a small, thin layer of molten metal and put it over the clay.

It certainly stopped the leak in the vessel until the vessel was heated. Then the clay dried out and cracked, and so did the thin layer of metal. Consequently, people began to say, “It’s not worth a tinker’s dam.” Dropping the tinker, it became, “It’s not worth a dam.” In other words, it either expressed that the tinker had done a poor job, or that the vessel was absolutely worthless. It could not be fixed; it was not worth a damn. Damming it would do no good; it would still continue to leak.

That is one source of the expression. But the second source, and the main one, came to us from the Duke of Wellington when he was in India. In India, the coin of least value was called a dam. Thus, when they said, “It’s not worth a damn,” it was an economic expression equivalent to, “It’s not worth a cent; it’s not worth a penny.” We had another expression in this country, “It’s not worth a continental,” referring to the Continental dollar because of inflation. Originally, then, that expression had nothing to do with profanity, cursing, or slang; it was simply an economic expression. Even today, when men say, “I don’t care a damn,” what they literally mean is, “I don’t care. It’s not worth even thinking about.” It is still basically an economic expression.

The reason I use this illustration is not to encourage anyone to use that term or expression, but to show you that what we normally think of as profanity is not necessarily always profanity. One can be profane and never curse. One can be profane and never use God's name with an epithet. One can be profane and never use a slang term.

## The Biblical Definition of Profanity: Taking God's Name in Vain

Profanity is far more than vulgar or vile language. It is absolutely possible to be profane without ever using foul language. In fact, the truth of the matter is that most preachers who preach profanity are usually very nice, congenial, and likable men. Most Christians who live profanity are usually very likable people. It is therefore easy to be profane without using foul language.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines profanity as “The condition or quality of being profane and abusive, vulgar, and irreverent language.” Although I certainly do not rely upon a dictionary definition when teaching the truth of God, in this instance the dictionary happens to have a biblical truth behind it. When we talk about profanity, we normally think of abusive, vulgar, and irreverent language. We have that part down; we understand it.

What we do not understand is the first part: the condition or quality of being profane. You can be profane without ever having vulgar language. Being profane and taking the Lord's name in vain are intimately connected, so much so that they are essentially interchangeable terms. You could say, “Thou shalt not profane the name of the Lord,” just as easily as, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” What does it mean when God said, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain”? To take God's name in vain is to deny in reality that He is the one true and living God.

It is an empty profession of God when our lives, when our attitudes and our actions and oftentimes our thoughts are totally and absolutely alienated from God and blasphemously ascribed to ourselves. Let me give you a good illustration of taking God's name in vain. In Titus 1 verse 16, the Bible says, "They profess that they know God. But in works, they deny Him." What is profanity? It is taking, carrying God's name in vain. They profess that they know God. In other words, here is one thing with their mouth, but in their actions, in their works, they literally deny God. So in essence then, when the life does not match up with the confession, it is a profanation of the name of God. It is carrying the name of God in vain.

Now the Hebrew word for vain is the word Shav, which is in the sense of desolating, and literally it means to carry something falsely, emptily, and worthlessly. Now the word take, God says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The word take means to take away or to carry off, or to bear. So what in the world is the third commandment? The third commandment is basically you shall not bear the name of God emptily, falsely, or in a worthless manner.

## The Positive Command: Walking Worthy of the Lord

You have heard me say this before: every negative has a positive. And when God says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," that is the negative. The positive of the third commandment in the New Testament is found in Ephesians 4:1. The Apostle Paul says, "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called." He says, "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling wherewith you are called." Your vocation deals with your calling. So he says you are to walk worthy. We are called being a Christian. So he says, I'm beseeching you, I'm begging you that you walk worthy of being called a Christian.

Here, once again, is the opposite of that: “I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind.” How do you walk worthily? First, you do not walk according to the way the ungodly walk; you do not walk according to the way the heathen walk. When you walk worthily, then, you are walking differently from the world and differently from the ungodly.

This is the positive side of the third commandment. Colossians 1:10 says, “That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Watch carefully. In Ephesians chapter 1, walking worthy was walking differently; that is, not acting like the heathen. In Colossians 1:10, walking worthy is walking pleasingly unto the Lord, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Walking worthily, then, means that we are adding to as well as obeying. In 1 Thessalonians 2:12, it is stated very simply: “That you would walk worthy of God who has called you into his kingdom and

glory." The opposite of "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" is walking worthily and carrying the name of God with us fully and worthily and in obedience.

The very first instance of the word profane in the Bible is found in Leviticus 18:21. I want you to go there because I am trying to show you the importance, impact, and implications of profanity. Here is its first occurrence: "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass to the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God. I am the Lord."

Of course, Molech was a false god. He was worshipped in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom. They not only literally sacrificed children to Molech, but also had a purification rite for those who were not literally killed. They would be passed through the fire, so to speak, and simply dedicated to the worship and service of Molech.

## Old Testament Examples of Profanity Without Foul Language

Notice what God says: "Thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech. Neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God, I am the Lord." What is God saying? If you allow your children to pass through the fire, or allow them to be sacrificed or sanctified to Molech, you are profaning the name of the Lord.

Why? God says, "I am the one true and the living God. I am the one that lays down the law. I am the one that tells you how to live. I am the one that governs your life. And when you turn from me, having professed to be my people, and now you are worshiping a false God, you are profaning my name. You are denying my sovereignty, and you are denying that I am the one and only true God."

Thus, profanity, while it has nothing to do with language here, does indeed have to do with our lives—how we live, how we act, and how we think.

Leviticus 19:12 says, "And you shall not swear by my name falsely. Neither lie one to another." God had already said, "You shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another," and then continues: "And you shall not swear by my name falsely, neither

shalt thou profane the name of thy God. I am the Lord." He said, "You shall not swear by my name falsely." When you swear by God's name falsely, you are profaning the name of God.

What many people do not understand is that swearing and worship are intimately connected. There is a biblical form of swearing. Yes, it is true. When our Lord says in the New Testament, "Swear not at all, let your yea be yea and your nay be nay," He is not talking about biblical swearing. He is talking about false swearing and humanistic swearing. Our words should be yea and nay, because, as He said, we cannot make one hair black and we cannot do one thing. Our words should be yea, and our words should be nay. But there is such a thing as biblical swearing. For He says, "Thou shalt not swear by God's name falsely"; and when you swear by His name falsely, what you are doing is profaning the name of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:13 gives the positive side of that statement: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God and serve him and shalt swear by his name." What is it to swear by His name? Verse 14 says, "You shall not go after other gods or the gods of the people which are round about. For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you, lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee and destroy thee from off the face of the earth." To swear by the name of the Lord is to say that He is the one true and the living God, that there are no other gods, and that we are going to be His people and obey Him. You will see this again in Deuteronomy 10:20.

Look what God says: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God. And him shalt thou serve. And to him shalt thou cleave and swear by his name. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things which thine eyes have seen."

What is it, then, when we swear by the name of God? It is not merely going around using the term, "Well, I swear." No, that is not it. Swearing by the name of God is when we say, "We agree. We confess. We acknowledge that he is the one true and the living God. And besides him, there is none other. And we are going to be his people." Therefore, we give him the praise, the honor, and the glory. Once again, he tells us that we are to swear by his name.

If you look back in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 12, you ought to understand that verse in light of Deuteronomy 6:13 and Deuteronomy 10:20: “And you shall not swear by my name falsely. You shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God, I am the Lord.” When you swear falsely, what are you doing? You are profaning the name of God.

When we say that God is the one true and the living God, that he is sovereign and rules over all, and then turn around and act as if there were no God, or as if God had not spoken, or as if God had no influence in our lives, we are profaning the name of the Lord. We are, in essence, carrying his name in vain.

Now look in Isaiah 48. God explicitly condemns this false swearing. I hope you are beginning to see why you can be profane and never curse. Isaiah 48:1 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, not 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.”

In other words, what are they doing? They are saying, "He is the one true and living God. We swear by Him. He is all there is." And what does God say? "Yes, you are swearing by My name, but you are not doing it in truth, nor are you doing it in righteousness." In other words, your life does not back up your confession of faith. You are swearing falsely.

Israel was to be God's peculiar treasure. God was to be their God, and He had given them His law, saying, "This is the way you are to live." Now watch what He says to God's people in Jeremiah 7: "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?"

"Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and

see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh."

Look again at verse 9. God says, "Will ye steal, murder, commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house," that is, this temple, "which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations." You know what preachers preach. You know what Christians believe? They preach, teach, and believe that once you trust Christ, you can just live any way you want to live. You can do whatever you want to do.

After all, you are under grace. I certainly believe that we are saved by grace through faith alone. But the truth of the matter is this: the grace that saves you and the faith that saves you make you bow to the sovereign God of the universe. Our Lord said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Those who have been genuinely and truly saved are not going to be running around stealing, killing, murdering, and worshiping false gods.

What is happening is that we have been preaching profanity in this country for a long time. People have been believing and living profanity for a long time. God says, “How dare you? Come and stand before me and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations.” No, you were not delivered for that at all.

In Leviticus 21, the priests were called to be holy unto the Lord. All I am trying to show you here is this: profanity originally had nothing to do with language. It is true that we may be profane in our language, but most people limit profanity to language while living profane lives. Concerning the priests, Leviticus 21:6 says, “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.” Note what he said: “They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God.” Being profane in this instance had nothing to do with language. It had nothing to do with words.

It did, however, have to do with actions, attitude, and worship. If the priests lived unholy lives, they profaned the name of God. If they did not worship correctly, they profaned the name of God. If they allowed that which was unholy, they profaned the name of God. God demanded holiness.

Leviticus 22:32 says, "Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the Lord which hallow you." Verse 31 explains, "Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I am the Lord. Neither shall ye profane my holy name." In this context, how do we profane God's name? By not keeping His commandments. Do you see that? By not keeping His commandments. God said, "I want to be hallowed among you."

"And I'm going to hallow you. And I hallow you when you obey my commandments." Instead of hallowing God's name by obeying Him, we profane His name by disobeying Him.

God was calling the priests especially to be holy because they dealt with holy things. I want you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 2. Our Lord has made us kings and priests under our God. God has been demanding holiness in the lives of those who are about Him. Let me show you some priests who were unholy.

Beginning with verse 12, the Bible says, "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial." That is, they were sons of the devil. They knew not the Lord. We are talking about Hophni and Phinehas.

"And the priest's custom was, with the people, that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servants came, while the flesh was in seething, and with a flesh hook of three teeth in his hand he struck it into the pan, or into the kettle, or the cauldron, or pot, and all that the flesh hook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. And before they burned the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man that sacrificed, 'Give flesh to roast for the priest, for he will not have sodden flesh, but raw.' And if any man said unto him, 'Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, then take as much as thy soul desired.' Then he would answer him, 'Nay, but thou shalt give it me now. If not, I will take it by force.'"

Wherefore, the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. Were these individuals holy men? What were they doing? They were stealing and weren't satisfied with what God gave them. They were demanding their meat so they could grill it, so to speak, or barbecue it. They didn't want it after it was sodden; they wanted it raw. And they made people despise the offerings of God.

"Now Eli was very old and heard all that his sons did in all Israel, and how they laid with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said to them, 'Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all those people. Nay, my sons, for it is no good report that I hear you make the Lord's people to transgress.' If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him. But if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding, they hearken not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them." They had gone to pure, out-and-out fornication.

"And there came a man of God, and said unto Eli, 'Thus saith the Lord, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt, in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel, to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? And I did give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel. Now look, wherefore kick you at my sacrifice and mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honorest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of the offerings of Israel my people. Wherefore the Lord God of Israel said, I said indeed that thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me forever. But now the Lord said, be it far from me, for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'"

God told Eli, "Both your sons are going to die in one day." And that's exactly what God did. God killed Hophni and Phinehas in one day. Why? Because they were profane. It wasn't that they were using foul, filthy language; they were living unholy and ungodly lives. They were not concerned with the real, genuine worship of God, honoring God, or pleasing Him. They were concerned with their lives only.

Let me ask you a question: How many church members and how many Christians that you know are really, genuinely concerned with obeying God and honoring Him in all things? The average professing Christian is consumed with selfishness. He is concerned only about himself; he is not really concerned about God at all. Being profane in the Bible dealt first and foremost with our lives, not our language.

## Esau as the Classic Profane Person

Hebrews 12:16 is the classic passage on profanity: "Lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." This is a very simple verse, and we should note it carefully: Esau is called a profane person.

The Bible does not say anything about his using foul or filthy language. He may have; I do not know. But the Bible does not say that. The Bible does not say he was profane in his language. The Bible says he was a profane person.

What made Esau a profane person? Go back to Genesis 25, and you know the answer. What made Esau a profane person was that he despised spiritual things. He despised God, His worship, and His service. Genesis 25, beginning with verse 32, records that Jacob said to Esau, "Sell me this day thy birthright." Esau said, "Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" But Esau was not really starving to death, as you will see. Jacob said, "Swear to me this day," and he swore to him, and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

If Esau had been at the point of death, he would not have risen up and gone his way after he ate and drank. No, it was not that he was starving to death; it was not that he was perishing. He simply despised that birthright.

Do you know what the birthright included? First and foremost, it included being patriarch of the family—that is, the head of the family. Secondly, it implied receiving a double portion of the inheritance, with the responsibility of taking care of his parents when they were elderly. Thirdly, it included the line of the Messiah.

And what did Esau do? He despised it. “I’m not interested in that.” He sold it for a mess of pottage.

Let me show you how profane Esau was. He not only despised God and the blessings of the service of God; he also despised his parents. The fifth commandment is honored by a father and by a mother.

In Genesis 28, you remember how Isaac told Jacob not to take a wife from the land, but to go back to Padan-aram to get him a wife. Genesis 28:6 says, "When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan-aram to take him away from this, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge saying, 'Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan,' and that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother and was going to Padan-aram. And he saw seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father. Then when he saw into Ishmael and took unto the wives which he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, and the sister of Nebajoth to be his wife."

When Esau saw that Jacob obeyed his mother and father, and that it did not please his parents for Jacob to have a wife from the children of the land, what did Esau do? He purposely and deliberately went out and married someone he knew would dishonor his father and mother, and he did it out of pure spite.

One can be profane and never curse. All one has to do to be a profane person is to live as if God did not exist, or as if God had not spoken, and as if God's law and God's Word had no influence or impact upon life. You simply live a life that ignores, forgets, overlooks, and despises that which is right and holy, and you are a profane person.

## The Etymology of 'Profane': Outside the Temple

Our English word profane is derived from the Latin. It is made up of two words: pro, a preposition meaning to or toward, and fanum, meaning temple. A profane person, then, is someone facing toward the temple, but outside the temple. He endeavors to live his life outside of God and outside of God's Word. He is on the outside. In other words, a profane person is someone who doesn't give a hoot

what God says, could care less about the Bible, preaching and teaching, or pleasing God. Esau could care less about pleasing God or his parents. He was a profane person. Someone who is profane, then, is outside of the temple.

What they are saying is, "I don't recognize God. I don't honor God. I live my life the way I want to live my life." The Apostle Paul was charged with profanity. In Acts 24, verse 6, they said, "...who also have gone about to profane the temple whom we took and would have judged according to our law." They said the Apostle Paul was going about to profane the temple.

Of course, he was not doing any such thing. They only thought that he was, and they took him and would have killed him, until the Roman captain saved his life. Paul was then appearing before the king. The accusation was based upon what they supposed Paul had done, not upon what he had actually done.

In Acts 21:28, the Jews cried out, "Men of Israel help! This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place, and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus, an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple." Of course, Paul had not brought him into the temple; they simply supposed that he had. This was what they thought was going to happen when the Apostle Paul was supposedly profaning the temple.

When they accused the Apostle Paul of profaning the temple in Acts 24:6, the Greek word for profane was bebēloō. It literally means to profane or to desecrate, and it is made up of two words: basis, which means to walk, or a pace, and bēlos, which means a threshold. To profane, then, literally means to walk across the threshold.

They thought that the Apostle Paul had profaned the temple by walking across the threshold and bringing into the temple someone or something that should not be there. That would be inside profanation. The word simply means to walk across the threshold. But you can also walk across the threshold outside of the temple. That is where we get our English word profane, which means then to or toward the temple. Many people have crossed the threshold, so to

speak. They have gone outside the temple and live a life that says, “God has no authority over me. God has no right to tell me what to do.” They are profane people.

## Ezekiel 22: Failing to Distinguish Holy from Profane

In Ezekiel 22:26, God says, “Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things. They have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths. Now look, and I am profaned among them.” God says, “I am profaned among them.”

What did the priest do? They violated God's law and profaned His holy things. In other words, they did not make a distinction between that which was holy and that which was unholy, or between that which is clean and that which is unclean. And God says they have profaned His name.

In this sense of the word, profane could be understood as taking something that should be highly reverenced and making it commonplace. What do men do when they use God's name in every sentence, or Jesus in every sentence, usually cursing? They take that which should be highly reverenced, unique, and special, and make it commonplace.

Moreover, when you and I live our lives as if the Bible means nothing to us, and God's law has no authority over us, we are still profaning God's name. Why? Because we are treating Him as just another god. He is not the God, the sovereign God of heaven and earth; He is just a god. We are basically bringing Him down to the level of all the false gods. Thus, we are profaning the name of God.

## Applications: Preaching and Living Profanity Today

The title of the message was “Preaching Profanity.” When preachers do not declare the whole counsel of God, when they do not apply the Word of God to every area and every sphere of life, they are preaching profanity. Deuteronomy 8:3 says, “That I might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Our Lord, in Luke 4:4,

answered Satan and said, “That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”

It does matter how we live. It does matter whether or not we obey the Word of God, whether we are outside of the temple or inside of the temple, and whether all of God's Word is taught. That is why Proverbs 30:5 says, “Every word of God is pure.”

I have preached messages to some of these other churches, and on occasion I will have even a preacher say, but usually it is the people, “Well, I bet you do not preach this way to your own people.” And I say, “Well, truthfully, I try it out on them before I ever try it out on you. They get it first.”

They cannot comprehend that someone would sit and listen to everything the Bible taught and take it. Well, I have news for you, folks: we are bound by the Word of God, and when we do not apply the Word of God to the totality of life, we are preaching profanity. All of God’s Word is applicable. There are principles that can be drawn from every aspect of the Word of God. What has doomed and damned our nation is the preaching of profanity. We think we can profess with the loudest voice that God is the one true and living God, and then live any way we please.

Secondly, when we endeavor to live our lives apart from God and His law word, we are living profane lives and taking the name of God in vain. We are denying that His sovereignty undergirds reality. We deny His sovereignty that we may establish our own, and we deny His law that we may establish our own. To take the name of the Lord in truth means that we ground our lives, actions, and attitudes firmly and fully upon Him and His Word. When we carry His name in truth, we are living holy, obedient lives and not profane ones.

The last application should be exceedingly clear. We should now see the absolute error of relativism. There is no such thing as common ground or common gray. There are absolutes. There is a right and a wrong. There is a difference between the holy and the unholy, the clean and the unclean. God says we are to establish our lives by making that distinction. All who refuse to make that distinction are profane.

That is what he said in Ezekiel 22 and verse 26: “They profane my name.” Why? They refuse to distinguish between the holy and unholy, and the clean and unclean. When you live your life outside of the temple, it does not mean it is relativistic. It means it is wrong, because you have crossed the threshold and gone apart from God’s law to follow your own autonomous ways. We either obey God and carry His name in truth, or disobey Him and profane His name. Profanity is not merely language; it is a life. God says, “Lest there be a profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat despised God and His Word.”

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would make us holy, not profane. May our lives be grounded upon Your Word and Your law. Give us grace to bring our lives into conformity to that Word, and to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Help us, Lord, to always honor Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 4

# Preaching Profanity

August 17, 2008

## Introduction: The Common View of Profanity

Look in your Bibles to Exodus 20:7: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” This is a very simple, straightforward verse. God says, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,” and then tells us, “For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” Everyone knows what profanity is, right?

If you really do not know what profanity is, go to several special meeting places—I am talking about pool halls. Usually on the wall of a pool hall, you will see something like this: “No profanity allowed.” What they mean by “no profanity allowed” is, as we say in South Georgia, no cussing, no dirty, foul, or filthy language. Usually, you and I also include slang language when we talk about profanity. We hear bad language everywhere we go. Sailors are known for their foul mouths and foul language.

Although America is an English-speaking country, many Americans can speak French very fluently, because everywhere you go you hear people saying, “Pardon my French.” You understand what they are doing when they say that. It used to be—and I remember this when I was a boy—that gentlemen would never, ever curse or use profanity in front of a woman.

But in today’s society, women can curse equally as fluently as men. You know what has happened. It seems amazing, but many small children who cannot even carry on a conversation intelligently have somehow acquired a repertoire of extremely filthy and foul language. I remember that a pastor friend and I were visiting in a home where there was a little three- or four-year-old boy. He came up to my pastor friend and used some of the filthiest, foulest language, taking God’s name in vain and cursing my pastor friend. I looked at his grandmother and said, “Did you hear what that little boy said?”

Because he could not talk plainly, I was pretty sure I heard exactly what he said. I asked, “Did you hear what that little boy said?” She laughed and said, “Yeah, it’s cute, isn’t it?” I said, “No, ma’am, it’s not.”

Cursing, swearing, and foul language have always been problematic. In fact, listen to the order signed by General George Washington: “The general is sorry to be informed that the foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing, a vice hitherto little known in our American army, is growing into fashion. He hopes that the officers will, by example as well as by influence, endeavor to check it and that both they and the men will reflect that we can have little hope of the blessing of heaven on our army if we insult it by our impiety and folly. Added to this, it is a vice so mean and so low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character detests it and despises it.”

Scripture is very clear concerning our language. Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Colossians 4:6 says, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how to answer every man.”

I am not talking merely about cursing. I remember, when I was a young boy, an uncle who was a very small man. I never liked being around him because every sentence out of his mouth contained a curse, usually taking God's name in vain. My father was a pretty good-sized man, and I asked him why my uncle cursed all the time. He said, "Well, son, he's a small man—not just physically, but evidently intellectually as well." He thought he had to elevate himself by punctuating everything he said with foul language and curse words.

Then my father said, "Son, if you will always say what you mean and mean what you say, you will never have to punctuate it with foul language." The problem is that, in our language as in everything else, the Word of God says we are to abstain from all appearance of evil. We do not understand the implications or the extent of profanity. In Christian circles, we have limited profanity to language.

## The Problem: Limiting Profanity to Language

You can be profane and never utter a curse word. You can be profane and never use foul, filthy language. The fact of the matter is that there are many preachers in this country who preach profanity. Usually, those who preach profanity are what you and I would call very nice, likable, congenial men. Let me give you an illustration for two reasons. First, to show you that not everything we think is profanity is profanity; second, simply to emphasize a point.

Many times you hear a Southern man use an expression such as, "It's not worth a damn." Please understand, I do not use this expression in my life, but I am using it here to prove a point. That is not cursing. That is not profanity. In reality, it is an economic expression. I do not use that language because most people really do not understand it. Let me tell you how it came into our language. The expression is truly an economic expression, and it came into our language from two sources.

The first source was England. You will remember that John Bunyan was a tinker. A tinker was a man who went around and repaired vessels. There were some wicked, vile tinkers who, when a vessel was broken, cheated people instead of fixing it correctly. They would take clay and put it over the crack in the vessel, then put a

very thin layer of metal over the clay. The vessel would not leak until it was heated. Then the clay would crack, the thin layer of metal would crack, and the vessel would begin to leak. The people would say, "It's not worth a dam," or, "It's not worth a tinker's dam." In other words, the tinker did not dam the crack as he should have. If the crack was too wide, they would say it was not worth damming. Thus, they were expressing the worthlessness of the vessel.

The second source came from the Duke of Wellington when he was in India. In India, the coin of least value in his day was the dam, spelled D-A-M. When they said, "It's not worth a dam," they were actually saying it was not worth a cent. It was like saying in our country, "It's not worth a continental." A continental dollar was absolutely worthless.

In reality, we think of that today as cursing, but it is indeed an economic expression. I did not give you that illustration to encourage anyone to say that. I do not say it; I am simply pointing out that not everyone understands profanity, and we tend to think that profanity deals only with language.

You can be profane and never use foul language. You can be profane and never curse, and never do anything in speaking that anyone would question. In fact, the preachers who are profane, once again, are very nice, cordial, congenial, and likable men.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines profanity as "the condition or quality of being profane and abusive, vulgar, irreverent language." Most of us understand that latter part—vulgar, abusive, irreverent language—but what we fail to understand is the first part, "the condition or the quality of being profane."

## Defining Profanity from Exodus 20:7

The Bible says in Exodus 20, verse 7, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." You could actually read that, "Thou shalt not profane the name of the Lord." In other words, taking the Lord's name in vain, profanity, and profaning the name of the Lord are basically interchangeable. It basically means the same thing.

What does it mean to take God's name in vain? To take God's name in vain is, in reality, to deny the one true and living God. It is

when you and I have a profession of Him in our lives, but that profession is absolutely empty. Our thoughts are not concerning God. Our lives are alienated from God. We are not concerned about His Word or His truth. We have made a profession, but we really live as if God did not exist or as if God had never spoken.

Hold Exodus chapter 20, but look in your Bibles to Titus chapter 1 and verse 16. Please note the word "profess." The Word of God says, "They profess that they know God." In other words, "We're godly people. We know God." "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."

Here are people professing to be God's people and professing to know God, but God says that in their works they deny Him. Titus 1:16 teaches us what Exodus 20:7 teaches us. When you and I profess with the loudest voice that we are Christians, that we are God's people, and yet live lives contrary to Christianity and contrary to the Word of God, we are guilty of profaning the name of the Lord. We are guilty of taking God's name in vain.

When the Bible says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," the Hebrew word emphasizes desolating. In other words, "Thou shalt not take God's name intently or falsely or lyingly." It speaks basically of absolutely worthless conduct. The word "take" literally means to bury, to carry off, or to bear. God says, You shall not bear or carry off My name lyingly, intently, falsely. That is exactly what they were doing in Titus chapter 1.

## The Positive Command: Walking Worthy

Now let me show you from the New Testament the positive side of this commandment. The negative is, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The negative is, "Thou shalt not profane the name of the Lord." Look in Ephesians chapter 4. Here is the positive side. The apostle Paul writes, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Note what he said: "that ye walk worthy of the vocation or the calling wherewith ye are called." You do not walk unworthily, emptily, or lyingly. No, you walk worthy of the calling wherewith you are called. Skip down to verse 17.

Paul says, “This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of your mind.” In other words, a child of God, a Christian, is to be walking totally, completely, and entirely differently from the way the ungodly walk.

Paul says in Colossians 1:10, “that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Note that you might walk worthy of the Lord. How do you walk worthy of the Lord? Unto all pleasing. That is, you please Him, you are fruitful in every good work, and you increase in the knowledge of God.

This is the positive side of “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 2:12, “that you would walk worthy of God who has called you into His kingdom and glory.”

In other words, since God has called you, since God has saved you, you now walk worthy of that name. You do not walk emptily and lyingly and falsely. You walk worthily.

## Profanity in the Old Testament: Actions, Not Words

Now, I want you to go back in your Bibles, first of all, to Leviticus 18. Let me take you through the Bible very quickly and show you some things about the word “profane.” Notice Leviticus chapter 18 and verse 21. This is the very first time the word “profane” is used in the Bible. Usually, the law of first mention is the very first time something is used in the Bible. That is the way it will be used throughout the Bible, unless, of course, the context indicates otherwise. Leviticus 18:21 says, “And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God, I am the Lord.” In other words, “Thou shalt not let any of thy children or any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of the Lord thy God.” Molech was a false god.

Usually, Molech was served not only with the sacrifice of children, but sometimes with the act of dedication or purification of those children, dedicating them to Molech. God says you are not to let any

of your seed pass through the fire to Molech. You are not to give your children to the wicked, ungodly Molech system. He said those who do so profane the name of the Lord.

Now let me ask a very simple question. Why should we not give our children to Molech? Why should we not purify them and dedicate them to Molech? Why should we not sacrifice them? The answer is very simple: because we are Christians, we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His Word, and we have been called to be peculiar. Therefore, we have nothing to do with Molech. Why? We are bound to our God through His Word. So the very first time the word “profane” occurs, it has nothing to do with language. It has to do with actions and conduct.

Look in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 12. Here is the second time the word occurs: “And you shall not swear by my name falsely. Neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God, I am the Lord.” One of the evidences that we are indeed His children is that when we swear by Him, we swear by Him in truth.

I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, swearing and worship are intimately connected. For instance, hold Leviticus if you would, but look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 13. Deuteronomy 6 verse 13. Notice what God says. Deuteronomy 6 verse 13: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God and serve him, and shalt swear by His name." Wow! "...Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name.

## Swearing by God's Name in Truth

You shall not go after other gods, or the gods of the people which are around about you. You swear by His name." What does that mean? You acknowledge Him. You confess Him as the one true and the living God, and beside Him there is none else. Look in Deuteronomy 10 and verse 20. Deuteronomy 10 and verse 20. Again, God says this: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, Him shalt thou serve, and to Him shalt thou cleave, and swear by His name." Now, swearing by His name does not mean that you go around taking His name in vain. Swearing by His name means, of course, that you live according to His Word in truth. You adhere to Him in truth. For instance, if you

look in your Bibles, to the book of Isaiah 48, and notice verse 1. Look what God says when He's condemning the people. Notice how He condemns them and what He says concerning them. Isaiah chapter 48 verse 1. Watch carefully now. "Hear ye this, O house of Israel, 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." Now what is he saying? Here's the people that say, "We're God's people. We swear by His name. He's the one true and the living God. He's the one that we should love. He's the one that we should serve." But God says your swearing is not in truth. Your swearing is not in righteousness.

Let me show you how far they went. Turn to Jeremiah chapter 7. This explains what it means to swear by His name falsely. Jeremiah 7:9 asks: “Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?”

“Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because you have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking. But you heard not. I called you, and you answered not. Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, which you trust in, and unto the place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.”

Notice what God said: Will you steal? Would you murder? Would you commit adultery? Would you swear falsely? Would you burn incense to all these other gods and then say, “This is why God delivered us”? God said, “You better pay attention. You're swearing falsely. You're claiming to be My people, and yet on the other hand, you're totally and completely violating My covenant and My Word.”

Swearing by God's name in truth means that we not only profess that He's the one true and living God, we live and act and walk like He is indeed the one true and living God.

I am pointing out the fact that profanity, so far in the Bible, has nothing to do with language. Look in your Bibles at Leviticus 21. Let me show you the next occurrence of the word “profane.” Notice Leviticus 21:6. The Bible says:

## Priests Profaning God's Name by Unholy Conduct

Now, he is talking about the priests. He says, “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.” Now certainly, when God is talking about the priest, He is not talking about people who are walking around cursing and taking God's name in vain. So when He says, “Thou shalt not profane the name of their God,” He has nothing to do with profanity. Profanity in this verse has nothing to do with language, but everything to do with life. What He is saying is that these priests are not to live unholy, ungodly lives. God is demanding holiness.

Look in Leviticus chapter 23 and verse 32. The verse I intended to quote says, “Neither shall you profane my holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am the Lord which hallowed you.” Notice that He said, “You shall not profane my holy name. I will be hallowed among the children of Israel.” Again, God is saying to the priests that they shall not profane His name. They shall not profane His holy name, but He will be hallowed among the children of Israel. He is the Lord who hallows them. So God is talking to the priests, and once again, it has nothing to do with language.

Now, if you would turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 2, let me show you some priests who did not hallow God's name and were not holy. Everyone knows the story of Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Notice 1 Samuel 2, beginning with verse 12: “Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial,” that is, they were sons of the devil. “They knew not the Lord. And the priest's custom with the people was, that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came,

while the flesh was in seething or boiling, with a flesh hook of three teeth in his hand."

And he struck it into the pan of the kettle, cauldron, or pot. And all that the flesh hook brought up, the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also, before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man that sacrificed, "Give flesh to roast, for the priest will not have it sodden of thee, but raw." And if any man said unto him, "Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth," then he would answer him, "Nay, but thou shalt give it me now. If not, I will take it by force." Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred, hated, despised, and detested the offering of the Lord.

Here was the pot boiling, and here was the offering. The priest, or his servant, would come with a flesh hook of three teeth and hook it into the pot. Whatever came up belonged to the priest. But Hophni and Phinehas did not want that. They came to the man before it was put in the pot and said, "We don't want boiled meat. We want meat to grill. Give it to us now." When the man said, "Let's burn the fat first," they answered, "No, if you don't give it to us now, we'll take it." What were they doing? They were profaning the name of the Lord by their conduct. Their sin was great before the Lord.

Eli was very old and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel, and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. He said unto them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons, for it is no good report that I hear you make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him. But if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" Notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.

God told the priest, "You shall not profane my name." Hophni and Phinehas were wicked men, but the Bible does not say that they went around cursing or taking God's name in vain. What they did was violate God's word and God's law constantly and consistently in their lives. They were profane.

## Esau: The Profane Person in Hebrews 12:16

Here is the warning: "Lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." Note the words, "lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau." The Bible does not tell us that Esau went around cursing, but it does tell us that Esau was a very profane man. What was it that made Esau profane?

Go back to Genesis 25, beginning with verse 29: "And Jacob saw a pottage, and Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage, for I am faint.' Therefore was his name called Edom. Jacob said, 'Sell me this day thy birthright.' And Esau said, 'Behold, I am at the point to die. What profit shall this birthright do to me?' And Jacob said, 'Swear to me this day.' And he swore to him, and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and a pottage of lentils. And he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way. And thus he despised his birthright."

Why is Esau called a profane man? First of all, because he despised spiritual things.

When Jacob was cooking this pottage, Esau told him, "Feed me with some of that pottage, for I'm about to die." He was not about to die. How do you know? If you are about to die, you do not eat and then rise up and go on your way about your own business. Jacob said, "All right, if you want some of this pottage, you sell me your birthright." Esau replied, "All right, I'll sell you my birthright just for that bowl of pottage."

Do you know what the birthright included? First, it included the headship of the family clan. Whoever had the birthright was to be the patriarch of the family. Usually, the birthright went to the firstborn. Second, it included a double portion of the family inheritance. Why did the eldest son receive a double portion? Simply because it was his responsibility to care for his elderly mother and father when they could not care for themselves. He received a double portion so that he could take care of his parents.

The third part of that birthright was the lineage of Jesus Christ. What did Esau say? "I'm at the point of death. What do I care about

being the head of a family clan? What do I care about a double portion? What do I care about taking care of my parents in their old age? What do I care about the lineage of Jesus Christ? Give me that pottage!" He despised spiritual things.

He wanted nothing to do with family responsibility, which is spiritual; nothing to do with leadership, which is spiritual; and nothing to do with the headship and lineage of Jesus Christ, which is spiritual. He hated and despised spiritual things. Let me show you how much he despised them. Look in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 28.

You know the story: after Jacob got the birthright, he deceived his father and obtained the blessing. The blessing went with the birthright, and Jacob knew that Esau would never consent to give him that blessing as well. When Esau found out, he came in and said, "Bless me, bless me, O my father, hath not thou one blessing left for me?" Isaac answered, "I've given your brother this and I've given your brother that, but I'll give you this little minor blessing. But he's got the rest of it." The Bible says in Genesis 27 that Esau determined in his heart that after his father died, he would kill his brother Jacob.

When Isaac found out that Jacob had the birthright and the blessing, he sent him away to Paddan Aram to get a wife. He told him, "Don't you marry a woman from one of these heathens around here, you go back and you get someone that's related to us."

Jacob was told by Isaac, "Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, thy mother's father, and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban, thy mother's brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people. And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with thee, that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham."

Isaac sent Jacob to Paddan Aram and to Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the mother of Rebekah, Jacob and Esau's mother. When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan Aram, charging him not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother, Esau saw that

the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father. Then Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife.

When Esau saw that Jacob obeyed, and that the women of Canaan did not please his father and mother, what did he do? He deliberately went out and got a Canaanite wife. Where is the honor of thy father and thy mother? Where is obeying the word of God? Esau was called a profane man because he despised spiritual things, because his life was contrary to God and contrary to God's Word. One can be profane and never curse. All you have to do to be profane is to live your life as though God does not exist or as though God has never spoken.

## The Meaning of 'Profane': Outside the Temple

Profanity is far more than filthy language. It is a lie that ignores, forgets, overlooks, and despises that which is right and holy. Our English word “profane” is derived from the Latin, and the word is extremely telling. Basically, “profane” is made up of two words. “Pro” is a preposition meaning “to,” “toward,” or “before,” and “fanum” is the word for temple. A profane man is someone who is outside the temple. He may be looking toward it, but he is outside, not inside. A profane man is one who remains outside of God's Word and outside of God's law. He does not know how to apply the Word of God to every area of his life, and does not care to. He does not want to know. He is profane; he is outside the temple.

The same charge was leveled against the Apostle Paul in Acts chapter 24. They said, “For we have found this man a pestilent fellow and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Who also hath gone about to profane the temple, whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away from our hands.”

They said they found the Apostle Paul about to profane the temple, which was not true. When they saw Paul in the temple, they assumed that he had Trophimus with him, who was an Ephesian, and that he had taken Trophimus into the temple. He did not. Nevertheless, they charged the apostle with profaning the temple.

The Greek word for profane is "bebēlos." It means to profane or to desecrate, but it is made up of two Greek words. The first is "basis," which means to walk or a pace, and the second is "bēlos," which means a threshold. Thus, the word "profane" actually means to walk across a threshold—in this instance, to go outside the temple. They charged the Apostle Paul with bringing Trophimus into the temple.

You can profane the temple by bringing into it things that ought not to be there, as well as by walking across the threshold and going outside the temple. The word "profane" literally means to cross over a threshold, to go outside, and to be before the temple. What has the average professing Christian done in this land? He has crossed the threshold. He has gone outside. He is profaning the one true and living God; he is taking His name in vain.

Look in your Bibles at Ezekiel 22:26: "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them." How did the priest profane God's name? By violating His law, by putting no difference between the clean and the unclean, and by hiding their eyes from His principles. God says, "I am profaned among them."

## Profaning God by Making Him Commonplace

That Greek word, "bebēlos," used in charging the Apostle Paul with profanity, literally means to cause something highly revered to become identified with that which is commonplace. It means to violate sanctity, to desecrate, to profane. Thus, in living a profane life, we profane God Himself and cause God to be identified with that which is commonplace, regular, and without specific consequence. It really does not matter.

A profane individual thinks it is a waste of time to study Scripture and hear the preaching of the Word of God. Such a person says, "I can live my life without God. I do not need God, God's Word, God's directions, or God telling me what to do." That was Esau. He was a profane individual.

When we live a profane life, we are saying, "You are not the one true and living God. You are not the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, immutable, infinite God of heaven and earth. You are no more and no better than any other god, and I can disobey you with impunity." That is why Esau was called a profane man.

You do not have to curse to be profane. You do not have to use foul and filthy language or tell smutty jokes. As long as you live a life outside of God and outside of God's law, you are profane.

## Application: Preaching Profanity

Now let me make some applications. I began this message by telling you the title was "Preaching Profanity." Have you stopped to think about that statement? When preachers do not preach the whole counsel of God, when they do not preach the entirety of the Word of God, they are preaching profanity. What they are saying is that some parts of God's Word do not apply and that we do not have to worry about them.

He has no authority in those areas. We can safely ignore those areas? You know what God said in Deuteronomy 8:3? He took Israel through the wilderness and let them do without for one reason: "That He might make them know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Our Lord in Luke 4:4 said, "It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

Now listen, young people. Does God speak about marriage? Yes. Does He speak about economics, law, government, and education? Yes. Does He speak about every area of our life? Yes. How many of those areas can you safely ignore? None.

When you do so, you are profane. When preachers ignore them, they are profane. They are saying that we can ignore God and His Word with impunity. Proverbs 13:5 tells us every word of God is pure. When you and I endeavor to live our lives apart from God and His law-word, we are living profane lives. We are taking God's name in vain. We are denying that His sovereignty undergirds reality. You are not the determiner of reality. Reality does not exist for you, by

you, through you, or in you. Reality is what God declares it to be. What you are saying is, "Lord, I don't need You to determine reality for me. I don't need You to explain things to me. I can be my own God and determine reality for myself." You cannot. Unless you are standing firmly and fully upon Him and His Word, submitting and surrendering to His sovereignty, you are living a profane life.

## Conclusion: Living Holy Inside God's Word

Relativism simply says that there is no right and wrong; everything is grayish. But God speaks about right and wrong, clean and unclean, profane and holy. You need to distinguish between those things. Remember this: All who refuse to bow to God and His Word are profane.

They have crossed the threshold; they are outside the temple looking in. It comes down to this: We will either honor God by our obedience—not taking His name in vain or profaning His name—or dishonor Him by our disobedience, carrying His name in vain and profaning His holy name. Profanity is more than language; it is a lie, an attitude, a conduct, and a conversation. God has called us to be holy; to avoid profaning His name, we must be holy as He is holy.

Let us pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we do not want to be profane in any area of our lives.

In our marriages, homes, economics, and education, we want Thee and Thy Word. Thou art the Sovereign. Thou art the determiner of reality. Help us not be like those who profess to know Him, but in works we deny Him, being abominable and filthy, and to every good work reprobate. Make us holy. Keep us inside the temple of Thy Word, bringing our lives into complete conformity to Your truth. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

CHAPTER 5

# The First Shot

April 29, 2012

## Introduction and Scripture Reading

Joel chapter 3. We are going to read verses 19 through 21. Although I am reading and referring to this text, you will understand why shortly. I am not going to expound this text at this time. I may do so a little bit later, but it is related to the message.

I hope you are putting together in your mind what this could possibly be about. Look in Joel chapter 3, beginning with verse 19: "Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion."

April the 19th has recently passed, and, as most of you know, I was away from the pulpit during that particular week. However, my mind was centered upon events that happened in Lexington, Massachusetts, on April the 19th, 1775. As most of you know, the

very first shot fired has come to be known as “the shot that was heard around the world,” in that it was the beginning of the war for independence from the tyranny of George III of England.

It is an important date to remember and to understand, not only in light of the tyranny of George III of England, but also in light of the tyranny that abounds today. You have to ask yourself: Why in the world did that revolution—and although it was not necessarily a revolution, it was a war for independence—why did it even happen?

## Historical Context of Tyranny and War

The answer is that the war happened because of tyranny and despotism. In fact, if you were to study all the major wars that have occurred, they usually occur because of tyranny and despotism. They want either control of their own country or control of other countries, and because of that tyranny and despotism, war happens. You remember what happened in 1 Kings chapter 12 when Solomon died. Rehoboam, his son, was instituted as king. In that chapter, the people came to Rehoboam and said, “Now your father made our burdens very heavy.

Rehoboam then turned to the old men and asked their advice. They told him, “If you will be the servant or the slave to this people, they will be your servants or your slaves forever.” In other words, if you serve them, they will serve you. But he rejected the counsel of the old men and followed the counsel of the young men. They told him to say, “Your little finger is going to be thicker than your father’s loins. Your father beat them with whips, but you are going to beat them with scorpions.” Three days later, when the people returned, that is exactly what he said.

Israel responded, “To your tents, O Israel! What portion do we have in the house of David?” They broke away from the confederation. Rehoboam thought things were still all right and decided to collect his taxes from them. He and Adoram, the tax collector, went to collect taxes from Israel. Adoram was stoned to death, and Rehoboam got into his chariot and fled as quickly as he could to Jerusalem.

This whole incident happened because of tyranny and despotism. It is the same thing that happened in 1775. All my life, and probably all of yours, we were taught that no one really knew who fired the first shot. The way it was presented in school, it was almost as though there had been a melee, with people mixed together, and somehow a shot went off, so the war began.

English General Thomas Gage had sent troops to arrest John Hancock and Samuel Adams and to confiscate and/or destroy the powder and lead in Lexington and Concord. He stated that the English troops had been fired upon first by the colonists. The truth, however, is that General Gage was not there. He did not know what happened. Whatever he heard, he heard from his men, which would have been secondhand and, of course, hearsay. He also had a motive to vindicate his men. Therefore, he would obviously say that they had been fired upon.

## General Gage's Report and Eyewitness Accounts

Let me read you his brief report of April 22, 1775. Remember, General Gage was not only the governor, the royal governor of Massachusetts; he was also the Supreme Commander of the British Army in North America.

Several days after the fighting was over, he wrote to his two superiors, the Secretary of State, the Earl of Dartmouth, and the Secretary of War, Viscount Barrington. Remember, as I read this, he was not there. He said:

“I have now nothing to trouble your lordship with, but an affair that happened here on the 19th instant. I, having intelligence of a large quantity of military stores being collected at Concord for the avowed purpose of supplying a body of troops to act in opposition to His Majesty's government, I got the grenadiers and light infantry out of town under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Smith of the 10th Regiment and Major Pitcairn of the Marines, with as much secrecy as possible on the 18th at night, and with orders to destroy said military stores, and supported them the next morning by eight companies, the fourth of the same number, the 23rd, 47th and Marines under the command of Lord Percy. It appears from the firing of alarm guns and ringing of bells that the march of Lt. Col.

Smith was discovered, and he was opposed by a body of men within six miles of Concord, some few of whom first began to fire upon his advanced companies, which brought on a fire from the troops that dispersed the body opposed them, and they proceeded to Concord, where they destroyed all the military stores they could find.

"The whole country was assembled in arms with surprising expedition, and several thousand are now assembled about this town, threatening an attack and getting up artillery, and we're now very busy making preparations to oppose them."

He says clearly that his troops were going to confiscate or destroy all the powder and military stores the colonists had, and that the colonists fired upon them first. Yet there were eyewitnesses: men who were fighting, men who were present but not fighting, and witnesses from both the English and American perspectives.

## Pastor Jonas Clark's Role and Testimony

One such eyewitness was Pastor Jonas Clark, pastor of the church in Lexington. Pastor Clark not only left an eyewitness account of what happened on April the 19th, 1776; he also preached a memorial message from Joel chapter 3, verses 19 through 21. I do not have time today to discuss that message, but I encourage you to read it online. It is a very excellent message.

There were many patriot pastors in those days. For instance, there was Dr. Naphtali Daggett, president of Yale College. When a body of British troops arrived and began moving toward his town, some of the college students went out to oppose them. They were vastly outnumbered. As they marched out, old Dr. Naphtali Daggett came flying past them on his old black mare with a fowling piece in his hand, just a pistol-like and a rifle. He was seventy-six years of age. He got himself up on a little hill and began to snipe at the king's soldiers. As they drew closer, the fighting became more severe. Finally, they sent a troop of men up there, and they saw this old preacher in a flowing black robe.

The lieutenant looked at him and said, "Why, you old fool, what in the world do you think you're doing opposing His Majesty's troops?" Dr. Daggett said, "Exercising the rights of war, son, exercising the

rights of war," as he reloaded his pistol. The lieutenant asked, "If I let you go, would you promise not to fire any more upon the king's troops?" He answered, "There's nothing more likely, son. There's nothing more likely." So they arrested the old preacher and forced marched him back into town, from which he later died. So there was Dr. Daggett.

There were also Archibald Scott, William Brown, and John Brown, three Presbyterian preachers. When the English threatened their village, they gathered all the young men and all the old men together and withstood the English troops. They had to get the very young and the very old because all the other men were already out fighting. This little bit of pure patriotism so excited General Washington that he said, "If I should be beaten by the British, I will retreat with my broken army to the Blue Ridge and call the boys of West Augusta around me, and there I will plant the flag of my country."

Jonas Clark was born in Newton, Massachusetts, on December the 25th, 1730, and died in Lexington, Massachusetts, on the 15th of November, 1805. He graduated from Harvard in 1752 and succeeded Pastor Hancock at Lexington on the 5th of November, 1755. He remained at that one church until his death.

He did marry John Hancock's cousin, so there was a relation between John Hancock and Pastor Jonas Clark, as was common in those days. Pastor Clark not only preached, but was also a farmer who cultivated about sixty acres of land. Of course, he was an ardent patriot.

As pastor of the church at Lexington, he typically preached four sermons a week, both written and orally presented—over 2,200 sermons in his lifetime. His discourses were all over an hour long. He was a very excellent preacher: ardent, hot, emphatic, and dogmatic. He was a Calvinist and a Trinitarian, and he was an extremely godly man. He applied the principles of the Word of God to his life and to his congregation. Thus, he had a very exemplary life. It is amazing that God allowed that war to break out in Lexington, and you are going to find out exactly, I believe, why God allowed that.

Edward Everett had this to say about Pastor Clark:

"Mr. Clark was of a class of citizens who rendered services second to none, enlightening and animating the popular mind on the great questions at issue. He well understood the state of the question between the colonies and the mother country, and from 1762 till 1776 drew up a series of papers giving instructions to the representatives sent by the town to the General Court. These papers are still among the Lexington town records and are conceived in a manly yet calm and respectful spirit. Mr. Clark was noted for his hospitality and was entertaining John Hancock and Samuel Adams at his house on the night of April the 18th, 1775, when Paul Revere warned him of the approach of the expedition sent out by Gage, one of whose objects was to surprise and capture Hancock and Adams. When Pastor Clark was asked by his guests, that is, Hancock and Adams, whether the people would fight, he replied that he had trained them for this very hour. They would fight and, if need be, die too under the shadow of the house of God."

Stop and think about that for a moment. The pastor was answering the question, "Will the people fight?" He said, "I've trained them for this very hour. They will not only fight, they are willing to die if need be under the shadow of the house of God." It was but a—quoting now from Mr. Everett still—"It was but a few rods from Mr. Clark's house that the first blood of the revolution was shed on the following day, April the 19th, 1775.

The men who fell were his parishioners or members of his church. When he says “a few rods,” that term is probably foreign to us, but a rod was five and a half yards. Thus, a few rods means 10 to 15 yards. That is where the battle actually started. What we tend to forget is that Lexington Green was basically under the shadow of the church; you could consider it the churchyard.

Yes, it was right in front, but it was under the shadow of the house of God.

Lexington had lawfully created the militia. The militia, as I will point out later, was under the authority of the Continental Congress. The captain of the militia was also a deacon in the church of Jonas Clark, who was there as pastor. Thus, the men at Lexington Green

that day were under civil authority as well as spiritual authority. The town chose to establish a militia, using these words from Pastor Clark in its resolve: "We shall be ready to sacrifice our estates and everything dear in life, yea, and life itself in support of the common cause."

Do you realize that one of our problems today is that we cannot get people together over anything? Here was a group determined to lose their property, their lives, and everything dear to them for the common cause.

Stop and think how divided genuine Christians really are, and how divided preachers really are. The average pastor will not cooperate in anything unless he has the final say or authority over it. Yet these people had a common cause, and the members of Jonas Clark's church proved those words on the morning of April 19. The pastor performed eight funerals for his own men.

Here is how it happened. On April 19, 1775, about four in the morning, Pastor Jonas Clark and Deacon John Parker led the Lexington Minutemen out to face the invaders. I will point this out later, but do not think there is a discrepancy here; there is not. The militia had been called out earlier, but the English did not show up that same night. There were about 150 militiamen. Since the English did not appear, they were allowed to go back. This was the second call, about four in the morning.

As the British approached the Minutemen, they cried, "In the name of the King of England, throw down your arms." The colonists' response rang out: "We recognize no sovereign but God and no king but Jesus." Captain Parker then said to his men, "Stand your ground. Don't fire unless you're fired upon. But if they mean to have a war, let it begin here." Of course, the first shot fired became known as "the shot that was heard around the world."

J. T. Headley, in The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution, gives wonderful accounts of the men who taught their people the truths of resistance to unlawful authority. Headley wrote, "There they found Pastor Clark who had arrived before them." The roll was called, and 150 answered to their names: "The church, the pastor,

and his congregation, thus standing together in the dim light waiting for the British soldiers."

The British did not appear at that first alarm, and the people returned home. At the subsequent alarm, they reassembled, numbering around 60 to 80. Once the sound of the battle subsided, some 18 Americans lay on Lexington Green. Eight were dead, all from Pastor Clark's church. Headley therefore concluded: "The teachings of the pulpit of Lexington caused the first blow to be struck for American independence."

Historian James Adams added that "the patriotic preaching of the Reverend Jonas Clark primed those guns." Where are the preachers today who will teach on the limited nature of civil government and the right of self-defense?

William Ware of Cambridge, Massachusetts, wrote that it was "a singular happy circumstance" that, since Lexington was to be the place where resistance to the power of England first occurred and the great act of a declaration of war was first made by the act of the people in the blood shed there, the minister of Lexington should have been a man of the principles, character, courage, and energy of Mr. Clark.

"He was eminently a man produced by his times, more than equal to them, rather a guide and leader. As his previous life, his preachings, his conversation among his people had been but a continued and most effectual preparation for the noble stand taken by the people on the morning of April the 19th, 1775. The militia on the Common that morning were the same who filled the pews of the Meeting House on the Sunday before, and the same who hung upon the rear of the retreating enemy in the forenoon and throughout the day. They were only carrying the preaching of many previous years into practice." Ware continued, "It would not be beyond the truth to assert that there was no person at that time in that vicinity, not only no clergyman, but no other person of whatever calling or profession who took a firmer stand for the liberties of the country or was more ready to perform

No minister better prepared the people to understand the duties and endure the sacrifices of a patriot than Jonas Clark of Lexington.

When the struggle actually commenced, the people were ready for it, thoroughly acquainted with the reasons on which the duty of resistance was founded, and prepared to discharge those duties at every hazard. No population within the compass of the colonies was better prepared for the events of April 19th than the people of Lexington. None could have been more safely entrusted with the events of that day, more worthy of the duties that fell to their lot, or more deserving of the honors that followed their fateful performance of them.

No single individual probably did as much to educate the people to that point of intelligence, firmness, and courage as their honored and beloved pastor. It was a heavy day for Pastor Clark, who, on the retreat of the British, saw eighteen of his men lying on Lexington Green. Eight were dead; the others were wounded. Captain John Parker of the Lexington Militia was a deacon in Pastor Clark's church. In addition to being a believer submitted to the Bible, his militia was under the authority not only of the city of Lexington, but also of the Continental Congress.

## The Doctrine of Interposition and Lawful Resistance

Our American forefathers were not rebels. The vast majority of those who resisted British tyranny had been taught the biblical doctrine of interposition by their pastors. The doctrine of interposition simply says that the president of the United States should lead us back to God and the Constitution. If he will not, the vice president should; if he will not, the Speaker of the House should. The responsibility continues down through the national, state, and county levels, finally reaching the spiritual magistrates, who are the preachers.

If Ron happens to be the supreme leader of the country and is doing wrong, and Jim is under him, Jim has the authority to step in and say, "You're wrong. We're not going to do this." That is where states' rights come in. The states are to protect their people from the abuses of the federal government. The lawful way to resist tyranny is to do so under constituted authority. There must be some authority. To resist individually is rebellion; there must be either civil or spiritual authority.

Do you know what our forefathers did when George III kept sending his royal governors? They rejected those governors and elected and chose their own governors to lead them. In other words, they were not without authority. They chose authority and submitted themselves to that particular authority. So when Captain Parker originally said, “Stand your ground. Don’t fire unless fired upon. If they have a war, if they mean to have a war, let it begin here,” he was declaring that theirs would be a defensive war. They would fire first.

## Just War and Self-Defense

Usually, when we talk about a just war, we talk about a defensive war. There are times in the Bible when an offensive war is just. For instance, God ordained an offensive war against the Midianites in Numbers chapter 31. The Midianites had formerly caused the people of Israel to sin, and God said, “I remember what they did. Now I want you to go and avenge for me the Midianites.” The same thing occurred in 1 Samuel chapter 15, when Samuel came to Saul and said, “God said, go and take care of the Amalekites.” That was an offensive war. Most of the wars of Canaan were offensive wars as well. I realize that Og and Sihon attacked Israel, and Israel defended itself and defeated them.

But when Israel entered the land, Jericho was not attacking the Israelites, nor were any of those other cities. God had given them that land. The point is this: wherever there is a just offensive war, the word of God comes expressly to his preachers or prophets, who say, “This is what God designs. This is what God wants.” That is exactly what they did.

So let us return to the question: Who fired first? Was the American Revolution, the American War for Independence, a defensive war? The answer is yes. I will give you Pastor Jonas Clark’s own testimony a little later, but you would be astounded at the eyewitness testimonies concerning who fired first. I will give you several—not a great many, but three or four. The first is 23-year-old Sylvanus Wood.

He was in the Lexington militia that answered the call that morning. Later in his life, at the age of seventy-four, he swore an affidavit before a justice of the peace in 1858. Here is his testimony:

“I, Sylvanus Wood of Woburn, in the County of Middlesex and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, age 74 years, do testify and say that on the morning of the 19th of April, 1775, I was an inhabitant of Woburn, living with Deacon Obadiah Kendall, that about an hour before the break of day on said morning, I heard the Lexington bell ring, and fearing there was difficulty there, I immediately rose, took my gun, and with Robert Douglas went in haste to Lexington, which was about three miles distance.

“When I arrived there, I inquired of Captain Parker, the commander of the Lexington Company, what was the news. Parker told me he did not know what to believe, for a man had come up about a half hour before and informed him that the British troops were not on the road. But while we were talking, a messenger came up and told the captain that the British troops were within a half a mile. Parker immediately turned to his drummer, William Dimmon, and ordered him to beat to arms, which was done. Captain Parker then asked me if I would parade with the company. I told him I would. Parker then asked me if the young man with me would parade. I spoke to Douglas, and he said he would follow the captain and me.

“By this time, many of the company had gathered around the captain at the hearing of the drum, where we stood, about halfway between the meeting house and Buckman’s Tavern. Parker says to his men, ‘Every man of you who is equipped, follow me. And those of you who are not equipped, go into the meeting house and furnish yourself from a magazine and immediately join the company.’”

Notice what the head of the militia said: if you are already armed, follow me; if not, go into the meeting house and furnish yourself from a magazine, then immediately join the company. Now turn with me to 2 Kings chapter 11, beginning with verse 3.

**SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 11:3 (KJV)**

Athaliah was a wicked, wicked woman. She murdered all of her grandchildren except one, Joash. He was hidden, and she didn't get him. Joash is going to be made king. 2 Kings 11 verse 3: "And he was with her hid in the house of the Lord six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land. And the seventh year Jehoiada"—who happened to be the high priest, by the

> way—"and the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guards, and brought them into the house of the Lord, that is into the temple, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the Lord, and showed them the king's son."

He commanded them, saying, “This is the thing that you shall do: A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king’s house; and a third part shall be at the gate of Sur, and a third part at the gate behind the guard. So shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down. And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall keep the watch of the house of the Lord about the king.” Watch. “And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain. And be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in.”

“And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded. And they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.” Watch. “And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David’s spears and shields, that were in the temple of the Lord. And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, along by the altar and the temple.” Note, if you would, that he armed them with weaponry that was in the temple.

This is why there were magazines—rifle, shot, powder, lead, whatever—in the meeting house. So Captain Parker said, “Every man of you who is equipped, follow me. And those of you who are not equipped, go into the meeting house and furnish yourselves from the magazine and immediately join the company.” Parker led those of us who were equipped to the north end of Lexington Common near the Bedford Road and formed us in a single file.

Now, listen to what he said: “I was stationed about in the center of the company. While we were standing, I left my place and went from one end of the company to the other and counted every man who was paraded. And the whole number was 38 and no more.” So now I

am not finished with this testimony. There were 150 who assembled the first time, but they were sent home.

Now the drum had been beaten, the bells had been rung, and men were gathering, but at this point there were only thirty-eight colonists there. Jonas Clark says, “Just as I'd finished and got back to my place, I perceived that the British troops had arrived on the spot between the meeting house and Buckman's, near where Captain Parker stood when he first led off his men. Those British troops immediately wheeled so as to cut off those who had gone into the meeting house. The British troops approached us rapidly in platoons, with a general officer on horseback at their head. The officer came up to within about two rods of the center of the company where I stood. The first platoon being about three rods there they halted. The officer then swung his sword and said, ‘Lay down your arms, you damned rebels, or you're all dead men. Fire!’ Some guns were fired by the British at us from the first platoon, but no person was killed or hurt.”

Being probably charged only with powder, it could have missed as well. Just at that time, Captain Parker ordered every man to take care of himself.

“The company immediately dispersed, and while the company was dispersing and leaping over the wall, the second platoon of the British fired and killed some of our men. There was not a gun fired by any of Captain Parker's company within my knowledge. I was so situated that I must have known it had anything of the kind been taking place before a total dispersion of our company. I've been intimately acquainted with the inhabitants of Lexington and particularly with those of Captain Parker's company, and with one exception, I've never heard of any of them say or pretend that there was any firing at the British from Parker's company or any individual until within a year or two. One member of the company told me many years since that after Parker's company had dispersed and as he was at some distance, he gave them the guts of his gun.” In other words, one man fired back after they had been fired upon.

Here is eyewitness testimony that they fired first. Elijah Sanderson was a twenty-four-year-old farmer living in Lexington in

1775. After the battle, the magistrates interviewed him and other men, and they gave this affidavit:

"We, Solomon Brown, Jonathan Loring, and Elijah Sanderson, all of lawful age and of Lexington and the county of Middlesex and the colony of Massachusetts Bay in New England, do testify and declare that on the evening of the 18th of April instant, being on the road between Concord and Lexington, all of us mounted on horses, we were about ten o'clock suddenly surprised by nine persons, whom we took to be regular officers"—English officers—"who rode up to us mounted and armed, each having a pistol in his hand, and after putting the pistols to our breasts and seizing the bridle of our horses, they swore that if we stirred another step, we should all be dead men, upon which we surrendered ourselves. They detained us until two o'clock the next morning, in which time they searched and greatly abused us, having first inquired about the magazine at Concord, whether any guards were posted there, and whether the bridges were up, and said four or five regiments of regulars would be in possession of the stores very soon."

"They then brought us back to Lexington, cut the horses' bridles and girths, and turned them loose and left us." These nine British soldiers captured these men. This was not an isolated incident; it was happening all over at that time of night.

John Parker was captain of the militia. He had military experience from the French and Indian War. Although he held a commission from the government, the men had elected him their captain. Parker testified:

"I, John Parker, of lawful age and commander of the militia in Lexington, do testify and declare that on the nineteenth instant in the morning, about one o'clock, being informed that there were a number of regular officers riding up and down the road, stopping and insulting people as they passed the road, and also was informed that a number of regular troops were on their march from Boston in order to take the province stores at Concord, ordered our militia to meet on the Common in said Lexington to consult what to do; and concluded not to be discovered, nor meddle or make with the regular troops if they should approach, unless they should insult or molest us upon their sudden approach."

Captain Parker said, “Our plans were not to attack the British. We were there, and unless they mess with us, we were not going to mess with them.”

He explained what happened when he saw the British troops: “I immediately ordered our militia to disperse and not to fire. Immediately, the English troops made their appearance and rushed furiously, fired upon, and killed eight of our party without receiving any provocation therefor from us.” Parker had initially ordered his men to stand their ground, but when he saw what was happening, he ordered them to disperse.

Thirty-four men from the Lexington company gave this testimony:

“We, Nathaniel Mulligan, Philip Russell, and 32 other men, all of lawful age, inhabitants of Lexington in the county of Middlesex, do testify and declare that on the 19th in the morning, being informed that a body of regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord, we were alarmed and having met at the place of our company's parade, were dismissed by our captain, John Parker, for the present with orders to be ready to attend at the beat of the drum. We further testify and declare that about five o'clock in the morning, hearing our drum beat, we proceeded towards the parade and soon found that a large body of troops were marching toward us. Some of our company were coming to the parade and others had reached it, at which time the company began to disperse. While our backs were turned on the troops, we were fired upon by them, and a number of our men were instantly killed and wounded. Not a gun was fired by any person in our company on the regulars, to our knowledge, before they fired on us and continued firing until we had made our escape.”

John Robbins, also a militiaman at Lexington, testified: “I, John Robbins, being of lawful age, do testify and say that on the 19th instant, the company under the command of Captain John Parker being drawn up sometime before sunrise on the Green or Common, and I being in the front rank, there suddenly appeared a number of the King's troops, about a thousand.”

This explains why Captain Parker suddenly told his men to disperse. Thirty to forty, perhaps fifty or sixty, men were facing a thousand well-trained soldiers.

"Suddenly appeared a number of the King's troops, about a thousand, as I thought, at the distance of about 60 or 70 yards from us, huzzahing!" The word "huzzah" means "Yoo-hoo! Hooray!"—an exclamation of happiness. They were huzzahing as they came upon this little group. He continued: "They were huzzahing on a quick pace from us with three officers in their front on horseback with full gallop toward us, the foremost of which cried, 'Throw down your arms, you villains, you rebels,' upon which said company dispersing, the foremost of the three officers ordered their men, saying, 'Fire, by God, fire.'

"At that moment we received a very heavy and close fire from them, at which instance I, being wounded, fell, and several of our men shot dead by one volley. Captain Parker's men had not then fired a gun. And further that opponent saith not."

These men testified that they did not fire, because Captain Parker had ordered them, upon seeing nearly a thousand British troops, to disperse and take care of themselves.

Pastor Jonas Clark wrote in The Battle of Lexington, an Eyewitness Narrative of That Day, which also includes the sermon he preached on April 19, 1776: "The militia of Lexington was alarmed and ordered to meet on the usual place of parade, not with any design of commencing hostilities upon the King's troops, but to consult what might be done for our own and the people's safety, and also to be ready for whatever service Providence might call us out to upon this alarming occasion, in case overt acts of violence or open hostility should be committed by the British."

He continued: "Alarm guns were fired, and the drums beat to arms, and the militia was collecting together, some to the number of about 50 or 60." Some said they counted thirty-eight, but others were coming in, and others were entering the church building to supply themselves. "In the meantime, the British troops, having stolen a march upon us, seemed to come determined for murder and bloodshed, and that whether provoked to it or not."

When within about a half of a quarter of a mile of the meeting house, they halted, and the command was given to prime and load. This being done, they marched on till they came inside of our militia. Immediately upon their appearing so suddenly and so nigh, and so great a number, Captain John Parker, who commanded the militia company, ordered the men to disperse and to take care of themselves and not to fire. Upon this our men dispersed, but many of them not so speedily as they might have done, not having the most distant idea of such brutal barbarity and more than savage cruelty from the troops of a British king, as they immediately experienced. For no sooner did they come in sight of our company, but one of them, supposed to be an officer of rank, was heard to say to the troops, “Damn them, we will have them,” upon which the troops shouted aloud, “Huzzah,” and rushed furiously toward our men. About that time three officers advanced on horseback to the front of the body, and one of them cried out, “You villains, you rebels, disperse, damn you, disperse,” or words to that effect.

One of them said, "Lay down your arms, damn you, why don't you lay down your arms?" The second officer fired a pistol toward our militia as it was dispersing. The foremost, a few yards from our men, brandishing his sword and pointing it toward them, cried to his troops, "Fire, by God, fire," which was instantly followed by a discharge of arms from those troops, succeeded by a very close and heavy fire upon our party, dispersing them so long as any were within reach.

Eight were left dead upon the ground, and ten were wounded. The rest of the company, through divine goodness, according to a miracle, were preserved unhurt in this murderous action.

According to Pastor Clark, the eight men killed were Robert Monroe, Jonas Parker, Samuel Hadley, Jonathan Harrington, Jr., Isaac Muzzy, Caleb Harrington, and John Brown, all of Lexington, and Mr. Porter of Woburn. Jonas Parker happened to have been the strongest wrestler in Lexington. That morning, he had vowed that he would never run from the British. And he did not.

There he lay dead, pierced with both ball and bayonet, which means they followed up the charge with stabbing. Caleb Harrington

lay dead on the church house steps, where he was going for powder and lead. All of these men were ardent believers and patriots.

On the one-year anniversary of the battle of Lexington, Clark preached a sermon from Joel 3 titled "The Fate of Bloodthirsty Oppressors and God's Tender Care for His Distressed People." This sermon, along with the eyewitness account, has been reprinted. Listen to his testimony concerning what happened when the British troops retreated.

## The British Retreat and Atrocities

"In the retreat of the King's troops from Concord to Lexington they ravaged and plundered as they had opportunity, more or less in most houses that were upon the road. But after they were joined by Percy's brigade in Lexington, it seemed as if all the little remains of humanity had left them and rage and revenge had taken the reins and they knew no bounds. Clothing, furniture, provisions, goods, plundered, broken, carried off or destroyed. Buildings, especially dwelling houses, abused, defaced, battered, shattered and almost ruined. And as if this had not been enough, numbers of them doomed to flames. They burned them down. Three dwelling houses, two shops and a barn were laid in ashes in Lexington."

Many others were set on fire in this town, in Cambridge and others, and must have shared the same fate had not the close pursuit of the provincials of the colonies prevented it and the flames been seasonably quenched. Add to this the unarmed, the aged and infirm, who were unable to flee or were inhumanely stabbed and murdered in their habitations. Yea, even women in childbed, with their helpless babes in their arms, did not escape the horrid alternative of either being cruelly murdered in their beds, burnt in their habitations, or turned into the streets to perish with cold, nakedness, and distress. But I forbear. Words are too insignificant to express the horrid barbarities of that distressing day. As they retreated, they tried to destroy and kill even innocent people.

It was Pastor Jonas Clark who said this: "And from the 19th day of April, 1775, we may venture to predict will be dated in future history the liberty or slavery of the American world, according as a sovereign God shall see fit to smile or frown upon the interesting cause in

which we are engaged." From April 19, 1775, the future history of either liberty or slavery would be dated.

Pastor Jonas Clark, who had witnessed the entire series of events from the road, countered General Gage's report to his superiors. General Gage said that the troops were fired upon by the rebels out of the meeting house, that is, from the church and the neighboring houses, as well as by those in the field, and that our troops only returned fire. Pastor Clark goes on to say, "As to the question who fired first, if it can be a question with anyone, a cloud of witnesses whose veracity cannot be justly disputed upon oath have declared in the most express and positive terms that the British fired first."

This agreed with Deacon Captain Parker, who only six days after the battle gave his legal deposition: "I immediately ordered our militia to disperse and not to fire. Immediately said troops fired upon"—listen carefully—"fired upon and killed eight of our party without receiving any provocation therefor from us." Most of the eight killed were shot in the back as they were obeying orders to disperse.

How can anyone doubt the veracity of Pastor Clark and his congregants? Who in their right mind would collect a group of farmers and merchants, sixty at the most, and have them oppose a thousand or more well-trained English soldiers? It would be absolutely insane to do so.

It is important for Americans to remember that our war for independence was both lawful and just. It was a defensive war fought in a lawful manner consistent with biblical principles. It was not rebellion, and it was not lawless. Where did the militia and those people get such teaching that allowed them to adhere to biblical principles? They got it from those patriot pastors known as the Black Robed Regiment, who taught the people the truth concerning limited government and the right of self-defense. It is absolutely amazing how far we have gone—not only from our history and heritage, but from the Word of God as well. You have to remember the resolve.

When the town of Lexington began its militia, they included these words: "We shall be ready to sacrifice our estates and everything

dear in life, yea, in life itself, in support of the common cause." Pastor Jonas Clark's church believed that. On April 19, 1775, 18 lay on Lexington Green—10 mortally wounded, or eight mortally wounded and ten simply wounded. Eight dead, ten wounded. Pastor Clark then had to conduct the funerals for those men. Later, someone asked Pastor Clark if he regretted that day. As to the loss of the lives of his men, he said, yes, he was very sorrowful for that. But for the principle for which they fought and died, he was more than glad and more than happy that they were willing to stand for truth.

## Applications for Today

Let me make some applications. First, I hope everyone in this room knows and understands that self-defense is biblical and lawful. It is biblical and lawful to defend oneself, one's family, one's town, one's state, and one's nation. It is lawful to defend your neighbor and anyone who happens to be in danger. It is impossible to deny one aspect of this without denying all the others. If I do not have the right to defend my life or my family, why would we have the right to defend our state or our nation? Why not let anybody come in, take over, steal, pillage, plunder, murder, rape, and kill? You cannot deny one aspect without denying all the other aspects.

Remember the positive side of the sixth commandment. The sixth commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill." The positive is, "Thou shalt preserve life." We have a duty, a responsibility, and an obligation to preserve life, even our own life.

Secondly, in order to acquire a full understanding of the justification for the War for Independence, I would encourage you to go back and read the first two chapters in my book, "The Christian Civil Government." There I talk about the covenantal nature of government. If you do not read the book, get the tapes where I preached on the covenantal nature of government. You will understand that George III violated the covenant, the constitutions, and the agreements that he had with the American colonists. The War for Independence was indeed a just and lawful war.

Thirdly, pursuant to orders, Lexington's militiamen were in fact dispersing when the British fired upon them. They were dispersing, but they were not laying down their arms. What did the British say?

"Lay down your arms, you rebels, you villains." Their commander had commanded them to disperse and take care of themselves. They were dispersing, but they were not laying down their arms. In other words, they were not going to resign their moral and legal rights or authority.

They understood that sixty to eighty men could not fight successfully against a thousand or twelve hundred, and so they dispersed. Later that day they gathered other men, because they did not lay down their arms, and successfully drove the British away. We can never lay down our arms. We can never forego our God-given right of self-defense—never. When we do, and if we do, we will be slaves. Notice what the Word of God says in 1 Samuel 13, verse 19.

"Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears." The Philistines had conquered them. Verse 20 says: "But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found." In other words, the only two who had a sword or spear were Saul and Jonathan. Why? The Philistines had conquered them, confiscated their weaponry, and enslaved them. Here's another principle.

When those British soldiers were saying, "Lay down your arms, you rebels, you villains," understand that unlawful authority is null and void. Any order, law, or statute that violates God-given rights is to be resisted and disobeyed. Men do not have ultimate authority. God is sovereign, and God has all authority. When Peter and the apostles were commanded, "You shall not preach any more in the name of Jesus," what did they say? "We ought to obey God rather than man."

Our thinking and attitude should be the same. God has never ordained tyranny or despotism as a legitimate form of government. You can read Romans 13 and all through the Bible to find the kind of government God has ordained and why He ordained it. A tyrannical

and despotic government is anti-God, anti-Christian, and anti-Bible. It is man-centered and against God and His law.

I want to give you a quote and then tell you who said it and when. As I read it, think and guess: "The time is now near at hand, which must probably determine whether Americans are to be free or slaves. Whether they're to have any property that they can call their own. Whether their houses and farms are to be pillaged and destroyed. And they consigned to a state of wretchedness from which no human efforts will probably deliver them."

The fate of unborn millions will now depend under God on the courage and conduct of this army. Our cruel and unrelenting enemy leaves us no choice but a brave resistance or the most abject submission. That is all we can expect. We have therefore to resolve to conquer or die.

That was said by General George Washington to his troops before the Battle of Long Island. Is it not the same today? You would almost think that this came from 2012. April the 19th should never be forgotten. And the first shot was the shot heard around the world, but the Americans did not fire that first shot. The British fired, because of the tyranny and despotism of King George. And when Americans are attacked and killed and pillaged and plundered today, it is because of the tyranny and despotism of our own government. May we stay vigilant and stay armed with the courage and determination to never, ever surrender our God-given rights.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We pray and ask for Your grace and Your mercy and Your goodness and kindness. Help us, Lord, to appreciate what our forefathers have given us, what they suffered and sacrificed for us, and help us to remember above all Your sacrifice, Lord Jesus, that we may always serve and honor Thee. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

For further information, call 912-925-0995, or visit our website at www.dominionministry.com.

CHAPTER 6

# Case Laws Of The Bible

December 14, 2013

## Introduction: The Abiding Validity of God's Law

Open your Bibles to Exodus, chapter 20. We will be looking at many Scriptures, but mark this passage. For instance, look at the first three verses of Exodus 20: “And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

When I last preached on Thursday evening, I brought a message from Matthew chapter 5, verses 17 through 20, on the abiding validity of the law. I was pointing out the fact that God's law is indeed in effect today, and I wanted to impress upon everyone that we have one Bible, not two Bibles. Many times, when you quote a Scripture, people say, “But that's in the Old Testament.” The Old Testament is just as much the Word of God as the New Testament.

As I pointed out on Thursday night, obviously, when Paul wrote 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17, he had in mind primarily the Old Testament Scriptures, because that was all that was available at that particular time. You have to understand this concept. We say it, but we never

really think about it: the new is in the old concealed, and the old is in the new revealed.

The truth of the matter is that you cannot understand the Old Testament apart from the New Testament, nor can you understand the New Testament apart from the Old Testament as well. Many individuals try to say that the Old Testament is law and the New Testament is grace. Of course, that is not true, because Genesis 6 says, “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” And, as we shall see in Ephesians chapter 6, the Bible says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”

"Honor thy father and thy mother." So there is law in the New Testament as well. None of God's law has been abrogated or set aside. Usually we talk about the ceremonial law, the judicial law, and the moral law, but even the ceremonial law has not been abrogated; it has been fulfilled. Read Hebrews chapters 8, 9, and 10, especially those chapters, but the entire book of Hebrews. What you had in the Old Testament were types, emblems, and shadows. Now we have the truth and the reality. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

So we have a sacrifice. Hebrews 13:10 says, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle"—that is, the types and emblems. Christ is our altar, and therefore grace can be mediated to a sinner anywhere. Christ is also our great high priest, Hebrews chapter 4, and Christ is our temple, Revelation chapter 22. God got rid of the types and shadows and gave us reality and substance.

I have heard people say, "I'd have loved to have been alive in the Old Testament era because you could see the temple and touch it and smell the sacrifices and the incense. All this was real." No, that was not real. All of it was shadows; the reality and substance are Jesus Christ. The Bible says in John 1:17, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Stop and think about that. Was it not God who gave His law to Moses? Moses was simply the mediator. But now it says, "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Was there no grace in the Old Testament? We know there was. Was there no truth in the Old

Testament? We know there was. Everything that God has revealed is truth. How can you understand John 1:17? The Bible teaches that the fullness of truth and the fullness of grace are found only in Jesus Christ, because He is the express image of God, and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. When we talk about God's law, understand that these are certain broad principles.

## The Role of Case Laws in Understanding the Commandments

We normally quote the Ten Commandments and say that we must have these Ten Commandments. I would much rather have the ten than the multitudinous number of laws that man gives us. Our founding fathers told us that if we will not govern ourselves by the Word of God, we condemn ourselves to be governed by tyrants. We must either be controlled by the Word of God in us or by the sword over us.

But do you realize that God's Word—in fact, David said this—"Thy commandments are exceedingly broad"? It is almost impossible to understand the ten laws apart from what are known as the case laws in the Bible. Case laws are important because they are specific illustrations of the broad principle.

Suppose your pastor has done something wicked, wrong, uncivil, and unkind to me. I have tried to get it straightened out, but he will not listen, and nothing will change his mind. I go to an attorney and say, "Here is what that man has done to me." The attorney listens and says, "There was a case similar to that." It was McNeill versus Floyd. The same thing happened to McNeill, Floyd did it to him, and the courts ruled in McNeill's favor. Since that precedent has been set, they will probably rule in your favor, too, because this specific case fits the broad principle.

When you study biblical law, you must understand that, first and foremost, the Bible contains broad principles and premises, such as the Ten Commandments. Secondly, it contains specific cases that illustrate those broad principles. Thirdly, there is always an application to your situation from the specific case and the broad principles.

For example, when you speak of theft, the average individual thinks of someone sticking a pistol in your face or putting a knife to your throat and saying, “Give me all your money.” Their concept of theft is limited to taking something by force. In other words, their idea of theft then comes from civil governments

or from man or from some humanist instead of coming from the Word of God. The point I am trying to make is this: If you do not understand the case laws in the Bible, you are going to be thinking the way the Pharisees thought, because the Pharisees always limited everything to the externals. That is why the Apostle Paul thought, before his conversion, that he was touching the law blameless. He had not seen the internal aspect of the law.

What I want to do today is show you three specific areas where you might understand these case laws, see how they apply to our hearts, and see also how the Old Testament blends with the New Testament. Here is the principle I want you to grasp: circumstances change, but principles never change. We are not under the same circumstances they were in the Old Testament, nor are we under the same circumstances they were in the New Testament, but the principles remain the same.

## The Sixth Commandment: Preserving Life

I want you to look in Exodus chapter 20. I am going to start with the most simple and proceed to the more complex. Look in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13, a very short verse. God says in the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.”

If I were to ask you, “What in the world does that mean?” you might say, “Well, it means exactly what it says: Thou shalt not kill.” But does it mean, “Thou shalt not kill at any time”? Or does it literally mean, “Thou shalt not murder”? Let me put it like this: Thou shalt not take life except on God’s terms. God is sovereign. God is the giver of life, and God is also the one who tells us why life may be lawfully taken. It can only be lawfully taken on His terms. When individuals say, “Thou shalt not kill means at any time thou shalt not kill,” no. If you read the Bible, you will find specific reasons given where God says that life shall be lawfully and legitimately taken.

Many of these, of course, are given to what you and I would call the civil government. God created only three institutions: the family, which is a ministry of education; the church, which is a ministry of grace; and the civil government, which is a ministry of justice. All three are answerable and accountable to God. He is the Creator, and all must give an answer to Him. Here are eighteen reasons given very quickly in the Bible why God says that life may be lawfully taken on His terms.

God says life may be lawfully taken for murder, but not for accidental killings in Exodus 21:12–14. Life may be taken for striking or cursing a parent, in Exodus 21:15 and Leviticus 20:9. Life may be lawfully taken because of kidnapping, in Exodus 21:16 and Deuteronomy 24:7. Life may be taken because of adultery, in Leviticus 20:10–21. Also, the incestuous individual is to be put to death, according to Leviticus 20:11, 12, and 14. God also demands the death penalty for bestiality in Exodus 22:19 and Leviticus 20:15–16, for sodomy in Leviticus 20:13, for unchastity in Deuteronomy 22:20–21, and for the rape of a virgin in Deuteronomy 22:23–27. We will look at that later as well.

In Exodus 22:18, God also demands death for witches: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” In Leviticus 20:2, God demands the death penalty for anyone who offers a human sacrifice. In Deuteronomy 21:18–21, an incorrigible delinquent is to be put to death. Leviticus 24 speaks of death as the penalty for blasphemy. Deuteronomy 13:1–10 speaks about the death penalty for the propagation of false doctrine and idolatry. Sacrificing to false gods merits the death penalty, according to Exodus 22:20. Refusing to abide by the decision of a biblical court of law in Deuteronomy 17:8–13 demands the death penalty. Refusing to restore the pledge or the bailment, according to Ezekiel chapter 18, demands the death penalty.

Then, of course, we have self-defense as well. When you look at Exodus 20:13, “Thou shalt not kill,” we can go over all these negatives, but every negative has a positive. When God tells you not to do something, He is also telling you to do something. And when God tells you to do something, He is also telling you at the same time not to do something. It is not the negative that I want to emphasize;

it is the positive. When God says, “Thou shalt not kill,” the positive is, Thou shalt preserve life. In other words, we have a duty, an obligation, and a responsibility to preserve life. We have a duty and responsibility to preserve our lives, the lives of our family, the lives of our friends, and the lives of our neighbors. This is without going into the two messages I have on the biblical doctrine of self-defense.

Self-defense is biblical and, according to the Bible, obligatory. How can I say that? Suppose Brother Floyd comes up to me and says, “Brother Weaver, I’m just so upset with you. I’m so angry with you. I could just strangle you.” If I answer, “Well, brother, just do whatever spins your wheels,” and stand here allowing him to strangle me to death, do you realize that I am guilty of self-murder by the hands of someone else? I have allowed him to do that.

If I have a responsibility to preserve my life, and if God has given me a duty and obligation not to kill, I infer from that that I have a duty not to kill myself. I also have a duty and responsibility not to allow myself to be killed. Therefore, self-defense is obligatory. If we do not defend ourselves, we are guilty of violating the positive side of the Sixth Commandment.

I never will forget preaching in Greenville, South Carolina. A professing Christian came to me and said, "Brother Weaver, I need to ask you a question." He asked, "What would you do if you woke up during the night and some man was crawling through your bedroom window?" I said, "Well, that depends." He asked what it depended upon. I said, "It depends upon whether or not I get my hands on a gun. If I get my hands on a gun, I'd shoot him. If I couldn't get my hands on a gun, I'd take a baseball bat and hit him in the head." He said, "Well, I don't think you ought to do that." I asked what he thought I should do. He said, "I think you should go in another room and pray about it." I said, "You mean to tell me you think I should be in another room praying while the man's in there raping my wife or murdering my daughters?"

"Let me tell you something, sir. I would pray. Believe me, I would pray. I'd pull that baseball bat back and I'd say, 'Dear Lord, don't let me miss him this time.' Pow! That's how I would pray." Why? Because I have a duty and a responsibility to preserve my life, the life of my family, and the life of my children.

I want to show you this from the Bible. Hold Exodus 20, but turn to Deuteronomy chapter 22. Let me show you very clearly what God says; this would be a case law. Beginning with verse 23: "If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto a husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; then ye shall bring them both out of the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones, that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife: so shalt thou put evil away from among you." So you can put evil away from among you.

Now, verse 25: "But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: but unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbor, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: for he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her."

Notice, if you go back to verses 23 and 24, that when a woman is in the city and a man finds her and lies with her, God says to bring them both out of the city and stone them to death: “so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.” Why is the woman to be stoned as well? The Bible says it is because He found her in the city and she cried not out. What does that mean? If she had cried out, anyone who heard her would have been responsible, obligated, and duty-bound to save her. The very fact that she did not cry out meant that she was consenting to the sin and the crime, and therefore she was to be put to death as well. If she had not wanted to be taken, she could have cried out.

When you skip down and find the damsel in the field, the man takes her and lies with her, and the Bible says that she is not to be put to death. Why? Because she cried out, and there was none to deliver her. In other words, we have a duty and responsibility to preserve life and to protect. Whenever we hear someone in danger, it is our responsibility to do whatever we can to save and help them.

There was a woman by the name of Kitty Genovese in New York City who was raped and murdered on the sidewalk. She was stabbed repeatedly. She was alive, screaming, begging, and crying for anyone to help her. Twenty-one people watched her die. Not one man lifted

a hand, with the exception of one or two who called the police. By the time the police arrived, she was dead. The man who raped and murdered her was caught and eventually put to death.

You say he was guilty of murder. Yes. But so were the twenty-one who watched her raped and murdered and did not lift one hand to help her, because there is a duty to save lives. There is a responsibility—the positive side of the Sixth Commandment: thou shalt preserve life.

## Case Laws on Protecting Animals and the Argument from Lesser to Greater

Let me show you two other simple cases. First, look to Deuteronomy 22 and read the first four verses. The next two passages give us a very simple argument—an argument from the lesser to the greater.

Deuteronomy 22, verse 1, says, "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost things of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself."

"Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again."

Here is the meaning. If you find your brother's ox or his ass going astray, out of the fence on the side of the road, you cannot pretend that you do not see it. You have a responsibility to warn your brother and to help him recover that animal. If you do not know whose animal it is and are able to catch it, you may take it to your home, feed it, and care for it until your brother seeks it; then you restore it to him.

Verse 4 says that if you see your brother's ass or oxen fall down by the way, you must not hide yourself from them. You shall surely help him to lift them up again. Here is a cow out in the pasture having a

calf, but she is having difficulty, and the owner does not even know she is out there calving. You see it. What does God say? You are responsible to find the owner and, if possible, help save that cow and calf.

I was riding my horse one time, and we went to a little stream because the horse was thirsty. There was a sandy place, and the horse stepped into it. The sand gave way, and he sank up to his chest. I jerked the saddle off him and the bridle off him and did everything I could to get that horse out. The horse was trying to get out.

Finally, someone saw, stopped, and helped me. We caught him by the halter and kept jerking and pulling until he was able to get his legs on firm ground and get out. That's what God says.

I remember preaching on this principle years ago. My wife and children went home from church first that Sunday morning. I was following in my truck and almost got to the house when I looked up ahead and saw my car with my wife and children beside the road. I thought, “Oh, my, what has happened in that car?” As I got closer, I noticed my girls kneeling down. They were petting one of the straggliest, skinniest, stinking goats you've ever seen in your life.

When I got out of the car, they said, “Oh, daddy, this goat is out of the highway and she's going to get hit. Daddy, can we take her home because we don't know who she belongs to?” Before I could answer, they said, “You remember what you preached this morning, don't you?” Yes, I remembered. We put the old goat in the truck and took her home with us. We kept her three or four or five days, fed her, and found out she was our neighbor's. He had bought her at the sale on Saturday. She got out Saturday night, and we found her on Sunday. She was a mile or two from his house, wandering around on the highway, so we kept her until he came and asked for her.

Now, here's what God says. You can't hide yourself. Here is an argument from the lesser to the greater: If you're responsible to help preserve the lives of your neighbor's animals, how much more are you responsible to help preserve his life?

You say, “Oh, but Brother Weaver, I'm willing to help my neighbor. I'm willing to help my brother. I really am.” Oh, good.

Turn in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 23, and let's see what else God says. Here again is the same case law. This time it's not your brother; this time it's not your neighbor.

In Exodus 23, verse 4: “If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.” Now it's your enemy, the man that hates you, the man who doesn't even want to talk to you, the man who wants to have nothing to do with you.

But what does God say? If you see his ox, if you see his ass going astray, if you see him lying under his burden, you count on forbear to help. You are responsible and accountable. Again, this is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If God requires you to help preserve the life even of your enemy’s animals, how much more does God require you to help preserve and protect his life, whether he knows it or not, whether he likes it or not? In other words, God is telling us that it is lawful indeed to save life.

In Mark chapter 3, our Lord refers to this. “And he entered again into 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. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith 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.” What is our Lord saying? It is lawful to save life, to restore life, and to do whatever you can to preserve life.

You cannot understand even the sixth commandment without all these specific case laws that say, “Look, this is what it means.” If God requires us to protect even the lives of animals, how much more does He require us to protect the lives of individuals? You can also apply the principle, “Thou shalt not kill,” to your health. You have a responsibility to preserve your life and not to abuse your body, overwork, or neglect rest. You have a responsibility to eat right, exercise, and do whatever you can to preserve your life. If it means giving up sweets, give up sweets. Those who are diabetic cannot eat sweets; fine, do not eat them.

I would rather do without food so that I could do without medicine than have the food and the medicine. I would rather do whatever is necessary to preserve my health. Now go back to Exodus chapter 20 and look at verse 15, the eighth commandment. I am progressing to something a little more complex: “Thou shalt not steal.”

## The Eighth Commandment: Theft Beyond Robbery

God says, “Thou shalt not steal.” Surely everybody understands what God means when He says, “Thou shalt not steal.” Oh, really? Look in Deuteronomy, chapter 25 and verse 4. Here is one of the case laws for “Thou shalt not steal.” God says, look carefully now, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.” You say, “Brother Weaver, this can’t possibly apply to me because number one, I don’t have oxen, and number two, we don’t use them to tread out corn.”

I told you circumstances change, but principles do not. When oxen treaded out the corn, they pulled that wheel round and round as the corn was ground. Occasionally some of the corn would fall on the floor, and the oxen would stop, get a mouthful, and keep going. The owners thought, “We’ll put a muzzle on that ox. He won’t eat that corn. Then we can sweep it up, put it back on the mill, grind it, and sell it.” God says no: “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.” Let him eat.

Why? A farmer friend once asked if he could borrow one of my horses to ride through his soybeans and see if he had bugs. I agreed and rode with him. My horse put her head down to eat the soybeans, which were not mine, and I kept pulling her head up. My neighbor said, “Brother Weaver, let her eat all she wants to eat.” I said, “We’re riding them. We’re working them. Let her have them.”

Why did God possibly say, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn”? What application could that have? In the New Testament, in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, the Apostle Paul uses this concept several times. The first fourteen verses apply, but look at verse 7. He asks several questions. First, “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?” Whether you agree with the wars we have been in or not is immaterial. We do not send our boys to fight at

their own expense. Obviously, no one goes to war at his own expense.

He asks, “Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?” If you have a grape arbor, you are going to eat the grapes. It is just that simple. He also asks, “Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?” If you have cows or goats, you are going to milk them. You will eat them if you want to.

Now watch what he asked in verse 8: “Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?” So now he is quoting the law. What is he quoting? Deuteronomy 25: “For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.” What is this next statement? “Doth God take care for oxen?” Well, obviously He does. But that is not why God wrote, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.” He says in verse 10, “Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.”

In other words, what the apostle is saying here is that the laborer is worthy of his hire. Once again, this is an argument from the small one to the greater. If God is going to take care of an ox, making sure that it has sufficient to eat as it works, God is certainly going to take care of us as well.

If you read all of 1 Corinthians chapter 9, especially through verse 14, the Bible says that even those who preach the gospel are ordained of God to live of the gospel. In 1 Timothy chapter 5, verses 17 and 18, we read: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.”

Now go back and look at verse 17: “Let the elders that rule well”—or let the pastors that rule well—“be counted worthy of double honor.” What does double honor mean? Does it mean that you are to call your pastor, if he is really ruling well, “Oh, pastor, pastor,” or say, “Yes, sir,” or “No, sir”? The verse says, “especially they that labour in the word and doctrine.” If he is a studious man who really

preaches the truth of God and teaches doctrine, is that double honor?

Do you know what double honor here means? It means double pay. That is exactly what it means. “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor,” or double pay, “especially they that labour in the word and doctrine.” Why? “For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.”

So God says that if you have a man who stays in the Word of God, teaches the truth of God, and labors in the word and doctrine, he is worth twice as much as anyone who does not do that.

I just thought of the old joke about the new pastor who was praying with his deacons. In his prayer request, he said, “Lord, just keep me poor and humble.” When it came time for the deacon to pray, he said, “Lord, You just keep him humble, we’ll keep him poor.”

That is usually the way it goes. Let me show you how this works. I want you to hold on. I am talking about “thou shalt not steal.” Before I show you this passage, do you realize it is theft, according to the Word of God, to withhold a man’s due? It is theft not to pay someone what he is worth. For instance, let me give you an illustration.

Let us suppose my house needed painting. I had gotten two or three professional estimates and knew the job was worth $3,000 because that was what the painters would ask. I also knew that Brother Sam was hard up for money. So I said, “Brother Sam, I’ll tell you what I’ll do. If you’ll paint my house, I’ll give you a thousand bucks.” He replied, “You know, Brother Weaver, that house is worth three thousand, but I’m in a tight and I need that money, and I’ll do it.” You know what I have just done? I have stolen $2,000 from him.

That would be different if he came to me and said, “Brother Weaver, it’s worth $3,000 to paint this house, but I love you and I want to help you. So I’ll just charge $1,000.” That would be a different thing, wouldn’t it? But if I know what the work is worth and deliberately, purposefully underpay him, it is theft.

Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 24, beginning with verse 14. “Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy,

whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates." Now watch: "At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee." Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant. He is poor and needy. Not only are you not to oppress him, but you are to pay him what his labor is worth. He says in verse 15, "At his day thou shalt give him his hire. Neither shall the sun go down upon it."

Let me give you another illustration. Suppose my house needs painting, and Brother Sam says, "Brother Weaver, I'll do it for you for $3,000." I say, "Fine. When you finish on Thursday, I will pay you on Friday." He agrees. He finishes on Thursday and does a good job. On Friday afternoon, at the appointed time, he comes back.

He asked for his money, and I said, "I forgot to go by the bank. I just don't have it now. I've got this going on and this going on. Come back Friday week." Even if I gave it to him on Friday week, what have I done? I have stolen the use of his money for one week. Do you want to know why all these big corporations are so hard to get money back from? While they are fussing and feuding with you and holding your money, they are making interest on it. They are going to give it back to you at the last possible minute. It is theft. God says it is wrong to withhold a man's due, and wrong not to give a man that which he deserves when he is supposed to get it.

Our Lord says exactly the same thing in Luke 10:7: "And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house."

Thankfully, Brother Sam invited me to stay with him. When Joy puts food on, I eat it. I do. I am not running around seeing who is a better cook or who has a bigger house. God says not to do that. You can eat whatever is put in front of you, for the labourer is worthy of his hire. If you come to my house, you may help me, sit down, and eat whatever I put before you. If I have steaks, wonderful; help yourself. If I only have peas and cornbread, which is really good food, by the way, help yourself. The labourer is worthy of his hire.

All I am trying to show you is this: God tells us that theft is more than sticking a gun in someone's face or putting a knife to someone's

throat and saying, "Give me your money." When we fail to pay a labourer that which is right, it is theft. When we withhold from someone that which is their just due, it is theft.

Do you remember what our Lord says in Malachi 3:8? "Will a man rob God?" He said, "Ye have robbed me." "What have ye robbed me in?" "In tithes and offerings," saith the Lord. "Therefore ye are cursed with a curse." We rob God not only financially, but often of His praise, honor, and glory. We fail to give Him thanks, fail to acknowledge Him, and fail to be grateful for everything He has done for us.

One of my favorite verses is Lamentations 3:22-23: “It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” Do you realize that the only reason you did not die in your sleep last night was because of the compassions and mercies of God? Have you thanked Him yet for allowing you to sleep, rest, and live?

A tithe, by the way, is nothing less than God's tax for the use of His earth. If I had time to preach from Deuteronomy 26, I would show you that giving God His tithes and offerings is also an act of acknowledging His sovereignty. Those who fail in that fail to acknowledge God's sovereignty. Read Deuteronomy 26. When we fail to thank Him properly for all His blessings, we are stealing from Him. We are robbing God.

## The Fifth Commandment: Honoring Parents

Now look at one last one: the fifth commandment in Exodus chapter 20. This is one that I really love to share because there are so many case laws. Let me tie them together for you. In Exodus 20:12, God says, “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

Have you ever asked yourself, How do I honor my father and my mother? What does it mean to honor father and mother? Turn first to Exodus 23:19. Here is a case law: “The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.” Look at Exodus 34:26. The same words appear: “The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt

bring unto the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." Look in Deuteronomy chapter 14 and verse 21.

Deuteronomy chapter 14 and verse 21 says: "Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." That is three times God has said exactly the same thing: Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

The word "seethe" means to boil. You shall not boil a kid, or a baby calf or a baby goat, in its mother's milk. Why would God tell us three times not to do this? You could say, "Well, Brother Weaver, that's very interesting." Probably the correct answer would be, "We're not supposed to take that which is a means of life and make it a means of death." That would be a good answer, because the mother's milk certainly is a means of life.

But there's more to it than that. Look in your Bibles to Leviticus 22, verse 28: "And whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day." So I have a cow and a calf. What does God say? I can kill the cow, but I can't kill the calf; or I can kill the calf, but can't kill the cow—not in the same day. Why would God say something like that? Even our hunting regulations and hunting laws, most of them are not scriptural. If I am deer hunting and a doe comes out with a little button buck, according to Georgia law I could kill the doe and that young buck. I would be killing both in one day, and God says, no, you can't do that. It would be all right, I suppose, if I killed the cow one day and her calf the next day. But God says you can't do it on the same day. Why?

In Deuteronomy 22, verses 6 and 7, God says, "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days."

Here you are, walking along, and you find a bird sitting on a nest. It is a mother, and she has five or six eggs in the nest, or four or five young birds. God says you cannot take them both. You have to let the mother go; you can take the eggs or the young birds.

Why? If you took the mother and left the others, they would die. You would be killing both on one day. So God says, “Let the mother go. Take the young; take the eggs.” Why would God say these things?

Look at Ephesians 6, beginning with verse 1: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

Now go back to Deuteronomy 22 and look again at verses 6 and 7: “If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.”

Does anybody see anything that would connect Deuteronomy 22 with Ephesians, chapter 6, verses 1 through 2?

In Deuteronomy 22:7, God says, “That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.” What did He say in Ephesians 6? “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

Do you realize there are only three promises of long life in the Bible? The first promise of long life is found in Deuteronomy 22:6–7. Of course, it is found in Exodus 20, but I am breaking it down for you because this is case law. The first time it is found is in Exodus, and in Deuteronomy 22 it is based upon how we treat animals. The second time it is found is in Deuteronomy 25. Begin reading there with verse 13. Here is what God says:

“Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect

and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

The third time is Ephesians 6. That is how we treat our family.

The point I am trying to make is simple. When God tells us not to seethe the kid in his mother's milk, and when He teaches us that we cannot kill the mother and the young on the same day, He is teaching us respect for families. It is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If we are going to respect our own families, we have to start learning by respecting the families of lesser things, even lesser animals. We are to respect their family. We cannot simply mutilate a family.

Let me tell you, I hunt. That is about the only thing I do other than study. The only reason I like to deer hunt is because I carry my Bible with me, my book with me, and, believe it or not, even a laptop computer. I sit and study and read and pray, and if I see something wonderful, I have not wasted any time; I have just kept going.

But I have news for you: I do not kill babies. I have deer that I have named. I see them all the time. I see little bucks with a little button sticking up, little spikes sticking up, and sometimes a little four-pointer. I do not shoot them. Do you know why I do not shoot them? Because they are babies. They have not had time to enjoy life. I am thankful that God has allowed me to live as long as I have lived, so that I can enjoy my children and my grandchildren. I am appreciative of life.

This is what God is saying: we have to learn to respect even the families of animals. Now, what is this? It is an argument from the lesser to the greater.

What does it mean to honor father and mother? In Exodus 21:17, God says, "And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death." God demands the death penalty for cursing your father and your mother. The command is stated plainly, and the same judgment is repeated in Leviticus 20:9: "For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him."

## Cursing Parents and the Duty to Requite

Proverbs 20:20 says, “Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.” The warning continues in Proverbs 30:17: “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.” In other words, he is going to die. He is going to be meat for the fowls of the air. These passages show the seriousness with which God regards cursing, mocking, and despising father and mother.

Matthew 15 shows how our Lord refers to these passages concerning the commandment to honor father and mother:

“Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”

Our Lord takes these verses about someone deserving the death penalty for cursing father and mother. Before explaining what it means to honor your father and mother, let us ask: What does it mean to curse father and mother?

You can read Mark 7 on your own. There, our Lord gives the same account, but they call it Corban. Corban means dedicated, or a gift. These young people—young married folks—would take all their money to the temple and dedicate it. They would give a portion to the priest and take the remainder of their money back home.

Here are Mama and Daddy, elderly, unable to work, perhaps sickly. They come to their sons and daughters and say, “We don’t have any food at all in the house. Could you help us get some food?” The children answer, “How could you even suggest that? This is holy money. This is dedicated money. We can’t even think of helping you.

This money has been dedicated to the Lord." If their parents say, "We'd have no heat. Can you buy some?" they reply, "No, you don't understand. This money is dedicated."

Now they could spend it on themselves, but not on their parents. You can curse your father and your mother and never raise your voice, never take God's name in vain, and never use slang words. How do you curse your parents? By refusing to help them and refusing to honor them.

Let me try to tie this together. God has worked this thing out. In 1 Timothy, chapter 5, verse 4, the Bible says, "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God."

Here is a widow. God says that if that widow woman has children—her immediate children—let them learn to show piety at home. If she does not have children, then it goes to the extended family, the nephews. Let them learn to show piety. Piety is just holiness; it is righteousness; it is godliness. So let them learn to show piety at home. Notice next: "and to requite their parents." The word "requite" means to pay back. Let them learn to pay back their parents.

Your parents took care of you when you could not take care of yourself. They fed you, clothed you, doctored you, and educated you. It is only our rebellion that causes divisions and heartaches in families.

They did everything in the world for you. Now, when your parents grow elderly and cannot take care of themselves, what does God say? You learn to show piety and requite, or pay back, your parents. You take care of them.

This applies even to nephews. I had an aunt and uncle who had no children. My uncle would call and say, "I need help. Can you come up and do this? Can you come up and fix this?" "Yes, sir, I can." When my aunt died, my uncle moved closer to us, onto one of the farms. I took care of him until my youngest daughter and her husband moved right behind him; then they took care of him. They got his medicine, took him to the doctor and to town, and did whatever was needed.

My mother died at ninety years of age. My sister and I took care of her. Never once was she in a nursing home—not one day. My wife's mother is ninety-four years of age and lives with us. We have taken care of her for two years; she has actually lived by us for about fifteen years. We cared for her when Pop died, but now she has lost her mental faculties and cannot remember, so we take care of her.

Do you know that is exactly what God says? It does not matter that it costs extra or requires trouble. Think of the trouble we caused our parents when we were young. God says that we should learn to requite, or pay back, our parents. We learn to help them.

I came home one time to visit my father, who was a farmer. I had something to do, and I was wearing wingtip shoes, a shirt, tie, and suit. Dad said, “Son, come on down here. Let me show you the new hog pen I built on the other side of the pond.” I said, “Sure,” and jumped in the truck. As he drove across the pond dam, he saw a hole in the fence, and a bunch of little pigs were out. My dad said, “Son, get over that fence and get in that hog pen and stop those hogs from getting out.” He did not ask whether I had on a suit or wingtip shoes. He said, “Get in there.” So I got in there. Shoes can be reshined, and suits can be cleaned. Let me tell you, I am going to show you this in just a moment.

God told you in Ephesians 6 that children are to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right. And then He said, “Honor thy father and thy mother.” In one sense, there comes a time when obedience to our parents ceases, when we leave home and have our own family. However, whenever I would go back home, my father was still my father and my mother was still my mother, and as much as I could, I obeyed them, regardless of what they asked me to do. Although there may be a time when obedience ceases in the sense that my father could not come and tell me to take my wife and do something, there is never a time when honor ceases.

I am the head of my house. Thankfully, my father never tried to do anything like that. But you are required to honor your father and your mother. I do not care how brilliant they are or how dumb they are, how silly they are or how serious they are. It is immaterial. God requires you to obey them if you are still at home, and He requires you to honor them.

Look at 1 Timothy, chapter 5, verse 8. We are talking about children helping their parents: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” If you will not obey your parents, honor your parents, or help your parents, God says you have denied the faith and are worse than an infidel.

## Practical Applications and Conclusion

He said in verse 16, speaking about widows indeed, “If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.” God is saying that we are responsible to take care of our elderly and our parents. My children joke, saying, “I can see Dad now when he’s 90.”

We'll have to help him up a tree so he can hunt deer. I doubt I'll be hunting deer when I'm ninety, but I am thankful that they are thinking ahead and willing to help me get up a tree.

The old scholars said that honoring our parents involved at least three things. First, if you honor your father and mother, you would never sit in a seat reserved for them. In your home, your mother and father have a seat at the table and a seat in the living room. Never sit in their seats.

Second, you never carp at their statements. We do not understand the word "carp," so let me give you an illustration. Your mother says, "Sweetheart, would you please wash the dishes or vacuum the floor for me? I am so tired." You answer, "Oh, Mama, why do you want me to do that right now? I've got some things..." Or your father says, "Son, would you cut the grass? I don't feel..." and you reply, "Oh, Daddy, I've got things. Why are you picking on me?" That is carping at their statements.

Third—and I love this one, though I never got my children to do it—you always refer to your father and mother as "my lord" and "my lady." Do you understand? God's law is exceedingly broad, and He gave us all these specific cases so that we could understand.

God says it is simple when you argue from the lesser to the greater. If you are responsible to preserve the lives of animals, how

much more are you responsible to preserve the lives of His people? If you are responsible not to stick a gun in somebody's face and steal his money, how much more are you responsible to deal with people honestly and openly and pay what you owe when you owe it? If God requires you to respect the families of animals, how much more does He require you to respect the families of men and women? I am obligated, responsible, and duty-bound under God to honor families.

You would never be trying to hit on another man's wife or another woman's husband. You would never be trying to steal, defraud, or take advantage of them, because you understand that God requires you to honor.

Young people, let me tell you: I have preached so many funerals in forty-nine years that I have no idea how many funerals I have preached. But I will tell you this: I have seen children, grown children, weeping, screaming, crying, and fainting. Some say aloud, "If only. If only, if only."

If you will not help them now, if you will not do what is right now, you have no right to cry when they die. God is giving you this opportunity now to honor your father and your mother, and you had better do it. When is the last time, young people, you looked at your father and said, "Daddy, I love you"? When is the last time you looked at your mother and said, "Mother, I appreciate all that you have done for me. I love you. Thank you. Please let me help you. Please let me know what I can do"?

I tell my wife every day that I love her. Every time I talk to my children, I tell them that I love them. I have grown grandsons who still come home, one in the Navy. They come home, sit on my lap, put their arms around me, kiss me on the cheek, and say, "Papa, I love you." They are twenty-five and twenty-six years old, but they are still not ashamed.

Now is the time to obey God, to learn to honor and obey your father and your mother; and in doing so, you honor and obey your heavenly Father. If you despise your earthly parents, you are despising your heavenly Father, for your heavenly Father gave you your earthly parents. Honor them and obey them, and therefore you will honor and obey God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee, and we thank You. We praise You for Your Word and for Your truth. We know, Father, there is only one Book and one God, and we give Thee all the honor and all the glory. Thank You again for life and health, for sleep and rest, for Your truth, for Your people, and for the opportunity to live for Thee, serve Thee, and serve Thy people. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 7

# The Importance of and Implication of the 6th Commandment

September 16, 2018

## Introduction and the Universality of Guilt

Exodus chapter 20, verse 13, gives us the sixth commandment, in a message titled “The Importance of and the Implications of the Sixth Commandment.” It is the shortest commandment, and probably everyone knows it. It simply says, “Thou shalt not kill.” Let me begin by asking a couple of questions, and do not be shocked when I ask them. The first one is this: Are you a murderer? The second one is: Have you ever killed anyone? Obviously, the answer for most of you is going to be, “Absolutely not.”

However, if you turn in your Bibles to the book of James, chapter 2, I want you to notice what the Bible says in verses 10 and 11. James 2, verses 10 and 11. In verse 10, God says, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.” Now thou

commit no adultery, yet thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. Keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, and you are guilty of all. So in reality, if we have ever violated God's law in any respect whatsoever, then we would be classified as murderers because we have broken the entire law.

I suppose that it should be obvious that the sixth commandment is the shortest: "Thou shalt not kill." The eighth commandment is the next shortest, with one additional letter: "Thou shalt not steal." But brevity does not negate importance, nor does brevity imply a lack of depth. The truth is that most pastors, most preachers, and most Christians have not understood the full implication of "Thou shalt not kill." Many think they understand the negative aspect, but very few even grasp the positive aspect.

## The Meaning of 'Thou Shalt Not Kill'

Now, the Hebrew word for kill is ratsach, which literally means to slay, to kill, or to murder. It includes what you and I would call premeditation, and it would also include what you and I would call assassination. So we have to ascertain the meaning of "Thou shalt not kill." Actually, as I pointed out, the Hebrew is, "Thou shalt do no murder." When this command is repeated in the New Testament, the Greek word used there also indicates murder: "Thou shalt not murder."

There is a vast difference between murder and self-defense. Taking a life may be murder, but it is not always murder. One may lawfully take life without murdering. The sixth commandment literally means, "Thou shalt not take life unjustly." It is possible to take life justly. Self-defense is the preservation of life, and when we defend others, we are preserving their lives. We could summarize the sixth commandment this way: "Thou shalt not take life except on God's terms." God is the giver of life. Since He is sovereign and the only One who gives life, He alone has the right and authority to take life.

Adam Clarke wrote: "God is the fountain and the author of life. No creature can give life to another. An archangel cannot give life to an angel. An angel cannot give life to a man. Man cannot give life even to the meanest of the brute creation. As God alone gives life, so He

alone has a right to take it away. And he who, without the authority of God, takes away life is properly a murderer."

This commandment, which is general, prohibits murder of every kind. Here is a truth applicable not only to the sixth commandment, but to every commandment and practically everything in the Word of God: whenever you see a negative, ask what is the positive, because every negative has a positive. Likewise, every positive has a negative. When you see a positive, ask what is the negative. Interestingly, God's law is couched in negative terms: "Thou shalt not have any other gods before me." "Thou shalt not make any graven images." "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

## The Positive Command: Preserve Life

Only two commandments are couched in positive terms: the fourth and fifth commandments, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" and "Honor thy father and thy mother," which is the first commandment with promise. Yet these positive commandments are undergirded by negative commands found throughout the Bible. Therefore, when we consider the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," we must understand the positive to be, "Thou shalt preserve life." The preservation of life is obligatory; it is a responsibility incurred upon each of us because of "Thou shalt not kill."

Years ago I preached two messages on the biblical doctrine of self-defense. I am certainly not going to re-preach those messages. However, the truth of the matter is, and unhappily so, most pastors and most Christians do not understand the importance of or the implications of the Sixth Commandment. If we really, genuinely understood the Sixth Commandment, there would be no debate on aborticide, genocide, or unjust wars. We would certainly take a stand not only on those subjects, but many other areas as well. So let me tell you what actually motivated me to preach this message.

## The Story of Adam Daniels and Misapplied 'Turn the Other Cheek'

I was reading on the Drudge Report on September 2, 2018, and saw an article that caught my eye. Here is part of it: "A high priest at one of America's most prominent devil-worshipping churches has lifted the lid on the secretive religion. Adam Daniels, 35, is the Dastur, or the high priest of the Church of Ahriman, which is based in Oklahoma City, USA. The Church of Ahriman has 15 members and worships Ahriman, another name for the original Persian devil figure Angra Mainyu, the god of hell. The church followers meet in Daniel's home, where he has converted a storage room into the ritual chamber in which he performed ceremonies, including devil-worshipping weddings and satanic exorcisms. But Daniel's beliefs were not always so fiery. Before turning to the devil, he was actually a Buddhist."

He claims his life changed forever when, at the age of nineteen, he was working in a convenience store. An armed attacker stabbed a regular customer with a knife and then turned his attention to him. Daniel said he defended himself using the martial art Aikido, but the attacker landed badly and died. However, since the whole thing was caught on closed-circuit TV, no charges were brought against him.

He said, "He went to stab me and I had to end up defending myself, and the guy busted his head open like a pumpkin all over the floor. It was a life-changing event for me, because you're not expecting to have to kill somebody. What could I have done differently so the guy didn't die? What could have happened differently so that he could have survived, instead of me having to carry that with me the rest of my life?"

Seeking a way to come to terms with ending another person's life, he began to see a therapist and turn to a variety of religions, all of whom suggested that he should have turned the other cheek. Daniel said, “I tried to find solace, and I was told that I had committed the sin of wrath by Christians and the Buddhists and even my mom.” Instead, he found comfort in the Satanic Bible of Anton LaVey, whose motto is “self-preservation is the highest law.”

He added, “Devil worshiping became the tool to allow me to deal with my inner demons. It gave me the strength I needed.” So here is a teenage boy that had to kill a man in self-defense. When he just threw the man, the man ended badly and burst his head on the floor, and it killed him.

Now, I do not know what Christian group Adam tried to find comfort from or instruction from. The article did not say. Yet the teaching of the scripture is very clear when it comes to self-defense. Self-defense is the preservation of life, and self-defense is obligatory. As I read this article, I could not help but wonder if someone had given him biblical counsel and explained the positive aspect of the sixth commandment, which is the preservation of life, humanly speaking. I wonder if that would have prevented him from actually going into full-fledged devil worship.

A lot of these so-called Christians told him that he should have turned the other cheek. Matthew 5 records our Lord correcting the misinterpretation of the law by the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He said, “You have heard that it had been said,” that is what they used to teach you, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” In other words, the Pharisees were using this to teach personal revenge, which the word of God is always denied. Then He said, “But I say to you that you resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” I have three messages on this passage, titled “The Principle of Mercy,” in which I deal with it very thoroughly, but I am not going into detail on it today.

“And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.” Now note that the Bible says, “but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” This verse has absolutely nothing to do with self-defense.

If Gary and I are going to get into a knockdown, drag-out fight, and I am really going to try to hurt him, then, since most men are right-handed, if I draw back with a real haymaker while we are facing each other, what cheek would I strike? His left, because he is facing me. If I hit him on the right cheek, it has to be with a backhanded slap or a slap with a weak hand. In other words, it is not anything that would endanger his life.

It would be an insult. That is all it would be. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when men challenged other men to duels, they would usually take a white glove, smite him on that cheek, and say, “I challenge you to a duel.” It did not hurt him; it was just an insult. In this passage, our Lord is telling us how to deal with insults and harassing circumstances that aggravate us so many times.

If a man is going to sue you and take away your coat—and what value is there in a coat? Hardly anything—He says, just to keep from becoming bitter, resentful, and revengeful, give him your cloak also. What difference does that make?

And He said, “If any man compels thee to go a mile,” well, in Rome and in Roman territory, any Roman soldier could compel any citizen to carry his backpack, his weapons, or anything he wanted carried for one mile. It was an aggravation. God says, in order not to become bitter, ugly, and hateful, go with him two.

Matthew chapter 5 and turning the right cheek has absolutely nothing to do with self-defense. When a man ran at this young teenager with a knife, going to kill him, there was no way he should have turned the other cheek. He should have defended himself. The very fact that the man died is immaterial in one sense, because the man was the cause of it. Had he not charged him with a knife, he never would have been thrown. Adam was absolutely justified; he was justified in the eyes of the law, and he would have been justified biblically as well.

When God commands, "Thou shalt not kill," the positive is, "Thou shalt preserve life." The sixth commandment gives us a negative—"Thou shalt not take life except on God's terms"—and a positive—"Thou shalt preserve life," including your own life and the lives of others. Therefore, we have duties and obligations, both negatively and positively.

## Case Laws Illustrating the Duty to Preserve Life

Biblical laws, especially the Ten Commandments, are given in very broad terms: "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Then God gives specific case laws that

illustrate these broad principles so that we can apply them. Deuteronomy 22 contains case laws for the sixth commandment: "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or sheep go astray and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. If thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it into thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again."

“In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; so shalt thou do with his raiment; with all lost thing of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise.” Note this phrase again: “thou mayest not hide thyself.” Verse 4 says, “Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.”

Consider the importance and significance of this. If you were coming to visit me, or going down the road to my house, and saw one of my cows along the edge of the road, God says you cannot hide yourself. You know that cow is in danger. It could also endanger other people, because if someone came along and hit it, the accident might not only hurt the cow but kill the people in the vehicle. You must notify me that my cow is out, and if I need help getting it back in, according to biblical law, you would be obligated to help me. Moreover, verse 4 says, “Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.” If an animal's life is in danger, if it is in trouble, you are obligated to help preserve its life.

I remember riding a horse named Little Bit—which meant he was a very big horse. I saw a beautiful stream of water with a sandy bank. The horse wanted water, so I rode him down to the creek. Just as he got onto the sand, he sank up to his belly. I got off and tried to get him out, but I could not. I even tried to snatch off the saddle. Finally, someone came along, saw the trouble, and helped me get the horse out. Had he not helped me, the horse probably would eventually have died. He was doing everything he could to escape, but he could not get out, and I could not get him out by myself.

When you are talking about seeing an animal going astray, I preached on this text years and years ago. Alice and my girls, when

they were small, were going home from church that Sunday morning ahead of me. I was about fifteen minutes behind them in the truck. I looked up the road and saw Alice and the girls standing beside the road, and I thought, “Oh no, what has happened?” I thought the car was torn up or something.

When I got there, my girls had their arms around a stinking, smelly goat, dirty as she could be. I said, “Where did that goat come from?” They said, “Oh, Daddy, she was in the road, and cars were going by and she was almost getting hit. People tried to catch her, and they couldn’t catch her.” I asked, “Well, how did you catch her?” They said, “We just knelt down and called her, and she came to us.” They had their arms around the old goat and said, “Daddy, if we leave her out here in the road, she’s going to get hit and get killed.” Before I could say anything, they said, “You remember what you preached this morning, don’t you?” I said, “Yes. Put the goat in the back of the truck.”

We kept that goat for two or three days until our neighbor came after her. Come to find out, he had bought the goat on Saturday at a sale. The goat got out Saturday night, and that is where we found her Sunday afternoon, wandering up and down the road.

Here is what you see in Scripture as an argument from the lesser to the greater. If God holds us accountable and responsible to help save the life of our brother’s animals, how much more does He hold us accountable to help save our brother’s life? How much more does He hold us accountable to help save our neighbor’s life?

Most of us will say, “I am willing to help my brother. I am willing to help my neighbor.” Fine, wonderful. But look at something else in Exodus 23, verses 4 and 5: “If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.” Now it is not your neighbor, your friend, or your brother. Now it is your enemy.

This is not a man who is trying to kill you. He is a man who hates you. Maybe you dislike him intensely as well; it really does not matter. You do not get along. But God says that does not matter. If you see his ox or his ass going astray, and you know that it belongs to

the man who hates you, God says you cannot keep going. You have to catch that animal and deliver it back to your enemy.

Then He said in verse 5, "If you see the ass of him that hateth you lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." God is saying that here is an animal in danger, and it happens to belong to your enemy. You still cannot hide yourself.

So here again is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If God holds us answerable and accountable to help save the life of our enemy's animals, how much more are we obligated to help save his life? These are two case laws for the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," whose positive command is, "Thou shalt preserve life."

## The Commandment Forbids Inward Sins Leading to Murder

Now, let me give you another principle that you should learn, not only in light of the sixth commandment but in light of all God's commands. If you can learn this early in life and follow it, you will be so much better off. When God forbids any sin, at the same time He forbids anything and everything that would lead up to that sin. For instance, the seventh commandment is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." In forbidding the act of adultery, God does not simply forbid the act; He forbids anything and everything that would lead up to it.

Look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5, beginning with verses 27 and 28. He said, "You've heard that it was said by them of old time," that is, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the old rabbis, and the old teachers. "You've heard it said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery," that is, do not commit the physical act. Then He says, "But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." When God forbids the act of adultery, He is at the same time forbidding wicked looking, lusting, coveting, desiring, thinking, planning, and wishing.

In other words, He forbids anything and everything that would lead up to that act. It is the same thing with the sixth commandment. In Matthew 5:21, He says, “You've heard it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill,” or, “Thou shalt not murder, and whosoever shall kill or murder shall be in danger of the judgment.” They said, Do not commit the physical act of murder. Then He says, “But I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council.” The word Raca would be something like, “You stupid idiot, you dumb imbecile.” In other words, you are taking great pains to hold him in contempt. He said, “Whosoever shall say his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council, but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” Thus, murder is forbidden, but the contempt, anger, and malice that lead up to the act of murder are forbidden as well.

That is why, in 1 John 3:15, God says, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” If we hate unjustly and unbiblically, God says it is murder. Anger, hatred, malice, resentment, bitterness, ill will, rogue rage, and anything like that which would lead up to the act of murder is a violation of the sixth commandment.

## Commentators on the Breadth of the Commandment

Matthew Poole, an old Puritan, said of the sixth commandment, “And this prohibition,” that is, “Thou shalt not kill,” “this prohibition being delivered by God, who made and searches and commands men's hearts, must be extended not only to the external act of killing, but to all motions of the heart or tongue, which tend that way as anger, hatred, envy, malice, strife, blows, challenges to duels, which is clearly manifest by comparing this with other scriptures.” He added, “And here, as in the rest, is commended the contrary duty of preserving the lives of our neighbors as much as lies within our power.”

Matthew Henry said that “Thou shalt not kill” applies to our own or our neighbor's life: “Thou shalt not do anything hurtful or injurious to the health, ease and life of thine own body or any other person's unjustly.”

"It does not forbid killing in lawful war or in our own necessary defense, but forbids all malice and hatred to the person of any, for he that hateth his brother is a murderer, and all personal revenge arising therefrom. Also all rash anger upon sudden provocations or hurts said or done or aimed to be done in our person as our Savior expounds in Matthew 5 and verse 22." Thus, the Sixth Commandment is far more than the physical act. It deals with our heart, our mind, and our emotions, and we have to make sure we understand that.

Adam Clarke gives us five different ways that we can murder. He says, "God is the fountain and the author of life. No creature can give life to another. An archangel cannot give life to an angel. An angel cannot give life to man. Man cannot give life even to the meanest of the brute creation. As God alone gives life, so He alone has a right to take it away. And he who, without the authority of God, takes away life is properly a murderer. This commandment, which is general, prohibits murder of every kind."

He then delineates, number one, "all actions by which the lives of our fellow creatures may be abridged." Anything that shortens, disturbs, or upsets the lives of our brethren is included in the Sixth Commandment. Number two is "all wars for extending empire, commerce, sanguinary laws, by the operation of which the lives of men may be taken away for offenses of comparatively trifling demerit." Sanguinary refers to the letting out of blood.

Think of all the lives lost in the war on drugs, where someone is shot for having a half ounce of marijuana, or someone is shot for not wanting to get a speeding ticket. All those trifling laws that cause people to lose their lives are a violation of the Sixth Commandment. Then he says, number three, "all bad dispositions which lead men to wish evil to or meditate mischief against one another, for, says the scripture, he that hateth his brother in his heart is a murderer." Notice that he includes all bad dispositions that lead men to wish evil or meditate mischief against another.

I recall an illustration I read years ago about General Robert E. Lee. I forget the exact battle, but Lee was an eminent Christian, one who truly understood Scripture. One of his subordinate officers looked out upon a sea of blue—Yankees in blue—and, in desperation,

said, “I wish all those men were dead.” General Lee looked at him and asked, “Why, sir?”

During the Civil War, a man said to General Lee, “How can you say such a thing?” Then he asked, “Well, General Lee, don’t you wish they were dead?” General Lee said, “Of course not.” The man asked, “What do you wish?” He replied, “I wish they were at home, tending to their own business, leaving us alone so that we could tend ours.” That was a biblical concept. He was not wishing them dead simply because they were fighting against him. He wished they were home and would leave them alone.

Adam Clarke then delineates another type of murder: “All want of charity to the helpless and distressed. For he who has it in his power to save the life of another by a timely action of succor, food, raiment, the person either falls or is abridged on this account, is in the sight of God a murderer.” He continues, “He who neglects to save a life according to an incontrovertible maxim in the law is the same who takes it away.” When you have it in your power to save a life and do not, you are the same one who takes that life away.

He gives a fifth violation of the Sixth Commandment: “All riots and excess and drunkenness and gluttony, all inactivity and slothfulness and all superstitious mortifications and self-denials by which life may be destroyed or shortened. All these are point blank sins against the Sixth Commandment.” Consider the ascetics of Bible times, such as Simon the Stylite. He obtained a huge rock, sat and slept on it, and lived only as people brought him water and food. Bugs bit him and insects devoured him, but he remained there until he died. Anything that shortens your life is a violation of the Sixth Commandment.

Murder can be committed in a number of ways. First, and most obviously, it can be committed with the hands—not merely by strangling, stabbing, or shooting someone. Proverbs 6:16–17 speaks of hands that shed innocent blood.

## Ways We Commit Murder: Hands, Mind, Tongue, Pen, Consent, Neglect, Conspiracy

“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven are abomination to him.” One of those things is “hands that shed innocent blood.” That is obviously murder, and you and I would always call it murder. But murder can also be committed with the mind, because the Bible says, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.”

Whenever we begin to contemplate people whom we hate and despise, wishing mischief and ill will upon them, that is a violation of the sixth commandment. We can commit murder with the mind. I realize that not everybody is a brother in Christ, but there are members of the human race in that sense of the word, and we simply do not go around wishing them dead.

Thirdly, murder can be committed with the tongue. Everyone has heard the term character assassination. You do not necessarily have to kill a man physically; if you assassinate him and his character, you have basically done so. James 3:2 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. Behold, we put bits in the horse's mouth that they may obey us and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue, there it is, even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth, and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. So is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell.”

"For every kind of beast, and birds, and serpents, and things of the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind. But the tongue can no man tame. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith blessed we God, even the Father, and therewith cursed we men who are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing, my brethren, these things ought not to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" The answer is no. "Can the fig tree, my brethren,

bear olive berries?" No. "Either a vine figs?" No. "So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh." The tongue can get us into a great deal of trouble.

James asks, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation," that is, a good conduct, "his works with meekness and wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth." If we have bitter envying and strife in our hearts and claim to be Christians, we are lying against the truth. The Bible is referred to as the scriptures of truth; the Holy Spirit is referred to as the spirit of truth; and Jesus Christ is the Son of truth. He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me." Thus, when we have bitter envying and strife in our hearts, we are lying against the Scriptures, against the Spirit, and against the Son of God.

"This wisdom," containing bitter envying, strife, hatred, and malice, "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." James contrasts this hellish wisdom with heavenly wisdom: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated," that is, easy to be worked with, "full of mercy and good fruits without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

We can murder with our tongue when we say things we ought not to say and fail to think before saying them. Fourth, we can murder with the pen. This does not mean using a pen to stab somebody in the eye or the throat.

You remember what David did? He wrote a note to Joab and said, "Set Uriah in the foremost front of the battle and the hottest battle and retire from him that he may die." Now, did David kill Uriah? No. The Ammonites did. But God charged David with murder. He said, "You murdered Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon." All David did was simply write, "Put him up there and let him die." That was it. So he murdered with the pen.

A lot of people have written things that are untrue, ungodly, and impure about other people, causing them to lose jobs, lose families,

and even lose their lives. The pen can be very poisonous, that is for sure, and we can lose lives with the pen.

Fifthly, we also violate the sixth commandment when we consent to the death of an innocent person. Saul of Tarsus was consenting to the death of Stephen. When you read Acts chapter 7, they laid their coats at a young man's feet whose name was Saul of Tarsus. In Acts 22:4, Paul makes this statement about how he persecuted Christians: "I persecuted this way," that is, Christians, "unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." Saul was not only consenting to the death of Stephen; he consented to the death of a lot of people.

In Acts 26:10, while giving his testimony before King Agrippa, he said, "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints that I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they," that is plural, "were put to death, I gave my voice against them."

Thus Saul was charged with murder for consenting to the death of innocent people. We can also commit murder by not defending others when it is in our power to do so. The sixth commandment means that we must preserve life. We must preserve the lives of others when it is in our power to do so. Proverbs 24:11-12 says, "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death and those that are ready to be slain; and if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it?"

“And shall not he render to every man according to his works?” Go back to verse 11: “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain.” God says you cannot pretend that you did not know when you did know. “I’ll reward everyone according to his works.”

There is a seventh way that we commit murder: when we conspire with others. In Proverbs chapter 1, God says, “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” “If they say, Come with us, let us lie and wait that we may shed blood. We’ll all have one purse. My son, do not walk in that way. Withdraw thy foot from them.”

Everybody understands this. Suppose Steve and I go to rob a bank. Steve is the man with the gun; he runs into the bank while I sit in the car, driving the getaway car. Things go wrong, and he shoots and kills someone. We are caught. Guess who is charged with murder? Both of us—not just him. I had nothing to do with the pistol or with pulling the trigger, but I consented to what he did, which ended in costing an individual's life. That is a way to murder.

## Failure to Execute Murderers and Self-Murder

Let me point something else out. Failure to execute a murderer is a violation of the sixth commandment. God has ordained this: if the murderer dies, society lives; if the murderer does not die, society dies. Numbers 35:33 says, "Bloodshed pollutes the land and atonement cannot be made for the land except the blood … by the one who shed the blood." In other words, you have to take the life of the murderer. That is why God says, "Then whosoever shedeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

That is why He said in Ecclesiastes, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men and women are fully set to do evil." It is obvious that when the state, the civil government, fails to execute a criminal, it violates the sixth commandment, especially when that individual is a murderer.

There were horrible murders around Bainbridge, Georgia, a number of years ago, when the Alday family was murdered. The Isaac brothers had already been sentenced to prison; they should have been sentenced to death. They broke out and murdered five or six individuals from one family. Had they been put to death, the Alday family would, humanly speaking, still have been alive. Obviously, when we fail to execute justice, it is a violation of the Sixth Commandment.

We may murder ourselves by failing to obey God, by failing to take care of our bodies, sticking with our diets, or doing whatever is necessary to preserve our lives. I usually say jokingly that if nobody ever gets anything out of my preaching, at least I do. I enjoy preaching; I simply enjoy teaching.

Although I am an old man, I would still like to live for a number of years more—not just for Alice's sake, but so I could keep on preaching and teaching. I enjoy it; it is what God has called me to do. In order to do that, I have to preserve my life and health.

Let me give you an illustration. We had a friend who was an extreme diabetic, and he loved to eat. He ate and ate and ate. I told him one day, "If you do not cut off that sugar and those carbohydrates, you're going to lose a foot or a leg." He did not listen, and eventually he lost his foot. That did not stop him. Within a year, he lost his leg. Alice and I took care of him, his wife, and his grandchild while he was going through all that surgery. Here was a man who had lost his foot and his leg, yet he would not stop eating what he should not eat. Finally, I told him, "If you do not stop eating, you are going to die. You're killing yourself." He said, "Pastor, I just love to eat. And if I can't have what I want, I just soon die." And he did, at the ripe old age of forty-seven.

Literally, he killed himself, which is a violation of the Sixth Commandment. It is like someone who wants to commit suicide but does not think he has the courage to do it himself, so he taunts a cop or tries to charge a cop and make the cop shoot him—suicide by cop. It is still self-murder, a violation of the Sixth Commandment. When we think about disobedience to God, we commit self-murder and violate the Sixth Commandment by not obeying God. What did our Lord say in Proverbs 8:36?

“But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.” When you consider the commandments, you have to understand that they are exceedingly broad. David says in Psalm 119, “Thy commandments are exceedingly broad.” Therefore, when we come to the sixth commandment, it affects not only us but others as well. It refers not only to what we do with our hands, but also to what we do with our health; not only to what we do with our minds, but also to our motives. Everything is involved.

## Preserving Life Through Deeds and Rejecting Revenge

As there are many ways to take life, there are many ways to preserve life. Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 3. As we

go there, remember the story our Lord told of the Good Samaritan in Luke chapter 10. A man was beside the road, beaten and left for dead. A priest walked by and did nothing. A Levite walked by and did nothing. Then came this hated Samaritan. He stopped and cared for the Judean, poured oil into his wounds, took him to an inn, paid for his room and medicine, and told the innkeeper, “Whatever he owes when I come back through, I’ll pay you.” Our Lord asked, “Which one was neighbor to this man?”

Here is what I am showing you. Look in 1 John 3 and verse 16. The Bible says, “Hereby perceive we the love of God.”

The word perceive literally means to comprehend, understand, lay hold of, and grasp. Thus, we grasp and understand the love of God—not merely because He told us, but because He laid down His life for us. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. It is true that, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). But in this context, it is not primarily me laying down my life. Verse 17 says, “But whoso hath this world's good and sees his brother have need, and shut 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.”

Suppose Steve comes to me hungry and thirsty and says, "I haven't had anything to eat in two or three days, and Lorraine is hungry and needs something, but I have nothing." Here I have a refrigerator full of food and a pantry full of food, yet I say, "Brother, I'm going to pray for you. I'm going to ask the Lord to bless you and lead you to some food." What I've got is what he needs. If I deny him that which he needs to preserve his life, then I am the one who takes his life, which is a violation of the sixth commandment.

In that sense, we are not obligated to help everybody. But we have to distinguish between a work of mercy and a work of charity. A work of charity undergirds the society of the faithful. I can give charity to a believer, and I am undergirding the society of faith. But if I see a wreck out there on 129, with someone bleeding profusely and hanging out the window, I do not first ask, "Are you a Christian?" I take that individual out of the automobile, apply pressure, use a tourniquet if I have one, stop the bleeding, and do

everything I can to save that person's life. That is a work of emergency, a work of mercy. Charity undergirds the society of the faithful; mercy responds to genuine need. We can preserve life by helping each other when there are real, genuine needs.

The second application is that the sin of desiring revenge is also considered murder because it usurps the prerogative of God. Romans 12:19 says, "My beloved, do not avenge yourself, but rather give place to God's wrath. As it is written, Vengeance is mine, said the Lord, I will repay." The sixth commandment covers quarreling, striking, wounding, hatred, malice, and strife. When we talk about the sixth commandment, it not only deals with our hands; it deals with our hearts. It not only deals with our minds; it deals with our motives. We must keep our hearts and minds as well as our hands. When God says, "Thou shalt not kill," the positive is, "Thou shalt preserve life"—your life and the lives of others—and do everything we can to preserve one another according to God's law.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. Help us guard our hearts as well as our hands. Help us keep our minds and motives; control our emotions and desires; and bring the totality of our being into conformity to Your Word. Help us live so as to please and honor Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

# Thou Shalt Not Covet or Lust

February 18, 2024

**SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 20:17 (KJV)**

> Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

## The Nature of Covetousness

This commandment has been violated, transgressed, and disobeyed quite frequently. While many people would not actually steal, they would covet. While many would not actually commit adultery, they will covet. The Hebrew word for covet is chamad, and it literally means to desire, to covet, to take pleasure in, to delight in, and to greatly desire. Covetousness appears to be a sin that can be increased by degrees, because there is what you and I would call a simple lust or a simple coveting. Then there is a burning with desire type of lust and coveting as well. Interestingly enough, covetousness is an invisible sin to begin with, but it does not remain invisible. I could not look in your mind and see whether or not you're coveting, neither could you look in my mind. But coveting, while it is invisible, is more than a thought and more than an emotion, because it

involves an illegal or an unlawful taking. That is, something is totally and absolutely forbidden, and what we're trying to do when we covet is to attach something or someone to ourselves that is forbidden.

## Coveting and Lusting Are Synonymous

So at the beginning, covetousness may be simply a thought or a desire, but in the end, it always involves conduct and action. Now, I made the statement, thou shalt not covet or thou shalt not lust. Let me explain why I said that. Romans 7:7 says: What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law. For I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet. Now, the interesting thing is the Greek word for covet in Romans 7 and verse 7 is epithumeo, and it literally means to have a desire for, to long after, to desire, to lust after, and to covet. So coveting is a desire and seeking after that which is forbidden.

Coveting and lusting are synonymous. How do we know that? Romans 7:7 says, What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. I have not known sin but by the law. For I have not known lust—epithumia—except the law had said, thou shalt not covet—epithumeo. In other words, coveting and lusting then are synonymous. The Greek word epithumia, the noun, is made up of two words: epi, which is a preposition meaning upon, and thumos, which is your passion or your desire. So your lust then is whatever you set your desire upon. It could be a woman, it could be a man, it could be a house, it could be a truck, it could be money, it could be anything. So your lust then is whatever you set your desire upon, and at the same time, you are coveting because you are desiring whatever you're looking upon.

## A Righteous Use of the Same Word

Normally when we think of thou shalt not covet or thou shalt not lust, we normally think of the word covet and we normally think of the word lust in a bad sense. There is a good and righteous sense of the use of the same word in the Bible. For instance, in Luke chapter 22 and verse 15, our Lord had set his desire upon eating that last Passover with his disciples. And so in Luke 22 and verse 15, he said unto them, With desire have I desired to eat this last Passover with

you? And the verb desired is epithumeo. It's the same word as lust. It's the same word as covet. Now, there are two other passages that use a different Greek word, but yet at the same time, the word actually means to be zealous about something or to burn with zeal. And that's when the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 31, but covet earnestly the best gifts. And I'll show it to you a more excellent way. And then, of course, in 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 39, he said, but covet to prophesy or covet to preach. So here the word covet is used in a good sense, but it means to be zealously affected or zealously desiring that which is holy and righteous. Whenever we hear the word covet, whenever we hear the word lust, we normally think of it in a wicked or vile or bad way. However, it can be used in a good way, but there are very few, I would suggest, that zealously desire the things of God, although we are commanded to do exactly that.

## One Offense Makes Us Guilty of All

So let me give you another truth in relation to this. Whenever anyone violates one part of God's law, he's guilty of all. For instance, in James chapter 2, verses 10 and 11, the word of God says, For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one part, he's guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Thou shalt not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So, whenever we violate one part of God's law, we're guilty of all. In Colossians 3:5-6, the word of God says, Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth.

## Covetousness Is Idolatry

Now, the word mortify literally means to make dead. That's where we get our English word mortician from. And, by the way, mortgage is related to that as well. So, mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth. Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, that's unnatural desires, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. Now, there are several things that I want to point out. First of all, if I were to ask you about fornication or uncleanness, or inordinate affections, you might could explain

that. But what in the world is evil concupiscence? Well, the word evil is the Greek word kakos, which means that which is bad or evil. And the word concupiscence is epithumia. It's the same word that's translated as lusting or coveting. So, evil concupiscence is evil, lusting, or coveting. Verse 5 says, Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. So, God is saying that all of these things involve idolatry.

## The Progression in the Commandment

Not only that, in verse 6 he said, For which things sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience. So, covetousness then is not only idolatry, it's something that brings the wrath of God upon us. Exodus 20:17 shows the progression. Here he begins with the general and descends to the specific. In verse 17, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house. That would be the entirety of his possessions. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, more specific, nor his maidservant, nor his manservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. So, the prohibition begins here by referring to thy neighbour's house. And this house includes everything. So, God then in this passage mentions the house first and then descends to the particulars.

Deuteronomy 5 repeats the law of God. Verse 21 gives the same command: Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's. Now, notice if you would, back in Exodus chapter 20, verse 17, he said, Thou shalt not covet. Now, here he says, Thou shalt not desire. So, coveting, lusting, evil desiring, is still a violation of God's law. But here in Deuteronomy chapter 5 and verse 21, he begins with a particular, that is your neighbour's wife, and then he goes to the house, and then everything that is in that house as well. So, the word desire is exactly the same Hebrew word as the word covet.

So, in both passages now, we can see that to desire or lust is the same as coveting. Unlawful lusting, desiring, and coveting are synonymous. It is possible to lust after, or desire, or covet a

multitude of things in our day and time. But usually, when we think about lust, and when we think about coveting, we also think of it in relationship to sexual immorality or sexual lust. The interesting thing about the times in which we're living today, it's almost as if in our country, we have descended into pure paganism.

## The Pagan Context of Lust

Paganistic immorality is everywhere—all the fornication and wickedness. It reminds you of the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth, Greece, which had a thousand courtesans for the use of visitors. It almost seems the same is going on today. I preached years ago in Kentucky, and the pastor said, "Kentucky used to be known for its beautiful women and fast horses. Now it's known for its beautiful horses and fast women." That's just about true of every state.

**SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Peter 3:1 (KJV)**

In 2 Peter 3:1, Peter writes to these believers, "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

## The Battle for a Pure Mind

**SCRIPTURE READING - Philippians 2:5 (KJV)**

What if I wrote you a letter and said, "I want to stir up your pure mind"? The word pure is from the Greek, meaning to be pure, sincere, unsullied, and found pure by the examination of light. The Word of God tells us we must have a pure mind. Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Clearly, our Lord Jesus Christ had a pure mind, and if we have the mind of Christ, we will have a pure mind as well. So let me make a statement: it should grieve you when you have impure thoughts in your mind. It grieves me as well. And I fight against those things just like you fight against those things. The Apostle Paul said, "I die daily." The Christian life is a battle; we are always battling our flesh and the world.

Here's the truth: whoever or whatever controls the mind controls the body. Whoever or whatever controls the mind controls the body. Now I'll say the same thing differently: it is only as we have the mind

of Jesus Christ that we have a pure mind and will be submissive to His word and His will. It's just that simple. Everything begins in the mind.

If I pick up this phone, I thought about it before I did it. If I pick up this piece of paper, I thought about it first. Every action begins in the mind. Now I want to show you what the will of God is for each one of you. You say, "You don't know the will of God for my life." I do in a number of things, because those things are stated very clearly in the Bible.

## The Will of God: Sanctification

**SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (KJV)**

I can show you the will of God for your life stated in black and white. Look at verse 3: "For this is the will of God." There it is, black and white—this is the will of God for you as a believer.

**SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (KJV)**

He said, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, your holiness, that you should abstain from fornication." Let me stop here. Fornication is a very broad term. Years ago, when I started preaching, I asked older preachers the difference between fornication and adultery. I got the standard answer: "Well, fornication is before marriage and adultery is after marriage." That's not true. Fornication is a very broad word—porneia. It includes adultery.

**SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (KJV)**

It includes bestiality, sodomy, and any and every sexual impurity imaginable. It also includes pornography. Our English word pornography comes from the Greek: porn is from porneia, and graphe is the Greek word for writing. Pornography means fornication writing. So this is a very broad term. Look again at verse 3: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication."

**SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Thessalonians 4:4-6 (KJV)**

"That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel"—that is, your body—"in sanctification and honor." I can't possess Steve's vessel, and he can't possess mine. We have a duty to

possess our bodies in sanctification and honor. Then he gives the negative: "Not in the lust of concupiscence"—that is, evil lusting or desiring—"even as the Gentiles are the unsaved, 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."

**SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 (KJV)**

"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." Now look: "He therefore that despiseth"—that is, despises the will of God listed in verse 3 and explained all the way down—"despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit." So he says, this is the will of God for you—that you know how to possess your vessel in sanctification and honor. Now that we've established this principle, here is the will of God for each of us: that we know how to possess our vessel, our body, in sanctification and honor.

## Looking and Lusting

**SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 5:27-28 (KJV)**

Turn to Matthew chapter 5, and look at verses 27 and 28. Remember what I told you earlier: everything begins in the mind. Our Lord said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

**SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 5:28 (KJV)**

Let me clarify verse 28. The word look is more than a slight look, more than a glancing, more than an acknowledging of something. Alice and I have been riding down the road, and I would see a beautiful woman. I said, "Boy, that's a pretty woman there." She was. Or I would say, "That young woman has a beautiful smile." And she did. That's not what this word is talking about. The Greek word is blepo, which means to see, to perceive by the use of the eyes, to gaze upon, to observe, and to direct the thoughts to that object.

So there is more to this looking than just saying, "That's a handsome fellow" or "That's a beautiful woman over there." I can put verse 28 in three words: looking and lusting. That's what the

word looking actually refers to. I've had women tell me concerning certain men, "That man undresses me with his eyes." That was far more than a glance, far more than noticing someone was beautiful or desirable.

**SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 5:28 (KJV)**

That is when you are pondering, thinking, considering. Here's an interesting thing: when our Lord said, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart," the phrase hath committed is an aorist active indicative. It means something that has happened—it is a done deal, over with, it has happened.

**SCRIPTURE READING - James 1:13-15 (KJV)**

Wow. That's what our Lord said. I told you earlier that sin begins in the mind. Let me remind you of James 1:13–15: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Every man is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Let me point this out: it is not a sin to be tempted. Our Lord was tempted—read Matthew chapter 4. It's not a sin to be tempted; the sin comes in yielding to the temptation. And that which leads us into temptation and to yield to it is our own lust. You remember the old adage from the South: you can't stop a bird from flying over your head, but you can stop him from building a nest in your hair.

The flesh and the world can throw thoughts into your mind quicker than lightning can flash. It's not a sin for that thought to go through your mind. The sin comes when you back that thought up and say, "Yeah, I'd like that. Let me think about this." So clearly, looking and lusting normally go together. Unhappily, it doesn't just stop there, even though our Lord said in Matthew 5:28 that it's a done deal—you've already done it mentally.

**SCRIPTURE READING - Job 31:1 (KJV)**

You've already done it spiritually. I want to show you something else. Go back to the book of Job, right before Psalms, to Job 31. I

want to read the first twelve verses. Please keep in mind now, that sin begins in the mind, the heart. In verse 1, Job said, "I made a covenant with mine eyes."

**SCRIPTURE READING - Job 31:1-12 (KJV)**

Why then should I think upon a maid? For what portion of God is there from above? And what inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is not destruction to the wicked, and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? Does not he see my ways and count all my steps? If I walk with vanity, or if my foot has hastened to deceit, let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to my hands, then let me sow and let another eat. Yea, let my offspring be rooted out. If mine heart had been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbor's door, then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. For this is a heinous crime, yea, it is iniquity to be punished by the judges. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase.

Job said, I made a covenant with mine eyes, why then should I think upon a maid? Job, of course, was a married man. The word think here is the Hebrew word bin, which means to consider, to be attentive to, and to consider diligently. So he's asking, why in the world should I even consider diligently a maid? He should not, because he was married. In light of Matthew 5:28, consider Job 31:7: if my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes. In other words, I saw, the eyes desired, and then his heart walked after it. Verse 9 says, if my heart hath been deceived by a woman, for if I have laid wait at my neighbor's door. I'm going to point this out. Looking and lusting leads to thinking and contemplation. And thinking and contemplation leads to deliberation or planning and action or conduct. In other words, that's when you actually plan to have that which is forbidden, that which God absolutely says, you shall not do.

Now, this is why it's imperative that husbands and wives understand their duties and their responsibilities to each other. I'm going to make a statement and I think I'm going to prove it to you from Scripture. You may disagree with me at first. I know that every

individual is responsible for his own sin. I understand that. But I'm also going to say this. I firmly believe that there are many spouses that have caused their spouse to sin and or commit adultery. How so? How could that be true? The answer is by fraud and theft. You say, what are you talking about? First Corinthians 7:1-5 begins: Now concerning the things whereof you wrote unto me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Does that mean that I can't shake Sharon's hand? Does it mean I can't hug Lorraine's neck? No, that's not what he's talking about. When he says, now concerning things whereof you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman, that is to touch her lustfully or inappropriately, doesn't mean shaking her hand, doesn't mean hugging her neck. If it's inappropriate, it's wrong. This is what he's saying. Don't touch a woman like that or don't touch a man like that, ladies. Now, look what he says. Here's how you know that's what it means. Verse two, nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence, and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband. And likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife.

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. Here is a wonderful truth: When you got married, you acquired a debt, you became a debtor. The husband, the Bible says, owes the wife due benevolence. And the wife owes the husband due benevolence. What in the world does this mean? Well, let's take the word due. I suppose probably everyone in this room has gotten a bill at one time or the other in their lives, and it'll have at the bottom amount what? due. That means you owe it. That's what they want you to pay. The interesting thing is the word due is the Greek word opheilo, which means to owe a debt and to be in debt. So, when you married them, you incurred a debt. You have a debt to each other, and you owe each other to provide for each other lovingly and sexually, this is true, and it's proven by verse 4. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband. And likewise also, the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife. Now, the word power refers to the word power, right, authority, jurisdiction, even mastery. So, the

truth of the matter is, I would have power, jurisdiction, mastery over my wife. She would have power, jurisdiction, and mastery over me. So, he says, look, there is a due benevolence, and here it is, it's a debt because you owe it. What about the word benevolence? What in the world is that? Well, look at it. The Greek word happens to be eunoia, and it literally means goodwill or kindness. In other words, when we're talking about this debt that the husband owes the wife and the wife owes the husband, it talks about goodwill and kindness. In other words, there should be no grudging, no halting, no hesitating, no manipulating in supplying each other's needs. it's owed, but it is a debt that is to be fulfilled by kindness and goodwill.

Thirdly, Failure to pay this debt is theft pure and simple. Look what he said in verse 5. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. When a debt is owed and you refuse to pay it, what is it? It's theft and fraud. And that's exactly what God calls it in verse 5. He says, defraud you not one the other. The Greek word is apostereo, and literally it means to rob, to steal, to defraud and to despoil. So, scripture is telling us that the only lawful time that a husband or wife may withhold themselves from the other is by a mutual agreement for a short or brief period of fasting and prayer. And then he says, come together again that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. In other words, don't tarry too long. Now, he's not talking about sickness or being incapacitated in this passage. He's assuming here that everybody is well, no problems. But he's saying, this is the only time that you can really withhold yourself when there is mutual consent. In light of these verses, what is the attitude, what is the conduct and the action of someone that deems himself defrauded or stolen from or robbed?

Do you get a sense of hurt? you get a sense of betrayal. For instance, if you were to walk outside and there's a masked individual sticking a pistol in your face and saying, give me everything that you have. And you pull out all your money and give it to that individual, I'll take the watch. I'll take your belt. If there's a lady, I'll take your earrings. I'll take your jewelry. Now, that's bad enough. Well, what if the mask fell off? And you found out it was your husband or your wife or some family member or your best friend? Would you not

have a sense of rejection? Would you not have a sense of betrayal? I'm just simply pointing out the fact that if something like this happened, by nature, there is a desire then to get even and to get back at someone who caused the betrayal and caused the hurt and caused the heartache. So, this is what I'm talking about when people then refuse, according to 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 5, to give due benevolence to their mate, and they're pushing that individual into sin by rejecting their needs and by refusing to pay the debt that they owe.

## Repudiation and Desertion

Luke 16:18 says, Whoso putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery. And whosoever marrieth her that is put away from the husband, committeth adultery. In other words, it's true on either the husband or the wife. Now, the interesting thing about this verse are the words putteth away. The Greek word is the word apoluo, and it means to dismiss, to set free, to let go. And yes, it is used of divorce. But it also has a meaning to repudiate and to dismiss. It also happens to be a present active participle, which means it's an ongoing process. In other words, there are husbands and wives that are repudiating and dismissing their spouse on a constant and continual basis. I've preached for 59 years. I've counseled an awful lot of people. I know right now, I know husbands and wives who are living together as husbands and wives, but they've repudiated and dismissed each other, and they're actually living more like brothers and sisters. They've dismissed each other. They've repudiated each other. They're refusing to pay the debt that they owe. They've deserted each other, although they're living in the same house, and desertion is sin. The unity and the union is gone. The love and the romance happen to be gone as well.

What will happen when there is no way to release or manage God-given desires? The results will be mental, emotional, or physical sins, or all of them. Husbands owe their wives and wives owe their husbands. They are indebted to each other, and failure to pay what they owe is theft and fraud. That is what Scripture says.

**SCRIPTURE READING - Proverbs 5:15–20 (KJV)**

I would encourage everyone to read Proverbs 5, 6, and 7 regularly. Proverbs 5:15: 'Drink waters out of thine own cistern and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own and not strangers with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times and be thou ravished always with her love.' Now look at verse 20, to which we will come back: 'And why wilt thou my son be ravished with a strange woman and embrace the bosom of a stranger?' How in the world can a husband rejoice with his wife and be satisfied with her love if there is a repudiation of the marital debt?

**SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Corinthians 7:2 (KJV)**

How can a wife rejoice with her husband if there is repudiation of the marital debt? Remember 1 Corinthians 7:2: 'Nevertheless to avoid fornication let every man have his own wife and every woman her own husband.' So in order to obey God and not covet, lust, or desire others, a husband and wife must take care of each other's needs. Period. And when we realize that God has sovereignly ordained and given us our spouses, we must obey him because he has placed the debt of due benevolence upon husbands and wives.

**SCRIPTURE READING - Romans 6:12–13 (KJV)**

A fulfilling relationship keeps our minds upon our spouses and hinders our minds from wandering. When our minds do wander they must always come back to the spouse. Sin may be in our minds and bodies, but it is not to rule over us; it is not our king or ruler. Romans 6:12 says, 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.' God did not say, 'Let not sin be in your mortal bodies'; it is in our bodies. But we are not to let it reign. It has no authority to reign because we have submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. He continues: 'Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.' We must learn that we are no longer under sin as a king. It may be in us, but it has no authority and no right to rule us.

So whenever lustful, unclean, or impure thoughts enter our mind, they must be rejected and repudiated because Jesus Christ is our king, not sin. Return to the provocative question in Proverbs 5:20: 'Why wilt thou my son be ravished with a strange woman and embrace the bosom of a stranger?' Or turn it around: 'Why wilt thou my daughter be ravished with a strange man and embrace the bosom of a stranger?' If you have a kind, loving, and benevolent spouse at home, why would you want a stranger? A stranger is not interested in you; a stranger doesn't care one thing about you; the stranger is only interested in himself or herself. We must learn a very practical lesson: grass is not greener on the other side; it's dead on the other side. So when we think about this, 'thou shalt not covet' means thou shalt not lust, thou shalt not desire unlawfully—whether it is an automobile, a house, a farm, a woman, a man, it doesn't matter.

## Contentment and the Grace of God

**SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Timothy 6:6 (KJV)**

Let me make a couple of applications and tie things together. One truth that will dispel covetousness and fight against it is biblical contentment. 1 Timothy 6:6 says, 'But godliness with contentment is great gain.' We have to learn to be content with the spouses God has sovereignly and providentially given to us and with such things as he has given. Why in the world would anyone go window shopping when they have no money? That's like me going down to the Ford or Chevrolet dealership and looking at $80,000 and $100,000 four-wheel-drive pickup trucks. Why would I ever look at something like that? I couldn't buy it; and if I had the money, I wouldn't buy it. I wouldn't spend that kind of money on a truck. Why can we not be satisfied with our spouses? He told us to rejoice with the wife of our youth.

I still remember what Alice was wearing the first time I ever met her. This week I asked if she still had that skirt and little sweater. She said no—if she had it, she couldn't fit in it. She weighed 98 pounds when I met her. I still remember her first words too. She looked at me and said, 'You look like my husband.' I said, 'Are you married?' She smiled, 'Not yet.' No, I'm teasing. She also promised me that when we got old and I got hard of hearing, she'd never forget my hearing aids, but she did today. Oh, no. But contentment. I've

thought about this many times. I tell people I'm like Job: why should I ever consider what we would call a pretty young thing when I've got a pretty old thing? After 61 years, I'm going to keep her; I'm not going to trade her in. Contentment—that's what he's talking about. If you asked me whether I have seen women more beautiful than Alice, yes. If you asked her whether she has seen men more handsome than me, she'd probably say yes. But that's immaterial. God in his providence gave us each other, and that's it. Contentment. Here's a second one: if God has not given you a wife or husband, you may lawfully seek a godly spouse.

**SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Corinthians 7:20; Proverbs 28:16 (KJV)**

But in his sovereign providence, if he does not give you one, you must be content. God does not call everyone to this state of marriage. He said in 1 Corinthians 7:20, 'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.' I have friends in their 50s who have never been married and have no desire to be married. They're happy just like they are. And truthfully, some of them, I don't know any woman that would live with them anyhow. But I'm not simply saying God does not call everyone to the state of marriage. It's just that simple. Whatever he does, we're to be content with it. We may lawfully seek something biblical and godly, but we're not to unlawfully sin against God by coveting and lusting. Now let me end with one scripture, Proverbs 28:16: 'He that hated covetousness shall prolong his days.' If we want to live long and healthy lives, we must live a godly life.

## Conclusion and Prayer

And we must learn to hate covetousness. When God says, 'Thou shalt not covet,' he is saying, 'Thou shalt not lust. Thou shalt not desire that which I have forbidden, that which is not yours, in any way whatsoever.' If we want to live a long life, we must learn to hate covetousness. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. And we pray, Lord, that you would make us pure in our minds, holy in our thoughts, and godly in our conduct and our actions. May, Father, we praise thee for your love and grace to us, for the instruction in your word, which you have designed, Lord, for our good and for your glory. Give us, Lord, we pray, a desire to please

thee and to walk according to thy law. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

# Negatives and Positives

January 4, 2026

## Introduction to Negatives and Positives in Scripture

Psalm 37, beginning with verse one: "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. Trust in the Lord and do good. So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in the way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger and forsake wrath, fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off, and those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be."

The Word of God is full of negatives and positives. This is true in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament. The importance

of this style of teaching is simply this: the negative tells you what not to do, what not to think, and how not to act. The positive tells you what to do, how to think, and how to act. Thus, the negatives and positives that we see in the Word of God are to control the entirety of our lives, in thinking as well as in acting.

## Examples of Negatives and Positives in the Ten Commandments and New Testament

The Bible contains what is known as wisdom literature: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. In these wisdom books you will find many negatives and positives; they are filled with this kind of teaching. When you come to the New Testament, you will find that the Apostle Paul also makes use of this teaching, especially in the books of Ephesians and Colossians.

For instance, he changes the negative and the positive to simply put off and put on. Putting off is the negative, and putting on is the positive. You will find this teaching throughout the entirety of the Word of God. Let me give you some illustrations and examples before we begin looking at Psalm 37.

Consider the Ten Commandments. I hope you can quote those Ten Commandments. Out of the Ten Commandments, you have only two positive commandments, the fourth and the fifth. The rest of the commandments are set in negative terms.

There is a reason for that. “Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not covet.” All these are negatives. A negative usually deals with a particular sin and a particular evil. If you are not committing that particular sin or that particular evil, then the negative does not necessarily apply to you.

Now, let me show you the importance of this. Every negative has a positive, and every positive has a negative. Sometimes a negative may have multiple positives, and sometimes a positive may have multiple negatives.

Take, just for an example, the Eighth Commandment: “Thou shalt not steal.” When we think of “Thou shalt not steal,” that means I am not to take anything that belongs to Roger and Sharon, at least not without their permission. If I took it without their permission, then I

would be stealing. “Thou shalt not steal.” We understand that. But what is the positive side of “Thou shalt not steal”?

Every negative has a positive. If you want to see what the positive side of “Thou shalt not steal” is, then I am going to ask you to turn in your Bibles, holding Psalm 37, to the book of Ephesians, chapter 4, and look, if you would please, at verse 28. Ephesians, chapter 4 and verse 28. Remember this: “Thou shalt not steal,” that is a negative.

You might say, “I am not stealing. I must be obeying that commandment.” No, because the negative has a positive. In order to obey the commandment, you must not only obey the negative; you must also obey the positive. Ephesians 4:28 says, “Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may give to him that needeth.” “Let him that stole steal no more” is the negative: do not steal. What is the positive? Learn to labor, working with your hands, that which is good.

In other words, you are doing honest work. But there is more to it than just doing honest work. "That ye may give to him that needeth." You are not only working for yourself and earning your money; you are not a covetous individual—that is what a thief is. You are not a selfish individual—that is what a thief is. Rather, you have developed a generous, loving, and compassionate spirit. You are willing to share and to give to him that needeth—not necessarily to everyone who asks, but to him that needeth. There would also be an understanding of a biblical need. The positive side of "thou shalt not steal" is that you are to be an honest laborer, doing what is right with a compassionate, unselfish, and ungreedy attitude, willing to share with those who need. Thus the negative has an absolute positive.

When you think about the positives in the Bible, the fourth and fifth commandments are positive. Take the fifth commandment as an example: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days upon the earth may be long, which the Lord thy God giveth thee." You will find that all the positives are undergirded with negatives as well. What does it mean to honor your father and mother? First, the negative would be, "Thou shalt not dishonor thy father and thy mother in thy thoughts, attitudes, or actions." Honor forbids dishonor. The positive side of this commandment also teaches

obedience. For instance, Ephesians 6:1 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Thus you have a negative and a positive: the negative is, do not dishonor; part of the positive is that you must honor them as well.

You may say, “I’m not a child any longer. Maybe my parents are dead, or perhaps they are elderly. I’m married and have children myself.” You have to understand this: there is never a time when honor ceases. There may be a time when obedience ceases. If I am married and have children and grandchildren, and my parents are dead, then, if my father were alive, he would have no authority to command me concerning my wife or children. I am the head of my house, as he was the head of his house.

After Alice and I were married, and after we had children, we went back and visited our parents. Both of us tried not only to honor our parents, but also to obey them to the extent that we could. When I went back to see my father, he was still my father, and I was still his child. I did not care whether I was forty or fifty years old; I was still his child. Until she died, my mother still called me her baby—and I was. I was the youngest of the two.

When I visited my father, he was still the head of his house, and I was still his child. Whenever he asked me to do something, as much as I could, I obeyed him. When my mother asked me to do something, I obeyed her.

Thankfully, my father never tried to tell me how to run my wife, my children, or my home. Certainly, he offered counsel and advice, but he never tried to run my life or my family after I was married. It is just that simple.

But there are other ways we can honor our parents, even when we are grown. How do we do that? Here is a verse: 1 Timothy 5:8: “But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

Now, let that sink in: “But if any provide not for his own, especially their own household, he hath denied the faith. He’s worse than an infidel.” So here is what God is saying. Your parents took care of you when you were incapable of taking care of yourself. They fed you, clothed you, nursed you, doctored you, and educated you.

Now, when your parents are elderly and cannot take care of themselves, it is the children's responsibility to take care of them. It is not the state's responsibility; it is the responsibility of the children.

In fact, I would even go farther. It is the responsibility of the extended family. In 1 Timothy chapter 5, he also talks about widows: "Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if a widow have children or nephews," that is, an extended family, "let them first show piety at home, and requite their parents." The word "requite" means to pay back. To show piety at home means to show godliness, holiness, righteousness, and obedience.

In the New Testament, our Lord thoroughly rebuked the Pharisees over this issue of honoring parents because they were dishonoring and allowing others to dishonor their parents. Hold Psalm 37, but turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 15 and then to Mark chapter 7. First, Matthew chapter 15, beginning with verse 1: "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread."

Jesus answered, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death." Here is the contrast: if you are not honoring your parents, you are cursing your parents. The law of God said whoever cursed his parents deserved the death penalty. Yet Jesus continued: "But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." They were dishonoring their parents and dishonoring God, who commanded them to honor their parents.

In Mark chapter 7, verse 9, we read: "And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye."

Notice that the word Corban is used here, although it was not used in Matthew chapter 5 or 15. Corban simply means a gift, or dedicated. The rabbis would let a man come up and dedicate his money to the Lord. He would only have to say the word Corban: it is a gift; it is dedicated.

Thus, they relieved him of his responsibility to take care of his elderly, aging, and possibly sickly parents. You could not use money dedicated to God for such a mundane purpose as taking care of old iron people. They made the Word of God of none effect. They despised the Word of God by saying that all of this stuff was dedicated. Perhaps the rabbi got a little cut; I do not know. All I am saying is that they simply had to say it was a gift, and according to the Pharisaic religion, they were relieved of their responsibility to help their parents.

When you hear, "Honor thy father and thy mother," it has a lot of negatives. It means, at the same time, do not dishonor them in any way whatsoever, and it further means positive duties: take care of them when they cannot take care of themselves; help them in any way you can; do for them whatever you can do. That is what it basically means.

## Further New Testament Illustrations of Negatives and Positives

Before we get back to Psalm 37, consider 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. We see many times in the Bible both positives and negatives, and we have to stop and think in order to understand what is being said. Beginning at verse 16, here is a simple verse: "Rejoice evermore." That is a positive. What would be the negative? Do not complain. Do not deliate. Do not whine and cry. If you understand what it means to rejoice evermore, you must also understand what it does not mean and what it does mean.

Look at verse 17: "Pray without ceasing." What does that mean? It means that you must be in a constant state of prayer. That does not mean you have to stay down on your knees twenty-four hours a day;

it means you should be praying about anything and everything that happens to you during the day.

You should be asking God's will, asking God for direction, and asking Him for His divine help and mercy. So, “Pray without ceasing.” Look at verse 18: “In every thing give thanks.” That is positive, “For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” What does “In every thing give thanks” mean? Do not grumble or complain. Be thankful for whatever you have. I like what the hillbilly said: “Bless God, I ain't got but two teeth in my mouth, but thank God they meet.” If they meet, you can eat meat. That is a fact. Simply, “In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

Then he says, “Quench not the Spirit.” That is negative. What would be the positive? Be submissive to the Holy Spirit. Be tender toward His direction and leadership. Follow Him and obey Him. “Despise not prophesyings.” I am going to come back to that one. You have to understand what the positive is. Then he says, “Prove all things.” What would be the negative? Do not be gullible or easily deceived. Do not swallow every lie that comes down the road. No. “Prove all things,” and once you prove them, “hold fast that which is good.” You know what truth is; hold it fast.

Then he says in verse 22, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” Positively, we should make sure that our life, thinking, attitude, and everything about us does not even appear to be evil, and that we are not associating with it in any way whatsoever. Now, going back to verse 20, he says, “Despise not prophesyings.”

The word “prophesyings” is *propheteia*, literally meaning a prophecy or a discourse emanating from divine inspiration, which would be the Bible. Here, prophecy refers to declaring, pronouncing, teaching, and preaching the Word of God, demonstrating God's purpose toward both the unsaved and the saved. It includes comforting the saints and giving them direction and counsel. It cannot mean that fresh and new revelation is now coming to someone beyond the Word of God. Revelation has ceased. God is not revealing anything else. We have the completed Word of God, and we also have the living Word of God.

Hebrews 1:1 says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." In the Old Testament and the New Testament, there were prophets who had dreams, trances, and visions—different ways that God spoke. But verse 2 says, "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

Who is God's last, full, and final revelation? It is Jesus Christ. So when someone says, "I just got this revelation from God. Here's what God's going to do," no, you did not get a revelation from God. You may have gotten one from your own dream factory, or from the fact that you ate a peanut butter, mayonnaise, pickle, and onion sandwich before you went to sleep, but you did not get it from God. If you claim to have a new revelation, you are denying, first, that the Bible is the Word of God and, secondly, that Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God. You are saying that there is something beyond the Bible and something beyond Jesus Christ, which is blasphemy.

Therefore, when Scripture says, "despise not prophesyings," it means not to despise the preaching and teaching from the Word of God. Throughout the Old Testament, particularly in Jeremiah, the prophet preached to people who refused to listen. They stiffened their necks, hardened their hearts, closed their ears and minds, and would not hear. That is exactly where people are today. They despise the preaching and teaching, the declaration of God's divinely inspired Word. God says, "Don't despise it."

"Well, he hurt my feelings." I am sorry, but do not despise the Word of God. "I don't like the way he preaches." I am sorry, but do not despise the Word of God. Men have different talents, personalities, voices, and styles of oratory. Otherwise, you become like those Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapters 1 through 3: "I like the Apostle Paul." "Not me. I like Apollos." "No, no, no. I like the Apostle Peter." They fussed and fought over different preachers. No. What counts is that the Word of God is being taught.

I know there are certain things that upset individuals, or certain individuals that some do not like. I had a friend who is now with the Lord. He was a preacher, and I loved him in the Lord, but I could not

stand to talk to him more than ten or fifteen minutes. His voice was so high and so shrill that it hurt my ears. But God used him. That was me, but I would listen to him as long as he was teaching the Word of God.

I am just saying, “Despise not prophesyings.” In other words, learn to love the Word of God. That would be the positive. Learn to love preaching. Learn to be there. It is astounding to me how easily people get out of preaching and teaching. They stuff their toe, their mother has a cough, or the baby has diarrhea, or something, I do not know. But anything and everything is used just to stay away from preaching. There is a big dinner somewhere, and we will go to that. But there you go, despising off both sides.

Now, turn back in your Bibles, if you would, to Psalm 37. I want to show you the negatives and the positives, as well as the contrasts, given to us in Psalm 37.

## The Three 'Fret Nots' in Psalm 37

I want to call your attention to three verses right off. Look in verse 1: “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.” The very first thing in the very first verse happens to be two negatives: “Fret not, neither be thou envious.” If you look at verse 7, you will see this again: “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.”

Now look in verse 8: “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.” So you have in this psalm three “fret not.” Obviously, “fret not” happens to be a negative. We are not to fret under any circumstances, but especially not over the circumstances outlined in Psalm 37. We are not to fret concerning the wicked, neither are we to fret or be envious at the workers of iniquity.

If you read the Word of God, you'll find they do not suffer as we suffer. They're not afflicted as we are afflicted. "Be not envious against the workers of iniquity." How in the world can you be envious as a Christian against the worker of iniquity? I told some

folks last week, on the way to church, that I passed a couple of folks who were going to worship Dagon. You say, "How do you know they were going to worship Dagon?" Well, you'd have to know who Dagon is. He was the Philistine god, but he was also the fish god.

Remember the Pope has that mitre? That's the fish mouth and the fish head. I knew they were going to worship Dagon because they had their boats behind their truck all the way to the ocean to fish. I love beautiful days, spring weather, and warm weather, but I have no desire to go fishing somewhere on Sunday morning. I don't envy them. They're neglecting God and the word. That's them.

But I'm simply saying it is astounding to me. They do things that we don't do. They go places we cannot go and will not go.

When he says "fret not" three times in this passage, the word "fret" is the Hebrew word "charah," and it means to be angry, wrathful, displeased, incensed, upset, burning, hot, or furious. Don't get worked up and vex yourself until you explode. That's what he's saying. Don't fret over these things. Don't get angry over these things.

Let me tell you something about this psalm that should make it more easily received. If you look in your Bibles to verse 25, David said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." So this psalm was written by David when he was an old man. He had lived his life and had many experiences. He learned a lot of things. Now he said, "I'm trying to teach you this while I am old." You should learn from the wisdom of the elderly.

Before I begin, I want to give you two quotes. The first is by Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and both quotes deal with this psalm. Spurgeon says: "The great riddle of the prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous, which has perplexed so many, is here dealt with in the light of the future," which I'll correct and show you.

“Fretfulness and repining”—repining is another word which means to moan, complain, to bellyache. The psalm is described this way: “Fretfulness and repining are most impressively... It is a psalm in which the Lord hushes most sweetly the two common repinings of His people, and calms their mind as to the present dealings with His

own chosen flock and the wolves by whom they are surrounded. It contains eight great precepts, is twice illustrated by autobiographical statements, and abounds in remarkable contrasts," which there are plenty in this psalm.

John Trapp says, "Fret not, be not angry at God as Jonah was, or aggrieved as Jeremiah and Habakkuk were, as if the divine providence did not justly divide to every man his due estate and do him right. But have patience a while, yea, let patience have her line and rope, her perfect work as James hath it, and quiet your boiling spirits with that word wherewith Christ becalmed the raging sea: Peace, be still." So now three times in this psalm he said, "fret not."

"Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." Why should we not be fretful over the evildoers? Why should we not be envious over against the workers of iniquity? The answer comes from verse 2: "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." Why are you going to be envious of someone who is soon going to be destroyed? Would you like to be destroyed as they? No, obviously not.

## Four Positive Graces to Replace Fretting

The command to "fret not" is a negative. God commands us: Do not fret. If God commands us not to fret, in light of these situations and circumstances, what are we to do? He says, do not fret. You cannot replace something with nothing. If God commands us not to fret, we must replace fretting, anxiousness, worriness, and worrisomeness—we must replace that with something else. What are we to replace it with?

The Lord gives us four things to replace fretting with—four wonderful graces. Fretting hinders and removes these graces from action. If you are fretting, you are not obeying. If you are obeying, then you are not fretting. If you are fretting, you are not exercising faith. If you are exercising faith, then you are not fretting. What do we replace fretting with—anxiety, worrying about everything? What do we replace that with? He gives you four things.

Number one is found in verse 3: “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” The very first thing he says is this: instead of fretting, learn to trust in the Lord and do good. Do that which is right and biblical and holy.

The Hebrew word for “good” happens to be the word “tov,” which means that which is good, that which is pleasant, that which is agreeable, that is to God, and to do that which is ethical, moral, right, and appropriate. Fretting not only delays obedience; fretting itself is disobedience. When they are fretting, they are disobedient. Do you realize that people who are anxious, fretful, worrying constantly and consistently, usually one of two things happens in their lives?

People who are full of anxiety are either extremely fearful or extremely indecisive. They are fearful of what is going to transpire, or so concerned that they simply do not know what to do. So he says, here is what you should do first: you must trust in the Lord. Look at verse 3: “Trust in the Lord, and do good.”

“So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” As long as we are obedient to Him, we do not have to worry about something to eat or a place to sleep. God said, I am going to make sure that you have that.

Now look, if you would, beginning at verse 25. Psalm 37:25 says, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.”

You see even here a contrast: there are the saints and there are the wicked. God has said that if we do good, we are going to dwell in the land, He is not going to forsake us, and we are never going to be cut off from Him. It is only the wicked who are going to be cut off. The very first thing he tells us to do to replace fretting is to trust in the Lord.

Look at verse 4. Here is the second thing: “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” If we are

delighting ourselves in the Lord, we are not concerned about the wicked or envious of the workers of iniquity; we are concerned with Him. If you are delighting yourself in the Lord, the desires of your heart are going to be holy and right. You are not going to desire anything contrary to God. You cannot say, "I am going to delight myself in the Lord, and I desire a billion dollars." If you delight yourself in the Lord, you will be delighted in whatever He gives you, because you realize you do not deserve anything. The word "delight" is the word "anog" in the Hebrew, and it literally means to be happy and to take exquisite delight in.

It means basically to be pampered with and to make merry over. In other words, you are to rejoice in Him: "Delight thyself in the Lord."

How do we replace fretting? By trusting and by delighting ourselves in the Lord. Here is the third one. Look in verse 5: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

The word "commit" is a very interesting word. There are certain words in the Hebrew and Greek that are so expressive that I delight in reading them. This is one of them. "Commit thy way unto the Lord." The word "commit" is the Hebrew word "galal." It literally means to flow into, to roll in, yea, even to wallow in, and to run into. In other words, you are wallowing in committing your way to the Lord.

I was raised on a farm, and I have seen hogs wallow in mud all day long. They love it. They enjoy it. It is delightful to them. God said we are to wallow in committing our way to the Lord. It should be delightful for us as well.

Notice what he says: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him." If you trust in Him, you are going to commit your way to Him. If you commit your way to Him, it is because you trust in Him. What is going to happen? "He shall bring it to pass." In other words, He will fulfill it. "And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

Since we are in the Psalms, turn over to Psalm 55. Look at verse 22: “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” That is the same as committing your way to the Lord. Whatever is bothering you, whatever you desire, whatever you have committed to the Lord, wallow in Him. He shall sustain you. He is not going to allow you to be moved, but He is going to bring to pass that which is ordained for your good and His glory. Absolutely. Now, 1 Peter 5:7 says, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." Now, look back to Psalm 37, verses 23 and 24, in light of this: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way." Who is the "he"? Is it God or is it a man? I would venture to say both. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he"—God—"delighteth in the steps of a good man." Or, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he"—the man—"delighteth in his way," that is, in God's way. It can be read either way.

But look at verse 24: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." So far, we have seen three things to replace fretting: trust in the Lord, delight thyself in the Lord, and commit thyself, or thy way, to the Lord. But what is the fourth? Verse 7 says, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."

The word "rest" is a very interesting word. "Damam" is the Hebrew word, and it means to be silent, to be still, and to be quiet. Resting is a quiet time, a relaxing time, a peaceful time. It is a cessation of activity and complaining.

Let me give you an illustration. Alice and I had four daughters. When our children were small and I was studying at home, I had to learn to study with running, screaming, hollering, crying, playing, laughing, and shouting. Finally, they grew up, and I did not have to study under those conditions. I had peace and quiet, and I enjoyed that. Then they got married, and we had six grandchildren. I would be in the room studying while the grandchildren were running and hollering, "Papa, Papa, come here, Papa, do this, Papa do that."

I had to get used to all that again. Then they grew up and got married. They were grown and gone, and I had peace of mind again—until we had seven great-grandchildren. But you see what I am saying? When you think about resting, resting in the Lord, you are thinking about relaxing in the Lord, a quiet time with the Lord. It is just you and the Lord. It is as easy as pie. Rest in the Lord. Do not get bent out of shape or try to do something you should not be doing. Just rest.

That is very difficult for most people. Rest in the Lord. If you are not to fret, God says the way to stop your fretting is to trust in me, delight yourself in me, commit your way to me, and rest in me.

Now, if you look in verse 7 again, you are going to see the second "fret not." He says, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."

## Reasons Not to Fret Over the Wicked

In light of Psalm 37, we are talking about wicked men who are exceedingly powerful and prosperous, with money coming out of their ears. They are using their power and prosperity to defile, defame, and destroy the righteous. And I am going to tell you something that is upsetting in and of itself. When you look at a man like George Soros and how he got his billions, he defrauded his own people. Look at Mark Zuckerberg. Look at the World Economic Forum man. Look at the money that they have and how they are attacking the righteous.

Now look at what he says in verse 8: "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath." He is talking about unbiblical anger and unbiblical wrath. There is a biblical anger, and there is a biblical wrath. What is happening in verse 7 is enough to make an ordinary man angry and extremely wrathful.

Why does God forbid us to fret over these kinds of men? The first reason is because God told me not to. The second reason is this: Why in the world am I going to fret over someone or something over which I have absolutely no control? How many of you can control Donald Trump? Not one. Who can control George Soros? Not one.

Which of you can control your own children? Young parents say, “Well, I’ve got mine under control; they obey me.” I always smile and say, “The teenage years are coming. Hang on, hang on. Twenty-one is coming. Hang on.”

I don't care how much you love, train, or teach your child: you cannot make your child do what is right. You cannot control him once he is grown and gone. It is impossible. Husbands cannot control their wives, nor wives their husbands. Now, I know I can say, “Well, Alice, I can control Alice.” I can control Alice as long as she is in submission and doing what God has commanded her to do. But if she makes up her mind that she is going to rebel against God and rebel against me—

There is no way I can stop her. I cannot control her. So why would we get bent out of shape over individuals who are doing wickedness and wrong? We can pray against them. We can pray those imprecatory prayers. But I am not going to get bent out of shape because I cannot control them; I have no power over them.

What God is telling us in Psalm 37 is that God is going to control them. He is going to judge them. Look at verse 12: “The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.” He is trying to destroy the righteous. What is going to happen? Verse 13 says, “The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.” The wicked have drawn out the sword and bent their bow “to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.” But what will happen to them? “Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.” God said, I will let them fall upon their own sword; I will let them destroy themselves. It is just that simple. God is saying, do not worry about it. I have this thing under control. I will take care of them.

Now look at verses 18 and 19: “The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.” “They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish.” Here is the contrast. We are not to fret over the prosperity, programs, and plans of the wicked. Here is why they are prospering. Verse 20 says, “But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.” In all their

prosperity, they are merely being fattened as lambs for the slaughter. It is just that simple.

Now, look again at verse 8. Here is the third “fret not”: “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.” Let me tie “cease from anger, and forsake wrath” not only with verse 7 but with verse 8 as well. We are talking about unbiblical anger—there is a righteous anger—and unbiblical wrath—and there is a righteous wrath. But God says, cease from that which is unbiblical, and fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

Mark this down in your mind and in your notes: unrighteous anger will make us do evil. Fretting is sinful in and of itself because it is a lack of faith and trust. But remember that one's sin always leads to other sins.

## Contrasts Between the Righteous and the Wicked in Psalm 37

The Hebrew word for “wrath” here is chemah, which literally means to be in a fury, to be in a heat, to be in a rage, to be filled with displeasure, anger, and wrath. It is nothing more than a poison burning up in your bosom. These negatives—to cease from anger and to forsake wrath—mean positively that we are to continue in righteousness, holiness, peace, calmness, doing that which is righteous.

He said in verse 8, “Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.” We are not to do evil regardless.

Ask yourself why we should not be angry and wrathful. There is a righteous anger and a righteous wrath, but we are not talking about that here. We are talking about getting bent out of shape over the wicked and their prosperity. Here is why we should not be bent out of shape. Psalm 37: “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off.”

“But those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” God says the reason we are not afraid is that He is going to

take care of it. He is going to wipe them out. But we, the meek, shall inherit the earth.

When our Lord in Matthew chapter 5 says, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth,” and in Matthew 11 says, “I am meek and lowly in heart,” the word meek does not mean mousiness or weakness. If you are meek, your strength is controlled by God; it is controlled strength. Moses was called the meekest man upon the earth, and look what he did.

I have a 3,000-pound bull. If you want to try to ride him, help yourself. But if that bull was broken to the yoke or trained with a bit and bridle, you now have controlled strength. That is what meekness is: the meek shall inherit the earth, those who are controlled.

The wicked are going to be destroyed. In Psalm 37, God puts everything together in the latter part of the psalm. He shows us not only the negatives and the positives, but also the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. He has been doing that throughout the psalm. Beginning at verse 34, notice how God puts it together:

“Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.” Once again, here is the contrast. Then David said, “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.” He is going to take over, he thinks. “Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.” There is another contrast. “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.” Here is the contrast again. “But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But”—another contrast—“the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord. He is their strength in the time of trouble.” Then the last verse: “And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.”

In this psalm, he gives you the negatives and the positives: he tells you not to do something, then shows you what you should do in its place. He gives you the contrast and tells you why you should not be worried. You are going to get everything; they are going to be destroyed.

Let me make some applications. Turn to Philippians chapter 4 and look at verses 6 and 7. This is a New Testament parallel passage to Psalm 37. Psalm 37 tells you not to fret and shows you how to trust, delight, commit, and rest. Philippians 4:6 says, "Be careful for nothing." The word "careful" means anxious. Do not be anxious for anything. If you are careful for nothing, what do you replace it with if you are not going to worry about anything?

## New Testament Parallel and Final Applications

He said, "But in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." The reason you should not be anxious is because you are praying about everything. You are asking God for everything, giving thanksgiving unto God, and making your request known unto God. Actually, Philippians 4, verses 6 and 7, is a parallel to Psalm 37.

The Greek word here for "careful" is the word "merimnao," and it literally means that we are not to be anxious, troubled, upset, or confused about anything. The way not to be that way is by continual prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, making our requests known unto God.

Now let me tell you a second application. Psalm 37 assures us of the protection, preservation, and providential acts of God in the lives of His people. It also teaches us that God is going to judge and destroy the wicked, especially those who have tried to harm His people.

There is a passage I want you to jot down. I will quote it: Deuteronomy 7, verses 9 and 10. This is a parallel passage to the destruction of the wicked in Psalm 37. Listen to it: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face." God said, "I'm not ashamed to strike the wicked. I will pay him to his face."

So when you look at Psalm 37, you think of the negatives and the positives. You think of the contrast between the righteous and the

wicked, how God is going to preserve, protect, and provide for His people, and how God is going to judge and destroy the wicked. What does that mean? It means that He is in absolute sovereign control. He is going to work things out for us, and He is going to judge those that hate Him and destroy them. All we have to do is rest in Him and wait on Him, because He will do it in His time and in His way. The reason we get so upset is because we do not want to wait or rest. We want to help Him, and we cannot. He is in control.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your words and Your truth, and we pray, Lord, that You teach us the negatives and the positives, as well as the contrasts in Psalm 37. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

# Thou Shalt Not Kill & Those That Hate Me Love Death

April 18, 2026

## Introduction: The Sixth Commandment and the Duty to Preserve Life

Exodus 20:13 says, "Thou shalt not kill." The Word of God is inexhaustible and covers so many needed subjects that it is astounding. It even covers what we would call self-defense and protection. Why would any church be interested in what we would call a security ministry? First and foremost, because it is a biblical ministry. Second, because it is a necessary ministry, and we have a duty.

We have an obligation and responsibility to protect the elderly, the children, and the innocent. God gives us that very clearly. "Thou shalt not kill" is a negative. Most of God's law is put in negative terms because negatives deal with a particular evil. There are only two commandments that are positive: "Remember the seventh day to keep it holy" and "Honor thy father and thy mother." Yet each of these is undergirded by many negatives throughout the Word of

God. When you see a negative, you must ask, What is the positive? When you see a positive, you must ask, What is the negative?

For instance, when He said, "Thou shalt not steal," what would be the positive? It would be, "Thou shalt work with your hands, working that which is good," not merely to provide for yourself, but also "to give to him that needeth." The opposite of a covetous, stealing, thieving attitude is having a work ethic and being a genuinely generous, giving person.

When He says, "Thou shalt not kill," the positive is, "Thou shalt preserve life." Therefore, you have a duty and responsibility to preserve your life, your family, your friends, and your neighbors. God even lays down laws concerning the animals we eat. Leviticus 22:28 and Deuteronomy 22:6-7 say, "Thou shalt not kill the mother and the young on the same day." There is a reason and a message in that: if you are not interested in protecting the family of animals, you will not be interested in protecting your own family or human families either.

That is an argument from the lesser to the greater. And so God then lays down all of these laws for us. He even tells us upon what terms human life may be lawfully and legitimately taken. So many people do not understand that there are actually 19 reasons given in the Bible as to why life may be lawfully or legitimately taken on God's terms.

I have two messages, which I'll refer to a little bit later, on the biblical doctrine of self-defense, which I cannot teach today. But if you're interested in learning those 19 reasons, I have DVDs and some CDs up here, and you're welcome to them. There are two parts, so if you get DVDs, you get part one and part two; if you get CDs, you get part one and part two. There are also DVDs up here that are very good, one for each family if you want to take one. It's "Lincoln's Quest for Empire," historical documentation with a lot of scholars involved. I think you would enjoy it very much. Michael has seen it and knows about it as well. Most people do not understand the biblical doctrine of self-defense, and I encourage you to really listen to those messages.

## The Necessity of a Settled Mindset and Proper Training

You have to understand that it is your mindset and your understanding that must be fixed upon this subject before you ever get into the circumstance where you need to understand. If your mind is not made up, if your heart is not secure on what God says you must do and are allowed to do, and you get into the situation, you're going to hesitate because you're not sure. Once you hesitate, you're dead or someone else is dead. It's just that simple. So you have to make up your mind and know and understand exactly what God tells you on this particular subject, because it's too late to try to sort it out when you're in a self-defense situation. It must be made plain, as we're talking about church security, that not every situation is a defensive situation. But the subject has to be settled in your mind before that situation arises as well.

The next truth I want to emphasize is this: you must not only possess knowledge of what God allows and what God demands, but also the proper training. Without proper training, you are more likely to get killed or to get someone else killed. When your life is in danger, you will freeze, flee, or fight. You will do something. But if you freeze or flee, you may not be able to escape it.

Training is absolutely necessary. Moreover, once you reach proficiency, you must continue training to maintain it. Muscle memory is easy to lose. I can assure you of that. My wife and I both became second-degree black belts in Shorinji Kempo, and we took it for eleven years. When I was fifty, I could kick you right smack in the face any day of the week.

Now I'm eighty-two. I'm sorry; I'll take your knee out. But I don't have the muscle memory anymore. If you do not use it, you lose it. It is just that simple. I am not saying that you have to train twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. But once you reach proficiency, you still have to train monthly or ever so often to keep that proficiency going.

And that is certainly true. Now, here's the truth: I have someone who can verify this. I am not picking on cops particularly, but most cops cannot shoot. So if you are depending upon the sheriff's

department or the police department to save your hide when you are in trouble, may I remind you that when you need them, they are only thirty minutes away? Most police departments and sheriff's departments have to qualify once or twice a year, and that's it.

## Personal Responsibility vs. Reliance on Law Enforcement

In the state of Georgia, the perfect score for qualifying is 300. You have to qualify with a 260 just to pass. In the last qualifying episode at our local police department, two—and I trained them—made a perfect 300 score. The rest, 120, 110, could not even qualify. Why? They have never been trained. And you think somebody like that is going to come save you in a hostage situation? The answer is not going to happen. It is just not going to happen.

Here is another truth: I do not care if the sheriff's department has the best-trained individuals in the world, or if the police department has people who qualify and make a perfect score year after year. It is not their responsibility to save your life and your family. That is your responsibility. You cannot depend upon others to fulfill your responsibility.

Church security is a historical fact. You will find it in all ages, beginning from the first century and continuing through today. It involves many facets. Many of you know the great reformer John Knox. Before John Knox became the great reformer, do you know what his occupation was? He was a bodyguard for Pastor John Wishart.

I encourage you, if you have not done so, to listen to two messages I preached long ago. One is on the Black Robe Regiment, which deals with the pastors of the American Revolution. They were leaders and shakers. James Caldwell, a Presbyterian pastor, was so hated that he had to preach with two loaded pistols on the pulpit. The British murdered his wife and eventually murdered him as well. When you learn about these men, it is absolutely astounding.

I also have a message on the chaplains in the Confederate armies, and you need to learn about them. There is so much difference

between men of today and men in those ages that it is absolutely unbelievable.

## Church Security as a Biblical Ministry

Church security is a ministry. Mark that down in your mind. What is a ministry? Two Greek words clearly teach what ministry consists of. The first is diakonia, which means service or ministry. It is work done for the benefit of others and done to others as well. The word can refer either to an office or an act. In Acts chapter 7, you have the first deacons; they did not run the church. They were servants.

They waited on tables, and they helped little women. That is what the word deacon actually means. It literally means a servant. The second word is the word leitourgia, and that is where we get our English word liturgy. A liturgy is basically a public worship. It is a service, a ministry, an act of devotion that is done to God. You remember the passage in 2 Timothy, chapter 4, verse 11, where the apostle Paul said, "Only Luke is with me." He says, "Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry." You have to understand that the church security team and church security is a ministry.

Now, since you have your Bibles, look in Romans chapter 12. Let me show you a passage there that should really emphasize this. The Word of God says, "So we then, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one member is one of another." Now watch verse 6: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministry; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

Notice that he said, "or ministry, let us wait on our ministry." It is the diakonia; that is, we have a ministry. There are different gifts that have been given to the body of Christ. Not everybody has the same gift. Here is the ministry in general, and he is saying that we must wait upon our ministry.

The apostle Paul, in Colossians chapter 4, verse 17, said, “Take Archippus, and say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord, to fulfill it.” If God has given you a ministry, whatever it is, you must fulfill that ministry. Now, turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 4, and let me show you this in relationship to ministry.

This is not a job. This is a ministry. I never will forget one of them. A good friend of mine was raised in a church and was thinking about entering the ministry. He did not know, so he asked his pastor, “I’m thinking about entering ministry. Would you tell me why I should enter ministry?” The pastor said, “Well, it’s a good job.” What? The ministry is not a job. It is a ministry. The man did not enter the ministry, and I am thankful he did not, because he turned out to be an excellent doctor. I am simply pointing out the fact: a ministry is a ministry.

So in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, the apostle said, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

There are two Greek words for steward in the Bible. The first is oikonomos. It is literally made up of two Greek words, oikos, which means house, and nomos, which means law. That is where we get our English word economy. The word means the law of the house, or someone who rules over the house.

In Luke chapter 12, verse 42, our Lord says, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” Here is the law of the house: the steward is the faithful man who feeds and takes care of all those in his house. The second word used for steward in the Bible is epitropos.

The word is literally made up of two words: epi, a preposition meaning “upon,” and tropos, meaning a way of life, a manner. It refers to character—someone who lives a way of life that is honorable and has integrity. This is what he calls a steward. Whatever ministry we have, God demands that we be faithful in that ministry and exercise it unto Him. A faithful man, a man of character, is an

individual to whom things may be entrusted and that trust may be kept.

If you are on a church security team, that means not only your family, but everyone in that church building, has entrusted their lives to you. You must be responsible, accountable, and faithful, because you have a ministry of protecting these individuals.

Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 10 says, “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and your labor of love that you have showed to him, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” God is not unfaithful to forget your work and labor of love. What was your work? What was your labor of love? It was that you minister to the saints and do minister.

How do you minister to God? He does not need you; He does not need anything. You minister to Him by ministering to His people. You minister to Him by ministering to each other. God is not unfaithful to forget your work and your labor of love that you have shown unto Him. In ministering to each other, you minister and do minister to each other. In other words, you keep going.

You are faithful in it. So what all is going to be involved in this? Stop and think about it. If you are on a church security team, or if you are interested in protecting your people, you must first learn what I would call de-escalation tactics. Not every problem and not every threat is a terroristic threat. Just because you do not have a jihadist trying to break into the church building does not mean that you will not have problems and threats. You are certainly going to have them. You will have family members, family matters, church disputes, church members who are upset, and members saying things they ought not to say, mouthing off. The truth of the matter is this: that requires a cool head and a calm spirit.

## Practical Principles for Church Security Teams

You must not be hot-tempered. You must not be easily and emotionally upset and unstable if you are going to help others. You cannot be filled with pride, arrogance, haughtiness, and high-mindedness. You cannot say, “Do what I say or hit the road.” Once you take that attitude, you will not have anybody to minister to

and you will not have anybody to protect, because they are going to hit the road. They are not going to have someone being high-handed and acting like a tyrant. You cannot run over people or treat them as dirt just because they are upset and have a problem they cannot work out by themselves. You are there to help them. It is just that simple.

The Bible says, write this one down, please: Proverbs 16:32. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” God says that if you are slow to anger, you are better than the mighty. If you can control your spirit, you are better than a mighty warrior. Now think about Proverbs 17:27.

“He that hath knowledge spareth his words.” So just because Jeff is upset with me and saying things he should not say does not mean that I have to unload on him. I could say a few words: “Jeff, that’s not right. And let’s not go any further with this. Jeff, I’m not willing to fight.” Just because I could really lay him low does not mean that I need to do so. The Bible says, “He that hath knowledge spareth his words.”

"And a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit." The word excellent is literally translated, "and a man of understanding is of a cool spirit." What does that mean? If somebody is hollering, spitting, and sputtering in your face, you can stand there and smile. You have a cool spirit.

I cannot make you angry unless you allow me to make you angry. I cannot make you jealous unless you allow me to make you jealous. I cannot upset you unless you allow me to upset you. If you can control your spirit, you are in control of yourself. If I can control your spirit, I am in control of you.

Proverbs 25:28 says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls." If a city is broken down without walls, you can walk in, get what you want, and walk out. There is no protection and no defense. If you cannot control your spirit, ultimately someone is going to control you. You have to control your mind, your emotions, and your spirit while someone

else may be ranting and raving. You still have to remain cool, calm, and in control, even if others are not.

If you cannot take being shouted at, screamed at, or cussed at, you probably ought not to be in a security ministry—or in any ministry. People are going to be upset, and you have to be able to deal with that. You cannot draw a weapon on somebody who is simply upset. It is impossible. You have to be able to control yourself.

Physical altercation should always be the very last resource. People who cannot keep their cool, calm, and emotions are not to be in the ministry. You have to be able to deal with homeless people and mentally unstable people. What are you going to do if a homeless person comes here? What are you going to do if a mentally unstable person comes here?

I was preaching many years ago to a large congregation, probably three or four hundred people. Right in the middle of my sermon, a man stood up and started contradicting everything I said, though I was preaching from the Bible. I stopped, looked at him, and said, "Sir, if you do not mind, please sit down and be quiet. The pastor has asked me to preach, not you. If you will wait, he may ask you to preach afterwards." I was trying to calm it down.

When I said that, he started cussing and taking God's name in vain. I looked at two men next to him and said, "Gentlemen, would you please escort him outside so I can finish the message." He was drunk. How he got in, I do not know. But with three or four hundred people, how do you spot one drunk in the middle of the church? I never drew a pistol on him. I simply tried to calm him down, and when that did not work, I had him escorted out.

You have to learn de-escalation tactics. Just because somebody is upset does not mean that you have to be upset. It does not mean that you have to push their buttons and make them go crazy.

You must always work in teams. One should always do the talking while the other is watching. Now, Elijah is a bad guy. If Mike and I confront him, with me hollering at him on one side and Mike on the other, what do you think that will do? It will create chaos and confusion. I could say, "Mike, you talk to him. I will step back and

watch and make sure that he does not become aggressive." Or Mike could step back while I talk to him.

You should always have at least two people there, and you must always have a witness. You remember what our Lord said in Matthew chapter 18, verse 16: "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two witnesses, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." You are going to want a witness, that is for sure.

That means there has to be a level of competence, knowledge, and strength in each man. Every man has his abilities, and every man has his disabilities. I mentioned earlier that if the Lord allows me to live to September, I will be eighty-two years old. I am no match for a young, 250-pound, six-foot-three-inch man.

I might be a match if I am smart enough to get the first blow, because I know a few things that will totally disable someone instantly. If I can make the first strike, perhaps. But if somebody like Caleb or Jacob runs into me, bulldozes me, and knocks me down, I am sorry, folks, I am no match for those men. That is all there is to it.

I went to one church where the security team was introduced to me, and all of them were my age. I said, “Where are the young men? Where are the young men who, if a tussle got started, could really intervene and take care of things?” You have to understand that you have limitations if it ever comes down to a physical confrontation.

Let me give you an illustration. When I was in school back in the sixties, I worked at the hospital and was assigned that particular week to the back desk. From there I could study and do what I wanted. Hardly anyone was ever there because the morgue was right around the corner.

All of a sudden, I heard cursing like you would not believe, taking God’s name in vain, and it would not stop. I picked up the phone. The hospital had police officers working there, so I called John Vinscus, a big Polish fellow who would make a muscle builder look sick, almost. I told him, “Vinscus, you need to come back here. Somebody is around the corner just a-cussing and carrying on.”

He came back, and somehow someone had left the back door open. An old drunk had gotten in, sat down on the floor, and was

cussing, drunk as he could be. Vinscus picked him up, brought him by my desk, and said, “You’re going to have to help me carry him to the front. I’ve got a patrol car waiting.” I came out from behind the desk. Vinscus had the man’s left arm and told me, “Now you grab that arm and hold him.”

The man was stacked. I said, “John, he’s just an old drunk.” He looked at me and said, “You hold that arm.” We got about halfway there when the old drunk snatched his arm from my hand and swung at Vinscus. Thankfully, Vinscus put him on the floor face down. I was shocked.

I was in my twenties, off the farm, and strong, yet I could not believe what happened. If an old drunk can do that, what do you think somebody on drugs can do? They are crazy. You need to understand. You can see another example on YouTube: a six-foot-three muscle man had three big police officers after him. They tased him, but he still whipped all three cops. You have to know your limitations, your abilities, and your disabilities. When you think about this as a ministry, you have to think broadly.

Third, you must have a means to communicate secretly and quietly. You should have people in the front, back, and middle of the church. If somebody at the back of the church building sees someone acting suspiciously, that person needs a way to tell the man in front and the man in the middle, "I think we're going to have a problem back here. Just keep your eyes open and your ears open," without interrupting the pastor or the message.

In other words, you have to be ready and able to do this. The truth of the matter is that most people do not even consider the outside. Did you know that most problems begin outside, in the parking lot? If you can identify problems in the parking lot, you can stop them on the inside a whole lot sooner and easier. If you do not have cameras on the outside, you need someone looking and patrolling the outside.

If you have never gone to ChristianWarrior.com, I would encourage you to do that. Keith Graves, a thirty-year retired cop with twenty years on SWAT, gives you bulletins every week and tells you what is going on in every church in the country. You would be

absolutely astounded at what is going on in our church buildings. So you need a way to communicate.

Fourthly, you must develop situational awareness. Our Lord said it like this in Luke 12:46: "The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder and appoint him his portion with unbelievers." The truth of the matter is that we often get in trouble simply by not paying attention. We are not observant.

We have a lackadaisical attitude, saying, "Nothing like this will ever happen to me." But you must be aware of what is going on. Why in the world would someone come to church here, or anywhere, in this kind of heat and weather, wearing a large sweater or a heavy coat? Stop and think about that. Why would you see someone in a raincoat, a long raincoat, when it is not raining? What would you think about someone coming in with a backpack? Who goes to church with a backpack? If somebody came in with a backpack and leaves without it, why did he leave it, where is it, and what is in it? What is he doing?

Have you ever noticed people when they get angry? Their face gets red and their nostrils start flaring. Have you ever noticed somebody fidgeting with their hands, or with a clenched fist or a charred jaw? Have you ever been talking to someone and, all of a sudden, they change stances and get in a fighting stance? What is going on?

You need to be situationally aware. Why would a newcomer, a stranger who has never been to this church, ask to be seated on the front row? Recently, a pastor was stabbed by a woman sitting on the front row. She ran up and stabbed him. They took her down, but she stabbed him. I am simply pointing out that we have to understand, fifthly, that churches, public events, and large gatherings are considered soft targets. People who attend church are usually there thinking, "I am in a safe place."

## The Reality of Soft Targets and Historical Attacks

Nothing is ever going to happen to me; nothing is ever going to happen here. The same is true when you are in the mall to shop or enjoy yourself, or when you attend a large concert. Many of these

concerts and places do not want you to be armed. They are soft targets because people there do not expect to be attacked. Usually, the Communists, Antifa, and all these people attack where you are most vulnerable: either in your home or in your churches, because that is where you sense safety. They are going to disturb your safety. Therefore, you must have situational awareness and understand that these are soft targets.

One illustration is the attack at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, on November 5, 2017, one of the worst attacks in church history. Twenty-six were killed and twenty were wounded. It began as a family matter: a twenty-six-year-old man was upset with his mother-in-law.

The week before, Pastor Frank Pomeroy had been told, “You need to be paying attention,” but he said, “Nothing like that will ever happen here. We are a small church, and we are out in the country.” One of the twenty-six killed was his daughter. The attack began outside a small building with asbestos-covered siding. The young man had an AR-15. He walked around the church, emptying fourteen magazines and firing from outside before entering and killing people inside.

Colin Dwyer wrote, “Authorities have not named the victims of the shooting, noting that they’re waiting until they can first notify families personally. They said the victims inside the church ranged from age 18 months to 77 years old. It was just horrific.” Tactic set of the scene in the church after the shooting.

“Words can't express what was there. It's hard enough to see an adult, but when you see babies, little ones—three, four, five, six years old, and ten years old—it's just hard.” Leslie Ward, who lives two blocks from the church, told NPR's Sean Burnett that her eight-year-old niece was killed, while her brother-in-law's wife and five-year-old twins were hospitalized.

“The scene looked terrible,” she said. “Everybody was bleeding, crying. There were dead bodies everywhere—babies. People were trying to get hold of their family, but their phones broke; they shattered. People were crying, just really, really bad off. Disaster, blood everywhere.”

Nick Eulick said, “Everyone goes here, and everyone knows everyone. You'd never think something like this could happen out here; it's so small.” Eulick's husband, Crystal Holcomb, was eight months pregnant when she was killed on Sunday, and three of her five children were also killed. He said his family had lived in that area for three generations.

If the possibility of such an event does not make you take church security seriously, motivate you to learn and train, then you would not qualify to be on the church security team. God is giving you the opportunity to protect His people, and you must be prepared to do so. Without proper training, you will not be prepared in the hour when wickedness strikes.

You do not get to pick the day, time, hour, or weather when something like this happens. The enemy does that. If you are not prepared and ready, it is death. When you read 1 Samuel chapter 23, you read how David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. The Philistines had destroyed the city and kidnapped all the people. David and his men went after them, defeated them, destroyed them, and brought back all the people of Keilah.

You have to have a biblical mindset, a fighting spirit, and a determined attitude. You have to know that God intends you to protect those in your charge. You can say all day long, “But I trust in the Lord.” That is wonderful; everybody should trust in the Lord. But God is not going to fulfill your responsibilities for you.

I could have my bedroom full of rifles, pistols, howitzers, bazookas, machine guns, and you could say, "Wow, you're really trusting in those arms." No, I am not trusting in those arms. Because if God does not awaken me in time or enable me to shoot straight, none of that's going to do me any good. You follow me? So, God is not going to fulfill your responsibility for you. God is not going to—God is not going to intervene for you if you are too lazy and too inept and too sluggardly to do what you need to do.

There is a principle of reaping what you sow. And that's exactly what we do. When you read 2 Samuel 23, you read about David's mighty men. You read about these men that God used. And the truth of the matter is this, you have to ask yourself this question: Why did

God use them? Read it. Why did God use them? They were prepared men. They were determined men.

One fought till his hand clave to the sword. They had to pry his fingers loose. He could not even ungrip his sword. Shema. Wow. These men were prepared. These men were trained. These men were ready to fight. These men knew what fighting was all about.

Now, I want you to understand, first of all, this is a ministry, and I want you to understand it is indeed a ministry. And that means you have to train.

Now, I've got another area I want to cover. I want you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Proverbs, chapter 8. And I want you to look at verses 35 and 36. Proverbs, chapter 8, verses 35 and 36. So I would try to answer another question for you. Why in the world would people do this? Have you ever thought about that? Look at Proverbs 8, verses 35 and 36.

## The Root of Violence: Hatred of Christ and Love of Death

Our Lord, whose wisdom personifies, says this, "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." Look at the next verse. "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." Now, what's that? "All they that hate me love death."

Now, here's a statement that I'm going to make. Listen carefully. We're not living in Mayberry any longer. Andy Griffith is not our sheriff. Barney is not our deputy. Barney would have one bullet in his pocket. And he kept it in his pocket and loaded his weapon. When I was a boy, if I wanted to see a policeman, a cop, I normally had to go uptown. I had to look. I had to hunt.

Because we hardly had any cops. You know why? Because in the little town that I lived in, the little country I lived in, out in South Georgia, if you were a Christian, at least you were moral. We didn't need them.

Today you cannot drive down the road without seeing five or six in a mile or two. Every year after our crops had been harvested, my

father would take us to Miami, Florida, to visit relatives. We would stay for two weeks. We never locked the door or the window. My father had combines and machines that were $50,000 each. Today they are three and four hundred and a half million, but $50,000 was a lot of money back in the 1950s. When we returned two weeks later, the house, the equipment—everything—was exactly as we had left it. You try that today.

There is a vast difference between loving life and loving death. We tend to forget that the unsaved are known as the walking dead. In Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 through 3, the Scripture says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Without Christ, we are nothing but dead men walking. Our Lord said, "All they that hate me love death." The unsaved are dead to the Lord Jesus Christ. They are dead to life, and the only thing to which they are alive is death.

John 14:6 says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Let me explain why folks are so wicked, violent, and rebellious today. You may say, "Well, Brother Weaver, I believe in total depravity." I believe in total depravity. I believe man is absolutely, totally, and completely depraved. But not all who are totally depraved become violent murderers.

The Bible tells us in James chapter 2 and verse 10 that whosoever offends in one point is guilty of all. If you have broken one part of God's law, you are guilty of breaking the whole thing. I understand that we are depraved and violators of God's law, but that does not mean everyone is taking a knife and plunging it into someone else's heart and murdering. In Matthew chapter 5 and 1 John chapter 3, the Bible tells us that whoever hates his brother is a murderer; yet mental, emotional, and spiritual murder in the mind is not physical murder.

I do not hate Mike, but I could hate him in my mind. If I were upset and angry and said, “Mike, I hate you,” that still would not be plunging a knife into his heart. I would be guilty of murder in the sense I did it in my mind, but not physically.

When God forbids any act, at the same time, He forbids everything that will lead up to that act. So when God forbids me to murder Mike, He forbids me to be angry with him. He forbids me to hate him. When God forbids me to commit adultery, He forbids me to lust. He forbids me to covet. He forbids me to desire. Anytime God forbids anything, He also forbids whatever leads up to that.

The reason people are so violent and so wicked is because they hate the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only do they hate the Lord Jesus Christ, they love death. If you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you love life. If you hate the Lord Jesus Christ, you love death. When you love death, it encompasses all kinds of death—not just physical death, but mental death, emotional death, and financial death. You look at the people who do not follow biblical principles, and their lives are devastated in every area.

It is interesting that all of the young mass shooters have always idolized other mass shooters, gone to violent video games and violent forums, and developed a mental state of loving death. Trinity Shockley, an 18-year-old from Indiana, was arrested in February 2025 for planning a school shooting. Photographs of mass shooters Nicholas Cruz and Dylann Roof were displayed on her bedroom wall, along with a photo album and buttons featuring their faces. One can only wonder: why were the parents not concerned about the pictures of these mass murderers on her wall?

Likewise, Colt Gray is accused of the 9-4-2024 shooting of Appalachian High School that left four dead and nine injured. GBI photos show a shrine to Nicholas Cruz in Colt's room. Cruz killed 17 and wounded 17 at East Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. How in the world can a parent ignore a picture of a mass murderer on the wall? In Washington State, a 13-year-old boy who may have idolized previous mass shooters was arrested after police found a large collection of guns and mass-shooting-scenario writings at his Washington State home.

Thirteen years old. Months before Desmond Holly opened fire at Colorado High School, he developed a deep fascination with mass shooters online. He expressed neo-Nazi views and was active on a violent gore site. Offline, he began to amass tactical gear. On September 10, 2025, 16-year-old Holly opened fire at Evergreen High School, wounding two students before shooting himself.

During a September 11 press conference, a Jefferson County Sheriff's Office spokesman shared that investigators had learned Holly had been radicalized by some extremist network, but did not elaborate further. You better pay attention to what your children are watching and listening to. In February of this year, 2026, in Hillsborough County, Florida, a 14-year-old boy was arrested for planning a mass shooting. He was found to have connections with violent forums online and also had pedophilic pornography on his phone. The arrest followed a tip that he had access to weapons and was planning a mass shooting at a church near his home. Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister confirmed that the teen was linked to an online chat room associated with a neo-Nazi satanic group called Temple of Love and had discussed his plans for violence in these forums.

During the search of the teen's home, authorities found multiple firearms and ammunition, along with electronic devices containing 14 extremely graphic images of child sexual abuse, including violence against infants and toddlers, on a 14-year-old boy's phone. Parents, listen to me: it is your responsibility to monitor your children and to know what they are reading, watching, and listening to. You say, "But Brother Weaver, I don't want to invade their privacy." They are your children. You are not invading their privacy; you are parenting them.

You are to be teaching them, disciplining them, and training them. Do not tell me it is an invasion of privacy. The Bible says in Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Child predators are not just after your child's body; they are after your child's mind.

Here is a principle you need to learn: whoever or whatever controls your mind controls your body. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy

heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." You cannot keep trash in your mind without trash coming out in your life.

You may find plenty of these attacks against churches in Christianity on a website called persecution.org. Listen to this. Pastor Christman, who is here in the back, knew this pastor. In Lexington, Kentucky, a gunman opened fire on Richmond Road Baptist Church, killing two female congregants before being fatally shot by law enforcement. Jerry Gunn, the pastor, was also shot but survived. God House, 47, opened fire at the church on Sunday, July the 13th, 2025, killing two women and injuring two men before being shot dead by police. The attack followed a traffic stop near Blue Grass Airport, where House shot and injured a Kentucky State trooper.

## Contemporary Attacks on Churches and the Call to Action

He then carjacked a vehicle and drove approximately 16 miles to the church, where he targeted individuals connected to him. The victims were Beverly Gumbs, 72, the pastor's wife, and her daughter, Christina Combs, 34. Both mother and daughter were members of a tight-knit congregation. Pastor Jerry Gumm, Beverly's husband and the church's longtime leader, was critically injured and later underwent multiple surgeries. His son-in-law, Randy Combs, Christina's husband, was also injured but remained in stable condition. Preliminary investigations indicated that House had a prior connection to the victims: he had been in a relationship with one of Beverly Gumm's daughters. Family members believed the attack was motivated by revenge after House was unable to find the woman he was seeking at the church. The church was in a rural Lexington area described as a close-knit community. He could not find the woman, so he killed and shot others.

Why are there so many attacks on churches, and why are there so many attacks on Christianity? Our Lord made it very plain. He said in John 14:21, "He that loveth me keepeth my commandments." In verse 24, He said the opposite: "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." If you love the Lord, you will obey Him; if you do not love Him, you will disobey Him. Love is not some ethereal feeling

floating around in the universe. Love is obedience. He said in 1 John 5:3, "And 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 keeping His commandments. I have four daughters. Two of my daughters are identical twins.

When my girls were little, they would sit on my lap, kiss me on the cheek, and say, “Daddy, I love you. Daddy, I love you.” I was happy to hear them say that, but I would always tell them, “Girls, I’m thankful you love your father. But if you really love me, you will demonstrate it by obedience. If you tell me you love me and do not obey me, then you really do not love me.”

That is exactly what our Lord said: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” If you love Him, you will be obedient. If you do not love Him, you will not keep His commandments. It is just that simple. Proverbs 14:2 says, “He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.”

In Wayne, Michigan, a gunman was thwarted in an attempted mass shooting at Cross Point Community Church. According to the New York Times, police said the gunman arrived wearing camouflaged clothing and a tactical vest. He was armed with an AR-15-style rifle with more than a dozen fully loaded magazines, a semiautomatic handgun with an extended magazine, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition. The shooter was fatally shot by church security before he could gain access to the church, which was filled with children attending vacation Bible school.

There are some things that boggle my mind. I can understand adultery in one sense of the word, but I cannot wrap my mind around pedophilia—an adult desiring a child. Likewise, I can understand an adult, in a fit of anger, hurting or even killing someone with whom he was angry. But I cannot understand people killing folks they do not even know, shooting them for no reason whatsoever. I can understand fighting, but I cannot understand someone driving by in a car and emptying a weapon into a house full of people they do not know, without knowing who is inside. Why would people do something like that?

The answer is that they love death; they do not love life. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles, chapter 15. Look at verses 5 and 6: “And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.”

Those times were times when there was no peace to him that went out or to him that came in. They were times when men forsook God and God's law, and trouble was on every side. Murder, mayhem, and violence were the results of forsaking God and His laws. Israel lived in gross neglect and contempt of God, His law, and His worship. There was no safety for travelers going from one point to another; the highways were infested with thieves and robbers.

Yes, those were times when people wanted to rape, rob, kill, and destroy. There was no peace to him that came in or to him that went out. In other words, you could not escape it; you could not get away from it. It was everywhere you turned. Likewise today, it is almost impossible to go anywhere with a large crowd and remain safe. You cannot go to a large mall. You cannot go to a large concert.

Look at the man out in Las Vegas who shot out of a window. It was him. But somebody did at the concert. There were ample targets. I am simply pointing out that it was those times. Judges chapter 15 verse 6 says it like this: “In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travelers walked through byways.” In other words, you could not even walk on the main road.

Matthew Poole said it like this: “Through byways, partly because of the Canaanites, who, besides the public births and tributes they laid upon them, waited for all opportunities of doing them mischief secretly, their soldiers watching for travelers in common roads, and as usual in such in times of war, partly because of the robbers, even of their own people, who having cast off the fear and worship of God, and there was no king or ruler in Israel to restrain or punish them, and being also many of them reduced to great want through the oppression of the Canaanites, it is not strange, in those times of public disorder, divers of Israelites themselves did break forth into acts of injustice and violence, even against their own brethren,

whom they could meet in the convenient places which made travelers seek for the bypass."

This is those times when we are not even safe in our churches. We must understand that it is the aim of the enemy to cause us to fear. I would encourage you to read through the Bible and underline all the "fear nots." We are not to be given to fear.

The prepared individual is not fearful. What does the Bible say? The prudent man perceives evil and hideth himself, but the foolish man continues on his way and is destroyed. One is not safe anywhere, it seems, today. They want to make us fearful in our churches and homes, but that will not happen if you are trained and understand the truth of God's Word. I am going to make a statement.

I know there are ladies here. My wife, Michael and these boys know, and Brother Christman knows: my wife is one person you do not want shooting at you. Outside of Jesus Christ and His so great salvation, the only thing I know that will give a woman absolute confidence is to have firearms, be trained, and know that she can use them to defend herself quickly and accurately. We need not fear if we are prepared individuals.

The church at Eastern Oaks in Montgomery, Alabama, about four hours from me, experienced a robbery at gunpoint on November 20, 2025, during a men's ministry event. A masked man entered with a handgun, confronted attendees, and ordered a group of men to kneel and empty their pockets. He lined them up against the wall, threatening to return and shoot them if they called the police within five minutes. The incident, captured on security cameras, lasted eleven minutes.

No one was injured, but seven people were robbed. Can you imagine being forced to your knees, emptying your pockets, and being lined up again? What do you think is next? You think that man is going to line us up and shoot us down one at a time, or shoot us in the back of the head while we are kneeling? On August 27, 2025, a shooter fatally shot two children, ages eight and ten, and wounded twenty-one others at the Annunciation Catholic Church and School in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In September, a thirty-five-year-old woman attempted to start a fire at Beth El Bible Church in El Paso, Texas, leaving a burning bag near an outside wall. Authorities said the bag contained a paper plate with hateful language inscribed on it. A pastor noticed the flames and acted quickly, extinguishing the fire before it caused danger.

Folks, we are living in those times. We have allowed our government schools to indoctrinate our children. You say, "But we bring our children to church three hours a week versus forty hours a week." I simply point out that we need to understand our responsibility to teach our own children and train our own children.

Look where we are today. We have not cried out against transgenderism, sexual immorality, theft, or all the immorality found throughout our country. We have not trained our children; we let them associate with all of these people, and they tend to think, "Everything's fine. Everything's okay." You know what the Bible says?

God asked this question in Psalm 4:2: "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?" Leasing is lying. Vanity refers not only to that which is useless and worthless, but also to idolatry. When you and I are disobedient to God, we are lying against God because we are saying He is not worthy of our obedience; He is not sovereign. Isaiah 59:13 says, "In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart the words of falsehood."

Those that hate Jesus Christ love death. They hate Christ, the Bible, the Word of God, and God's lawful authority over them. Yet Psalm 97:10 commands, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." We are commanded to hate evil.

Proverbs 18:21 says that death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. The one who loves life eats the fruit of life; those who love death eat the fruit of death. Death will ultimately come from God's sovereign vengeance. Deuteronomy says, "If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take

hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.” And He shall do so.

There is a philosophical principle known as Occam’s Razor: the simplest answer to a problem is usually the correct answer. There may be many answers as to why people are so wicked and vile, but the simplest answer is this: they hate Jesus Christ. They hate His Word, His authority, and His commandments.

Remember, the Scripture said, our Lord said, "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death."

I have two quotes with which I will close. The first concerns church shootings: What can we learn from the patterns of attacks on houses of worship? This was February 2, 2026, by OmniAlert. Up 71% of all violent incidents that occurred at religious institutions from 2000 to 2024 happened outside, such as in parking lots or at outdoor events. This shows that not only the inside, but also the outside of church properties, must be secured. Most shootings in houses of worship happen on Sunday mornings, when congregations are gathered for services. This is when religious activities are at their peak, so they are more vulnerable to attacks like shootings. Geographically, church shootings are more common in the South and in the Midwest.

This is likely due to regional differences in the frequency of church gatherings, the number of religious centers, and possibly increased access to firearms. Knowing these timing and location trends helps us prepare and implement security measures during peak times and vulnerable seasons.

One more quote is from the Family Research Council. Its newest edition of Hostility Against Churches in the United States analyzes incidents from 2024 and records 415 hostile incidents across 383 churches: vandalism, 284; arson, 55; bomb threats, 14; armed aggression, 28, more than double the 12 identified in 2023; and other crimes, 47. The top affected states include California, where 69 happened; New York, 57; Pennsylvania, 35; Florida, 23; and Texas, 23.

Only about 30% of suspects have been arrested, and no federal prosecutions have occurred despite federal laws criminalizing attacks on houses of worship. Other religious institutions are also under threat. A 2024 Family Research Council report noted an 800% increase in hostile acts against American houses of worship over six years, including the 2023 arson at Seattle Lutheran Church and bomb threats against Christian churches in Arizona. These attacks reflect a growing pattern of religious hostility driven by political, cultural, and ideological tensions, with no sign of abatement.

We must learn to protect ourselves and our families. We must learn to protect our neighbors and our friends. God has given us that responsibility. God expects us to do it, and God is not going to do it for each one of us. We must trust in Him. And you say, "But Brother Weaver, what if I don't have a weapon?" Well, you'll have to play Samson.

Pick up the jawbone of an ass or whatever is nearby and use whatever is necessary to defend your life.

Suppose Brother Michael walked up to me and said, "Pastor, I'm upset with you. I'm angry with you. And I think I'm just going to shoot you." And I looked at Brother Michael and said, "Well, if you shot me, you just get me to heaven a whole lot quicker. And I'm ready to die, so just do whatever spins your wheels. If you feel like shooting me, just go ahead and shoot me."

You know what I would be doing? I'd be violating the sixth commandment. Because the sixth commandment is not only negative; it's positive: Thou shalt preserve life. I have a duty to preserve my life. I would have to look at him and say, "Michael, you might try to kill me. But I can assure you, before you try to kill me, I'm going to be drawing my weapon against you, and I'm going to do everything I can to preserve my life. And I'll have to kill you to preserve my life. That's exactly what I'll do. Because I'm going to obey the sixth commandment."

The sixth commandment demands that we preserve and protect not only our lives, but the lives of others. Church security is historical, it's biblical, and it is a ministry.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we commit these words and truths unto thee and ask you to apply them in our hearts. Give us grace and give us mercy, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

# A Consuming Fire

February 2, 2012

## Introduction: The Jealousy and Fire of God

Deuteronomy 4:24 says, “For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.” We will come back later and look at the context, but notice that verse again: “For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.” Have you ever considered the fact that God is a jealous God? If you have thought about that, have you ever considered the implications of it? The Bible also says that God is a consuming fire. If you have meditated upon that reality, then you must ask, What are the implications of it? You must also ask whether there is a connection between God's jealousy and His being a consuming fire. In other words, are these two truths interrelated? We will consider God as a consuming fire and as a jealous God.

## Defining Godly Jealousy

Whenever I refer to the jealousy of God, you must understand that God's jealousy is not sinful or wicked in any way. There is in the Bible a godly jealousy, and certainly there is an ungodly jealousy. It is not sinful for us to be jealous if we are jealous in a godly manner.

However, our jealousy is usually not based upon scriptural principle, nor is it like God's jealousy in any way. Usually, our jealousy is sinful and wicked. But there is a godly jealousy, and it is possible to be jealous in a godly manner.

Our English word “jealous,” or “jealousy,” is derived from the Latin word “zelosus,” which is also the source of our word “zeal.” When you realize that God is a jealous God, you realize that He is also a zealous God. There are basically three definitions of jealousy. The first two are biblical and can be applied directly to God, and they should also be applied to God's people.

First, to be jealous means that you are intolerant of rivalry or unfaithfulness. To be jealous in a godly manner means that you are intolerant of rivalry or unfaithfulness. Certainly God is jealous in this sense. In Isaiah 42:8 God says, “I am the Lord, that is my name. My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” God is jealous for His honor and His glory. He is intolerant of rivalry and unfaithfulness. You and I should be jealous in that manner as well.

Second, to be jealous means that one is vigilant in guarding a possession. Certainly that applies to God. Since we belong to Him, we are His possessions. Zechariah 2:8 says, “For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.” God is saying, “I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. I am going to protect you. I am going to defend you. You are mine.”

The Apostle Paul expressed the same jealousy over his converts. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 he said, “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” Paul said, “I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy.” Very obviously, there is a godly jealousy and there is an ungodly jealousy. Certainly husbands and wives should be jealous over each other in this respect.

Remember, the second definition means that one is vigilant in guarding a possession. When I say that husbands and wives should be jealous in this respect, do not become upset over the word “possession,” or over the word “property.” If I say my wife is my

possession or my property, that is a biblical expression. The word "property" comes from the Latin "proprius," literally meaning belonging to oneself or one's own. Biblically, I can say that my wife is my property, and she can say that I am her property. That is, we belong to each other.

Parents should view their children as their property as well. Children belong first unto the Lord and, secondly, to the parents as their stewardship. But they never belong to the state. God did not give children to the state. We should therefore be jealous over our spouses and our children in this way: we guard them vigilantly and protect them.

Third, the word jealousy with which we are most familiar describes an unhealthy and unbiblical attitude. Unhappily, it is this attitude that we most often identify with. In this respect, jealousy denotes a hostile attitude toward a rival, or toward one believed to enjoy an advantage that we do not have.

God could never be jealous in this way because God is unique. No one ever has an advantage over God. This should never characterize our lives either. God made us and created us the way that we are, and we should be content with the way He made us. I should not be jealous of James because he has a wonderful head of hair and I do not. He does have an advantage over me in that aspect, but I am far more charming than he is, so I have an advantage over him. It does not matter what we look like, as long as we understand that God made us the way He made us and that we should be content with that. We should never consider another person a rival who has some advantage that we do not have. We have advantages that they do not have. There is no reason to be jealous in that way.

## Biblical Evidence: God Is Jealous

So let us ask and answer a simple question from Scripture: Is God jealous? The answer is most definitely yes. He is jealous in the biblical sense of the word. Hold Deuteronomy 4; we will come back there. Turn to Exodus, and look in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 5. Exodus 20:5.

Exodus 20:5 says, “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them,” that is, to idols, “nor serve them.” Why? “For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” Now God has just declared that He is a jealous God. In Exodus 34:14 we discover that He is not only a jealous God, but that “Jealous” is one of the names of God: “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

Deuteronomy 5:9 repeats the declaration: “Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them. For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” Deuteronomy 6:15 says, “For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you; lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.” It is amazing how many times God says this in the Bible.

Joshua said, “Choose you this day whom you will serve,” but notice what he says in Joshua 24:19: “And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord.” Why? “For he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.” Here is what Joshua is saying: You had better not trifle with God.

Ezekiel 39:25 says, “Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name.” Joel 2:18 says, “Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.” Nahum 1:2 says, “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries. He reserveth wrath for his enemies.”

In Zechariah 1:14, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.” Finally, Zechariah 8:2 says, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.” I hope you remember the question asked in the introduction: Is there a connection between God being a jealous God and God being a consuming fire? If you have paid attention to these verses, you will understand that the answer is yes. In fact, the last passage makes the

connection very obvious: God was jealous for Zion with great jealousy and with great fury.

## The Connection: Jealousy and Consuming Fire in Context

Return to Deuteronomy 4:24. I want to read that verse, and then I want to show you the context in which it appears: “For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.” Now let me tell you, in the context which I am going to show you, the jealousy of God is associated especially with idolatry and disobedience. Moses said in verse 14, “And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments.” Why? “That ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.” It does not do you any good to memorize Scripture, listen to Scripture, and hear Scripture if you are not going to obey it. God gave these statutes and judgments so that they might be done.

Verse 15 says, “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire.” They were not to corrupt themselves by making “a graven image,” the likeness of male or female, of any beast on the earth, of any winged fowl in the air, of anything creeping on the ground, or of any fish in the waters beneath the earth. They were not to lift their eyes to heaven and, seeing the sun, moon, stars, and all the host of heaven, be driven to worship and serve them. These were things “which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.” But the Lord had taken Israel and brought them out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be unto Him “a people of inheritance,” as they were that day.

**SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 4:21-26 (KJV)**

> "Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance: But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land. Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the Lord thy God hath

> forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it. Ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed."
>
> Isn't that interesting? The context of God being a jealous God and a consuming fire is the context of idolatry and disobedience. In other words, God is jealous for His honor, His glory, and His praise. God will not be treated as simply another God. He will brook no rivals. Christianity is not on a par with the other religions of the earth.

When anyone tries to tell you, “Well, we're all working for the same place; it really doesn't matter what you believe, just so you believe,” that is pure blasphemy and hogwash. God said that He would brook no rivals. If we took the time to go through the book of Exodus, we would understand how God destroyed not only the Egyptians, but also the gods of Egypt. The same fate awaits the false gods of this day and time.

## God Revealed as Fire: Non-Consuming and Consuming

Remember, God is a jealous God, even a consuming fire. How did God reveal Himself on Mount Sinai? In Deuteronomy 4:11, Moses reminded the people what they saw: “And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.” The mountain burned with fire. In Deuteronomy 9:15, Moses said, “So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands.”

Exodus 19:18 is very descriptive: “And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.” God had descended upon Mount Sinai in a

mighty fire. When God revealed Himself to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, gave them His Law and His Word, and entered into a covenant with them, He revealed Himself as a fire, but it was a non-consuming fire.

It did not consume them. It did not consume Moses. It did not even consume the mountain; the mountain still stands. The fire was a demonstration not only of God's purity, but also of God's power. Remember when Moses approached the burning bush that did not burn? Moses said, “I will now turn aside, and see this great sight.” God spoke to him from the bush: “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” God has revealed Himself as a fire in several places, but as a non-consuming fire. Yet God has also revealed Himself as a consuming fire. Why did Moses say in Deuteronomy 4:24 that God is a jealous God, even a consuming fire?

You remember Numbers chapter 16. God did reveal Himself in a consuming fire. Dathan and Abiram and Korah and their company rebelled against the Lord. The earth opened up and swallowed them alive, but there were 250 men with their censers before the Lord. What did God do? God sent fire from heaven and consumed them all.

What happened to Nadab and Abihu when they offered strange fire before the Lord? God sent fire from heaven and consumed them. What happened in Numbers 21? When the people murmured and complained and spake against God, God sent fiery serpents to destroy them.

## The Pillar of Fire: Light to Israel, Darkness to Egypt

The truth God is giving us is a two-fold truth. On the one hand, God is pure and holy as a flame of fire, protecting His people and providing for His people. On the other hand, God is a consuming fire, defending His people and destroying His enemies.

Look at Exodus 13:22. God was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness. The Bible says, "He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." How did God lead them? With a pillar of a

cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The cloud moved during the day, and they moved during the day. The cloud stayed during the day, and they stayed during the day. During the night, if the pillar of fire moved, they moved. If the pillar of fire stayed still, they sat still. When Moses had gotten the children of Israel to the Red Sea, Pharaoh said, "Man, they're trapped."

The mountains were on one side, the desert on the other, and the sea in front of them. Pharaoh could come up behind them and whip them in a minute—no problem. But look in Exodus 14:20. Pharaoh comes upon them at night. How did God lead the children of Israel? At night, with a pillar of fire:

“And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.”

What was happening during the night? This pillar of fire gave light to the Israelites, while it gave darkness to the Egyptians. What did God do to Pharaoh and the Egyptian army? He consumed them utterly, totally, and completely.

Now listen to this: “For even the Lord thy God is a jealous God, He is a consuming fire.” Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 9:3. How applicable this is in our day and time. We will return to the context in a moment, but notice the verse:

“Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the Lord hath said unto thee.”

God is going to bring the children of Israel into the land, going before them as a consuming fire. He is going to destroy those enemies completely, totally. Deuteronomy 9:3 is very interesting because God is giving Israel a warning.

## Warning Against Self-Righteousness (Deuteronomy 9)

In this passage, God warns Israel not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. He warns them not to think they will acquire Canaan land by their might, their power, or their righteousness.

You and I have been blessed immeasurably by the grace of God. Is it not true that so many times we attribute the blessings of God to our ability, our power, our work, our strength, or our wisdom? Let us read Deuteronomy 9:1–6 carefully. God says, “Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven, A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak! Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the Lord hath said unto thee. Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.”

Do you realize that in our most spiritual moment, in our most heavenly exercised moment of faith, we are still nothing but sinners? Our self-works and righteousnesses are nothing but filthy rags. God said, “I want you to make this clear in your mind. I'm not blessing you and giving you this because you're righteous. You're not righteous in and of yourself. You're a stiff-necked, rebellious, wicked people.” But He said, “I'm doing this because of my covenant. And

I'm doing this because the nations that you're going to dispossess are even more wicked and vile than you are."

Psalm 44 says again that it was not by their bow, strength, might, or power that they got that land, but by God's grace and God's strength. Here is an example of the righteous wrath and anger of God as a consuming fire. God said that He would go before them as a consuming fire. A fire burns up everything in its path. It is irresistible, unstoppable, and total and complete destruction.

## The Fear of God Among the Heathen and Believers

As a boy, I helped my father burn off a thirty- or forty-acre field. It was full of dry sage grass about that high. I had already plowed a firebreak around it, and I told my father, "Give me a little while to go to the far end, and I will back-burn so it will not jump our firebreak. Then you can set it on fire with the wind. It will burn very quickly."

I set the sagebrush on fire and back-burned fifteen or twenty feet. Then I gave Daddy the sign to set it on fire with the little wind we had. I was in the middle of the field. I hope you know that fire makes its own wind. When he set it on fire, it took everything I could do to beat it out of that field before it consumed everything between him and me.

If you have never seen fire sweep irresistibly and unstoppably, you are in for a great surprise. God said, "That's exactly how I am. I am a consuming fire." When God moves as a consuming fire, one should undoubtedly stand in awe and fear before Him.

I want to show you the attitude even of the heathen when they understand that God is a consuming fire. Turn to the book of Joshua, chapter 2. You know the story of Rahab, how she hid the two spies. Have you ever wondered why she hid them? I have said this for years: I have never done it, but one of these days, if the Lord allows me to live, I am going to bring a message on "Confessions of a Harlot." I want you to see her confession. She was not naming names as far as men are concerned, but she made a great confession.

Rahab the harlot said, "And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For

we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had 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 in earth beneath."

What did she say? "When we heard what your God had done, our hearts melted. We were faint. There was no courage in anyone. We were afraid. We were scared." Anybody who has one eye and half a sense ought to be afraid of God as a consuming fire.

In 1 Samuel 4:8, when Hophni and Phinehas, as wicked as they were, brought the ark of God into the camp of Israel, all the Israelites shouted. When the Philistines heard the shouts, they said, "Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods?" They were pagans, but they knew the power of God.

Isaiah confessed, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites." Then comes the question: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Why? Our God is a consuming fire.

Each of you ought to understand the ramifications of the fact that God is a consuming fire to His enemies. If not, look at 2 Thessalonians 1:7: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

To you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Very obviously, He is a consuming fire to His enemies. Just as He consumed the Amorites, the Jebusites, the Hittites, the Hivites, and the Perizzites, none can stand before Him. He is irresistible.

## New Testament Application: Hebrews 12:18-29

Some may think, “Boy, I’m glad I didn’t live in Old Testament times,” or, “I sure am glad that I’m a Christian and this truth doesn’t apply to me.” Hold on. We have not read all the verses yet. Hebrews 12:29 has the same identical truth as Deuteronomy 4:24 and Deuteronomy 9:3: “For our God is a consuming fire.”

Let me give you information that may be helpful to your thinking. God has not changed. God never changes. God is immutable. The same God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. He is just as holy, majestic, and just as He was in the Old Testament.

The difference in Hebrews 12:29 is that this passage is applied primarily to believers. Deuteronomy 4 was to be applied to believers. There is a truth of God as a consuming fire being applied to unbelievers, but here it is applied to believers. Consider the context of Hebrews 12, beginning in verse 18: “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest.” He is referring to Mount Sinai.

“And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.” The Israelites begged Moses, “You find out what God says. Let us not hear God’s voice anymore. We’re afraid.” Verse 20 says, “For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.” Anyone or anything that touched Mount Sinai was to be killed. Why? God is holy, and sinners cannot approach unto God unless they approach through a sacrifice, through a mediator. Verse 21 says, “And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.”

**SCRIPTURE READING - Hebrews 12:22-29 (KJV)**

> Now look what the author of the book of Hebrews says. You haven't come to Mount Sinai, so horrible. But look in verse 22: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." Now you've come to the one true and the living God in heaven as He's revealed Himself, not on Mount

> Sinai, but as to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, verse 23, "which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."
>
> Now we're talking about the New Testament, grace, and mercy. Watch verse 24: "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Now we have the new covenant. Now we have Christ. Verse 25: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."
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> Now what's going to be remaining? Here's what it is: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved," that's the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of mercy, "let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."

Verses 28 and 29 go together. Just because we are in the new covenant does not mean that God has changed. God is still the same. Just as we understood in the Old Testament that God is a jealous God and consequently a consuming fire, that truth is applicable today. The reality that our God is a consuming fire should motivate us to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

When the author of Hebrews speaks about “our God,” he is referring to the covenant relationship that we have with God. Thus, God is our Father. But although He is our God and our Father, He is still a consuming fire. If we understand that He is our God and our Father, that should prevent despair when we consider the inevitable purity and inflexible justice of such a holy God. The fact that He is a consuming fire should check any presumption, irreverence, flippancy, lack of consideration, and failure to serve Him in the way that He demands.

## Practical Exhortations and the Mercy of God

Simply because He is our God and Father, because we are His children, and because we stand in grace, mercy, and favor, does not give us any right to disregard, disrespect, or dishonor Him. He is still the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Just as we expect our children to honor and obey us, God expects us as His children to honor and obey Him.

God has not laid aside His majesty, splendor, sovereignty, or inflexible justice. God is still God. Ezekiel Hopkins wrote in 1680, "Even those who stand in the highest in the love and favor of God, and have the fullest assurance thereof, and of their interest in Him as their God, ought, notwithstanding, to fear Him as a sin-avenging God and as a consuming fire."

We may be His children, but He is still God. God requires us to retain in our minds a due apprehension of the majesty of His person, the holiness of His nature, the severity of His justice, and an ardent jealousy for His worship.

Hebrews 12:28 says, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved," Nothing is going to shake the Kingdom of Grace. It cannot be moved. The New World Order is not going to destroy the Kingdom of Grace. The Bilderbergers will not dismantle God's Kingdom. "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved."

In light of that, "let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and" godly fear. We cannot serve Him acceptably unless we serve Him with reverence and godly fear. It is godly fear that helps us remember that God is still God. He cannot be played with, trifled with, ignored, or dishonored. He is still God.

This godly fear is referred to in a number of verses. Psalm 4:4 says, "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Stand in awe of God, His righteousness, His holiness, and His perfections. Psalm 33:8 says, "Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him." In other words, the world better recognize that God is God. Psalm 89:7 says, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."

I do not care how funny a joke is; you should never joke about God. You should never refer to Him as "the old man upstairs." He is not the old man upstairs. He is the sovereign God of heaven and earth. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.

Habakkuk 2:20 says, "But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." The earth ought to shut its mouth and listen to God. He is God. He is saying, "I'm not someone to be trifled with." Without grace and its actual operation, we cannot serve God acceptably, without reverence and godly fear. You and I need to keep in mind His awful wrath, so that we would dread displeasing and dishonoring Him. We need to keep in mind His majesty, that our hearts may be humbled, and His wondrous love, that we would want to please, honor, and adore Him.

Isaiah 8:13 says, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear and your dread. One of Jeb Stuart's favorite sayings was, "Fear God and you have no one else to fear."

Since God is a jealous God, whose name is Jealous, we should be extremely careful not to offend Him. We should never desert Him, deny Him, or detract from Him. God will not give His praise and honor to idols and images, and neither should we. Idolatry in the Bible is referred to as spiritual whoredom. Idolatry was the demise of Israel in the Old Testament; it was the demise of Israel in the New Testament; and it is the demise of Israel today. When we take the honor, glory, and praise that belong to God and heap them upon ourselves or someone else, it is idolatry.

God is not who we wish Him to be, who we want Him to be, or who we think He is. God is who He is. His very name is, "I AM THAT I AM." We should have an eye of jealousy in our lives concerning our God and our relationship with Him, doing nothing to displease Him. We should make sure that we give Him our entire adoration and affection.

Secondly, God is not only a jealous God, but He is a consuming fire, with a heavy hand to punish all affronts, especially in His

worship. Because God is specifically jealous over idols, He will not give that praise and honor to others. He is a consuming fire. His wrath is revealed against sinners, and it is a dreadful and destroying wrath.

In Hebrews 10:27, it is called, "a fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." He is our God, and He is a light to those who serve Him. He is a consuming fire to those who hate Him. But as God's people, we must also remember that in 1 John 5:16, the Scripture says there is a sin unto death. We need to stand in awe and sin not. Throughout Scripture, we're repeatedly taught that God is a jealous God. Moreover, He's a consuming fire. But God is also a merciful God.

Those two things are not irreconcilable. Deuteronomy 4:24 says, "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."

"When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (For the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them." Even as the Bible teaches that our God is a consuming fire, the same breath teaches that He is a merciful God, when we repent and turn to Him.

It should be an extreme encouragement to realize that God is jealous over His possessions. We who have repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are His possessions. We belong to Him. He will defend us, deliver us, and provide for us. We are His property, His possession, and His inheritance. Deuteronomy 32:9 says, “For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”

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.” Have you ever stopped to think about this? We are His, and He is ours.

He is my Father who is in heaven. Although He is my Father, and I am in covenant relation with Him through Jesus Christ, He is still my God, infinitely holy and not to be trifled with. If you want to be more holy, you need to understand who God is. Understanding who God is, and that He will not be trifled with, will make you very careful not to sin against Him. He is a jealous God and a consuming fire.

Father, we thank You for the truth that Thou art not only a jealous God, but also a merciful God, and yet, at the same time, Thou art a consuming fire, because Thou art holy and pure and just, and Thou dost hate sin. Make us more conscious of who Thou art. May we not neglect Thee, forget Thee, deny Thee, dishonor Thee, desert Thee, or denigrate Thee in any way whatsoever, but may we remember that Thou art the sovereign God of heaven and earth, a jealous God whose name is Jealous, and a consuming fire. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for we confess and acknowledge that Thou art a consuming fire. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

# The Removal of the Battlements

February 8, 2012

## Introduction: The Biblical Battlement

Let's begin with Deuteronomy 22 and then turn also to Jeremiah chapter 5. Deuteronomy 22 and then Jeremiah chapter 5. I want you to listen to the title of the message today. The title is, "The Removal of the Battlements." You will understand that momentarily. Deuteronomy chapter 22, and if you would go ahead and turn to Jeremiah chapter 5, we're going to only read one verse in Jeremiah chapter 5 and then come back to that verse. In reality, Jeremiah chapter 5 is going to be the text that I'm going to be developing, and Deuteronomy 22 is going to be basically the introduction. So, notice if you would, Deuteronomy 22 and verse 8, where God says, "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence." And then if you'd look in Jeremiah chapter 5 and verse 10, God says concerning Jerusalem, "Go ye up upon her walls and

destroy, but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's."

We have lost the concept of battlements and consequently we do not understand their importance or the importance of their loss. Why in the world would God command if you built a new house that you build a battlement upon its roof? So you have to ask the question, what is a battlement? And the parallel question, why is a battlement important? Well, the Hebrew word for battlement actually refers to a parapet or a balcony. Now, a parapet is a wall-like barrier at the edge of the roof, terrace, balcony, or other structure. It's also a protective wall upon a fortification or sometimes an outside wall. Many of you have seen pictures of some of the old battlefields where they would have sharpened poles sticking out like that. That would be a parapet in that sense of the word. It's a protective structure and that's basically what a battlement is. So when you think of the term battlement, you should automatically think of the word protection. So a battlement then was a safety railing. It was a means of protection.

Well, let's ask the question, why is it that we do not use battlements on our roofs today? The answer is very simple, because we do not use our roofs today in the same way that those roofs were used during Bible times.

Now there are a few houses that still have them. Alice was reared in a house that had two portions of flat roof over the porches, and each one of those had a door going out to the roof and you had an iron railing around that. It was a battlement. And so the battlement basically was to keep someone from falling off that flat porch area or that flat roof area that was over the porch.

You can probably find something similar to this, especially down in Florida. But the roofs of the houses in Palestine were flat and were used for various purposes such as diversions, recreation, meditation, and prayer. The owners and their guests would use their roofs to enjoy the fresh air, to converse, to dine, to dry fruits and vegetables, to wash, and for a myriad of other uses.

You have to remember that in Joshua chapter 2, Rahab hid the spies upon her roof and covered them with flax. Evidently, she was

drying the flax on the roof as well. You must also remember that it was on the roof that David stepped out to cool himself in 2 Samuel chapter 11 and spied Bathsheba, who was taking a bath upon her roof. Also, in Judges chapter 16, the Philistines were sitting upon the roof while they were mocking, humiliating, and making fun of Samson, when he pulled the house down upon them and slew hundreds of them.

## Biblical Law and the Sixth Commandment

So let us return to a previous question: Why in the world would God demand that a battlement be built upon a roof? In order to answer that question, you have to understand something about biblical law. Biblical law is taught throughout the entirety of Scripture. First of all, biblical law gives a broad general principle, such as the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not commit adultery." These are broad general principles. Secondly, biblical law gives specific cases, or case law, that illustrate those broad principles. Thirdly, biblical law gives the practical application. Once you have observed the principle and considered the specific case that illustrates it, you have to make an application to your present situation or present circumstance.

When you look at the sixth commandment in Exodus 20:13, it is very simple: "Thou shalt not kill." However, what most people do not understand is that the sixth commandment contains both a positive and a negative command. The negative command is that thou shalt do no murder, or thou shalt not take life unlawfully. Life can only be taken upon God's terms. As you read through the Bible, you will find eighteen specific reasons that God says life may be lawfully taken. If you add self-defense, there would be nineteen reasons. Thus, when God says, "Thou shalt not kill," He is saying, "Thou shalt not take life except upon my terms." There is a lawful taking of life and an unlawful taking of life. The positive command of the sixth commandment is, "Thou shalt preserve life." If it is our duty not to kill unlawfully, the parallel duty is that we must protect and preserve life.

There are specific cases in the Bible that illustrate this general principle. Deuteronomy 22:8 is one of them. Battlements were a means of protecting and preserving life. If there were no railings around the roof of the house, a fall would be fatal, and every house, instead of being a house of rejoicing, would become a house of mourning. Think of the children, as well as the visitors, who used the roof. Tradition states that the battlements around a roof had to be a minimum of three to three and a half feet high. Failure to build a battlement was failure to protect and preserve life. Hence God said, “When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof,” and gave the reason: “that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.” The man who did not build a battlement as God commanded was not only negligent, but also positively guilty.

## Lessons from Deuteronomy 22:8

A man who refused to build a battlement must be viewed in the same light as a murderer because he failed to protect and preserve life. The first lesson from Deuteronomy 22:8 is that we have an obligation and a duty to preserve and protect life. That is why God commanded a battlement to be built.

Secondly, though it is not so obvious, we have an obligation to remove potential sources of danger. A flat, unprotected roof was a source of danger. We must remove any dangerous situation. If we have rotten steps, we must repair them. If we have a cluttered yard, we must pick up the clutter and clean the yard to prevent someone from tripping and falling. If we have exposed electrical wires, we must cover them. We must do whatever is necessary to protect our surroundings, those who visit us, and those who are in our homes. Under Deuteronomy 22:8, therefore, we have an obligation to remove unsafe hazards from our homes.

Thirdly, we must be prepared to assume liability for our actions or our lack of action. Several passages illustrate this truth clearly. Exodus 21, beginning with verse 31, shows that a man is responsible for his actions, or for failing to protect others. "Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. If the ox shall push a manservant or a

maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned."

The man is responsible for his animal that is goring. Especially if it is known to gore, he should have it sufficiently caged or fenced in.

Verse 33 says, "And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein; the owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his. And if one man's ox hurt another's, that he die; then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead ox also they shall divide. Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own."

So what is God saying? God says you have to assume responsibility and liability for your actions. If you dig a hole and do not cover it back up, and someone comes along, falls in, and breaks his leg, the man that dug the hole is responsible; he is liable. If you have an animal known to be vicious, God says you had better keep him caged up, because if he hurts someone or another animal, you are responsible. So God is saying there are assumptions of liability.

For instance, Exodus 22:6 gives another statement that we are responsible for our actions: "If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution." What does that mean? If I am your neighbor and start burning trash on a windy day, having nothing to prevent the fire from getting out, and it burns down your cornfield, then I am liable for your cornfield and for your loss. If it burns down your house, I am liable for your loss. Why? God is telling me that I am responsible according to His law. So very obviously, Deuteronomy 22:8 is telling us that we must assume liability for our actions. If we do not build a battlement and someone falls, then we are liable; we are responsible.

Fourthly, Deuteronomy 22:8 teaches us that we must be solicitous of the lives of our brethren and our neighbors. We must learn to look out for each other, help each other, and protect each other. We must also warn each other if we see something hazardous or problematic. The Bible says in Leviticus 19:17, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in

thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." If we do not warn, rebuke, or get on to our brother when something is wrong, it is evidence that we hate him. God says we are not to hate our brother, but to be solicitous toward him and warn and caution him if something around his life, home, or property is dangerous to him, his family, or others.

## Building According to God's Word

Based upon Deuteronomy 22 and verse 8, we have an obligation to build according to God's Word. I am not advocating that we get out and build battlements on our roofs when we never use our roofs. That is not what I am saying. Rather, as we desire to have the blessings of God upon our lives and desire to prosper, we must build our lives, our families, our churches, and our nation according to the principles and precepts of the Word of God. If we have a flat roof, yes, we should have a battlement on it if we are going to use it. But I am not necessarily talking about roofs at this particular point.

Think with me for a moment. When God said in Deuteronomy 22 and verse 8 that, when you build a house, you had to build a battlement upon the roof, He told you why: "that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence." Think how many deaths would have occurred had the battlements not been in place. How many children would have needlessly fallen to their deaths? How many adults would have tripped and fallen to the ground? For some of us at a certain age, you do not need something to trip over to fall. You just fall. You do not need Maryland around to push you down until your brother hurt it. Sometimes you just fall on your own. God is saying, Here is why these battlements must be here. If they were not there, children, adults, the elderly—any one of us—could simply trip or fall.

## The Spirit vs. the Letter of the Law

God is saying that the battlements must be in place, or certain death will ensue. It is possible to do the right thing in a wrong way. It is possible to obey and disobey at the same time. One could build a battlement weakly, install it improperly, or fail to tie it down securely. He could truthfully say that he had obeyed the letter of the

law: he had a battlement. But he had not obeyed the spirit of the law, because the spirit of the law said that the battlement was to preserve and protect life. If it is not tied down securely, or if it is weakly built, he has obeyed, but at the same time he has disobeyed. He might have a battlement, but it would not be the Lord's battlement. It is not what God demanded, nor is it there for the reason God demanded. It is also possible to erect the most secure battlement possible, have it installed correctly and tied down securely, and have it done in such a way that one personally believes it will keep anyone from falling to his death.

Simply stated, in that light, you are trusting in your own work and efforts, assuming that you are sufficient for whatever might occur. You may have fulfilled the letter of the law, and may even have fulfilled its spirit, but the battlement is not the Lord's; it is yours, because it is what you have done. You are trusting in it, taking pride in it, and boasting in the sufficiency of what you have done. It is your accomplishment. It is your work.

The principle of battlements applies to each of us personally, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally. We may build, but we may build in such a way as to procure the judgment of God. Consider the warning the Apostle Paul gave in 1 Corinthians 3: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” This clearly enunciates a principle. The Apostle Paul is not only talking about having the correct foundation; he is saying that we had better take heed how we build upon that foundation.

## Jeremiah 5: The Context of National Judgment

He is saying that we had better build biblically. Foundations are important. In Matthew chapter 7, our Lord talked about the man who built his house upon the rock and another who built his house upon the sand. The one that was built upon the sand, our Lord says, fell, “and great was the fall of that house.” But it is not just the foundation; it is how we build. We must not only consider our foundation, we must consider our battlements.

Now turn to Jeremiah chapter 5. I want to read the first 19 verses, because we are going to come back to verse 10, the verse I want to expound. I want you to see verse 10 in its context, because we are talking about the removal of the battlements. Remember, battlements are for protection. God says to 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. O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.”

**SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 5:1-19 (KJV)**

> I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bands. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities.
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> Every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased. How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning.
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> Every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord. They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil

> come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine: And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them. Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.
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> Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword. Nevertheless in those days, saith the Lord, I will not make a full end with you. And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the Lord our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.

God says, "Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's." Some time ago, I preached two messages from this text entitled, "Causes for National Judgment." In one of those messages, I used verse 10 as an application. But today I want us to look at verse 10.

The first nine verses of Jeremiah chapter 5 demonstrate the immorality, ungodliness, rebellion, and wickedness of the people. None cared for justice or judgment. No one wanted the truth. God told Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro throughout the streets of Jerusalem." He said, "If you can find just one man, just one, that cares anything about justice and truth, I'll pardon the entire nation."

Everyone was totally corrupt, interested only in sin, rebellion, idolatry, and wickedness. Jeremiah said, "I tried looking among the poor people, the common folks," but could find nobody. Then he said, "I'll get me to the great men. They have understood God's judgment. They've understood God's law." But everyone had burst the bonds and thrown off the restraints. No one listened to God. He

had sent prophet after prophet and preacher after preacher, but none listened, and no man repented of his sin. It was so bad that, in verse 9, God said, "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" God said, "I will destroy the nation."

## God Removes Protection and Empowers the Enemy

My question, in light of these verses, is this: How does God avenge himself, and how does God visit such a nation in judgment?

God, the sovereign God of heaven and earth, is our true Lord Protector. If He does not protect us, we are not protected at all. God gave up many nations. In verse 10 of Jeremiah chapter 5, we read how God gives up a nation to its enemies. Look at verse 10 again.

God says, “Go ye up upon her walls and destroy.” In this phrase He is giving permission, power, and authority to the Babylonians to come and pillage and destroy Jerusalem. Look at verse 17. The people of Judah and Jerusalem had fallen into the same sin as the pagans. Speaking of the Chaldeans, God says, “They shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.”

What were they doing? They were trusting in their battlements. When David went to conquer Jerusalem, where the Jebusites lived, those pagans trusted in their battlements as well. In 2 Samuel 5:6 we read, “And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.” In other words, they said, “David, we have such a strong wall and such strong battlements, even the lame and the blind can defend this city.”

There was no way, they thought, that David could get in. Yet verse 7 says, “Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David.” Note that it was the pagans, the wicked, who trusted totally in their battlements. They thought they had it made and that no one could get in.

Moab also trusted in the heights, rocks, and fortifications. Jeremiah 49:16 says, “Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord.” Then he says, “And Edom shall be a desolation.” Edom and Moab lived in the rocks and thought their cities were impregnable.

No one could penetrate their defenses. God said, "I will bring you down to the ground." So when you look in your Bibles at Jeremiah chapter 5 and verse 10, where God says, "Go ye up upon her walls and destroy," God is giving permission, authority, and power to the Chaldeans to pillage Jerusalem. He will enable and empower them to ascend the walls and enter the city without difficulty.

This was like the Jebusites, who said, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou canst not come in here." God said, "You think you've got battlements? You think you've got a protective wall? I've got news for you. I've got men that can jump and climb, and they'll get over those battlements without any problem whatsoever." Those battlements were not going to protect Jerusalem.

In Jeremiah 52, verses 7 and 14, we see what happened to the walls: "Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain." Then verse 14 says, "And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about."

What happened to those mighty protective walls? They were broken down and destroyed. The enemy had no problem scaling those walls or getting through those battlements. Amos 3:6 says, “Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” Shall there be evil, judgment, or visitation in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? In other words, God said, “I’ve allowed it.”

God was the one who gave permission. In Jeremiah 5:10, He gave the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, permission and authority to ascend Jerusalem's walls and destroy it. Notice what else He says in verse 10: "Go ye up upon her walls and destroy; but make not a full end." This phrase, "but make not a full end," has been interpreted in two different ways, based upon the translation from the Hebrew.

The first interpretation understands it in what we would call a good sense. It views God as somehow mitigating the extremity of His punishment. In other words, He says, "Do not just kill everybody, and do not just tear down everything. Do not let the consummation be full and complete. I will spare a few of them." The second interpretation, based upon the Hebrew, signifies a full end. In other words, "Go ye up upon her walls and destroy, and do not stop destroying until you make a full end." Let nothing hinder you; let the destruction be entire and complete.

Based upon the context and the extended context, probably the second interpretation is correct, because God was saying, "It's over for you. I'm removing your battlements. They're not mine, and you will be destroyed." Notice verse 10 again: "Go ye up upon her walls and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's." In their pride and arrogance, they assumed that Jerusalem was God's city because He had chosen it, and that they were God's people because He had chosen their fathers. They totally neglected the covenant and the promises. They did not remember that God had promised Jerusalem would be His throne if they continued to worship Him, obeyed His covenant, and obeyed His law. They totally forgot the fact that God said, "If you're going to

## The Wickedness of Jerusalem

God had said, "be my people, you will obey me." No. Instead of remembering those things, they had violated the covenant and broken God's law time after time after time, so much so that Jerusalem had become a den of thieves, a harlot city, the seat of idolatry, and God gave her up. I want to show you how bad it was. Isaiah chapter 1 shows how God addresses Judah and Jerusalem. Verse 1 says: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham,

Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." Note that this was the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Who are we talking about? Judah and Jerusalem.

Now look at verse 10. Look what God says to Judah and Jerusalem: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah." God calls them Sodom and Gomorrah. That's how perverse they had become and how wicked they were. Look at Jeremiah 23:14: "I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah." Again, God says they were nothing more than Sodom and Gomorrah. Their prophets committed adultery, walked in lies, and strengthened the hands of evildoers so that no one would return from his wickedness.

Go back to Jeremiah 4:14. Again, God asks this before He visits them: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" No one wanted to listen. That's why God told Jeremiah to run to and fro throughout the whole city of Jerusalem, to see if he could find just one man, just one. God said, "If you do, I'll pardon the entire nation. I'll forgive everyone." But he could not find one.

Now let me ask you, how wicked were Judah and Jerusalem? I want to show you the implication of God's command: "Take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's." Go first to Ezekiel chapter 14, beginning with verse 12.

**SCRIPTURE READING - Ezekiel 14:12-21 (KJV)**

> The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts: Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the

> Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate. Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves. Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. For thus saith the Lord God; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?
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> God says the city was so wicked, so corrupt, and so vile, that if Noah, Job, and Daniel were in it, they would only deliver their own selves.
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> When you look at Jeremiah 5 in verse 10, when God says, "Go ye up upon her walls and destroy; take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's," that is God sovereignly giving a decree for the enemy to come in and destroy. Here is the hard, hard implication. God is not only giving permission and power and authority for the enemy to come in to destroy, God is actually going to be transferring His power in the hands of the enemy, so that the enemy may effectually fight against His people. However, they were not His people.

They professed to be, but they did not trust in Him. They did not obey Him. They did not worship Him. They may have built their fenced cities, their walls, and their battlements, but they were not the Lord's. They did not trust in Him or look to Him. This is how grievous the statement is when God says, “Take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's.”

Jeremiah 21, verse 1, says, “The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying, Enquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of

Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the Lord will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us." The king sends word to Jeremiah: "You pray for us, because we do not want the Babylonians here. Pray that perhaps the Lord will send them away."

Then, in verse 3, Jeremiah says, "Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them in 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."

God said, "It is not just that they are coming. They are coming empowered by Me. Moreover, I personally will fight against you." He would turn back the weapons in their hands; their weapons would be useless, worthless, and profitless. What did God say? "Take away your battlements, for they're not the Lord's."

When God removes His sovereign protection from a people, a city, a home, a church, or a nation, He removes the battlements. They may still be in place, but He gives power to the enemy to come in, pillage, and destroy. God Himself fights against those whose battlements He removes.

## Applications for Today

Let me make a couple of applications. The first is this: What can defend us, or who can defend us, when the true Lord Protector, Jehovah God, has departed from us? When God says, "Take away our battlements," there is nothing that awaits us but sure and certain destruction. Washington, D.C., will not save us. Atlanta, Georgia, will not save us. When God removes the battlements, we are gone.

You know what God said in 2 Chronicles 13:7? "And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see." What did God do to their fathers? He gave them up to

desolation. He removed the battlements. That is why, in Psalm 81:12, God said, “So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.” God said, “I gave them up. I removed the battlements.” They had no protection.

There is nothing and no one that can replace the sovereign protection of the sovereign God of heaven and earth. If God removes our battlements, we are lost. When God refuses to be our protection, He will give us up into the hands of our enemies, exactly as He gave Jerusalem into the hands of the Babylonians.

Here is the second application: When a city, a people, or a nation is filled with sin, rebellion, and wickedness, God will not honor their fortifications, battlements, or defenses. Consider Numbers 14. God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and was going to send them into the land with a sword in their hand to slay all the inhabitants. He was going to give them the land of Canaan, with all its fruits. Of the spies, only Joshua and Caleb brought back a good and honest report; the rest brought back an evil report upon the Lord. Joshua and Caleb were trying to steal the people and tell them the truth. Verse 6 says, “And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes.” They said, “The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.”

Joshua and Caleb warned Israel: “Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.” Concerning the heathen, full of sin, wickedness, and rebellion, he said, “Their defence is departed from them. They’re just bread for us.” Let me tell you something, folks: when we become as sinful, rebellious, and ungodly as they are, our defence departs from us, and we become bread for the enemy. Period.

Thirdly, when God removes our battlements, He will choose our destruction. He chose the destruction of Jerusalem. In Jeremiah chapter 5, verse 15, God says, "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not,

neither understandest what they say. Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men."

"And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword."

God said, "I'll bring upon you a great and mighty nation, one that you don't even know about, one that you're unaware of their language, you can't understand them." God chose to bring the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, and the Assyrians. When God removes the battlements, He chooses the destruction. He chooses which nations to use, and He can bring destruction from either near or far. It does not matter to Him. He can bring men and warriors that we have never dreamed of or heard of, and they will become our masters, and we will be bread for them.

The last application is this: I hope you now see the importance and necessity of battlements. The very safest, the very best battlement is the protection of the sovereign God of heaven and earth. You remember, as I preached last week, "Except the Lord build the city, except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." When God is for us, it does not matter who is against us. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:31, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

If God is for us, it does not matter who is against us, because God is our sovereign protector. But if God is not for us, it does matter who is against us, because they will destroy us. What does this mean? It means you and I must learn to cry to God now, in this day, in this time, in this age, to awaken His sleeping people. We need to pray that God would grant us repentance and faith.

We are at a very severe turning point in this country. We are either going to repent and go back to the God of heaven and earth, who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ based upon the Word of God, or we are going to be destroyed. Period. It could be from Islam,

our own stupidity, our corrupt rulers, or our own apathy. But if God removes the battlements, we are gone.

We need to learn to trust Him, obey Him, worship Him, cry unto Him, repent, and exercise faith. Folks, it is time to wake up. When God says, "Take away your battlements, for they are not the Lord's," the implication is that God Himself will fight against such a people. Woe to the man, and woe to the people, against whom God rises up in arms.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we cry to Thee and pray to Thee. We want to see the absolute importance and necessity of worshiping Thee, obeying Thee, and bringing our lives into conformity to Thy Word. We want to see the necessity of having the divine battlements, the sovereign protection of the Lord God of heaven and earth. O God, awaken Thy people in this country. Grant us repentance and faith; grant us to return. Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. May we honor Thee in our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

# Are You Groaning and Crying Yet?

February 17, 2012

*John Weaver examines Exodus 2:23-25, where Israel finally cried out to God under unbearable bondage, and urges believers to recognize the depth of national corruption and cry out to God for deliverance.*

**SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 2:23-25 (KJV)**

## Introduction: The Cry of Israel in Exodus 2

> And it came to pass in the process of time, that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.

Each of us has groaned and cried for many different reasons. We have lost loved ones, failed in our desires, suffered financial setbacks, and been inundated with medical difficulties. In fact, every one of us has experienced all kinds of problems. There are many and

varied circumstances that cause us to groan and cry. However, I submit to you that most of us have never groaned and cried the way the children of Israel did in Exodus chapter 2. They groaned and cried because of oppression, persecution, and tyranny. Look again at these three short verses. The Bible says they sighed and they cried.

## The Nature of Their Groaning and Crying

Sighing and crying go together. The word "sigh" means to mourn and to groan with great pain and sorrow. The word "cry" means to assemble together to cry out for help. So it took great mourning and great groaning and great pain and great sorrow to finally get the Israelites to cry out to God for help. Notice what the scripture says: "it came to pass in the process of time that the king of Egypt had died." Perhaps they expected when the former ruler died, they thought maybe some relief might come with the change of administration. Let me put it like this: the Democrat was defeated and the Republican was voted in. But the situation did not change. They had changed masters but not miseries. When will we ever learn that salvation and deliverance are not found in political parties? They cried, the Bible says, and their cry came up to God. They not only sighed and groaned inwardly, but so great was their oppression, so great was their persecution and tyranny, they could not help but cry out aloud. And such was the greatness and vehemence of their cry that the Bible said that God heard their cries. In other words, it reached the ears of Almighty God.

## The Harshness of Egyptian Bondage

Why were they groaning and crying so? Look back in Exodus chapter 1 and verse 14. The Bible says, "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor, and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field, all their service wherein they made them serve was with rigor." Note they made them serve with hard bondage in mortar and brick. Years ago I had a friend who was a brick mason who had a stroke. He was able to recover and use one hand. I helped him during his stroke. I helped him a little before his stroke when he was getting sick, with his brickwork. If you've never mixed mortar, I could ask Roy, if you've never poured cement and carried cement, we

have done that. It is hard, absolutely back-breaking work. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Leviticus, chapter 26, and let me show you what God said concerning the deliverance of the children of Israel. Notice Leviticus chapter 26 and verse 13. God says, "I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their bondman, and I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you to go upright." What does he mean, "made you to go upright"?

## God Hears the Cries of the Oppressed

In other words, you started walking straight and tall. You weren't bent over because of the bondage and the oppression. By the way, when the Bible says that they cried and God heard their cries, the Bible informs us that God will always hear the cries of people who are persecuted and oppressed. For instance, go back in your Bibles to the book of Exodus chapter 22, and let's begin looking there at verse 22. God says, "You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with a sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children shall be fatherless." What did God say? "You shall not afflict them. If you afflict them, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cries." Did you know that in the book of James chapter 5 and verse 4, God sends a warning to rich people and He says this, "Behold, the hire of your laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is kept back by you by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of the Sabbath." God said when people are oppressed, when they're defrauded, when they're persecuted, and they cry, I will hear them. Now, Israel was defrauded. Israel was oppressed, persecuted, and tyrannized. Therefore, God said in Exodus chapter 6 and verse 5, "I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant." Note what God said, "I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel."

## Why Israel Delayed Crying Out

Now I've got a question that needs to be asked. Why were the children of Israel so slow in crying out to God? Very obviously they

were groaning and crying previously, but maybe not with great urgency and great vehemence. Why had they not cried out before they did? Could it possibly be, now listen, that they had become accustomed to their bondage and accustomed to their tyranny? Look back in Exodus chapter 2, and the Bible says this in verse 23, "and it came to pass in the process of time." What was the process of time? Well, I submit to you in the immediate context, it would probably have to be 40 years. Because don't you remember how Moses had tried to deliver them previously when he killed the Egyptian, thinking they would understand? They did not. And then when Pharaoh got after Moses, Moses had to flee and he was in the desert of Midian for 40 years. When you get to Acts 7 verse 30, don't turn there, let me just quote it. The Bible says that when 40 years was expired, there appeared to him, that is to Moses, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire and a bush. So, after 40 years, in the process of time. Now, the children of Israel certainly had been in bondage more than 40 years. You have to remember, when God appeared to Moses, he was 80 years old, and the reason his mother placed him in the little ark in the river was because Pharaoh had demanded the death of all the male children. So there's 80 years, and of course, very obviously, we know 430 years they were in Egypt, but probably for the first 50 or 60 years, they weren't in bondage. They did not really get into bondage until after Joseph died, and another Pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph. But it says "in the process of time." So here they are in bondage all of this time. They're in captivity all of this time. They're under tyranny all of this time. And they're not crying out to God. Why? Well, they'd gotten accustomed. They'd gotten used to their bondage. Do you realize it is an absolute fact that most of us will bear up under tyranny and despotism while it is bearable? But here's a question. Why do we tolerate even the very first invasion of our God-given rights?

Why are we willing to suffer while evils are sufferable? Do you realize this very truth was enunciated in the Declaration of Independence? Listen, "Prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient reasons. And accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable than

to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed." Isn't it interesting that we get accustomed? We get accustomed to being robbed, pillaged, defrauded, abused, controlled, manipulated, deceived, lied unto, and tyrannized. Do you realize as long as it is sufferable, the average man will put up with it, as long as it is light at first. We will continue to bear it until it becomes insufferable and unbearable. Do you realize why? Because the average man wants peace and prosperity at any cost. And we're willing to settle for any crumbs that fall from our master's table. As long as we retain a measure of peace and prosperity, we will suffer, we will bear up, and we will allow multitudinous invasions of our rights. Do you not think the enemies of liberty and freedom understand this?

Well, of course they do. We're like those Israelites in 1 Kings chapter 12. Do you remember when Solomon had died, Rehoboam, his son, became king? And the children of Israel came to Rehoboam in verse 4, and they said to Rehoboam, listen carefully to what they said, "Thy father made our yoke grievous. Now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father and his heavy yoke which he put upon us lighter, and we will serve thee." Do you know what they just said? We're accustomed to a yoke. We will wear this yoke of tyranny and despotism as long as you make it a light yoke. Make it light for us and we'll serve thee. Just give us a measure of freedom and a measure of prosperity. And the truth is, folks, we will not complain of despotism and tyranny as long as it is a light despotism and a light tyranny. We seemingly do not understand that a benevolent dictatorship is still a dictatorship and a light tyranny is still a tyranny. It takes far more than something light to make us groan and cry. Isn't that a shame? We have to get our backs up against the wall and be almost pressed to death before we understand we have to cry to God.

Do you remember the passage in 1 Samuel chapter 8, when the children of Israel were crying out for a king? And in verse 9, God told Samuel, "Now therefore, hearken unto their voice, albeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." Now, I'm not going to take the time, since I've done it recently, to go back and read all of 1 Samuel chapter 8. But if you would read from verse 10 through verse 17, you will find out how

God told them, your king is going to oppress you. He's going to take from you. He's going to steal from you. You will become His servants. He'll even take your children. He'll take your young men. He'll take your young ladies. You will suffer because of the king that you've chosen you. And when you get to 1 Samuel chapter 8 in verse 18, God said this, listen carefully, "And you shall cry out in that day because of a king which you shall have chosen you." What did He say? Oh, I'm going to let you have him. And you're going to have him until you get absolutely sick of him. And when you get sick, you're going to learn to cry out. We have today good reasons to cry out. We have good reasons to groan. That's why I entitled this message, "Are You Groaning and Crying Yet?" Let me just show you a number of reasons why we should be groaning and crying. I want you to consider just for a moment the difference between God's perfect law and man's imperfect law.

## Modern Reasons to Groan and Cry

If you were to take the Ten Commandments, you will find that there are 313 words in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments summarize, they sum up our duty toward God and our duty toward man. So God then is able to list a summation of His law in 313 words. In contrast, here is man's imperfect law. Listen carefully. I'm going to read a couple of these. The federal tax code today covers 17,000 pages and requires over 700 different forms. The IRS estimates, the IRS now, they estimate Americans spend 5.1 billion hours annually preparing their taxes. The Tax Foundation estimates that those wasted hours drain some 194 billion dollars annually from the United States economy. And all that comes before Joe Taxpayer forks over his first dime. The federal criminal code is just as bad. Listen to this. Thomas Jefferson wrote that the United States Constitution gave Congress the power to criminally punish treason, counterfeiting the securities and current coin of the United States, piracies, felonies committed on the high seas, and offenses against the law of the nations, and no other crimes whatsoever. Yet the Federal Criminal Code today spans over 1,400 pages, and that's only the pocket edition. The Federal Registry, which records all the regulations the federal government imposes on business, all of which carry the force of law, now exceeds 75,000 pages. The Office of

Management and Budget estimates that merely complying with these regulations, that is paying lawyers to keep educated on them, interpret them, and implement them, costs United States businesses another 500 to 600 billion per year. Congress creates, on the average, one new crime every week. Federal agencies create thousands more. In fact, there are so many crimes. Now in the books, I'm quoting, that the Congressional Research Service itself said that merely counting them would be impossible. A report estimates that there were 4,000 federal crimes at the start of 2000. This report updates the total through 2007, finding an additional 452 crimes created in 2007 for a total of at least 4,450 federal crimes. Now you compare 4,450 federal crimes with what Jefferson said was the five areas only in which there could be federal crimes. These do not include state laws and state crimes.

Let me show you how far we've come. James Madison, who is known as the father of the Constitution, since he was a secretary at the Constitutional Convention, he said this, "We have staked the whole future of American civilization not upon the power of government, far from it. We've staked the future of all of our political institutions upon our capacity to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God." By how far we have come. We have lost the concept that true liberty only comes through the law of liberty and that law of liberty is found in the word of God. So let me ask you a question in light of this. Are you groaning and crying yet? Are you sick and tired of the wastefulness, the fraud, the corruption, the debauchery, the politics, the criminal activity on the part of our elected representatives? Now, if you're not really groaning and crying yet, I've got some things that might make you tend to groan. I hope I've got some things that might just infuriate you. I hope I've got some things that might make you start to act like the children of Israel and cry out to God. If you're not upset, maybe this next little news bit will upset you.

Feds spent $800,000 of economic stimulus on African genital washing program. Monday, September the 13th, 2010 by Matt Cover, The National Institute of Mental Health, a division of the National Institute of Health, spent $823,200 of economic stimulus funds in 2009 on a study by a UCLA research team to teach uncircumcised African men how to wash their genitals after having

sex. The genital washing program is a part of a larger 12 million dollar UCLA study examining how to better encourage Africans to undergo voluntary HIV testing and counseling. However, only the genital washing study received money from 2009 economic stimulus law. The washing portion of this study is set to end in 2011. Are you groaning yet? Anyone stupid enough not to know how to wash and take care of themselves ought to die out! I'm not talking about individuals who have organic mental problems. I'm talking about individuals who are so despicably and desperately depraved they don't have an ounce of common sense or biblical sense to take care of themselves. And by the way, I hope you normally know that you get HIV or you get AIDS from either fornication or sex or sodomy or drugs. You don't get AIDS by being faithful to your wife or faithful to your husband. So I've got some other questions. If African men are so stupid, why isn't the African government doing something? Why should United States taxpayers spend their tax dollars, waste their tax money, on such a senseless project to support depraved, debauched activities? Why in the world would our government be so stupid as to do something so unconstitutional when it knows it has absolutely no constitutional authority to do so?

I'm just asking, are you groaning and crying yet? You want to know why we're in the trouble we're in in this country? Here's another one. This will help you. Schools tag kids with RFID chips, stimulus money used for tracking every move inside school building. September the 15th, 2010, a California school district is using some $115,000 of federal stimulus money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to have kids wear vests with RFID chips embedded so their every move inside the school complex can be monitored. A report from Tech Daily News cites the work of the Contra Costa County Employment, California naturally, and Human Service Agency, which already spent $50,000 setting up the system for our first Head Start school. Now, Head Start, you're talking about five and six-year-old kids. "We did some research, and we thought this would be a good utilization of the money," Karen Mitchoff, an agency spokesman, told Tech Daily News. Oh, Karen said, "we thought this would be a good, really, utilization of money." Oh, really? Who is the "we"? And the question has to be asked, do not the students have teachers? Are they not being monitored? Why would

children be allowed to wander all over buildings anyhow? Why are they not in a classroom? If they're there to learn, why is not someone teaching them? Why is not someone watching them? I have another question. Why would you waste money on chips when what most of them need is a rod? You can't teach without discipline. And we've lost discipline. Are you groaning yet? Are you crying yet?

Now I've got news for you. If that hasn't made you mad, maybe this one will. I'm just showing you folks, it is time that we start crying to God where God can hear our voice. U.S. funds restoration of global Islamic sites. Associated Press, August 24, 2010. Washington. Lord have mercy, that's a curse word. The goodwill tour of the Middle East by the imam behind the proposed mosque near Ground Zero is just part. By the way, we spent $16,000 of U.S. money to send him on a trip. It is just part of the United States government's efforts to reach out to the Muslim world. This year, the Obama administration will spend nearly $56 million to restore 63 historic and cultural sites, including mosques and minarets in 55 nations, according to the State Department documents. Under a program established by Congress in 2001, the department will fund at least five projects in as many countries at a cost of more than $271,000. The contributions, isn't that amazing what they call it, the contributions include $76,135 for the 16th century Grand Mosque in China, $67,500 for the 18th century mosque in Pakistan, an additional $62,169 will be spent monitoring a 19th century minaret in Mauritania, another $50,437 is for a mosque in New Delhi, and $15,000 to restore the 18th century minaret in Nigeria. The amount spent on mosque restoration projects is a fraction of the total 2010 Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, which also will fund projects to restore Christian and Buddhist sites, as well as museums, forts, and palaces. Since 2001, the United States government has spent almost 26 million dollars on the program to fund 640 cultural preservation projects in more than 100 countries. Now I want to tell you something. I suppose I read as much as any man and probably more than most men. I've never read and I've never heard of our government restoring one Christian building. Now there may be one, I don't know. But I've never read of it and I've never heard of it. But the truth of the matter is this. The government has no right and has no authority to restore any of those buildings, Muslims or

Christians. If the Muslims want a building, let them fund it. If Christians want a building, let us build it. It is not the duty of the government to go around restoring buildings in other cultures and other countries. That is their responsibility, not ours.

## The Pattern of Crying Out in Judges 6

Has it entered your mind to groan yet? Has it entered your mind to say, "Oh God, help us"? I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Judges chapter 6. I've said this before, I'll say it again. I know it's going on tape, but I'm saying it again. We either have the most stupid politicians or the most traitors. You decide which. Either the most stupid or the most traitorous. Treasonous. Look in Judges chapter 6. We need Davy Crockett back again. Look in Judges chapter 6 verse 1. This is absolutely phenomenal. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." Now, I want you to watch. "And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel, because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them dens which were in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds. And so it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them, and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth till thou comest to Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came up as grasshoppers for multitude." "For both they and their camels were without number, and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus said the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage, and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land. And I said unto you, I am the Lord your God." "Fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell, but you've not obeyed my voice." Now I want you to note something about this passage. I want you to take note

that the Israelites again did not cry out to God until they were practically destroyed. They had to build dens and caves in the mountains. They were fearful. They were outnumbered. The Bible tells us the enemies came up on the land to destroy it. That was their purpose. And they came up as grasshoppers. They left nothing. Neither cattle, nor sheep, nor oxen, nor fruit, nor fields. They destroyed it all. In other words, everything that the Israelites had worked for was either stolen, confiscated, or destroyed. The Israelites were helpless. They were impoverished. They were defeated people. They were in bondage and they were helpless. And the reason they were in this fix to begin with is because they had forsaken God and His Word. What had they done? They had turned to idolatry. And now that they are at their wits' end, and they have nothing, now they're willing to cry out to God for deliverance. Isn't it amazing that it takes absolute destruction to make us cry out to God and recognize we're in trouble?

## The Threat of Retirement Confiscation

You say, "But wait a minute, Brother Weaver. Boy, such a thing like that could never happen in America." Oh. You say, "Man, we've worked hard and we've saved our money and we're getting ready to retire soon and we're going to retire with ease and comfort." Well, get ready to groan and cry because here's the headline, "Retirement Fund Trillions Lure Government Grabbers" by Peter Raymond. Listen, is the government making plans to confiscate your retirement money? The Obama administration is certainly exploring the idea. The question no longer seems far-fetched, when the group thinkers in Washington unabashedly promote a doctrine of wealth distribution and central planning. These Keynesian socialists know that they will need vast new resources of revenues to fund their relentless spending binges to transform this nation. A logical next step would be to legitimize the confiscation of private retirement assets, an idea that was contemplated in the recent past by the Clinton administration. Now listen, according to the Investment Company Institute, there's nearly $8 trillion in IRAs, 401Ks, 457s, 403Bs in 2009. That is certainly too large a sum to be ignored by the big spending social engineers in Washington. Bureaucrats and politicians have been hard at work formulating a social justice

excuse to legislate an historic seizure of private assets. This would not be the first time the state has extorted wealth from US citizens on a massive scale. What's going to happen to your 401Ks and your IRAs? Well, if the government doesn't steal them, since it's in paper, it's probably going to be worthless anyhow. Or electronic digits. Well, let me ask you a question. Why in the world would the federal government want to confiscate your private assets? Why would they want to confiscate your retirement? Well, you've got to answer the question and here it is. Number one, because they're covetous, they want it for themselves. And number two, since they believe in social justice, they want to take what you have worked for and give it to someone who has not worked for it.

You say that's ridiculous. Here it is. Bill Wickens put this out to answer the question, why is the United States bankrupt? Here are just some of the answers that he found. And by the way, this is only dealing with one subject. And there is documentation, which I have, for every one of these. I'm not going to read it. But you can verify everything that I'm about to quote to you. Why is the United States bankrupt? Here it is. $11 billion to $22 billion is spent on welfare to illegal aliens each year by state governments. Billion, not million. $2.2 billion a year is spent on food assistance programs such as food stamps, WIC, and free school lunches for illegal aliens. We're not talking about people in this country, just illegal aliens. $2.5 billion a year is spent on Medicaid for illegal aliens. $12 billion a year is spent on primary and secondary school education for children here illegally and they cannot speak a word of English. $17 billion a year is spent for education for the American-born children of illegal aliens known as anchor babies. $3 million a day is spent to incarcerate illegal aliens. 30% of all federal prison inmates are illegal aliens. $90 billion a year is spent on illegal aliens for welfare and social services by the American taxpayers. $200 billion a year in suppressed American wages are caused by illegal aliens. The illegal aliens in the United States have a crime rate that's two and a half times that of white non-illegal aliens. In particular, their children are going to make a huge additional crime problem in the United States. During the year of 2005, there were 4 to 10 million illegal aliens that crossed our southern border. Also as many as 19,500 illegal aliens from terrorist countries. Millions of pounds of drugs, cocaine, meth,

heroin, marijuana crossed into the United States from the southern border. The National Policy Institute estimated that the total cost of mass deportation would be between $206 and $230 billion, or an average cost of $41 to $46 billion annually over a five-year period. In 2006, illegal aliens sent home to Mexico 45 billion in remittances to their countries of origin. The dark side of illegal immigration, nearly 1 million sex crimes committed by illegal immigrants in the United States. Here's a total. Just on the illegal alien problem alone, 338.3 billion is what the United States government pays because of their corruption and because of their unconstitutional actions in funding and supporting illegal immigration. $338.3 billion a year.

## Acknowledging Theft by Government

You want to know why we're broke? Think of all of these stupid, unconstitutional, unbiblical programs. Is all of this theft? Well, of course it is. "Thou shalt not steal" applies to the government as well. And at least, finally, one representative was honest enough to say that. Representative Tom Perello, who's a Democrat from Virginia, who is vulnerable in this 2010 election, unleashed some pretty strong rhetoric in one of the recent chats he had with his constituents. Here's what he said. Listen carefully. Asked about keeping Social Security and Medicare in the black, Perello faulted lawmakers who had raided the cookie jar and urged passage of legislation that would tie our hands so lawmakers can't keep stealing. "If there's one thing I've learned up here, and I didn't really need to come up here to learn it, is the only way to get Congress to balance the budget is to give them no choice," he said. "The only way to keep them out of the cookie jar is to give them no choice, which is why, whether it is a balanced budget act or pay-as-you-go legislation or any of that, it's the only thing. If you don't tie our hands, we will keep stealing." Those were his words.

## God's Response to Crying Out

And so what did that representative say? "Stop us before we steal again." Are you groaning and crying yet? I want you to go back to Exodus chapter 2. Look in Exodus chapter 2. And let's go back to verse 23. Watch carefully. "And it came to pass in the process of time that the king of Egypt died and the children of Israel sighed by

reason of their bondage and they cried." Now look, "and their cry came up to God by reason of their bondage." Pay attention. "And God heard their groaning and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel and God had respect unto them." It is only when our bondage and our tyranny becomes insufferable and unbearable that we cry out to God. That we cry out with such vehemence. And we cry for repentance and restoration that God hears us. What did God do? God heard. He not only heard, He remembered His covenant. And then He looked down with favor upon them. If you will turn in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy 26. Deuteronomy 26, beginning there with verse 6. Moses is rehearsing the blessings of God and he says this, Deuteronomy 26, verse 6. "And the Egyptians evil entreated us and afflicted us and laid upon us hard bondage. And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice." "And looked upon our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders. And He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey." Note, if you would, it was God who sovereignly, powerfully, miraculously brought them out.

## The Loss of American Liberty

May I submit something for your consideration? We have dropped so low and gone so far and are in so deep, if God doesn't bring us out of this mess we're in in this country, we will never get out on our own. It's time to groan and cry. It's time to ask God, like David, "Awake, O God! Rise up, O Lord! Put forth thine arm, O God! Let the nations know that they are but men." In other words, God, do something! For if God doesn't move, we're all gone. I want to end this with two quotes. I've preached so much so often on the fact that we really lost our country in 1865 when the war of northern aggression was ended. That's when we lost our republic, we lost our constitution. There's a man who was an attorney, an abolitionist, an entrepreneur. I certainly don't agree with him on everything, but he wrote a wonderful treatise on the jury, Lysander Spooner. But although he was a northerner and an abolitionist, he had this to say

about the war of northern aggression. Listen carefully. He said, "The principle on which the war was waged by the North was simply this, that men may rightfully be compelled to submit to and support a government that they do not want and that resistance on their part makes them traitors and criminals. No principle that is possible to be named can be more self-evidently false than this, or more so evidently fatal to all political freedom." "Yet it triumphed in the field and is now soon to be established. If it really be established, the number of slaves, instead of having been diminished by the war, has been greatly increased. For a man thus subjected to a government that he does not want is a slave. And there is no difference in principle, but only in degree, between political and chattel slavery. The former no less than the latter denies a man's ownership of himself and the products of his labor and asserts that other men may own him and dispose of him and his property for their uses and at their pleasure." Let me paraphrase what Spooner just said. The War of Northern Aggression did not abolish slavery, it merely enlarged the plantation. Now we're all slaves. H.L. Mencken said this, "The American people, North and South, went into the war as citizens of their respective states. They came out as subjects. What they thus lost we have never gotten back." It is time to groan and cry and ask God to make bare His arm and to raise up men with wisdom and discernment to know what to do and how to do and when to do. God can put us in the position, like He did Israel, to make us groan and cry.

## Conclusion: A Call to Groan and Cry

We ought to have sense enough to start groaning and crying before we get in such a state individually. Are you groaning and crying yet? Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth and for Your blessings. And Lord, we are living in desperate times, wicked times, depraved times, ungodly times. And Lord, we do need wisdom and we need, Father, character and courage and brokenness to cry unto Thee and ask Thee, Father, to make bare Thy arm and to remedy the problem, for only Thou canst do it, and only Thou canst do it correctly and rightly and permanently. Give us grace to be obedient and to be holy and to be godly. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 14

# You Just Can't Stop Stealing, Can You

March 14, 2012

## Introduction: The Eighth Commandment and the Nature of Theft

Exodus 20:15 gives the eighth commandment: “Thou shalt not steal.” In light of things happening around us, I want to put matters in perspective and offer an admonition and warning from scriptural principles. This calls for more quotations than I have used in a long time.

Everyone hates a thief, and every one of us has been stolen from. You may not know or realize it, but you have been stolen from.

## Examples of Despicable Theft

Nothing is meaner, viler, or lower than a thief, especially one stealing from someone needier and more deserving than himself. Consider this article from Trenton, New Jersey:

A paraplegic homeless man awoke from sleeping in his spot outdoors to find his personal mobility scooter that was charging overnight had been stolen this morning. Police said the victim had a spot on the 600 block of South Clinton Avenue where he slept every night and where he knew there was an electrical outlet where he could charge his motorized cart. Thieves apparently knew it too, police said, as it was taken sometime after the man went to sleep there about 2:15 a.m. Police said the cart was a gray Hoveround scooter and it was worth about $2,500. Police said officers searched the area looking for the device but turned up nothing.

Can you imagine someone so low as to steal a homeless paraplegic's scooter? Yet they did. Headlines have carried an abundance of theft reports: manhole covers and railroad tracks have been stolen. One train in Florida derailed because someone stole a section of track. Air-conditioning units have been stolen. Copper wiring is ripped off everywhere. Farmers lose copper wiring from irrigation systems and much of the metal. Electrical wiring is stolen; one man was found dead after cutting the wrong wire and being electrocuted. Another article reported the theft of nineteen metal bathroom doors from rest stops.

You may call it a sign of the times in our economic depression. It is also a sign of a lack of character, morality, and fear of God. There is only one biblical instance I can think of in which men would not universally loathe a thief. Proverbs 6:30 says, "Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry."

Hunger does not excuse theft. Theft remains wrong, a violation of God's law. If someone is genuinely hungry, there is usually no need to steal. Ask for food or try to work for it. If you cannot find work, someone will usually be willing to help.

We Had Everything But Money contains pictures and stories from the Great Depression, showing the difference in character between the 1930s and now. Hobos and homeless people knocked on doors and first asked if there was work they could do for a sandwich or a bowl of soup. They were willing to work. Today most people are not willing, though someone is usually willing to share or give.

We understand hunger. Hungry people will do what is necessary to sustain themselves and their families. If stealing is the way, they will steal. That is why God says, “Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his soul when he's hungry.” Each of us in that situation would probably do what we needed to survive.

When we hear “Thou shalt not steal,” we mostly picture someone putting a pistol in our face and demanding our money. That is theft, but there are many ways to steal without force of arms. We also normally think only of individuals stealing. God’s law prohibits every kind of theft.

If we limit our understanding to forceful taking by individuals, it is no better than the Pharisees’ understanding. They limited God’s law to physical acts to justify themselves. They imagined that because they had not physically reached out and stolen something, they were not thieves. Yet the Word of God teaches that covetousness, selfishness, and greediness are theft, and covetousness is idolatry.

## Biblical Case Law: The Muzzled Ox

To understand biblical law, we must understand case law. God gives us three things. First, He gives broad principles, such as the Ten Commandments. These are the basic law, a summary of God’s law rather than all of it: “Thou shalt not steal,” “Thou shalt not kill,” “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” and “Thou shalt not covet.” Second, He gives specific cases illustrating those principles, especially in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Third, there is practical application from the principle and illustration to our situation and life.

Deuteronomy 25:4 supplies a main case law for “Thou shalt not steal”: “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.” How can that illustrate the eighth commandment?

We smile because we assume it has nothing to do with us. We do not own oxen or use them to grind corn; they have no place in our society or lives. Circumstances change, but principles never change. The principle is still here.

God says, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he grindeth out the corn.” In Bible times, corn was usually ground stone upon stone. An ox was attached to a pole and walked in circles, turning the wheels that ground the corn. Sometimes corn fell to the floor. The ox stopped, took a mouthful, and resumed his rounds.

Owners thought they could make more money by muzzling him. They could sweep up the corn, put it back on the wheels, and sell more meal and grits. God forbids it as a violation of His law: “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he grindeth out the corn.”

If you will not let the ox take a mouthful, you deprive him of the reward of his labor. You steal from him. The principle is that the laborer is worthy of his hire.

Paul develops this principle in 1 Corinthians 9:7, asking, “Who goeth to warfare any time at his own charges?” Whether you agree with where our soldiers are is immaterial. In Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere, they serve at our expense, not their own. No one goes to war at his own charges. Who plants a vineyard without eating its fruit? If you plant grapes, you eat grapes; if you plant plum trees, you eat plums.

Paul asks, “Or who feedeth the flock and he did not have the milk of the flock?” Whether you have goats, sheep, or a herd of cows, you use the milk and meat. The answer to these questions is no. He continues, “Say I these things as a man, or saith not the law the same also?” This is not merely Paul’s statement; it is God’s law. Verse 9 says, “For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.”

“Doth God take care for oxen?” He does care for all His creatures, but the New Testament does not give this only for the oxen. “Doth God take care for oxen, or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt this is written, that he that ploweth should plow in hope, and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.”

“If I have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things?” The laborer is worthy of his hire. Whether plowing or threshing, he works in hope of reward. The apostle ministers spiritual things to them; is it unreasonable that he should

reap their carnal things? Again, the answer is no. Paul uses the principle, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.”

## Applications of the Laborer's Hire Principle

Paul uses the same principles in 1 Timothy 5:17-18: “Let the elders, or the pastors that rule well, be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture says, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and the laborer is worthy of his reward.”

What is double honor? Does it mean addressing me twice as “Pastor, pastor,” or answering “Yes, sir. Yes, sir”? Those things may be part of honoring a pastor, but that is not the point. “For the scripture said, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and the laborer is worthy of his reward.” Double honor here literally means double pay.

The man who labors in the Word and doctrine and teaches it is worth more than one who does not. I learned long ago that paying a knowledgeable man more is easier and cheaper than hiring four or five cheaper men who do not know what they are doing. I would rather pay one man fifty dollars an hour who completes the job in forty-five minutes and still makes fifty dollars than five men ten dollars an hour who know nothing and take four or five hours. The laborer is worthy of his hire.

Our Lord uses the illustration in Luke 10:4-7:

"Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes, and salute no man by the way."

"And in whatsoever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the Son of Peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it. If not, it shall return to you again. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house."

I travel often and sometimes stay in private homes, perhaps a pastor’s house while preaching at his church. God tells me I may eat what is set before me, as much as I want. I will eat black-eyed peas and cornbread, or a T-bone steak. If I could eat two steaks, I would,

though I usually cannot. You may call that being a hog, but if I am doing the work, the laborer is worthy of his hire.

Our Lord says, “Go not from house to house.” I should not leave Henry’s house for Dr. Bowen’s because I think the food might be better. I should eat what Henry puts before me, and may have as much as I want while laboring in his vineyard.

It is theft to defraud a man of his hire. I understand saving money and wanting the best deal, but the laborer is worthy of his hire.

Suppose I know a job is worth five hundred dollars, but tell Frank, “I know you're hungry. I know you got all those kids. I know they're hungry,” and offer him two hundred fifty. He says the job is worth five hundred, but I tell him to take it or leave it. He takes it because his children are hungry. I have stolen two hundred fifty dollars from him. That is the principle: the laborer is worthy of his hire.

It is also theft to withhold his hire for a period of time. There is far more to stealing than putting a gun in someone’s face. Deuteronomy 24:14-15 says, “Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren or of thy strangers, or that are in thy land within thy gates.” “At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.” He must receive his hire at his day.

Suppose Ed comes to work at my house. I tell him the job will take a week and that if he finishes Friday, I will pay Friday. He agrees, works all week, finishes Friday, and asks for the promised pay after I approve the work. I tell him I forgot to visit the bank and ask him to return the following Friday. Even if he agrees, I have stolen the use of his money for a week. I use it while he cannot.

Have you wondered why getting money back from an insurance company or large corporation is like pulling teeth? An overpayment or money they owe may take three, four, five, or six months to recover. While you wait, they invest it and earn interest. They steal from you by using your money to make money. It is yours, but they will not promptly give it back.

## Government Theft and Legal Plunder

What is the extent of “Thou shalt not steal”? Does it apply only to individuals, families, and churches, or to everyone indiscriminately? Does the eighth commandment apply to civil government? Yes. Civil rulers and governments are beneath God’s law, and theft by them remains theft. It may be classified as legal, but it is still theft.

Governments steal in many ways, sometimes by force through eminent domain or confiscation under threat of imprisonment or death if you will not surrender property. Most government theft happens under the guise of legality. That is the governmental application of the question, “You Just Can't Stop Stealing, Can You?”

Individuals steal continually, sometimes unknowingly because they do not understand God’s law. Governments steal repeatedly. Our own government and Congress have stolen from us again and again, yet we do not recognize it. The recent charade over whether to raise the debt ceiling ended in an increase. Raising it is theft by inflation.

Frédéric Bastiat, who lived from 1801 to 1850 and died of tuberculosis, was a French economist, statesman, author, and deputy to the Legislative Assembly. Much of his writing came just before, during, and after the French Revolution of 1848, as France rapidly turned toward socialism, a year or two before he died. He studied, explained, and exposed socialism’s fallacies to warn his countrymen. In his book on the law, he explains how to identify legal plunder, or legal theft:

"But how is this legal plunder to be identified? Quite simply. See if the law takes from some persons what belongs to them and gives it to other persons to whom it does not belong. See if the law benefits one citizen at the expense of another by doing what the citizen himself cannot do without committing a crime."

We could never have the Ponzi schemes governments have. That is my comment, not Bastiat’s. He continues:

"Then abolish this law without delay for it is not only an evil in itself, but also as a fertile source for further evils because it invites reprisals. If such a law, which may be an isolated case, is not

abolished immediately, it will spread, multiply, and develop into a system."

“The person who profits from this law will complain bitterly defending his acquired rights.”

"He will claim that the state is obligated to protect and encourage his particular industry, but this procedure enriches the state because the protected industry is thus able to spend more and pay higher wages to poor working men. Do not listen to this sophistry by vested interest. The acceptance of these arguments will build legal plunder into a whole system. In fact, this already has occurred. The present day delusion is an attempt to enrich everyone at the expense of everyone else to make plunder universal under the pretense of organizing it."

“Legal plunder has many names.” Legal plunder can be committed in infinitely many ways, with infinitely many plans for organizing it:

"Tariffs, protections, benefits, subsidies, encouragements, progressive taxation, public schools, guaranteed jobs, guaranteed profits, minimum wage, a right to relief, a right to the tools of labor, free credit and so on and so on. All these plans as a whole with their common aim of legal plunder constitute socialism." "Now since under this definition of socialism, socialism is a body of doctrine, what attack can be made against it other than a war of doctrine? If you find this socialistic doctrine to be false, absurd, and evil, then refute it. And the more false, the more absurd, and the more evil it is, the easier it will be to refute. Above all, if you wish to be strong, begin by rooting out every particle of socialism that may have crept into your legislation."

Bastiat continues, “This will be no lack task.” He then discusses socialism as legal plunder. A further excerpt says, “To prevent this, you would exclude socialism from entering into making laws. You would prevent socialists from entering the legislative palace. You shall not succeed, I predict, so long as legal plunder continues to be the main business of the legislature. It is illogical, in fact, absurd to assume otherwise.”

“The choice before us. The question of legal plunder must be settled once and for all.” The reading continues:

"And there are only three ways to settle it. Here are the three ways you can settle legal plunder. Number one. The few plunder the many. That's what we have going on right now. Number two, everybody plunders everybody. Number three, nobody plunders anybody. He says we must make our choice among limited plunder, universal plunder, and no plunder. The law can follow only one of these three. Limited legal plunder, this system prevailed when the right to vote was restricted. One would turn back to this system to prevent the invasion of socialism. Universal legal plunder, we've been threatened with this system since the franchise was made universal. The newly enfranchised majority has decided to formulate law on the same principle of legal plunder that was used by their predecessors when the vote was limited. No legal plunder."

“This is the principle of justice, peace, order, stability, harmony, and logic. Until the day of my death,” which was about a year later, “I shall proclaim this principle with all the force of my lungs, which, alas, is all too inadequate.”

Bastiat distinguishes illegal from legal plunder. If I put a .357 Magnum in your face and demand money, that is illegal plunder. If I get into Congress and pass a law requiring you to give me a certain amount of money or part of your property, with jail as the alternative, that is legal plunder.

Why did Congress raise the debt ceiling? We knew they would. They just cannot stop stealing. Stealing is a way of life for most politicians. They think nothing of it. They steal money, property, and valuables, and they steal our children through multitudinous needless wars and police actions.

United States Representative Tom Perriello, a Virginia Democrat, told a Jefferson area Tea Party:

“Politicians have raided the cookie jar over and over again. That's a problem. But there's one thing I learned up here and I didn't really need to come up here to learn it. The only way to get Congress to balance a budget is to give them no choice. The only way to keep them out of the cookie jar is to give them no choice, which is why,

whether it's balanced budget acts or pay-as-you-go," "if you don't tie our hands, we will keep stealing." He acknowledged it.

A friend was discussing financial matters on the telephone. I told him I knew how to solve his financial problems: do as Congress does and borrow money. He said he had tried to pay cash as he went. I told him he was the culprit: Congress believes we cannot live without debt, and because of him we were in this trouble. He laughed, knowing I was sarcastic.

You cannot borrow your way out of debt any more than you can drink your way into sobriety or fornicate your way into purity. Most people know little about how our government should work or how it actually works, and there is a great difference. Constitutional government differs from a government making up rules as it goes.

Representative Alcee Hastings of Florida said of the House of Representatives, "There are no rules here. We make them up as we go along." If that is the reality, our Constitution, country, and freedoms have been stolen. There is no law. Congress is bound by nothing, a usurped tyrannical body answerable to neither the Constitution nor, evidently, the citizens.

I have contacted my congressman many times. The reply is something like, "I appreciate you contacting me on this issue. I appreciate your views and I will consider them, but please remember that I must vote my conscience in this matter." I did not send you there to vote your conscience. I sent you to represent me. They simply do not care.

## Modern Monetary Theft: Inflation and Banking

We do not understand how government should work or how it works, and we do not understand the Federal Reserve banking system or Treasury Department. The Federal Reserve is neither federal nor reserve. Mike Adams wrote "Seven Startling Things That Most People Still Don't Know About the National Debt, Banking, and the Money Supply" on August 2, 2011. I will read part of it.

One thing we do not know is that it is all fraud. Since the Federal Reserve Act, the process is basically this: Congress asks the Federal Reserve Bank for money, perhaps twenty billion dollars. The bank

contacts the Treasury, which prints bills of whatever denomination, a million dollars or a dollar. Printing costs about five cents per bill. Treasury sends them to the Federal Reserve at cost; the Federal Reserve lends them to Congress at full face value plus interest.

Adams writes, “The United States Treasury is stealing money from you every single day by the simple fact that it keeps creating new money and handing it out to wealthy banksters.” Sixteen trillion dollars was given to international banks outside our country. This is supposed to be our Federal Reserve System, yet it gave sixteen trillion to foreign banks. Adams continues:

"Well technically this is done by the Federal Reserve, which isn't even part of the Federal Government. But it's all done in cahoots with the Treasury, which is eroding the value of your money through these money creation and distribution actions."

"That's why prices keep going up all around you, folks. Food isn't suddenly worth more money. The truth is that your money is worth less. That's how the Treasury and the Federal Reserve steal from you without even breaking into your home. Probably 99.9% of the population have no understanding of this phenomenon, the erosion of currency valuation through the centralized government printing of more currency and yet it is a government scam that has been carried out against citizens of the world time and time again spanning millennia. As history has clearly shown, every nation that goes down the path of printing more money or printing more currency to pay its bills eventually ends up with a runaway hyperinflation scenario followed by economic collapse."

“The United States will be no different.” I love what he says next:

“Politicians can no more solve the problems of big government than arsonists can solve the problems of office fires. Because they are themselves creatures of runaway debt spending, how else do you get elected these days? They simply do not possess the cognitive framework from which real financial solutions must stem.” That is true.

Adams’s fifth fact is the point I especially want to make:

"The government is going to steal everything from you before it collapses. Oh my, this is a tough one for the people to get their heads

around, especially those who naively trust government to act in the interest of the people. The simple truth of the matter, and I've publicly made this prediction before, is that the government is going to steal almost everything you own as it heads toward a total financial implosion. This will include the government theft of private retirement accounts."

"The feds will claim they're taking them over for your protection. Yeah, right. And then one day, they will simply all vanish. Kiss your IRA goodbye. The government theft of precious metals. Within the next three years, watch for a national emergency to be declared, followed by government confiscation of gold and silver. The feds will take your gold and hand you paper money in exchange. The paper money, of course, will all be but worthless shortly thereafter. Only the suckers, of course, will actually turn in their metals. Government takeover of your bank accounts. As banks begin to fail in the big collapse, the government will step in and take ownership of the failed institutions just as it did with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which used to be publicly owned companies, but are now largely just government finance operations." "This will put your bank accounts under the direct control of the White House, which can use executive orders to do things like banning all wire transfers out of the country or limiting daily withdrawals and transfers. Sure, you will still own your money in the bank, you just won't be able to freely access it."

A banking website explains how banks work:

"Banks accept deposits and make loans and make a profit from the difference in the interest rates paid on deposits and charged for loans. Hang on. Banks work because of our trust. We give a bank our money to keep it safe for us and then the bank lends it to someone else in order to make money for itself. Banks can legally lend far more money than they have cash. Still, most of us have total trust in the bank's ability to protect our money and to give it to us when we ask for it."

Banks work because of our trust. There is really no money there. What happens when trust and faith vanish? You say you trust your bank, but have you heard of bank runs, bank failures, and banking holidays? During the Great Depression, banks closed and you could not access your money because there was no money. Banking and

Federal Reserve notes depend upon trust, confidence, and faith. When confidence dissolves, banks dissolve.

Study fractional reserve banking. Deposit one hundred Federal Reserve notes, and the bank can lend nine hundred to one thousand notes based on that deposit.

Suppose you obtain a loan for a house or car. The bank asks if you want it placed in your account, and you agree. It does not take thousands of dollars from its registers and put them there. You receive electronic digits. If you cannot repay, it forecloses on your house or repossesses your car for resale, obtaining something for nothing because it created money out of thin air.

The Federal Reserve Bank in Dallas, Texas, explains “How banks create money”: “Banks actually create money when they lend it. Here's how it works.”

"Most of a bank's loans are made to its own customers and are deposited in their checking accounts. Because the loan becomes a new deposit, just like a paycheck does, the bank again holds a small percentage of that new amount in reserve and again lends the remainder to someone else, repeating the money creation process many times."

Deposit a hundred, and another thousand is created out of thin air and placed in an account; then ten thousand is created. These matters have occupied my mind all week.

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke recently said, “Gold is not money.” Here is the direct account: asked by Representative Ron Paul on Capitol Hill whether he thought gold was money, he paused and finally answered, “No, it's not money. It's a precious metal.” That is an interesting concept: unbiblical, unhistorical, and untrue.

Banks once sold gold; now they buy it as fast as possible. Mexico’s central bank bought over one hundred tons in February and March of this year. According to the World Gold Council, central banks worldwide added 425.4 metric tons to reserves last year, the largest increase since 1964.

Henry made me think of a question. How do banks buy gold? Can they borrow from each other or themselves? Can they create money

from thin air to compete against us for precious metals? Remember the Dallas quotation: “Most of a bank's loans are made to its own customers and are deposited in their checking accounts.” Most is not all. How many of us own a ton of gold or silver?

We have little or none because everything we worked for has been stolen through incompetence, inflation, or deliberate, premeditated planning. Theft is theft.

Ann Barnhart’s article “We the Stupid” makes astute observations. She is a livestock and grain commodity broker, marketing consultant, patriot, and Roman Catholic. Here is what she wrote.

## Warnings from History and Contemporary Voices

“I stand here in abject stupefaction. The so-called right or Tea Party in this republic is being so thoroughly rolled and defeated that I'm struggling to come up with an adequate violent submission metaphor that does not involve prison rape. And honestly, they think they're winning. Really? You call this winning?”

She is describing what just happened in Congress:

"Obama gets over two trillion to spend before the 2012 election. There are no real spending cuts. There is a massive tax increase effective January the 1st, 2013. Obama is going to be handed something in excess of two trillion. And he has made it perfectly clear that he will spend every penny of it before the November 2012 election. That's why he kept saying, 'So we don't have to do this again.'"

"Meaning raise the debt ceiling again. The debt ceiling would only need to be raised if all the money had been spent. Therefore, he has stated very clearly that he will spend every penny of any debt ceiling increase. He's going to burn through 2 trillion plus in the next 16 months. This was the Obama's regime's plan from day one. Geithner appeared before Congress in early May and told them in no uncertain terms, this outcome has been a known quantity a long time. There are no spending cuts in this plan."

“It is all accounting fraud. Saying that you're not going to spend money in Afghanistan 10 years from now is not spending cuts. Even

if you accept the $1 trillion in cuts over 10 years propaganda, that is only $100 billion per year, which is essentially meaningless relative to the size of the problem."

Someone pointed out that if you lived on two thousand dollars a month and tightened your belt by the same percentage as the federal government, you would have only twelve cents less to spend. That is what she means by practically meaningless. She continues:

"Furthermore, even a minuscule uptick in interest rates which give the massive debasement of our currency is now mathematical certainty. We'll certainly consume that 100 billion per year. It's all a joke."

Returning to the two trillion being handed to Obama, she writes:

"I honestly think that most people in this country have no understanding of the simple counting numbers. Do you understand how much a trillion is? Now listen, where do you think this money is going to come from? Who has two trillion dollars to loan us? China? Nope, not even close. China's entire gross product is only six trillion. Do you honestly think that China is going to loan one third of their total annual income production? China was a huge creditor to us back when 100 billion was considered a staggeringly large amount of money, which was four years ago. Now 100 billion is merely a rounding error. Do you realize that there's only a handful of nations of this planet that even have a gross domestic product in excess of 2 trillion? If these countries loaned us every penny of their gross domestic product, it would even be 2 trillion. Canada," she points out, "1.57 trillion. India, 1.54 trillion. Russia, 1.46 trillion."

"Are you starting to understand the scope of what we're talking about? Obama is going to embezzle considerably more than the entire economic output of Canada, India, or Russia to his cronies before the 2012 election, and that is just counting this round of spending, this does not include the other $5 trillion that he's already burned through since 2009. China is not going to lend us this money because they simply don't have anything close to that much money to lend. This $2 trillion is going to come from the Federal Reserve. Where's the Federal Reserve going to get $2 trillion? They're going to print it out of thin air. We're in the midst of the largest currency

debasement ever seen in human history. There's only one result that can come out of this currency debasement, hyperinflation and total economic and societal collapse."

"Have you forgotten the so-called Bush tax cuts? Yeah. Those rates are going to expire January the 1st, 2013. Obama will be presumably occupying the Oval Office at the time, assuming that he is not forcibly removed or that the Republic is still intact at that time. Taxes will increase significantly at that point, and the Congressional Budget Office has scored everything put before them given the fact of the massive tax increase on 1-1-2013. Do you understand that?" "Now listen, when these Republicans and even these so-called Tea Party freshmen tell you that there are no tax hikes in their plan, they're consciously, willfully, knowingly lying to you through their teeth. Finally, I do not understand how it can be possible that conservative writers are still addressing Obama as if he actually is trying to help the economy, but his well-intentioned policies are failing. Now listen, Obama is the enemy. Obama is a Marxist-Communist usurper and puppet from a front for a cabal of Marxist-Communists who are actively trying to destroy the United States of America."

The Communist Party USA has already endorsed Obama for the next four years.

“Everything they have done, are doing, and will do has a single goal of collapsing and destroying the United States economy, military, constitutional government, and culture. What part of Marxist revolution do you not understand? The Obama regime is not a failure. The Obama regime is not incompetent. The Obama regime has achieved more in two and a half years than anyone could have possibly foreseen. It has debased the currency by 50% of the gross domestic product and guaranteed that our economy will collapse. It has looted the treasury for more than the size of the top 10 economy and embezzled that wealth in the hands of their fellow Marxists in preparation for the final collapse of the United States. It has ground the economy of the United States to a screeching halt.”

"It has destabilized the entire Muslim world and ensured that there will be a nuclear war centered around Israel within the decade. Obama regime has no interest whatever in stimulus or getting folks

back to work. How can you not understand this? How can we possibly win this war if we refuse to come to terms with the fact that we're in fact fighting a war? God saved the United States of America because the people are far too stupid to do it themselves."

She hit the nail on the head. Governments have stolen, are stealing, and will keep stealing unless the people and God's providence stop them. We have repeatedly been warned throughout history and have not heeded the warnings.

Thomas Jefferson wrote to John Taylor in 1816:

"I sincerely believe that the banking establishments are far more dangerous than standing armies and that the principle of spending money to be paid by posterity under the name of funding is but swindling or theft of the future on a large scale."

John Adams wrote to Jefferson:

"All the perplexities, confusion and distresses in America arise not from the defects of the Constitution or Confederation nor from one of honor or virtue as much from downright ignorance of the nature of coin, credit and circulation."

In a speech on May 27, 1836, John C. Calhoun said:

"A power has risen up in the government greater than the people themselves, consisting of many and various powerful interests combined in one mass and held together by the cohesive power of the vast surplus in banks."

Andrew Jackson, speaking to a delegation of banksters over the Bank Renewal Bill of 1832, said:

"You're a den of vipers and thieves, and I intend to rout you out, and by the eternal God, I will rout you out."

Jackson stopped renewal of the Bank of the United States charter. Napoleon Bonaparte said:

"When a government is dependent upon banksters for money, they and not the leaders of the government control the situation."

"Since the hand that gives is above the hand that takes. Money has no motherland. Financiers are without patriotism and without decency. Their sole object is gain."

Jefferson also said:

"If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation, then by deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around them will deprive the people of all their property until their children wake up homeless on the continent that their fathers conquered."

Cicero is quoted as saying in 55 B.C.:

"The budget should be balanced. The treasury should be refilled, public debt should be reduced, the arrogance of officialdom shall be tempered and controlled, and the assistance of foreign land should be curtailed lest Rome become bankrupt. People must again learn to work instead of living on public assistance."

No one heeded Cicero, and Rome went down the tubes. Constitutional attorney and scholar Dr. Edwin Vieira, author of the classic works on money, Pieces of Eight, said of our monetary, banking, and governmental systems:

"You can fool some of the people all the time, and all of the people some of the time, and that's good enough."

It is good enough for them.

“Thou shalt not steal” applies to governments, individuals, families, and churches. God will hold everyone answerable and accountable. This country will learn that we cannot thumb our noses at God and escape the consequences. We cannot ignore His law and walk away free. We reap what we sow. The scriptural principle is that if you sin, you suffer.

## Conclusion: Personal Preparation and Trust in God

In light of these matters, especially if there is a third quantitative easing, paper money is absolutely worthless and becomes more worthless daily. The Bible says, “The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.” Make sure your preparations are in order.

You may have silver and gold, or you may not. Put away now the things you would spend that silver and gold to obtain later. Let them have their sorry paper money. Without food and means of caring for ourselves, we will end up like Germany in 1923.

One of my favorite stories concerns a woman during Germany's hyperinflation. On her way to the bakery for bread, she carried a basket full of Deutschmarks. Seeing a fight, she set the basket down and pushed through to satisfy her curiosity. When she returned, someone had emptied the money on the ground and stolen the basket. The basket was worth more than the money. Tools will be far more valuable than paper money.

Our Lord tells us to be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. Governments cannot stop stealing. The only perfect government will be when the Lord Jesus Christ rules and reigns, and His dominion will have no end.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank Thee, we give Thee praise and we ask, Father, that You would help us as we fellowship together and give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Give us wisdom and understanding. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

# Trading Jesus

June 27, 2023

Matthew 26:14: “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me? And I will deliver him unto you.” And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

“Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.”

## Introduction: The Nature of Trading

Think about this title, “Trading Jesus,” or basically, “What Will You Give Me?” Everyone trades. We trade cars, houses, furniture, guns, baseball cards, products, vegetables, and a host of other things. I would imagine everyone in this room at one time has traded something.

However, we trade only when we think we are getting a better deal. If Clay and I are to trade something, I value what he has more than what I have, and he values more what I have than what he has, or else we are not going to trade. When you stop and think about trading, you have to value something exceedingly great in order to do that. No one in his right mind is going to trade an extremely expensive piece of equipment for a piece of junk, unless he does it ignorantly. And there have been many pieces classified as junk that turned out to be worth far more

There have been people who purchased junk and later discovered that it was not junk at all. They realized they had made the purchase of a lifetime. One such incident happened in France. A woman was preparing to sell her house, so she brought in an auctioneer to appraise her belongings. The auctioneer quickly noticed a painting hanging over the woman's hot plate in the kitchen. It turned out to be a thirteenth-century painting by the long-lost Florentine artist Cimabue. The masterpiece, known as "Christ Mocked," was part of a series depicting the crucifixion of Jesus. It sold for $26.8 million—and she had it hanging over a hot plate in the kitchen.

Another piece of junk was purchased thirty years before its actual value was discovered. In the 1980s, a woman in London bought what she thought was a fake diamond ring from the West Middlesex Hospital. She paid thirteen American dollars for the large imitation ring and wore it almost every day for thirty years. In 2017, she decided to see whether it was worth anything. To her surprise, what she thought was a fake diamond turned out to be a twenty-six-carat diamond. It had originally sold for $400,000, but at auction it brought $847,667.

I asked Alice, "What would you do if you had a diamond ring—or a ring you thought was worth only thirteen dollars—and wore it every

day for thirty years?" If you lost it, you would not think anything about it. Yet this woman wore that piece of junk every day, and it turned out to be worth nearly a million dollars.

We always tend to think in economic terms when we think of trading. However, some trades have very deep spiritual implications. So think about the title of this message.

## The Soul's Incomparable Worth

Have you ever really thought about trading Jesus Christ? Can He be traded, and would you trade Him? The answer to both questions is yes. People trade Him all the time, even Christians.

Our Lord asked in Matthew 16:26, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” The word “exchange” indicates a trade: something is given in the place of what is traded. In Mark 8:36–37, He asks again, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Many people value things far more than their own souls or lives. They are willing to trade their lives, houses, families, and children for their lusts and pleasures—for essentially their own lives and souls. Our Lord tells us to think very carefully before trading not only our souls, but the value we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is there anything you could gain in this world that would be a good exchange for your soul?

The answer is no, because everything you gain, you will ultimately lose. Matthew Henry stated it this way: “The worth of the soul, which lies at stake, and the worthlessness of the world in comparison of it. What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? The same word which is translated ‘his life’ in Matthew 16:25, and ‘soul’ in Genesis 2:7, for the soul is the life. This alludes to the common principle that whatever a man gets, if he loses his life, it will do him no good. He cannot enjoy his gains. But it looks higher, and speaks of the soul as immortal, and a loss of it beyond death, which cannot be compensated by the gain of the whole world.”

He is going to give six principles. Listen to them; then he is going to tie

First, every man has a soul of his own. The soul is the spiritual and immortal part of man, which thinks and reasons, has a power of reflection and prospect, actuates the body now, and will shortly act in separation from the body. Our souls are our own, not in respect of dominion and property, for we are not our own; God says, “All souls are mine.” But in respect of nearness and concern, our souls are our own, for they are ourselves.

Secondly, it is possible for the soul to be lost, and there is danger of it. The soul is lost when it is eternally separated from all the good to all the evil that a soul is capable of, when it dies as far as a soul can die, when it is separated from the favor of God and sunk under the wrath and curse of God. A man is never undone until he’s in hell.

Thirdly, if a soul be lost, it is of the sinner’s own losing. The man loses his own soul, for he does that which certainly is destroying to it and neglects that which alone will be saving. The sinner dies because he will die. His blood is on his own head.

Fourthly, one soul is worth more than all the world. Our own souls are of greater value to us than all the wealth, honor, and pleasures of this present time, if we had them. Here is the whole world set in the scale against one soul, and Tekel written upon it; it is weighed in the balance and found too light to weigh it down. This is Christ’s judgment upon the matter, and He is a competent judge. He had reason to know the price of souls, for He redeemed them. Nor would He underrate the world, for He made it.

Fifthly, the winning of the world is often the losing of the soul. Many a one has ruined his eternal interest by his preposterous and inordinate care to secure and advance his temporal wants. It is the love of the world and the eager pursuit of it that drowns men in destruction and perdition.

Sixthly, the loss of the soul is so great a loss that the gain of the whole world will not countervail it or make it up. He that loses his soul, though he gained the world, makes a very bad bargain for himself and will sit down at the last an unspeakable loser. When he comes to balance the account and compare profit and loss, he will

find that, instead of the advantage he promised himself, he is ruined to all intents and purposes and is irreparably broken.

“What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Note, if once the soul is lost, it is lost forever. There is no counter price that can be paid or will be accepted. It is a loss that can never be repaired, never be retrieved. If after that great price which Christ has laid down to redeem our souls, and to restore us to the possession of them, they be so neglected for the world that they come to be lost, that new mortgage will never be taken off; there remains no more sacrifice for sins, nor price for souls, but the equity of redemption is eternally precluded. Therefore it is good to be wise in time, do well for ourselves.

Let that sink in for just a moment, because once you exchange your soul for anything, once you deny the redemption that's found in Jesus Christ, there is no counter price. There's no redeeming it back. In fact, the Bible says in Psalm 49 and verse 8, “For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.” In other words, it's gone. It's gone.

## Judas's Trade: What Will You Give Me?

Now look back in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 26, verses 14 and 15: “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.” Consider the question that Judas asked: “What will you give me?”

Before considering that question, notice that Judas initiated the trade. Judas wanted the trade. Judas was concerned, and he is the one who went and began the bargaining. In other words, Judas went to the chief priests and asked, “What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?” Undoubtedly, the chief priests were thrilled with this because they wanted our Lord as well. Matthew 26:3–4 says, “Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.” So they wanted Him dead.

Luke 22:2 says, “And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.” Clearly, the chief priests and scribes wanted this trade. Here is the question Judas asked them: “What will you give me?” Think about that, because he was willing to trade Jesus Christ for profit, for gain, or for something he valued far more than Jesus Christ. He only asked, “What will you give me?”

He also said, “I will deliver him unto you.” He would keep his part of the bargain. Matthew 26:15 records, “And he said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.”

Mark 14:11 puts it this way: “And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.” Judas was willing to betray the Lord, but not publicly or in a fashion that would draw attention to himself. He wanted to do it conveniently, when no one would particularly notice. And when he came to betray Christ in the garden, what did he do?

He said, “Hail, master,” and then he kissed him on the cheek, just like this was a normal greeting: “I’m just greeting you. I love you so much.” Yet the whole crowd was behind him with swords and staves. Judas was willing to trade Jesus, but now that they had covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver, he was looking for the opportunity to complete the trade.

Many people have tried to give Judas a better motive than money. They imply that what Judas really wanted was to force the hand of Jesus Christ and make Him declare Himself King. If that were true—which I do not believe—it would still be sin and wickedness, because you cannot force God or make God do anything. But Scripture never implies anything like that concerning Judas.

## Judas's Motive: A Thief's Heart

In fact, it implies something totally different. Look in your Bibles to John chapter 12, beginning with verse 4: “Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him.” Go back and pick up verse 2: “There they made him a supper; and

Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?"

"This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." So Judas was a thief. Three hundred pence would be three hundred days' worth of wages. Back then it was a penny a day. Judas wanted that money because he was a thief, the Bible says. He was willing to trade Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver.

How much was thirty pieces of silver worth? Even in today's money, if—and it is a mighty big if—each of those pieces happened to be one ounce of silver, then thirty pieces of silver at today's price of $25 for one ounce would be far less than $1,000. At $30 an ounce, it would be $900. Most scholars say that the value of the thirty pieces of silver was somewhere between $300 and $600. You and I certainly do not think that was a large amount, and it was not.

## The Prophetic Significance of Thirty Pieces of Silver

But when you consider that a penny a day was the normal wage, it would probably last you maybe a year or two anyhow, something like that. It was not much money, not at all.

There is a great significance to these thirty pieces of silver. Everybody understands that it is the price of betrayal, but there is more than that. In Zechariah chapter 11, verses 4 through 14, we read: "Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock.

And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock."

Zechariah is presented as a shepherd. In verse 8 we read: “Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me. Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.”

“And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”

“Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.” In this passage, Zechariah happens to be a type of Jesus Christ. There are other types of Christ in the Bible. Isaac was a type of Christ. Solomon was a type of Christ. Isaiah, at one point, was a type of Christ. Now we have Zechariah, a shepherd who is indeed a type of Christ.

What is portrayed clearly during the life and times of Zechariah is a perfect picture of the time of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as in Zechariah’s time the rulers thought they owned the people, likewise it was in the time of Christ. Verse 5 speaks of the flock: “Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.”

We must think not only of the princes, kings, rulers, and elders in Zechariah’s time, but also of those in the time of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Zechariah shows us the absolute corruption, hypocrisy, wretchedness, and generosity of the rulers. They were tyrants.

They did to the people whatever they wanted to do. It is kind of like the hirelings that our Lord talked about in John chapter 10: “For

the hireling careth not for the sheep," but when the wolf cometh, what does a hireling do? He fleeth, and he leaves the sheep to be destroyed by the wolf. And so here is a picture of these rulers who are nothing more than tyrants.

When you come to the New Testament, you find that it was the high priest, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the scribes. They sold the people; they could care less. They traded the people; they could care less. They sheared the people; they could care less. Here is a perfect picture. I want to give you one more quote from Matthew Henry. Listen to what he says: "In Christ's time the chief priests and the elders, who were the possessors of the flock, by their traditions, the commandments of men, and their impositions on the consciences of the people, became perfect tyrants, devoured their houses, and grossed their wealth, and fleeced the flock instead of feeding it. The Sadducees, who were deists, corrupted their judgments. The Pharisees, who were bigots for superstition, corrupted their morals by making void the commandments of God. Thus they slew the sheep of the flock. Thus they sold them. They cared not what became of them, so they could but gain their own ends and serve their own interests."

That almost descriptive of those ruling today, is it not? When you stop and think about those who are extremely wealthy in our land, who are willing to do anything and everything for money, and then claim that they are above the law, that they are blessing the Lord, and that they are great and wonderful Christians, isn't that astounding? Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles. Hold Zechariah; we're coming back there. Turn in your Bibles to the book of John, chapter 11. Let me show you how corrupt and how degenerate the priesthood, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, elders, and scribes really and truly were. Look, if you would, in your Bibles, at verse 47. John 11, verse 47: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we?"

"For this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." What were they concerned about? Were they concerned with the people being healed by our Lord, delivered from demonic influences, or healed of blindness and lameness? No.

They said, “We can’t deny; we’ve got to do something. If we don’t do something, everyone’s going to believe on him, and the Romans, they’re going to come and they’re going to take away our place.” That was their power, their position, and their nation. In other words, they would have nobody to rule over and nobody to be tyrants over.

Here, indeed, was a perfect picture of the tyranny that existed in the time of Christ, brought to us by the prophet Zechariah. In Zechariah chapter 11 and verse 8, he says, “Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me.” The three shepherds cut off in one month could be interpreted in one of two ways: princes, prophets, and priests, or chief priests, scribes, and elders. When did our Lord cut them off in one month? How about A.D. 70, when He destroyed the nation? He did indeed cut them off.

Zechariah also breaks two staffs. One he named Beauty, and the other he named Bands. The staff named Beauty, or Favor, was given to us in Zechariah as God breaking His covenant with these people because they had already broken the covenant. Here is a legal as well as a biblical principle: when one party violates the covenant, the other party is loosed from obedience. If Clay promises to cut my lawn, edge and trim everything for fifty dollars, but cuts only half the lawn, does nothing else, and then demands fifty dollars, he has violated his end of the covenant. I am not obligated to give him fifty dollars. I might give him five; or, if he wants fifty, he needs to finish the job. That is true whether the covenant is governmental, personal, or biblical. Thus Beauty, or Favor, would be broken, and God would send His judgment upon that nation. What did He do in A.D. 70?

He judged them. He destroyed them. He scattered them. He also broke the staff called Bands, which meant union and foretold the breakup between Israel and Judah, accomplished again by the Romans in 70 AD. Everything given to us here is pictured in the time of Jesus Christ.

In verses 12 and 13 of Zechariah chapter 11, we read: "I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of

them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD."

When he said, "a goodly price that I was prised at of them," it was tongue-in-cheek—a sarcastic statement. It is like having a flat tire and needing to buy a new one. Marshall sees the donut tire on my car and says, "Oh, Pastor, I see you have a flat tire. I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll give you 20 bucks for that car now." I look at him and say, "Well, I guess you would. Will you give it to me all at one time?" That would obviously be tongue-in-cheek, because the car is worth far more than 20 bucks, even with a bad tire.

Zechariah, who was the shepherd here, took thirty pieces of silver and said, "That was a goodly price that I was prised at," and then the Lord said, "You take this and throw it to the potter." Matthew 27 tells us that Judas brought back the money, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." That was the innocent blood; the only blood that was innocent was Jesus Christ. They said, "What is that to us? See thou to that." In other words, "That's none of our problem. It's your problem. You're the one that did it, not we." But yes, they did it; that was their attitude.

"And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood." Wait a minute. It was lawful for them to take it out of the treasury to give it to Judas to betray an innocent man so that they might murder him, but now it was not lawful for them to put it back into the treasury. That was their thinking.

"And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they

Matthew records, “took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.” So, in Zechariah, the thirty pieces of silver were thrown to the potter; and in Matthew 27, they bought the potter's field to bury strangers in.

When Zechariah said, “a goodly price that I was prised at,” I said that was tongue-in-cheek. Why? Let me show you. Hold Zechariah, but turn in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 21 and verse 32. This may surprise you. God says, “If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.”

Here is a man who has a servant, a slave, and the ox gores and kills that individual, whether man or woman. The owner of the ox must give the slave's master thirty shekels of silver for the burial. In other words, thirty shekels was the price of a slave, and his burial as well.

Now you understand why it was cast to the potter's field as well. When Judas went to betray the Lord Jesus Christ and trade Him, he traded Jesus Christ for the price of a slave's funeral. What did those chief priests have in mind when they said, “We'll give you thirty pieces of silver”? Were they thinking of Exodus chapter 21, verse 32, saying, “This is how much we value your so-called Messiah. He's nothing more than a slave. He's nothing more than an imposter. We don't care one thing about him”? So little did they value Jesus Christ. Yet Judas accepted the thirty pieces of silver. Whether he knew it was the price of a slave and his funeral, I have no earthly idea.

But stop and think about this. Judas had walked with Christ for three years. He had seen the miracles and knew Him personally. He may not have recognized Him as the Son of God; he may not have been genuinely saved or converted. Nevertheless, Judas should have understood the value of the Lord Jesus Christ. What in the world was he thinking about? Here is the question we must ask ourselves in light of this message: How much do we value the Lord Jesus Christ? What would you trade the Lord Jesus Christ in order to possess, in order to

## Trading Jesus Today

Have you ever considered what your bottom line would be? You have heard the old expression, “Every man has his price.” What would you be willing to deny the Lord Jesus Christ for in order to possess and have something in this life?

Is it possible to sell Jesus Christ today? Yes. Is it possible to trade Jesus Christ today? Yes. Is it possible to betray the Lord Jesus Christ today? The answer is yes. The truth of the matter is, we do trade Him, usually on a daily basis.

Stop and think about this: anytime we prefer sin over obedience to Jesus Christ, we are actually trading Jesus Christ for sin. That is what it amounts to. We are trading Him for pleasure, for profit, or for whatever we want to possess. At that particular time, we are valuing what we want more than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

You have to remember, Jesus Christ is the living Word, and the Bible is the written Word.

A new four-wheel-drive pickup truck is all decked out, and I think, “Oh man, I’ve wanted one like that for years and just not been able to afford it. But look what Steve has, and I sure want that thing. But there’s no way that I can get it.” I’m lusting, coveting, and desiring. Guess what I’m doing? In my mind, I’m trading the Lord Jesus Christ for that pickup truck, because I’m valuing that truck more than “Thou shalt not covet.”

We’re willing to trade Jesus Christ. So many people are willing to trade Him and think so little of His value. They take His name very lightly. I’m not just talking about where God said, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.” There’s more to taking God’s name in vain than using His word with slang and curse words. I have heard people use the name of Jesus Christ as an expression of surprise, crying out, “Jesus Christ!” They use it so flippantly, so wickedly, like He’s nothing—like saying “Mickey Mouse.” How can people not value even the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ, when the Scripture says, "Thou hast given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"? Do you value Him enough not to take His name lightly? Do you value Him enough to obey Him? Do you value Him enough to worship Him only? Do you value Him enough to obey His Word and follow His commands? Do you value Him enough that you're willing to honor Him in every area and

every sphere of your life? The truth of the matter is, we do trade Jesus.

## Applications and Warnings

I want to give you a couple of applications, and I want you to really think about these things. The first one is this: Many are willing to trade Jesus Christ for money, for power, for fame, for position. And yet everything that we bargained for in those areas is destroyed at death. Fame is gone. Our power is gone. Our position is gone. Our money is gone, because we leave this world just as we came. It's a bad trade to trade the Lord Jesus Christ and your soul for temporary gain. And yet people do it all the time. Look at some of the most wicked people in America today and in the world today.

Some people are extremely wealthy, and somehow think they are going to overthrow God and rule contrary to His Word. Guess what? When they die, everything they have ever possessed is gone. It is done for. When you trade Jesus Christ for anything, you are going to end up the loser.

There is not a Christian, a real genuine Christian, who would not condemn Judas Iscariot. He is the traitor. He sold our Lord. He traded Him for thirty pieces of silver. Why are we so hard on Judas Iscariot when he traded Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver, and we are willing to trade Him for something much less than that? Think about it.

If I want another man's wife, what am I saying? God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Jesus Christ said, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." But if I really want that woman, what am I doing? I am saying, "Lord,

I'm willing to trade You for her." I'm willing to trade You for that truck. I'm willing to trade You for that money that's laying over there. I'm willing to steal it even though Thou hast said, "Thou shalt not steal." You see what I'm saying? We trade Jesus Christ just for our lust, just for our pleasures, just for our pride, just for our fame. We're willing to sell Him down the drain just to please ourselves. I think if this thought really became prevalent in our minds at any

time sin, wickedness, anything that's contrary to Jesus Christ, anything that's contrary to the Word of God came in our mind, I think it would help us immediately put it out of our mind. Because we're willing to trade Him for whatever we're meditating upon or thinking about or considering. We cannot trade Him and trade His Word. I ran across a poem. There was no author's name, so I cannot give credit.

Obviously, I did not write it. But the title of this poem is "30 Pieces of Silver." I want you to listen. "What's the bottom line? Or what's the price I'd take to leave it all behind? To trade a cross of shame for the glory of mankind, to sell a crown of life for pennies on the dime, and trade eternity for one moment in time. For if the key to life is right here in my hand, why would I trade it for an hourglass of sand, or choose the riches of this mortal coil, forego the incorruptible for the praises of man? All the treasure in the world is so blinding, 30 pieces of silver shining. Tell me what's the price you seek to place the kiss of death upon his cheek? Blood money and the serpent winding, 30 pieces of silver shining. Treasure fades away. What price to pay anyway? What's the price you've named? Well, is it money, power, acceptance or fame? And when you sell out for a temporary gain, or dare to stand up undeterred and unashamed, and let the glory fall to whomever it may, when all the world is asking you to sell your soul and to deny the cross for silver and gold, the kiss of Judas, or on

The bended knee, vain glory or humility—the ultimate goal. All the treasure in the world is so blinding, thirty pieces of silver shining. Tell me, what is the price you seek to place the kiss of death upon His cheek? Blood money and the serpent winding, thirty pieces of silver shining. Treasure fades away, sold out for the price of a slave.

The truth is, most people will trade Him for something cheaper than the price of a slave. Judas said, “What would you give me?” He may have been purposely, deliberately, and premeditatedly thinking of trading Jesus Christ, but we may trade Him without all that clear, premeditated thinking. We may trade Him without thinking when we value Him as worthless and are willing to sell Him and plant the kiss of death upon His cheek.

## Closing Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth. Lord, we have to admit our guilt so many times in trading Christ to satisfy our lusts, our pride, our ambitions, our desires, and our goal. Help us to understand the value that Thou hast placed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, especially when the Apostle Paul said, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” The value of Christ is unspeakable. He is God in the flesh, the God-man, salvation, wisdom, sanctification, righteousness, and truth. Help us to value Him above anything and everything else and to bring our lives into conformity to His Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

# Do You Have 20/20 Hearing and Understanding?

September 15, 2025

Exodus 20, verse 20: “And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that you sin not.”

## Introduction: 20/20 Hearing and Understanding

The title of the message is, “Do you have 20/20 hearing and understanding?” I can hear people reply concerning the title, “Pastor, you must be confused. 20/20 applies to vision and not to hearing and not to understanding.” I know that 20/20 is the standard for vision, but according to Exodus 20 and 20, it is also the standard for hearing and understanding as well. Just as someone’s vision may not be 20/20 and may be off the standard, someone’s hearing and understanding may likewise not be 20/20 and may be off the standard as well. You have to understand that a loss in vision always leaves someone impaired to some degree, and likewise, a loss in hearing and understanding always leaves someone impaired to some degree.

## Context: God's Revelation at Sinai

When you talk about 20/20 vision, think about the various vision problems people may have. There are people who are nearsighted and farsighted; people with astigmatism, central vision loss, peripheral vision loss, and night blindness; and people with blurry vision, cataracts, glaucoma, and a host of other vision problems as well. In fact, there is one vision problem simply known as lazy eye. I think that could be very applicable in our sense, because we sometimes have lazy hearing and lazy understanding as well. In the context, you will understand why I entitled this message, “Do you have 20/20 in hearing and understanding?”

In the context of our passage, God revealed Himself to the children of Israel on Mount Sinai with lightning, smoke, thunder, and darkness. Exodus chapter 19, verse 16, says, “And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God. And they stood at the nether part of the mount, and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.”

When the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai on top of the mount, called Moses up to the mount, and Moses went up. The Lord said unto Moses, “Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish.”

All of this is happening: there is fire, smoke, lightning, thunder, darkness, and God speaks. In Exodus chapter 20, verses 1 through 17, God gives the Decalogue, well known as the Ten Commandments. He gave these commandments in the midst of the fire, the thunder, and the smoke. Consequently, the people were absolutely frightened and were all struck at the same time.

God has given His law in thunder and lightning. Exodus 20:18-19 says, “And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings and

the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking. And when the people saw it, they removed and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us lest we die." Clearly, the people were terrified.

## The Dual Meaning of 'Fear' in Exodus 20:20

Probably, if you were standing near a volcano and, all of a sudden, there were lightnings and thunderings, and it began to smoke and bubble and shoot ash and liquid fire into the air, you would be not only awestruck but terrified as well. Now here is the interesting thing in verse 20: "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, for God has come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not." In one verse Moses says, "Fear not," and then in another voice he says, "and fear the Lord." In other words, he says "fear not" one time, and then, "Now the fear of God must be in you." It is exactly the same root word that is used both times. When Moses said, "Fear not," the Hebrew word is yare, which means do not be afraid or do not be terrified.

But the same root word, yare, is used when he said, "and let the fear may be before your faces." In other words, this time it means fear, reverence, respect, submission; you are standing in awe and bowing before God in obedience. Moses is telling us very plainly that there is a proper use of this word fear in "fear not," and another proper use of the word in "fear the Lord." In order to understand verse 20, we need to note, first of all, the importance of interpretation and, secondly, the importance of linguistics. We have to know what words actually mean to understand the verse.

Moses now informs the people that, in the demonstration of God's power, holiness, and sovereign majesty, God, in giving His law, has come to prove them. He had just given the law. Now, in verse 20, Moses said to the people, "Fear not. Don't be afraid, don't be terrified, for God has come to prove you, that His fear, that His reverence, awe, respect, submission, obedience may be before your faces, that you sin not." The interesting word is prove. It is the Hebrew word nasah, and it means to test, to try, to prove, and to assay. This is the same word used in Genesis chapter 22 and verse 1: "And it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham." The word tempt

there does not mean to try to lead Abraham into sin. It simply means that God came to prove Abraham, to test Abraham, to give Abraham a trial, so to speak.

## God's Purpose in Proving His People

Here are two questions that I want to answer before this message is over. First: What does it mean to be proved or tested by God, and how is that done? What does it mean to be proved or tested by the Lord? Second: How is the fear of God involved in this proving and testing? Before answering these questions, consider the fear of God. I have preached a number of messages in times past on the fear of God, but to understand Exodus 20 and verse 20, you must understand the fear of God in relationship to proving. When we ask, "What does it mean to prove? What would be the results of proving?" we must consider the intent and also the ultimate result of proving. This word is used many times in Scripture.

The Scriptures I am going to show you are from the exact same Hebrew word. It is important that you not only see but hear what I am reading. In Exodus 16:4, when God sends the manna, He says: "Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no." Note the words, "that I may prove them." It is exactly the same word found in Exodus 20:20.

Now turn to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 8. You might as well keep Deuteronomy open, because we will come back there a little later. In Deuteronomy 8:2, we read: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." Then, in verse 16 of the same chapter: "Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end."

Now turn right over to the book of Judges—Joshua, Judges. In Judges 2:21-22, God said: "I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died, that

through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not." Judges 3:1 says: "Now these are the nations which the Lord left to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan." Then, in verse 4: "And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses."

If you look at these passages and listen carefully as they are read, you will make an amazing discovery. Each time the word prove or proving was used, it referred to a test of obedience. Anytime God proved Israel, or proves an individual, it always has reference to obedience: whether we will obey or disobey, whether we will love the Lord or hate the Lord, whether we will respect His authority or deny His authority.

The tests and trials are not always the same. First, we read about tests and trials in relationship to the manna. God said, "Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to send that manna. Every day, each one of you go out and gather so much—no more, just so much. But on the sixth day, I'm going to allow you to get double." Those who did not get double on the sixth day found nothing there when they went on the seventh day. Those who tried to gather more than their daily amount found that it bred worms and stank. The Lord God said, "I'm proving you just to see if you trust me, if you're going to obey me and recognize my authority."

The other passages had to do with enemies. God left them to prove Israel, to see whether they would listen to these wicked people or listen to God.

The point is this: It does not matter what the test or trial is. It is always a test of obedience—whether we will obey God, have faith in Him, believe Him, and trust Him in obedience. God has the absolute sovereign right to test, try, and prove each of us. That right is inherent in Himself. He is the Creator, and we are the creature. He is the Lord, the Master, and we are the servant. He is the Father, and we are the child. Therefore, God has the absolute sovereign right to test us, try us, and prove us as He sees fit.

However, we do not have the right to test, try, and prove God except in the way and manner He has ordained. For instance, in Matthew chapter 4, our Lord was tempted by Satan.

## The Right to Test: God's Sovereignty vs. Man's Foolishness

Our Lord answered one of the temptations in Matthew 4:7: “It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

The word tempt is ekpeirazo in the Greek. Ek is a preposition meaning “out of,” while peirazo means to tempt, to test, or trial. In other words, you cannot draw God out; you cannot tempt God, test God, or prove God.

This statement, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,” was in response to a suggestion by Satan. In Matthew 4:6, Satan said, “If thou be the Son of God.” As I have told you in times past, in the Greek this is a first-class condition with the indicative, literally meaning, “Since thou art the Son of God.” He was not questioning whether Jesus was God; he knew He was. But he said, “Since thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

So what he is saying is, “Jesus, since you are the Son of God, why don’t you prove it? Why don’t you kick your foot against this big old rock over here and trip and maybe fall over the side of this mountain, because the scripture says he has given his angels charge over thee and they’ll bear thee up lest you even hurt yourself.” And our Lord said, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

There’s a vast difference between faith and foolishness. If you want to go to the top of the Empire State Building and jump off, saying, “I’m trusting God to catch me before I hit the pavement below,” guess what? They will wipe you up with a mop. God cannot be tempted. God cannot be tested that way. It is absolutely foolish to try to test and prove God in that sense. Our Lord refused to be drawn into that sin. There’s a vast difference between faith and foolishness.

## Proving God Through Obedience

Now, here's the good thing: God does invite us to test him, to try him, and to prove him. But he does so in a specific and certain way, and it has to be done in the specific and certain manner that he has ordained. In Malachi chapter 3, verse 8, the Bible says, "Will a man rob God? Yet have ye robbed me? But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings." Verse 9 says, "Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."

Then God says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." And verse 11 says, "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed, and ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord."

In verse 10, God says, "Prove me." The word is bachan in the Hebrew, and it means to examine, to try, to prove, to test, and to make trial. But in this passage, the testing, trying, and proving of God is done by obedience. It is not done by foolishness; it is done by obedience.

It is our duty, privilege, and obligation to recognize God's sovereign ownership and authority. Everything we are and everything we have comes from God. Blessings always follow obedience, and curses always follow disobedience. The interesting thing is that God says in this passage that if we are under the curse, the curse is removed by obedience. "Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."

Then He says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." He continues, "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither

shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts." In other words, the curse is removed by obedience.

If you and I do not wish to be cursed, we must obey. God pledges Himself to His creatures in such a way that we may verify and prove Him. He says, "If you will obey, I will supply all of your needs. And if not, I will continue your dearth."

Adam Clarke says of this passage: "What you give to God shall never lessen your store. Give as you should and see whether I will not so increase your store by opening the windows of heaven, giving you rain and fruitful seasons that your barns and granaries shall not be able to contain the abundance of your harvest and vintage." God is saying that if you want to test Him, you do so by obedience.

John Bunyan wrote this couplet many years ago: "There was a man, and many did count him mad; the more he gave away, the more he had." That is what he meant: when you give to God, you never lessen your store.

In light of this passage where God tells us to prove Him, we need to look at three specific passages. Deuteronomy 26, beginning with verse 12, says: "When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates and be filled."

Whether you know it or not, there were three tithes in Israel. There was a 10% Levitical tithe for the priests, for the teaching of the law. There was a 10% tithe which was the tithe of rejoicing, which you actually spent upon yourself and your family each year in what you and I would call a religious vacation, because they used this 10% when they went to Jerusalem to those seven annual feasts. God said in Deuteronomy 14, "Whatever your heart desires, spend it on."

And, Lord, just so it was not anything wicked or sinful, if you wanted a T-bone steak, have at it. If you wanted the best lemonade possible, have it. If you wanted a glass of wine, have it. You just could not get drunk. You could not do anything sinful. That was the tithe of rejoicing.

Then there was the third tithe, which was a poor tithe, also 10 percent, taken every third year. So that meant three and a third

percent per year. This is why he is talking about the widows and the strangers and this kind of thing. Ten percent then went to the Levites for teaching, 10 percent went to your family for your family religious vacation, and three and a third percent per year went for the poor tithe, for the undergirding of the society of faith when they needed help.

That shows you they were actually tithing 23 and a third percent per year. Now when you get to the New Testament and you get the Romans there adding all their taxes, you see why the people were suffering so in the New Testament. It is kind of like today, when about 50 to 60 percent of our income is devoured by taxes in one shape, form, or fashion over and over and over.

The Israelite was to give the tithe unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they might eat within their gates and be filled. Then he was to say before the Lord his God: "I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them. I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey."

Now look at verse 16: "This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul." Here it is: "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."

When you are obedient and give to the Lord as He demanded and commanded, you have avouched the Lord to be your God. The Hebrew word for avouched is amar, and it means to avow and to avouch. The word avouch means a frank acknowledgement of, an

affirmation of, a declaration, to assert with positiveness, a guarantee, or to confess. When you are avouching that God is your God through obedience, you are declaring and affirming positively that He is the one true and living God and that you are worshipping Him.

The word avow means simply to declare frankly, to declare openly, to admit, and to confess. By our obedience and by doing what He commands us to do, we are admitting and confessing that He is our God. That was through the obedience of tithing. But look now at verse 18. Here is the second passage, in the same chapter, Deuteronomy 26.

## The Reciprocal Avouchment

"And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments." When we are obedient and avouch that God is our God by our obedience, God in return avouches that we are his people because we are doing exactly that which he has commanded. Isn't that amazing? It is like a parent, especially a father, at sports. He sees his son make a football touchdown and says, "That's my boy." He is avouching that he is his son and is thankful that the boy succeeded in making a touchdown.

This is what God is saying: You are avouching me to be thy God through obedience. I am avouching you to be my child because you are obedient to me. You are listening to me, hearing me, and obeying me.

In 2 Chronicles 31, we see what Azariah the priest said: "And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered and said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the Lord hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store." Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the Lord. "And they prepared them, and brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated things faithfully: over which Cononiah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was the next."

In other words, God says, “You obey me, I’ll bless you.” They had an abundance and had to build places to keep all the blessings God had bestowed upon them.

John Trapp, a Puritan, said this on Malachi 3:10, “and prove me now herewith”: “A wonderful condescension that God should call upon man to take experiment of him, to make but a trial, to put it to proof whether or not he will prosper the penitent. This is somewhat like the other passage in Psalm 34 and verse 8, ‘O taste and see that the Lord is good,’ or ‘Come and let us reason together, saith the Lord.’”

“O, we never enough adore the depth of God's goodness, that he should stoop so low to us, clay and dirt, dung and worms meet. He is so high that he is said to humble himself to behold the things in heaven and in earth (Psalm 113:6). If he looks at all outside of himself to see but what the angels do, he doth therein abase himself. That he will deal so familiarly with us, who are no better than so many walking dunghills, as to bid us prove him as to what he will do for us, this deserves acknowledgement and admiration in the highest degree.”

"Should he have used martial law with these malapert miscreants in the text, that is Israel, that robbed him of his rights, and not only have reproved them and cursed them with the curse of penury, but have written his law in blood upon them, he might have justified his proceedings. But thus to commune with them, and not only to prescribe them a remedy for the removal of the curse, 'Bring ye all the tithes,' but thus to persuade them and to permit them to prove his bountifulness in giving and his faithfulness in keeping his promise with them, and that with an oath, is absolutely wonderful." God has told us that we may prove Him, but the manner in which we prove Him is always obedience. We may not only prove God and His Word; we may also prove God and His will.

Romans 12:1-2 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ... that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." There is a way that we may prove God and

a way that we may prove His will. The word prove in Romans 12:2 is the Greek word dokimazo, which means to test, examine, prove, and see whether or not something is genuine. We could use the word assay.

If I happen to be digging in my backyard and see a huge little rock that shines with a yellow shine, I may think, "Man, this is a big gold nugget." I will take it to an assay office and have it assayed, so I can prove it is gold or prove it is not gold. It could be fool's gold. I will make sure that it is gold before I say, "Hey, folks, I found a gold mine." This is what God is saying: we may prove His will. Adam Clarke says it like this: "That ye may have a practical proof, an experimental knowledge of the will of God, of His purpose and determination, which is good in itself, infinitely so, acceptable, well-pleasing, and well-received by every renewed and transformed mind."

Then he said, "In perfect, finished, and complete, when the mind is renewed and the whole life changed, then the will of God is perfectly fulfilled, for this is its grand design."

Now, I want you to remember this and try to put it together so that we can understand this verse. Look back now to Exodus chapter 20 and verse 20: "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, for God has come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that you sin not."

Proving is simply testing and trying. When we use the word temptation, we have to understand that it is used in a good sense and in a bad sense in the Bible. Turn to James chapter 1, and hold James because we will be coming back there as well. In James chapter 1, beginning with verse 12, he says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

When you look at verse 12, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." In verse 12, temptation is a noun. It is peirasmos. In verse 13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God."

It is the verb peirazo. In verse 12, temptation simply means a trial, to be proven: “Blessed is the man that endureth trying, testing, proving, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life.” But the same word is used differently in verse 13: “Let no man say when he is tempted”—tempted to sin, tempted to violate God’s command—“don’t let him say that I am tempted of God.” No, because God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.

When it comes to testing, trying, and proving, God already knows what is in our hearts and minds, but we do not, and others do not. The test, trial, or temptation reveals what is really and truly in us, that we may know what is in us and others may also know it. Our tests, trials, and temptations are for our good, that they may make us more holy, more obedient, and more patient.

## The Purpose of Trials: Maturity and Sanctification

Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” We can rejoice in the fact that we are saved by the grace of God, that God will wipe away every tear and make us absolutely perfect in Jesus Christ. We will spend eternity worshiping Him. Yes, we can rejoice in this hope of the glory of God.

But verse 3 says, “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.” Tribulations? Why would we rejoice in being tested, tried, and proven? “Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: 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.” We can rejoice because these tests, trials, and this proving are designed to make us more holy and give us everything in our lives that we need to worship and serve God more effectively.

James says, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations”—different kinds of temptations. When was the last time you thankfully and joyfully said to the Lord, “Wow, Lord, isn’t this wonderful? I don’t have enough money this month to pay my bills. Isn’t this great?” Or, “Lord, I’ve got a stomach virus and I’m so sick. Thank God. Hallelujah.” We do not normally do that. But this is what he said: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers” or different kinds of “temptations.” Why?

“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect” or mature “and entire” or complete, “wanting nothing.” God has designed these tests and trials so that we will be mature and complete in Him.

Peter says, “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” We are being kept. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations”—trials, provings—“that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Wow.

Why did God come to prove Israel? Here is the answer: “And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, for God has come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that you sin not.” God’s test and God’s trial was that His fear may be before our faces, that we sin not.

The fear of God must be understood in relation to proving, testing, and trials. Deuteronomy 6:2 says, “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.” What is it to fear God? It is to keep all His statutes and commandments which He hath commanded. This is what it means to fear the Lord our God.

## The Fear of the Lord Keeps Us from Sin

Deuteronomy 8:6 says, “Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear

him." What is it to fear God? It is to walk in His ways and keep His commandments. The fear of God is therefore shown in obedience to His commandments and in walking according to His ways.

Deuteronomy 10:12 asks, "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God?" What does it mean to fear Him? "To walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." The same chapter says in verse 20, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name." So what is fearing the Lord? It is to walk in all His ways, love Him, serve the Lord with all your heart and soul, cleave to Him, and swear by His name.

It's serving him, cleaving unto him, and swearing only by his name. Proverbs 16:6 says, "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. If you do not fear God, you will not depart from evil. If you fear God, you will depart from evil.

Proverbs 19:23 says, "The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil." The fear of the Lord tendeth to life. Why? Because you are obedient. He shall not be visited with evil.

You must remember that in Romans chapter 3 there is a whole list of sins stated by the Apostle Paul: "Their feet are swift to shed blood, their mouths are open sepulchres," and all of this. When you read down that litany of rebelliousness, you come to verse 18. He tells you why all these sins are so prevalent: "There is no fear of God before their eyes." And remember the passage in Luke 18 concerning that unjust judge: "He feared not God, nor regarded man." So if you have no fear of God, you will have no regard for man either. The fear of God is to keep us from sinning. That is what he said in Exodus 20:20: "and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."

## Application: We Do Not Have to Sin

If sinless perfection is a heresy—and it is, because there is no one on this earth now who is sinlessly perfect; the only one who was was the Lord Jesus Christ—then an equal heresy is that you must sin and

have to sin. First John 2:1 says, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.”

What are you going to do with Romans chapter 6? “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” I would encourage you to read Romans chapter 6 about five or six times this afternoon. That passage teaches us very clearly and definitively that sin is no longer our lord.

For an unsaved man, that is true. When sin tells an unsaved man to jump, he asks, “How high?” But when sin tells a Christian, “You have to do this,” or “You need to do this,” or “You want to do it, don’t you?” say, “I do not have to. You’re no longer my lord. Jesus Christ is my Lord, and I’m not obligated to obey King Sin. Sin is no longer my king. Jesus Christ is my King.” We have been freed, not from the evil principle of sin, but from the dominion of sin. God gives us power over sin through the Holy Spirit. In eternity, we will be freed even from the very presence of sin itself. Therefore, we do not have to sin. That is why Exodus 20:20 says, “that the fear of the Lord may be before your faces, that you sin not.”

Adam Clarke gives this statement: “The maxim contained in this verse is, ‘Fear not, that he may fear.’ Do not fear with such a fear as brings consternation into the soul and produces nothing but terror and confusion, but fear with that fear with reverence and filial affections, inspire that you sin not, that through the love and reverence you feel to your Maker and Sovereign, you may abstain from every appearance of evil.” Note that he says, “sin not.”

Let me make some applications. When Moses said, “Fear not,” do not be terrified, there was probably an allusion to their fear of Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt. Pharaoh took the life of whomever he wanted. You remember the story of the butler and the baker: the butler he spared, but the baker he hanged. Do not fear God in that sense. Do not fear that God is some tyrant or wicked individual who

only wants to hurt people. Fear God with reverence, respect, and awe, with submission and a desire to obey Him. That is filial fear.

I love my Father—my earthly father—but I did not want to be whipped by him. I feared him, but I loved him. So we have a reverential fear, a fear that brings us into submission to Him. Here is the second thing: you might as well mark this down, that God will test us and try us and

God proves us in different ways. Our testing, our trials, our proving demonstrate whether or not we will obey Him regardless of the circumstances. God is still God no matter what we are going through or what is happening unto us. Our tests and trials determine whether we will remain obedient, faithful to Him, honoring Him, reverencing Him, and worshiping Him. We will do so if we understand what it means to fear God, because then we will not sin against Him.

## Conclusion: Passing the Test

Passing our tests, trials, and afflictions always makes us more holy, more godly, more obedient, and more submissive. It always brings what we call greater sanctification. The word used earlier in Romans 12:2 for prove, dokimazo, actually means to prove with a good result. When I take a lump of rock to the assay office and the assayer says, "Preacher, you struck it big. That is pure gold," that is what I want to hear. It passed the test.

This is what God is saying in 1 Peter: the trial of our faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, shall be found to the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns. If we understand our tests, our trials, and what we are going through, they will increase our faith, obedience, and love, and lead us into greater sanctification, so that we can honor and worship our Lord as He deserves. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord." The only way we can test God is through obedience. If we test Him through obedience, He will prove Himself, His Word, and His will, and we will know that He is God alone.

# Source Notes

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