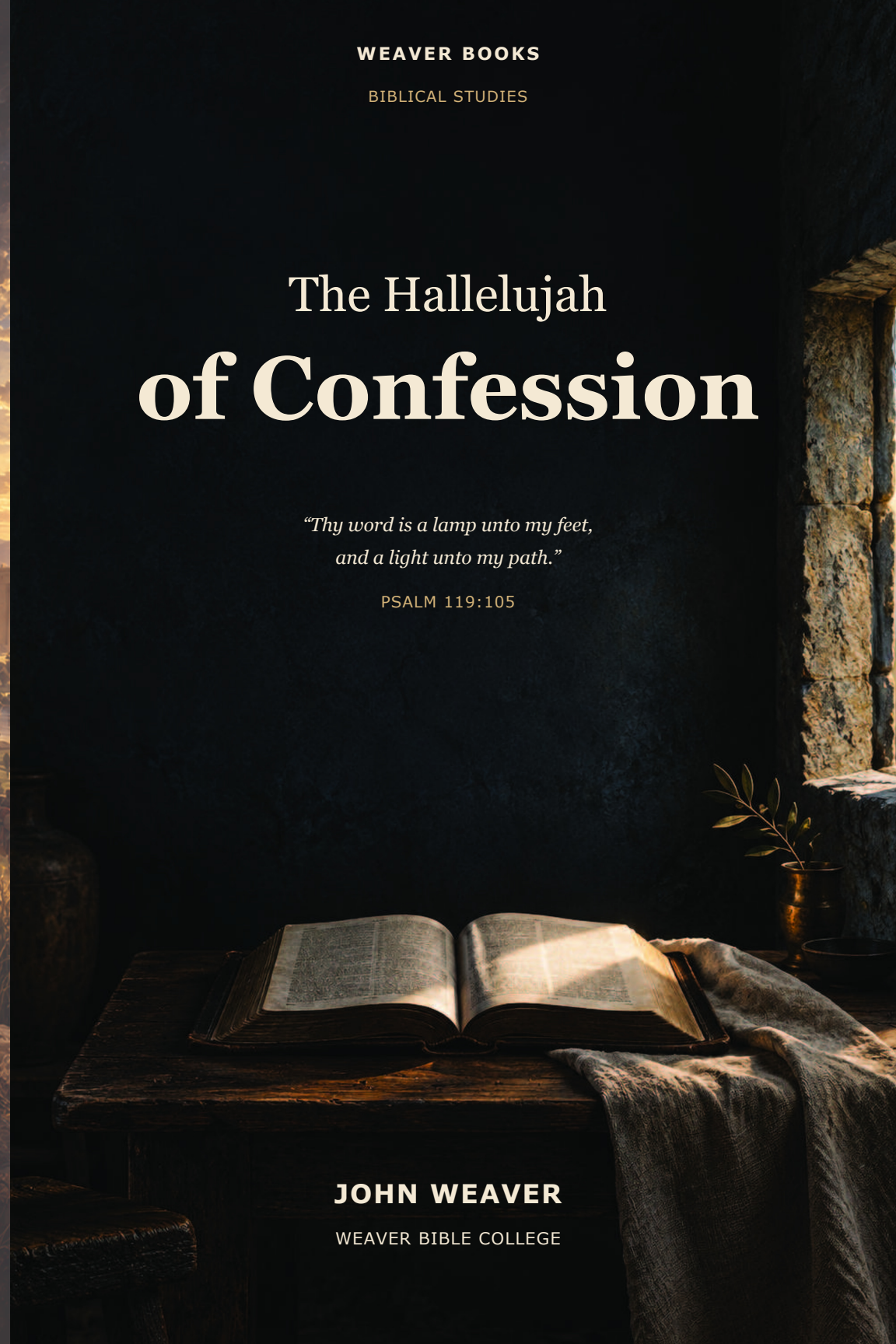
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The Hallelujah of Confession

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

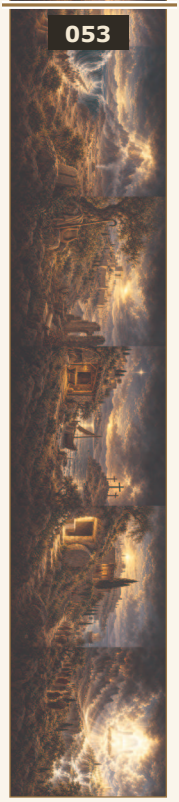
PSALM 119:105



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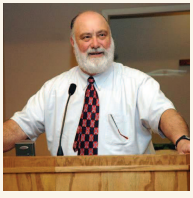
Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

PSALM 32:1

Confession and praise belong together in a life brought honestly before God. In this sixteen-message series, John Weaver examines confession, forgiveness, and the response of the believer through sustained biblical teaching. Readers are invited to consider the relationship between acknowledging sin, trusting God's mercy, and expressing gratitude in faithful conduct.

“If you ever want to really know whether someone is repentant or not, this is a simple test: a repentant individual is always willing to freely and frankly confess and acknowledge their sins.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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

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CHAPTER 1

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part One of 16

Introduction to Psalm 106

Psalm 106 is an introductory message to this psalm. Some may ask, "Well, Pastor, how long will you preach on this psalm?" The only answer I can give is, Until I get through. I anticipated that my last little series would be two messages, and it ended up being six. I might get through this psalm in five or six messages; I do not know. The main part of the psalm we will begin to look at closely the next Lord's Day, Lord willing.

Let us read beginning with verse one. The psalmist says, "Praise ye the Lord. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise? Blessed are they that keep judgment and he that doeth righteousness at all times. Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people. Oh, visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance."

I want to read on just a little bit: “We have sinned with our fathers. We’ve committed iniquity. We have done wickedly. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt. They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.”

I read through verse seven, although we will only get through verse five today. I am entitling this series “The Hallelujah of Confession,” and I will explain why in just a moment.

Psalm 106 is a companion to and a contrast with Psalm 105. In actuality, Psalm 105 and Psalm 106 need to be read together. In Psalm 105, we find a lively account of God’s mercies to Israel. In Psalm 106, much notice is taken of the sins of God’s people. Psalm 105 greatly praises God; Psalm 106 greatly deplores our departures from the one true and living God. Psalm 106 is a demonstration of our sin and rebellion. It is also a psalm that calls us back to truth, trust, and hope in the one true and living God and in His divine mercy. Although it tells us about our sins, failures, and wickedness, it does not leave us in desperation and ruin. Psalm 106 is the first Hallelujah Psalm.

Psalm 106 is the first psalm in a series of psalms that has Hallelujah for its inscription. In fact, when I say that, I mean this: if you look at Psalm 106, verse 1, it says, "Praise ye the Lord," which in the Hebrew is simply Hallelujah: Praise the Lord. Psalms 111 through 113, Psalm 117, Psalm 135, and Psalms 146 through 150 all begin with the word Hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

The Structure of the Psalm

This is the hallelujah of confession because it is the first Hallelujah Psalm, and the content of this psalm deals basically with confession of sin. The main thrust of Psalm 106 is the acknowledgement and confession of our sins. This psalm can be very easily divided into three parts. First of all, there is an invitation in verses 1 through 5, which I will explain momentarily. Secondly, there is a confession in verses 6 through 46. Thirdly, there is a solicitation in verses 47 and 48. Thus, the main thrust of this song concerns acknowledgement and confession.

First Invitation: Thank God for His Goodness

Since verses 6 through 46 deal so extensively with that subject, I want to begin today by covering the first five verses and showing the invitation. What the psalmist is doing in the first five verses is basically inviting us to join in praise and adoration of the one true and living God, and he invites us to do this in four distinct ways.

Verse 1 says, "Praise ye the Lord," or "Hallelujah. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever." This verse gives us the first of the four ways in which we may praise the Lord. We must praise and glorify God by thanking Him for all of His goodness. Actually, verse 1 invites us to praise and glorify the Lord by thanking Him for all of His goodness. There is never a time when it is unfit and uncomely to thank the Lord for His goodness. We may thank the Lord at any time and at all times. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Mr. Coulter, who lived in Jessup, liked to golf. He was an older Christian gentleman, and I used to go with him—not because I enjoyed golfing that much, but because I enjoyed being with him, walking around, and getting the exercise. To show you how much I enjoyed golf, the last game I played was probably twenty-five years ago.

We were going to the golf course at Folkston, and he pulled up to the railroad track. I saw him look to the left, so I automatically looked to the right. Just as I looked, here was that Amtrak roaring down right on us. I said very calmly, "You better whoa or go." Thank God, he only heard, "Whoa," and slammed on the brakes. When he did, that train shot past us. We just sat there silently. Finally, the train got by, and I looked at him.

I said, "What are you saying?" We sat there a little longer and just thanked the Lord. He said, "That's fine with me." So there is never an uncomely or unfit time to thank the Lord. Psalm 100:4 says it like this: "Be thankful unto Him, and bless His name."

There is not only never an unfit or uncomely time to thank the Lord; there is truly never an unfit subject to thank the Lord about. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:12, "And I thank Christ Jesus

our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." Paul was thanking God for enabling, empowering, and endowing him with gifts so that he might preach and teach the Word of God.

Turn to 2 Timothy 1:3. Once again, the Apostle Paul says, "And I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience."

Paul writes, “And that without ceasing, I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.” So Paul is once again thanking God for a pure conscience and thanking God that he is enabled to pray for other believers as well. In Romans 6:17, he reminds the Romans of their conversion, how God saved them and turned them from their sins. I think every one of us can acknowledge this truth with the apostle: “But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you.” He says, “But God be thanked.”

I believe it is interesting that as you search through the Scriptures, you will find the apostles and the disciples thanking God for everything and at every opportunity. In fact, have you ever stopped to realize that one of the condemnations heaped upon the reprobate in Romans 1:21 is this: “Because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God. Neither were they thankful.” Is that not interesting? They knew of the one true and living God. They did not have a saving knowledge of Him, very clearly, but they did have an intellectual or historical knowledge of Him, and they refused to glorify Him. Neither were they thankful.

Philippians 4:6 says, “Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be known unto God.” The apostle is inviting us to praise the Lord for His goodness. I want to emphasize it simply because he is inviting us to praise the Lord for His goodness. For the last several days, many of you know that I have had back problems—a pulled muscle, some muscle spasm, or something; I do not know. Alice can tell you that it has been difficult to walk. I cannot bend or turn. That has improved today, for which I am thankful. As I lay in bed praying, I was at least thankful that it was not worse than it was. It could have been a lot worse. You can always find something to be thankful about.

So the apostle writes, "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." The exercise of praising and thanking God is needed and necessary, even when we're in the deepest trouble and calamity.

I find it absolutely amazing in Acts chapter 16. When Paul and Silas were thrown into prison for preaching the truth of God, they were not sitting around moaning and crying because they had been wrongfully arrested and imprisoned. Scripture says, "And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises." "And the prisoners heard them." At midnight, they were praying and singing praises—wrongly accused, wrongly condemned, wrongly tortured—and yet they were singing and praising God.

That which serveth the Lord's praise also serves for the comfort and encouragement of the humble soul. What the psalmist is telling us in Psalm 106 is simply this: we have to learn to thank God and meditate upon God's goodness and mercy, even in the most trying circumstances, even when we're called upon to mourn for our sins, which Psalm 106 is about.

You say, "Well, how in the world can I thank God if I'm mourning for my sins?" Turn back, if you would please, to Psalm 103. I can show you how you can thank God even when you're called upon to mourn for your sins. He says in Psalm 103, verse 8, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever." Here's something to be thankful about when you're mourning for your sins: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Aren't you thankful for that? "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgression from us, like as a father pitieth his children. So the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we're but dust."

Even when we're called upon to mourn for our sins and repent from our sins, we can still thank God for His goodness and mercy to us. No trial, no affliction, no sense of ill-desert can release us from our duty to thank God and praise Him for His goodness to us. In

fact, when we believe that we least deserve the mercy of God, that magnifies His mercy, because He's been so kind and gracious to sinners.

What does the Apostle Paul say in Romans chapter 5? It is, “But while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

I can quote this passage, but I want you to see it. In the latter part of Psalm 50, verse 23, the psalmist says, inspired by God, “Whosoever offereth praise glorifieth me. And him that ordereth his conversation right will I show the salvation of God.” I hope this will be drilled upon your heart. Look what God said: “Whosoever offereth praise glorifieth me.” This is the first part that I wanted you to see. One of the ways in which we may glorify God is by thanking him and offering him praise.

Thus, what the psalmist is doing in Psalm 106 is inviting us to praise and honor the one true and living God. When we return to Psalm 106 and look again at verse 1, before going to the second verse, we see that he begins this passage with Hallelujah.

"Oh, give thanks unto the Lord." Why? "For he is good. For his mercy endureth forever." Is it not a marvelous truth that God does not cut off His mercy from His people? Even though we are wicked at times, rebellious at times, ignorant, disobedient, hard-headed, and stubborn, He is still merciful to His people. Therefore, the psalmist says that we must learn to praise the Lord and give thanks to Him for His goodness and for His mercy.

Second Invitation: Stand in Awe of God's Mighty Acts

The second reason, or means, the psalmist gives to stir up ourselves and others to glorify the Lord is to stand in awe at our Lord's works and innumerable causes of praise: "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise?" Who can tell all about God's great deeds? The answer is no one. Who can show forth all His praise? Again, no one.

Hold Psalm 106 and turn to Psalm 111, another Hallelujah Psalm. The psalmist is calling us to stand in awe at God's mighty acts and give Him the glory due unto His name. "Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright

and in the congregation. The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious and his righteousness endureth forever. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion. He hath given meat unto them that fear him. He will ever be mindful of his covenant. He showed his people the power of his works that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. The works of his hands are verity, that is, truth and judgment. All his commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever. They are done in truth and uprightness. He sent redemption unto his people. He has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and reverend is his name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all they that do his commandments. His praise endureth forever."

The works of the Lord are great, “sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.” The Bible says plainly, “He hath shown his people the power of his works.”

Psalm 145 speaks of the works and mighty acts of God: “I will extol thee, my God, O King, and I will bless thy name forever and ever. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name forever and ever.” Why? “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty and of thy wondrous works, and men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts, and I will declare thy greatness.”

“They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all and his tender mercies are over all his works. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of thy glory, the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.”

Psalm 111 and Psalm 145 both speak of God’s mighty acts. Psalm 150 does also: “Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in the sanctuary. Praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him for His mighty acts. Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet. Praise Him with the psaltery and

harp. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance. Praise Him with the stringed instruments and organs. Praise Him with the loud cymbals. Praise Him with the high-sounding cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord." Notice: "Praise Him" for "His mighty acts."

What are God's mighty acts? They may be summarized under three heads, each of which could be multiplied by the thousands: creation, redemption, and providence. Who can utter the mighty acts of God in creation? God spoke, and it came to pass. All God simply said was, "Let there be." And it was.

There is a story about scientists who wanted to challenge God because they said they could now create everything God created. God intervened in their discussion and said, "All right, I'll challenge you to a creation contest." The scientists agreed. "Let's get this dirt over here." "No, no," said God, "you get your own dirt."

Stop and think of the greatness of God in creation. Talk about His mighty acts. He has given us the sun to rule by day and the moon by night. He simply said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further." Isn't that amazing?

Then consider the mighty acts of God in redemption. I like to challenge people when I hear them say, "Well, I just like the simple gospel. It's John 3:16 for me. The simple gospel." Would you explain to me, "God so loved"? Would you explain the greatness, depth, and breadth of the love of God? "For God so loved the world." What world? "That He gave"—can you imagine God giving His own Son? "That He gave His only begotten Son." Explain to me the greatness of God in giving Christ. Explain to me the Incarnation, the virgin birth, believing, having faith, and eternal life. John 3:16 is not so simple after all, is it? There is the greatness of God in redemption, and then the greatness of God in providence.

If you think creation is mind-boggling and redemption is baffling, stop and try to analyze how God sovereignly controls everything in the entire universe instantaneously. His hand rules over everything. Not a sparrow can fall without Him. The very hairs of our head are numbered. God is in absolute and total control, and nothing comes to pass except that which is for His glory and our good and by His

decree, which He decreed before the world ever began. If you cannot find something amazing, mighty, and powerful in creation, redemption, and providence, then there is something wrong with you—something bad wrong. God is the absolute sovereign God.

Go back to Psalm 106. The psalmist asks in verse 2, "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?" He is setting us up for what follows in verses 6–46 of this psalm.

"Who can show forth all His praise?" Do we have any volunteers who will do that? The answer is that it is impossible. However, look at Psalm 96. You will also find the same truth in Psalm 29 and several other passages. Psalm 96:7 says, "Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength, give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. Bring an offering, and come into his courts."

Now wait a minute. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." We are duty bound; we are obligated to give God the glory due unto His name. However, when you look back at Psalm 106:2, the questions are, "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise?" And the answer is no one.

What if that raises another question? How then can we give God the glory due unto His name? The truth is, we cannot. Do you realize that you would have to be God in order to praise God the way He ought to be praised? You would have to be infinite as He is, which is impossible. But simply because it is impossible, humanly speaking, to give God the glory due unto His name, to utter His mighty acts, and to show forth all His praise, that does not mean we cannot do what we are enabled to do by His power and grace. We can praise Him for what He does in our lives, for what He shows us, and for what the Holy Spirit of God illuminates us to understand. He invites us to praise Him.

What we need, dear friend, is the disposition of Psalm 111:2: "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." Do you realize that this is the hinge on which everything turns? The reason we do not understand more about God's mighty works, His Word, His mighty acts, and His power is that we do not

have pleasure in those things; we do not study and search them out as we ought.

So the fault is ours. Although we have human frailty and cannot give God everything that is due, it is our sin that we do not give Him what we could if we searched and studied His Word and loved Him as we should. The psalmist is saying, "Look, I want to stir you up to praise the Lord. I want to stir you up to worship by His name."

Third Invitation: Recognize the Blessedness of Obedience

The first way he does it is in verse one, by encouraging us to thank him for his goodness and for his mercy. The second way is in verse two, by inviting us to praise him for his mighty acts and for his power. And then, if you look in verse three, the third means whereby the psalmist seeks to stir us up to glorify God is by declaring the blessings of God upon the obedient: “Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.” The psalmist repeats the verse: “Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.”

The word “judgment” is the Hebrew word “mishpat,” and it literally means a sentence of divine law, or that which is just and right. Literally, in verse three, he says, “Blessed are they that keep the divine law, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.” In Psalm 25:9, the same word is used: “The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.” “The meek will he guide in judgment,” that is, in the divine law, “and the meek will he teach his way,” because teaching his way is teaching his Word. Therefore, the word “judgment” here is synonymous with the law, or with the Word of God.

Psalm 37:28 says, “For the Lord loveth judgment,” that is, he loves the divine law, “and forsaketh not his saints. They are preserved forever, but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.” Then verse 30 says, “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom and his tongue talketh of judgment”—that which is right, that which is just, which is, of course, the divine law.

So, if we go back to Psalm 106 and look at verse three, the psalmist says, “Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.” To keep judgment is synonymous with doing righteousness at all times. No one can be right or righteous who is disobedient to God’s law. No one can be right or righteous who is disobedient to God’s law. Yet we have a class of professing Christians today who claim to be above the law. How so? They say it is the law of the Spirit: “The Holy Spirit leads me to do this. The Holy Spirit leads me to do that. Aren’t I wonderful?” Now, listen, folks: I believe in the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Study the Scripture, and you will find that the Holy Spirit will never lead anyone contrary to the Word of God. When you do what is wicked and contrary to God's Word and claim that the Spirit is leading you, I do not doubt your claim—but it is not the Holy Spirit of God. He always leads us in obedience and conformity to the law of God.

In Deuteronomy 6:24–25, Moses says, “And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always, that he might preserve us alive as it is at this day. And it shall be for our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.”

Why did God command us to keep His law? It was not just for God’s benefit. He commanded us to keep His law for our good always, that He might preserve us alive as it is this day. When we are obedient, we do glorify God, but our obedience is also for our good. And look what he said in verse 25. Let’s read verse 24 again: “And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always, that he might preserve us alive as it is at this day.”

“And it shall be for our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.” What is our righteousness? Is our righteousness a claim to super piety and super spirituality by saying, “Well, the Spirit led me here and the Spirit led me there”? Or is our righteousness obedience to the Word of God? Do you follow what I’m saying? Our righteousness

is obedience. If we are obedient, the Holy Spirit did indeed lead us, because He does not lead us contrary to the Word of God.

I am making this point because there is an erroneous teaching that you can be spiritual and holy without keeping God's law. Folks, that is not true. Let me ask you a question. If I were a known adulterer, would you count me a holy man? If I were a known thief and defrauded everyone I came in contact with, would you count me a holy man? If I were a known gossiper, slandering, lying, criticizing, and condemning everyone I met or spoke of, would you count me a holy man? If I were in rebellion to my parents, would you count me right and holy?

What does God say? "It shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God as he has commanded us." How do we know whether we are right and in standing with God? The answer is very simple: Are we obedient? Are our lives in conformity to His Word? The psalmist said, "Blessed are they that keep his judgment. Blessed are they that are always in the path of righteousness."

Since you are in Deuteronomy 6, turn over to Deuteronomy 28. Deuteronomy 28 is a tremendous passage containing blessings and curses. God promises blessings if we keep His law. That is why the psalmist said, "Blessed are they that keep judgment." Deuteronomy 28:1 says, "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth, and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, blessed shalt thou be in the field, blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, the fruit of thy ground, the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face. They shall come out against thee one way and flee before thee seven ways. The Lord shall command a blessing upon thee in thy storehouses and all that thou settest thine hand unto, and he shall bless thee in

the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” He goes on to tell about all these other blessings, but note that all of them come if you keep His commands.

Not only do the blessings of God follow obedience, but, if you read the rest of the chapter, you will find that the curses of God follow disobedience. Why did the psalmist say in Psalm 106 and verse 3, “Blessed are they that keep judgment”? Was it simply because of all the blessings that obedience to God’s law brings upon us?

And the answer is no. Why did he say, "Blessed are they that keep judgment and he that doeth righteousness at all times"? Because if we are the blessed who are obedient, if we are the blessed who do righteousness at all times, that must mean that we are recipients of God's grace, favor, and mercy. If we did not have His grace, we would not be doing righteousness, and we would not be obeying His law.

In 1 John chapter 3, verse 7, John says, "Little children. Let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

How can the psalmist say, "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times"? The reason we are blessed is that, if we are righteous, God has made us so; if we are obedient, God has made us so. In verse 10, John says, "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

So the opposite is true: he that doeth righteousness is of God. In verse 24, he says, "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us by the spirit which he hath given us." How do we know that we abide in Him? How do we know that the Spirit of God is in us? Because He leads us in obedience. He brings our lives into conformity to the Word of God.

I want to show you one other verse in Romans chapter 3. Inevitably, someone will say, "But Brother Weaver, don't you know we're justified by faith alone? And therefore, the law has nothing to do with us." It is true that justification is by faith alone. But

justification by faith does not negate the law of God. Just because the law is not given for salvation does not mean that it is not for sanctification. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 3, verse 31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid."

Perish the thought. Do not even think that. “Yea,” he says, “we establish the law.” We do not establish the law as a means of salvation. God never gave the law for salvation. Romans 3:28 says, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Verse 30 says, “Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

Justification by faith alone does not negate the law of God, nor the necessity for obedience to it. There is an evangelical obedience to God's law that is opposed to and contrasted with Pharisaic, legalistic obedience. The Pharisees and legalists seek to keep God's law in order to be saved. Christians obey God's law because we have been saved. See the difference? One is evangelical obedience; the other is Pharisaic and legalistic obedience.

Hebrews 8:10, quoted from Jeremiah 31, says, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their mind and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” What is God going to write in our hearts in the new covenant? His law. That is what He said.

Since we obey from a regenerated heart of love, reverence, respect, and a desire to be holy, we are blessed indeed, as the psalmist said: “Blessed are they that keep judgment and that do righteousness.” No one can overestimate the value of a good conscience arising from a heart willing to do justice and judgment and to live honestly in the sight of God and man.

In fact, Micah 6:8 says, “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee? But to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.” The evidence that we

have been regenerated is our obedience to our sovereign. Our Lord said in Luke 6:46, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?" In John 14:21, He said, "If a man love me, he will keep my commandments." Verse 24 says, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." First John 5:3 declares, "And this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and they are not grievous unto us."

The third way the psalmist seeks to stir us up in this song is by declaring the people who obey God as blessed. Not just because we receive many blessings, but because, if we are obedient, it is because of God's grace in us. God has made us so.

Fourth Invitation: Pray for Personal and National Revival

But note verses 4 and 5. The fourth way the psalmist seeks to stir us up to glorify God is by the use of prayer, especially in times of trouble and calamity. Verses 4 and 5 are special verses. All the Bible verses are special, but these two verses are worth particular attention. Look at this excitement in prayer. Look what the psalmist says: "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou barest unto thy people. O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." So the fourth way the psalmist seeks to stir us up is by encouraging us to prayer, especially in times of trouble and calamity. All I can say about verses 4 and 5 is this: What a prayer. What an encouragement to prayer. Let me tell you why these verses are so special, at least to me.

We've got to realize that it is not selfishness to desire to be delivered from an ungodly situation. Nor is it self-love to seek God's blessings and grace upon us, the elevation of His people, and the establishment of His kingdom. That is not selfishness. Look at what the psalmist prayed: "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation."

"that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance."

How do we pray in a time of trouble and calamity, when our rulers are wicked, our courts are unjust, our nation is in rebellion, and the hearts of the people are as cold as ice and hard as stone? Here is the answer: Regardless of what others do, regardless of what the nation does and how it goes, I want to be right with God. I want to be obedient. I want God's blessings.

The psalmist prays, "Remember me. Lord, don't forget me. I want to do what's right. Everybody else may want to do what's wrong, but Lord, I want to do what's right. Remember me with thy favour. Visit me with thy salvation." In other words, he is saying, "Lord, we're in a mess. Other people may be happy with the mess and contented to live in an ungodly situation, but not I. I want things different. And Lord, if the whole mess can't be changed, you change me. You deal in my heart. You deal in my life."

Whatever our state or condition, the grace and mercy of God are sufficient. Therefore he says, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people, O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance."

Although the psalmist wanted to be delivered and blessed personally, there is nothing sinful or unbiblical about praying for personal deliverance or desiring to be godly and holy. But note why he prayed this prayer. He says in verse four, "Remember me, O Lord, with thy favour that thou barest unto thy people. I want to do what is right. I want thy grace and favour." Then he says, "O visit me with thy salvation. Change me. Prolong my life. Do whatever thou wilt." Why? Verse five: "That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance."

He knows that God will redeem His remnant; it is only a matter of time. He wants to live to see the good of his people. I think of a song that is sung, though I am certainly not a singer. I love the truth of it: "I want to see Israel marching. I want to hear that bugle call. I want to see Israel marching. I want to see old Babylon fall." I want to see Babylon fall. I want to see God's people marching. I want to say, "Lord, save Thy remnant. Save Thy people. Thine inheritance."

Here is the New Testament counterpart. Psalm 106:4–5 says, “Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou barest unto thy people, O visit me with thy salvation. That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.” Then Matthew 6:9–10 says, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” It is a prayer to establish God’s people and law, give gladness to His nation, and overthrow the wicked and ungodly. Personal deliverance branches out into national deliverance, and personal revival into national revival.

Applications and Conclusion

Now let me make three applications this morning. One of them, as I say, I cannot touch yet, because you are going to have to see it in the psalm as we work our way down it.

The sum of this psalm, especially in the first five verses, is to teach us to glorify God, thank Him, and magnify Him regardless of our situation and circumstances. We could be well or sick, prosperous or poor, rich or dying, happy or sad. It does not matter what our circumstances are; we must glorify Him by faith and thank Him for all His goodnesses toward us. Probably the sickest person alive today would have to acknowledge that they have had more well days in their life than sick days. There is always something to thank God for.

The second application is this: this psalm, especially as we get into it, is to be used for our encouragement. It tells us about the frequent failures of God's people and God's abundant mercies and forgiveness to the same ones, over and over and over and over and over again. I don't know about you, but I'm kind of thankful God did not throw me away the first time I sinned, or the second, or the third, or the fourth, or on down the line. With each failure, He met me with forgiveness. That is what this psalm is teaching us. There is encouragement for each of God's people.

The third thing, especially in the first five verses, is to learn to pray for grace and mercy for ourselves as well as others. I will acknowledge and confess that one of my great weaknesses and

failures is being able to pray for myself the way I pray for others. I can assure you that is a problem with everyone in here.

You find it easier to pray for other people than you do for yourself. Do you know why? Because you know your own sins; you do not know everybody else's sin. I can pray for Henry more easily than I can pray for myself. I say, “Boy, Henry's a better man than I am.” But I do not know his secrets the way I know mine. If I knew his secrets the way I know mine, I would probably say he is no good either. It is easy to pray for others; it is not so easy to pray for yourself.

The psalmist said, “Remember me. Visit me. That I may see. That I may enjoy. That I may have.” We need to learn to pray for grace and mercy for ourselves regardless of our situation, that God would visit us and make us holy and godly in every situation and circumstance: “Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that Thou bearest unto Thy people. O, visit me with Thy salvation, that I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance.”

The psalmist says, “We have sinned with our fathers. We’ve committed iniquity. We’ve done wickedly.” There is the confession where it begins. We must consider how we sinned with our fathers.

Let us pray. Father, help us now to live for Thee. Thank you, Father, for your goodness and your kindness toward us. You’ve been so good and so gracious. Lord, we’re unable to utter all of Thy mighty acts and the wonders of Thy works, but we confess Thou art our God, the great and terrible God who doeth wonders, with whom all things are possible. Father, we acknowledge that obedience brings Thy blessings. Yet, if we are obedient, we have already been blessed, for Thou art the one who has made us so. We pray those last two verses that we dealt with, and ask You, Father, to remember not just us, but each of us. Remember me with the favor that Thou visitest to Thy people. Grant us Thy grace and Thy mercy. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part Two of 16

Introduction and Review of Psalm 106 Structure

Well, let's open our Bibles today to Psalm 106. We started this passage last week, and I'm going to be in it for some time. I don't know how long, but you will remember the series, however brief or however long it is going to be, is entitled “The Hallelujah of Confession.” The reason is very clear: this psalm deals mainly with confession of sin. So let's begin reading Psalm 106, and today we are going to read through verse 7.

The psalmist says, “Praise ye the Lord, O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise? Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times. Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that Thou bearest unto Thy people. O visit me with Thy salvation, that I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance.”

"We have sinned with our fathers. We've committed iniquity. We've done wickedly. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt. They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea."

Now, as you looked at this psalm last week, I told you that it was very easily divided. Verses 1 through 5 contain an invitation, where the psalmist invites us to praise and worship the Lord. Secondly, verses 6 through 46 contain confession, and thirdly, verses 47 and 48 contain a solicitation. Let me very quickly go over the four points I gave you last week concerning the invitation.

In verse 1, "Praise ye the Lord, O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever." There is the first reason the psalmist wants us to praise and magnify the Lord: number one, because of his goodness, and number two, because of his mercy. The second reason is found in verse 2: "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise?" We ought to praise God because his works are innumerable and, of course, really and truly incomprehensible in one sense of the word. Therefore, humanly speaking, we cannot give the Lord all his praise.

The glory that is due unto His name requires that we stand in awe before the Lord. The third reason is found in verse three: "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times." In other words, God's blessings are upon the obedient. Keeping judgment and doing righteousness are synonymous.

The fourth reason is found in verses four and five, where the psalmist teaches that we ought to pray even in the time of trouble and calamity. It is not wrong, wicked, or unbiblical to want to be delivered from an ungodly situation, even from an ungodly nation. The psalmist prays that he may see the goodness of the Lord, rejoice in God's gladness, and glory in God's inheritance. He also says in verse five that he could see all this for the nation as well. So it was not just a personal request; it was also for the nation.

The General Confession in Verse 6

Now we come to verse six. Actually, the first point is in verse seven, but we are not even going to get to the first point. All this is still

basically introduction. When we come to verse six, the psalmist says, “We have sinned with our fathers. We have committed iniquity, and we have done wickedly.” What the psalmist has done in the first five verses is encourage us to worship, adore, and magnify the Lord. Then, beginning with verse six, he leads us to confession and acknowledgement. In verse six he begins with what may be called a general confession and a general acknowledgement, and then he descends to the specific and detailed confessions in verses seven through forty-six.

It is interesting and noteworthy to observe the manner and language in which the psalmist acknowledges and confesses. He says, “We have sinned. We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedly.” In other words, there are absolutely no excuses. There are no extenuating circumstances mentioned. There is no pretension and no beating around the bush. He does not use euphemisms or try to water things down. He does not say, “We slipped up. We made a few mistakes. We are only human. We have our faults.” No, he does not say anything like that. He says, “We have sinned. We have committed iniquity, and we have done wickedly.”

The repetition in verse six denotes not only the multitude of their sins, but also the magnitude of their sins. The psalmist is saying, “We have sinned. We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedly.” They have committed all manner and kinds of sin—not just sins of ignorance, sins of frailty, and sins of infirmity, but sins of presumption, sins against light and knowledge, sins against grace and mercy, sins against God, and sins against man. In other words, the psalmist is saying that they have basically committed all kinds of sin.

This type of confession is certainly an open and frank confession, and it is the confession of an individual who is genuinely repentant. If you ever want to really know whether someone is repentant or not, this is a simple test: a repentant individual is always willing to freely and frankly confess and acknowledge their sins. An unrepentant individual is not willing to do that. He always wants to hide and he always wants to pretend.

This is the type of confession used by Solomon, by Daniel, and by the other biblical heroes. Solomon set it forth in his prayer of

dedication for the temple in 1 Kings 8. Speaking of the people being carried away captive, he says, “Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, we’ve done perversely, we’ve committed wickedness.”

The psalmist borrows those exact words. Ezra and Daniel both use the same language. What the psalmist is doing in verse six and in the rest of the psalm is not only acknowledging that he and the nation have sinned; he is also acknowledging that they really do not genuinely deserve the mercy for which he is praying. Just stop and think about that: “We have sinned with our fathers. We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedly.”

Let me ask you a question. The person that so readily admits his guilt, do you think that he deserves the mercy? The grace that he's asking? The answer is no. A person who admits his guilt really and truly deserves justice. But what the psalmist is saying is we do not want justice. We want what we do not deserve. And that's your mercy and your grace. And so when he is acknowledging the fact that they are sinners, he's also confessing and acknowledging the fact that they are now totally dependent upon God's grace and God's mercy.

Now, let me put it to you like this. Just like words cannot describe the greatness of God and the love of God and the mercy of God, so likewise, words cannot accurately describe the wickedness and depravity and the sin of man. And so the psalmist begins, he says, we have sinned, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

Now, today, we're not going to get out of verse six, because there is a very interesting and intriguing phrase in this verse. I don't know if it piqued your curiosity. It did mine. But the psalmist said in verse six, we have sinned with our fathers.

The Question: How Can We Sin with Our Fathers?

Now, let me ask you a question. How is it possible to sin with your fathers when you were never even born? And yet, that's what the psalmist says. We have sinned with our fathers.

Now, if you were to begin reading with verse seven and read on down through verse 13, you will find that he is talking about the deliverance of Israel out of the land of Egypt. We'll get into that next week. But the point I'm trying to make is David, who wrote this psalm, was alive over 400 years after this incident happened. The exodus was in approximately 1446 BC. David reigned approximately from 1010 to 970, 40 years. And if you will turn in your Bibles very quickly to look at 1 Kings chapter 6 and verse 1. Now you remember Solomon, David's son, followed him upon the throne. Solomon was the one who built the temple. And look what the scripture says in 1 Kings chapter 6 verse 1. 1 Kings 6 verse 1. And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.

That is interesting because Solomon began to build the temple four hundred and eighty years after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. He had only been on the throne for four years. That means 476 years would be the death of David. David was writing this psalm—I do not know how old he was, let us say approximately 450 years after the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt—and David says, “We have sinned with our fathers.”

How can you sin with your fathers when you were never born? How can you be involved in someone’s sin when they lived 400 years prior to you? I want to answer that question and show you that David is not just blowing smoke in the wind when he says that we have sinned with our fathers. Part of the problem that we have today in America is because we do not understand this principle. How did David sin with his fathers? How did we sin with our fathers—our grandfathers and our great-grandfathers? How did we sin with them?

First Way: Seminally (In the Loins)

First of all, number one, we have sinned with our fathers seminally. We have sinned with our fathers seminally. This means that we were in their loins when they committed those sins.

There is a continuity between ancestors and descendants. That was brought home to me a year or two ago when I received a genealogical chart of my ancestors going back to 1620. I was absolutely flabbergasted to see how many of my ancestors were named John, John Daniel, Elizabeth, and Rebecca. In other words, the family names that we have today have basically been family names from 1600 on. I thought, how is it that we are continuing the use of those names? Why do we not come up with some other name? I did not know that my great-great-great-grandmother might have been named Rebecca when I named my baby daughter Rebecca. Yet here is a continuity.

How can we sin seminally with our fathers? It is when we are in their loins. Let me show you. Look in your Bibles, first of all, to the book of Genesis chapter 14, and then we are going to turn over to Hebrews chapter 7. Here is the story of Abraham when he returns from the slaughter of those kings. One lot was taken captive.

SCRIPTURE READING - Genesis 14:17-20; Hebrews 7:1-10 (KJV)

He's returning now in victory and he meets Melchizedek. In Genesis chapter 14, beginning there with verse 17:

> And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

So now Abraham has given tithes to Melchizedek. Hebrews 7 verse 1:

> For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having

> neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily, now watch, and verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him. Isn't that interesting?

God is saying that Levi, the priestly tribe, paid tithes to Melchizedek by virtue of the fact that they were in Abram's loins when Abram paid those tithes to Melchizedek.

If it is true that we participate in the good and righteous deeds of our fathers while we were yet in their loins, is it not equally true that we participate in their evil and wicked deeds when we're yet in their loins? Stop and think about this. How is it that Abraham came to be known as the father of the faith and the father of the faithful?

Abraham is so designated in Romans 4:11: “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” So Abraham is here called the father of all them that believe.

Verse 12 says, “And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.” Then verse 16 says, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who

quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be."

Abraham is very clearly called the father of the faithful. Why is Abraham called the father of the faith? Is it because he was the first one that God called out of Ur of the Chaldees? The answer is no, although Abraham was one of the first called by God out of Ur of the Chaldees. In Genesis 13:15, what does God tell Abraham?

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. Now I want you to note that the word seed is singular. In Genesis 17 and verse 8, God says, "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." In Genesis 22 and verse 18, when Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac, God says, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." So God has given this great promise to Abraham and his seed.

In Galatians 3:14-16 we read: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Watch carefully as Paul makes the distinction: the promises were made not to seeds, as of many, but to one seed. The seed that he had in his mind was Jesus Christ. The promise concerned the seed in the singular.

The promises that God gave to Abraham and his seed concerned Jesus Christ. Abraham was not the father of Christ, but Abraham possessed the promises, and the seed came through Abraham's line. Now, the truth is this: it is true that Joseph was the father figure in our Lord's life.

God was the father of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you will read Matthew chapter one, you will find an amazing thing. The book of

the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ identifies Him as the son of David and the son of Abraham.

So, Abraham is the father of the faithful because Abraham, in that sense, was the father of Christ—not humanly speaking, but he was the one to whom the promises were given. Even in Luke chapter 3 and verse 34, Mary's line comes through Abram, or Abraham, as well. The promises were given to all of those who were in Christ in Abraham because Jesus Christ is the true seed of Abraham.

Job used the language to speak similarly of children. In Job chapter 31, verse 19, he says, “If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep.” When he says, “If his loins have not blessed me,” he is talking about his children. If his children have not blessed me, where's Joseph? I'm going to take care of the poor and the needy.

Job here is speaking similarly. Now, how is it that we've sinned with our fathers? The answer is that we were in their loins when they sinned. So the first way that we've sinned with our fathers is that we have sinned with them seminally.

Second Way: Imputatively (By Imputation)

Secondly, we've sinned with our fathers imputatively—that is, by imputation. The word imputation means to charge or to credit to one's account. So we sinned with our fathers by imputation. That is, it has been charged or credited to our accounts. In Romans 5 and verse 12: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”

The interesting thing in the latter part of Romans 5:12, when it says “all have sinned,” or “all sinned,” is that it is an aorist passive in the Greek. That means it is something that happened once and for all, once and forever. It is over with. When did all sin once and for all? The answer is: in Adam.

There are only three instances of imputation in the Bible. The first is Adam's sin to his posterity, in Romans 5:12. The second is believers' sins to Jesus Christ. The third is the righteousness of Jesus Christ to believers, found in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It is true that Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity.

Since Adam, all are sinners. There is no such thing as the humanistic philosophy of tabula rasa—that everyone comes into this world with a clean plate, everyone comes into this world innocent. That is hogwash. Everyone comes into this world a sinner. When you look at that cute little baby lying there and say, "He's so sweet and innocent," that is not true. That baby is a sinner.

Someone may say, "Brother Weaver, I don't believe that." I will tell you what: all you have to do is not feed him, and he will die. You say, "What does that prove?" The wages of sin is death. If he were not a sinner, he would not die. We have all been imputed sinners.

There is also an aspect of this imputation demonstrated in what we know as generational sins. Exodus 34:5 says, "And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." That is what I call a generational sin: a sin that has been imputed, and a curse as well.

That goes from father to son, to grandson, to great-grandson. Why? Usually children follow in the footsteps of their parents. Joshua warns the people about generational sins. Joshua 24:19 says, "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. Now watch. If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good."

What is he saying? If you forsake the Lord, judgment is going to fall upon you. It will fall upon your children. There are generational sins with generational curses. If you study First and Second Kings and First and Second Chronicles, you will find that the sons of the kings usually followed in the footsteps of their fathers. If the father was a good king, usually the son was. If the father was an evil king, usually the son was. I know there are some exceptions, but usually that is so.

Thus, we are participating in the sins of our fathers by imputation. There are generational sins with generational curses, and we will point that out later, because we usually end up doing the same things our fathers did. So how could David say, "We have sinned with our fathers"? The first two ways he could say that are: we have sinned with them seminally, and we have sinned with them by means of imputation.

Third Way: Representatively

Number three: we have sinned with our fathers representatively. This truth is included in Romans 5:12, because Adam was not only designated as our head, but he was also our representative. What he did, we did. When he sinned, we sinned. When he fell, we fell.

You say, "Brother Weaver, I don't think that's right." Well, we use that principle every day of our lives. Had Adam done right, we would have done right. Had Adam succeeded, we would have succeeded. And if you do not like that principle, then you do not like salvation, because that is the very principle upon which we are made righteous in Christ.

We are identified with Him. He is our head. His obedience is our obedience. His death is our death. His resurrection is our resurrection. His life is our life. He is our representative. If you do not like to sin in Adam, then you will not like to be saved in Christ, because it is only by means of representation that we are saved. We do this same thing with our government.

We elect men who are supposed to represent us. Unhappily, they do not. But they are supposed to. Whatever they bind us to, then,

since they are officially our representatives, whether they represent us or not, we are bound to it as a people and nation.

Now, look in your Bibles. We are going to come back to this passage, but first look at Ezekiel 18:20, because this verse will undoubtedly come to someone's mind. I want to answer the objection before we reach it. God says simply: The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Watch carefully. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

It is true that every man dies for his own sin. I am going to bring that out a little bit later. However, when father and son are involved in the same sins, both are condemned. The family is bound by whatever the husband, the head, does. If I go downtown tomorrow and buy a $30,000 automobile and finance $29,000 of it, which I would never do, but if I did, basically once I put my name on the line, my wife is bound to that contract.

My children would be bound if they are in my house. In that sense, whether they are legally obligated to pay that bill or not, they will suffer from the consequences. If I do not pay it, because as head I represent them.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Joshua, chapter 6, verse 18. The children of Israel are about to go into Jericho and take it, and God says: "And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." God warned the individual Israelites not to touch any of the accursed thing, lest they not only became a curse, but the camp, or the nation, became a curse as well. God says, "Don't touch anything."

Now go to chapter 7, verse 1: "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel." Who was it that stole the goodly Babylonish garment and the wedge of silver and gold? Who stole? Achan. Well, how did Israel, the people, the nation, commit a

trespass? There is a continuity in the nation. What Achan did, not only did his family do, but the nation as well.

Now skip down to verse 19. Achan has been found out, and Joshua said unto Achan, “My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done.”

“Hide it not from me.” And Achan answered Joshua, and said, “Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.” So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

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

Why is it that Achan was the one that stole, and yet his whole family died with him? You say, “Brother Weaver, you just read that every man shall die for his own sin. The father shall not die for the son. The son shall not die for the father.” And yet here is a clear illustration where these people were taken out and died with Achan. Achan was the one that sinned. Where did Achan hide that cursed, stolen property? In the tent—in the home. Undoubtedly, the family knew about it, consented to it, and agreed with it, and they died with their father. He was their representative.

Had they not condoned that sin, then certainly they would have gone to Joshua and said, “Look, we’ve got problems.” But they did not do that. And so everything that Achan had died.

Turn to 2 Samuel chapter 12, beginning with verse 9. You remember how David committed adultery with Bathsheba.

He had Uriah, her husband, the Hittite, killed with the sword of the children of Ammon. Look what God tells him in 2 Samuel chapter 12, beginning with verse 9: “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house. And I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.”

Why was David’s house cursed? Not only was David the representative of his family, and not only is there a principle that you reap what you sow, there is also the lex talionis, the law of retribution. David had destroyed another family in Israel, and now his family would be destroyed.

The humanistic phrase is, “No man is an island.” The biblical principle is Romans 14:7: “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.” Whatever we do always affects the lives of others. Whatever I do affects my wife, either good or bad. It affects my family. It affects my ministry.

When you take the attitude, “Bless God, it’s my life. What I do is what I do. It doesn’t affect anybody else,” that is hogwash. The old drunk says, “I’ll get drunk and drive; that’s my business,” until he hits another family head-on and kills them. No man lives to himself. No man dies to himself. We are representatives as well as individuals, and what we do indeed affects the lives of others.

Fourth Way: Nationally

So we have sinned with our fathers seminally, by imputation, representatively, and, fourthly, nationally. There is a national solidarity that affects the lives of individual citizens as well as the nation.

Do you realize that Achan's sin was the cause of his own family's destruction? But his sin not only affected his family; it affected the nation. God counted it that way in Joshua chapter 7, verse 1, where He says Israel had committed a trespass. God counted it as the whole. How did his sin affect the nation? The people came to Joshua and said, “Ai is a little town. We do not need the whole army. Let a few of us go up there.” Joshua never sought the Lord's direction; he simply sent a few of them. The men of Ai came out and fought against Israel. How many were killed? Thirty-six Israelites.

Achan's sin had not just touched his family; it had touched thirty-six more families. Besides the judgment of God against the nation, God told Joshua, “Until you deal with this, neither will I be with you anymore.”

Listen carefully to what God says in Leviticus 26:39-40. He is speaking to the people concerning the blessings and curses of obedience and disobedience: “And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them. If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me.” Nobody says you will pine away only in your sins; you will pine away in the sins, or trespasses, of your fathers. And He says that if you will confess your sins and the sins of your fathers.

Why? Because there is a solidarity in the nation. In Jeremiah 3:25, Jeremiah writes, “We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.” There is a national solidarity. Jeremiah said, “We’ve sinned,” and we’ve sinned with our fathers. In Jeremiah 14:20, he says, “We acknowledge, O LORD, our

wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee."

Let me give you another illustration. Anybody remember Ahithophel and Absalom? Absalom rebelled against his father, and Ahithophel, who had been David's counselor, turned and went with Absalom. Absalom's rebellion and Ahithophel's joining him and giving credence to his rebellion caused a bloody civil war. If you study 2 Samuel 18:7–8, you will find that approximately 20,000 to 40,000 people died because of the sins of two men. It affected the nation.

There is a national solidarity. This truth is lost upon our generation. I hear people say all the time, "I don't care what they do in Washington; it doesn't affect me." That's hogwash. "I don't care what they do in Atlanta; that doesn't bother me." Yes, it does. In Jeremiah 15:4, God says concerning Judah and Jerusalem, "And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem." God said He would send the people into captivity for what Manasseh did. Don't tell me what your leaders do does not affect you. There is a national solidarity. When we allow our leaders to sin and rebel against God openly and do nothing, God judges the people with the rulers. We sin with our fathers nationally.

Fifthly, we have sinned with our fathers actually. What do I mean by that? We have engaged in the same sins and in the same kinds of sins our fathers did. They were corrupt, and we're corrupt. We cannot blame everything on our fathers. Most people try.

Fifth Way: Actually (Committing the Same Sins)

Jeremiah 31, verses 29 and 30, says, "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge."

I could put this in a more applicable light. How many have ever had the pleasure of eating, or biting into, a green persimmon? If you bite into a green persimmon, your children's teeth are not going to be set on edge. Yours are. Your mouth, your lips, and everything that

you pucker with will be set on edge. What do they mean when they say, “Our fathers have eaten sour grapes, and our children's teeth are set on edge”?

They are saying it is the father's fault—the father's sins. I know that our fathers have sinned. Our forefathers have sinned. But the truth is that we have sinned equally, and we have actually done the very things that they have done. Turn quickly to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Look at what God tells us not to do.

He is talking about the fathers that came out of Egypt: “But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” All of them that came out of Egypt died, except Joshua and Caleb. God overthrew them.

“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

Have you ever lusted? Have you ever engaged in idolatry? Have you ever sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play? Ever committed fornication? Ever murmured? Ever tempted Christ?

This whole generation has done everything that our fathers have done. But not only have we done the things our fathers did; we have done even more wickedly, because we have sinned against light, truth, and knowledge. The Bible says in John 1:17, “the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Was there no grace in the Old Testament? Of course; anyone who was ever saved was saved by grace. Was there no truth in the Old Testament? Of course; all of God's word is truth. But the fullness of truth and the fullness of grace are given us in Jesus Christ. Our fathers did not

have that fullness of knowledge and grace; we had it. And we have done exactly what they did, only worse.

It is not that our fathers ate sour grapes and our teeth are set on edge. We have eaten the sour grapes ourselves, and our teeth are set on edge because of what we have done. We have engaged in their same sins.

The Need for Corporate Confession

I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but we live such individualistic lives. This generation has changed even since I was a boy. When I was a boy, our neighbors used to come and sit on the porch and drink tea and talk, fellowship in the cool of the evening. That was a regular thing, not an occasional thing.

No one does that anymore. Our lives are so individualized that we don't have time for anybody or anything. What we have forgotten is this: there is a continuity between our ancestors and us. There is a national solidarity. And let me tell you what we've got to learn to do, folks. We have to learn to confess not just our sins, but our family's sins, our church's sins, and our nation's sins.

Do you realize that is what our Bible heroes did when they were beseeching God for an awakening and a reviving? Turn in your Bibles to Ezra chapter 9, and let's begin reading with verse 6. Then we'll go to the book of Daniel. Here's what Ezra is confessing: “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.”

Do you notice the plural there? “Our iniquities are increased over our head and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.”

Notice what Ezra is doing. Ezra's not just saying, “God, I'm a sinner. God, I've sinned.” Yes, he is admitting that. But he said, “God, it's not just me. It's my family. It's my group. It's my nation. It's my people. We've sinned as a whole.”

In Daniel chapter 9, beginning with verse 4, notice Daniel's confession: “And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled.”

Doesn't that sound like Psalm 106, verse 6? “We have sinned with our fathers, we've committed iniquity, we've done wickedly.” Daniel continues, “We have sinned, we have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”

“O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.”

Isn't that amazing? A national confession. When the nation itself will not mourn for its sins, then we as individuals must. When the nation as a whole will not confess and acknowledge its sin, then we as individuals must. When families will not confess and acknowledge their sins, then we as individuals must. We need to learn to pray and say, “Lord, it's not just this old boy that has sinned. I've done my share. And I'm a sinner and I'm wicked and I want to confess, acknowledge it. But Lord, it's my nation”

Application and Closing Prayer

And my people, and my church, and my family. Lord, I want a reviving. I want an awakening. We've sinned with our fathers. We've

committed iniquity. We've done wickedly. We must seek the Lord for His grace, His mercy, and His forgiveness.

Father, we are thankful today for Jesus Christ. Where in the world would we begin when we acknowledge and confess the sins of our nation? We've forsaken Thee, the one true and living God. We've committed idolatry, spiritual adultery, and physical adultery. We've hated You. We've turned our backs upon You. We've trampled Your law under our feet. We've elected men who are despicable, wicked, and rebellious. We've left all form of law, Your law. Our churches are corrupt. We've left Your word and golden entertainment into programs. Our families are corrupt, and we're corrupt. How desperately we need Thee, Lord. We need an awakening, a reviving, repentance, and faith. Enable us, Lord, to confess not only our sins, but the sins of our nation, and say, We've sinned with our fathers. We've done wickedly. We've committed iniquity. Give us Your grace. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part Three of 16

Psalm 106, verses 1 through 12:

"Praise ye the Lord, O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise? Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times. Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that Thou bearest unto Thy people. O, visit me with Thy salvation, that I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance.

"We have sinned with our fathers. We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedly. Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt. They remembered not the multitude of Thy mercies, but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up. So he led them through the depths as through the wilderness, and he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them

from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies, and there was not one of them left. Then, believing his words, they sang his song." Or they sang his praise, which would be they sang his psalm or they sang his praise.

This series is entitled "The Hallelujah of Confession." The reason is that this is the first hallelujah psalm. It begins with "Praise ye the Lord," which is Hallelujah. There are a number of Hallelujah Psalms in the Bible, and this psalm is called "The Hallelujah of Confession" because it is full of confession, confession of sin.

Introduction and Review

By way of introduction, let me remind you that in verses one through five I gave four reasons why the psalmist invited us to praise the Lord. The first is found in verse 1: because of His goodness and His mercy that endures forever. The second is found in verse 2: "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise?" The marvelous works of God are so great that we cannot give God all the praise and glory due unto His name. The third reason, found in verse 3, is His blessings upon the obedient.

"Blessed are they that keep judgment and he that doeth righteousness at all times." The fourth reason is found in verses four and five, where the psalmist wanted to be delivered personally from an ungodly situation, that he might ultimately see the success of God's law, God's kingdom, and God's grace toward his nation. That was dealt with in detail in the first message.

Then, in verse six: "We have sinned with our fathers. We've committed iniquity. We've done wickedly." Verse six contains a general confession. Last week, I dealt mainly with the first phrase: "We have sinned with our fathers." We have sinned with them seminally, in that we were in their loins when they committed their sins. We have sinned with them imputatively; that is, many times their sins were imputed to us, as Adam's sin was imputed to us. This is known as generational sins in the Bible. In Exodus 34, God says that He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him.

We also sin in them representatively, because our fathers represent their families and offspring. Fourthly, we have sinned in them nationally. Scripture shows the bond that exists between the people of a nation. Fifthly, we have sinned in them actually—that is, we have actually committed the same sins they committed.

General vs. Specific Confession

To prove that, the psalmist begins specifying the sins in verse seven. Verse six is a generalization, but from verse seven through verse forty-six there is a specification of the sins.

It is one thing to acknowledge that we have sinned and quite another to confess and acknowledge specific, individual sins. Everyone is willing to admit, "Well, yeah, I'm a sinner. I've done some bad things. I've done wrong." But when we begin to press the individual and say, "Tell me specifically about your sins," suddenly we do not want to discuss specifics. The psalmist is saying that it is necessary not only to admit that we are sinners, but also to confess our specific sins before the Lord.

The Meaning of Confession

Let me ask and answer this question for you: Why do we need to specify and delineate our sins before the Lord? Why do we need to get downright specific, or, as we say, down to the nitty-gritty? Hold Psalm 106 and turn in your Bibles to 1 John 1:9, a verse practically everyone can quote, or at least should be able to quote. So many people quote this verse and never understand it. The Word of God says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Look at that: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The problem is that most people do not know what the word “confess” actually means. Let me ask you a question.

Suppose I went to Tony, stuck my hand in his pocket, and stole a $100 bill from him. Then I said, “Lord, I just stole a $100 bill from Tony. Lord, please forgive me.” Next, I went over to Doc, stuck my hand in his pocket, took a $100 bill from him, and said, “Oh, Lord, I got another one from Doc. Please, Lord, forgive me for this.” Then I

made my way up to Dr. Brissett. Is that confessing? The answer is very clearly no.

What is involved in confession of sin? The Greek word in 1 John 1:9 is homologeo. Homo means "one and the same"; that is where we get our words homogenized and homosexual. Lego means "I say." Homologeo literally means, "I say the same thing that God says," or, "I take the same attitude that God takes."

Suppose, then, I go back to Tony, stick my hand in his pocket, and steal a hundred-dollar bill. Then I understand that what I have done is wicked, wrong, and vile. I come to God and say, "Lord, I have stolen. I am confessing this sin; it is wicked, it is vile, it is wrong." If I genuinely confess that sin, what do I do? I go back to Tony, make restitution, and ask his forgiveness. Since I am taking the same attitude that God takes toward sin and saying the same thing God says about it—that it is wicked, wrong, ungodly, deserving of punishment and God's wrath—have I changed my mind concerning that sin? I repent of it, and I do not perform that sin anymore.

Real, genuine confession involves specification. It involves repentance. How in the world can you repent of something if you simply say, "Well, I sinned"? What are you going to repent of—being a sinner? You cannot repent of being a sinner; you are a sinner. You have to repent of specific sins. Repentance, then, is involved in confession. Real, genuine, true, biblical confession involves repentance. Repentance means not only that you acknowledge your sin but that you forsake your sin.

What does the Bible say? Proverbs 28:13 says, "Whosoever confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy." Did you hear that? "Whosoever confesseth and" what? "Forsaketh." Real, genuine confession involves forsaking. In order to confess our sins, we must not merely say, "Lord, we have sinned." We must become specific so that we might turn from them, change our minds about them, and certainly forsake them.

As you go back to Psalm 106, that is exactly what the psalmist begins to do in verse 7. That is the very first sin he deals with specifically in this psalm. The psalmist said, "Our fathers understood

not thy wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea."

The Twin Sins of Ignorance and Ingratitude

There are actually two sins involved in verse 7. They may be put in two simple terms so that they can be grasped more quickly: ignorance and ingratitude. "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt"—that is ignorance. "They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies"—that is ingratitude. These twin sins always go together. Do you realize it is impossible to be grateful when you are ignorant of what has been done for you? Ignorance and ingratitude always go together.

The Word of God has a great deal to say about ignorance. Rather than merely taking the Scriptures and running through them to show what the Bible says about ignorance, let us develop the subject. Let us first consider an overall view of ignorance from the biblical perspective. According to the Bible, there are sins of ignorance as well as sins of presumption. There are sins that you and I commit every day that we do not willingly, purposefully, and deliberately do.

Biblical Teaching on Ignorance

We do them because we are ignorant of God's law. If you study Leviticus chapters 4 and 5 and Numbers chapter 15, you will find that God has made provision for those individuals who sinned ignorantly and unawares. When you and I are ignorant of Scripture and God's law, many times we are guilty of many specific ignorant sins. The only way that will stop us from committing those sins is to understand and know the law of God. So there are sins of ignorance.

Secondly, the Word of God teaches that the ungodly are separated from God through ignorance. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 18 says specifically that unbelievers are alienated from God through the ignorance that is in them. Let us be honest: an unbeliever does not know who God is, the truth of God, or the principles of God. He is absolutely, totally ignorant. Thus, in 1 Peter 1 and verse 14, we are admonished not to be ignorant. We are to know. The ungodly are alienated from God through the ignorance that is in them.

Thirdly, seven times the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter admonish us not to be ignorant. We are not going to turn there, but Romans 11:25, 1 Corinthians 10:1, 1 Corinthians 12:1, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, and 2 Peter 3:8 contain language such as, "Brethren, be not ignorant of this one thing," or, "Brethren, I would not have you to be ignorant of this very thing." There are some things that are so important we had better not be ignorant of them. Seven times, then, Paul and Peter admonish us not to be ignorant of certain doctrines.

Fourthly, Scripture teaches that some individuals are willingly ignorant. Speaking of those who scoff at the return of Jesus Christ, Peter says in 2 Peter 3:5, "For this they are willingly ignorant." In other words, some people not only do not know the truth; they do not ever want to know the truth. They are willingly ignorant, and it is for these people that the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:38, "Him that is ignorant, let him be ignorant still." I told Dr. Brissett outside earlier that there are some people you just cannot help. A man who will not receive the truth, a man who will not listen to the truth, there is nothing you can do for him.

Leave him in his ignorance. It is like what our Lord said in Matthew 15. When the disciples told Him, "Knowest thou not that the Pharisees were offended at thy saying?" our Lord answered, "Let them alone. They be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall in the ditch." What did our Lord say? Let them alone. Let them stay in their ignorance and blindness. They will die in their iniquity, because some people are willingly ignorant.

Now the Bible says in Psalm 106 and verse 7, "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt." The word "wonders" refers to His miracles, His mighty works, and all His marvelous acts. Remember the plagues God put upon the Egyptians and how He delivered the Israelites, but they did not understand all this. Now let us look at the word "understanding." He said, "Our fathers understood not."

The Meaning of 'Understood'

Now, in order to grasp the word "understand," we're going to leave the negative off just for a moment. I'm going to tell you what the

word "understand" is in the Hebrew and what it means without the negative. The Hebrew word is sakal, and without the negative, it relates to an intelligent knowledge of the reason. You know why something has happened. Not only that, but it means that one considers and one pays attention to something. So in order to understand something you've got to consider, you've got to pay attention.

Now, hold Psalm 106 and look first of all in Proverbs 21 and verse 12. Proverbs 21 and verse 12. Proverbs 21 verse 12, the Bible says, "The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked, but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness." Now, what does the wise man do? He wisely pays attention. He wisely considers. He wisely knows the reason why the wicked's house is overthrown. Look in your Bibles, go back if you would to the book of Ezra, Ezra Nehemiah, Ezra chapter 8 and verse 13.

You'll see the same word for understanding translated here. Ezra 8 and verse 13. The Word of God says this. Ezra 8... put down verse 13. 13, but that's not the correct verse. Let me look at verse 31. Might have transposed it. This deals with the reading of the law of God. Well, skip down to verse 16. The Bible says, and he names them. He says that they were men of understanding. But when he read the law of God, let me see if I could find the verse—that's not the verse that I wanted, but anyhow, the verse basically says that they paid attention, that they gave diligent consideration to the reading of the law of God. Now watch this.

The word sakal then means to understand the reason for something. It means to pay attention. It means to give understanding, but more than that, it means this: it also means to have insight. For instance, turning your Bibles to the book of Proverbs chapter one and verse three, you'll see why the Proverbs were written, by the way. Proverbs chapter one verse three. Here is why the book of Proverbs were written. He says in verse 2: "To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding." Verse 3: "To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment and equity." So there is a perception in the word understanding. Then if you would turn over to Jeremiah chapter 9, Jeremiah chapter 9 and look at verse 23.

Here the word is translated just a little differently, but it is the same word. Jeremiah chapter 9 and verse 23 says: "Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me. That I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, judgment, righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, saith the Lord." God says, if you are going to glory, glory in this, that you understand and know me. The word "understand" here does not mean that you comprehend God totally, but it does mean that you perceive him, that you have insight into his being and into his nature, which we get from the Word of God.

Now go back to Psalm 106 and put this together. The sin of ignorance is revealed when he says, "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt." What does that mean? It means that they did not consider, pay attention to, or perceive. They did not have insight into it, and they had no idea of the reason why God did what he did in Egypt.

Deuteronomy 32, beginning with verse 28, shows how God characterized the fathers and the nation: "For they are a nation void of counsel. Neither is there any understanding in them." Then God says, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" God says they are absolutely void of counsel. They have no understanding. He would that they would understand, listen, and pay attention, but they simply do not.

So our fathers, of whom he speaks in Psalm 106 and verse 7, did not understand why God wrought those miracles in the land of Egypt. They did not understand the judgments that he inflicted upon the Egyptians. They had seen them with their eyes and heard them with their ears. They were there, and they knew the results of them. But although they saw with their eyes and heard with their ears, they did not have a heart or an understanding to perceive and grasp what was really happening. They did not see that here was the one true and living God, the almighty God manifesting himself in power and in grace in delivering them from the hand of the enemy.

We tend to criticize the Old Testament saints. I have done it. You have done it. We read things in the Scripture that are so obviously

wrong and so patently wicked. We say, "Well, if we had been there, we wouldn't have done that." But the truth is, we do exactly the same thing that they do. There was the same exact problem in the New Testament.

New Testament Parallels of Ignorance

In relationship to our Lord's own disciples, Mark 9:31 says, "For he taught his disciples." He did not leave them in the dark. He taught his disciples and said unto them, "The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him." "And after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying and were afraid to ask." They understood not that Christ was going to physically die and be raised again. They understood not what he said, and, of course, they were afraid to ask him.

Luke 9:43 says, "And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God, but while they wondered everyone at all things which Jesus did, he said to his disciples, 'Let these things sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men.' But they understood not this saying. And it was hid from them that they perceived it not. And they feared to ask him of that saying."

Luke 18:34 says, "They understood none of these things. And this saying was hid from them. Neither knew they the things which were spoken."

Can you imagine? As loving and as kind as Jesus Christ was, and as able a teacher as he was, and as willing a teacher as he was, why would his disciples be afraid to ask him something they did not understand?

Why is it that there are things we do not understand that we are afraid to research and find out, or even pray about and ask God for wisdom concerning them? There are a number of things—I meet people all along who are simply afraid to know the truth. In John 10, our Lord is telling the parable that he is the Good Shepherd.

"He giveth his life for his sheep." The Bible says in verse 6: "This parable spake Jesus unto them, but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them." Our Lord was talking about a

shepherd and a sheep to people who lived around shepherds and sheep. He gave a parable, and yet they did not understand it.

Here is another example. "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest and went with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought Peter in." Peter was the one saying, "Lord, I'm never going to deny you. I'm willing to die with you." Did Peter understand? No. What did Peter end up doing? Denying the Lord exactly as Christ told him he would.

In Matthew 15, verses 15 and 16, we read: "Then answered Peter and said unto him, 'Declare unto us this parable.' Jesus said, 'Are you also yet without understanding?'" We are dealing with the twin sins of ignorance and ingratitude in Psalm 106, verse 7. Scripture says our fathers understood not God's wonders in Egypt. Not only did the Old Testament saints fail to understand the wonders of our Lord in Egypt; even the New Testament saints did not understand some of the Lord's teaching. The same problem that existed in the Old Testament and in the New Testament still exists today.

Modern Ignorance of God's Works

How many of us understand God's mighty acts, God's mighty miracles, and God's wondrous power? That is too broad a question, so let me be more specific: How many of us understand what God did in Egypt? We can criticize our forefathers for not understanding when they were there. But we have thousands of years of history and a completed revelation, and most of us still do not understand what God did in Egypt.

Do we even know why there were ten plagues, or why those plagues were like they were? What most people do not realize is that Egypt was a polytheistic nation; that is, they had many gods. Each one of those plagues was directed at a specific false god. Why did Pharaoh's son die? Because Pharaoh was worshipped as a god. To show the people that he was not a god, he could not even save the life of his own son, much less the firstborn of all the other nations. But the firstborn of Israel lived. Why? Because God is the one true and

living God, and he is able to save and deliver. The truth is, most of us do not even understand the specifics of the deliverance of Egypt after thousands of years and a complete and total revelation.

How many of us understand what God did in our own personal salvation? Ignorance and ingratitude go together. How can you be grateful for what God has done for you if you do not even understand what he has done for you? What has God done for you in your own personal salvation, in your own personal deliverance?

The Apostle Paul writes, “Giving thanks unto the Father.” Why should we thank God the Father? Why should we praise him? Why should we magnify him? What has he done for us? The Apostle Paul tells us simply one great thing that he has done: “Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet,” or suitable, “to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” That is one thing right there: God made us suitable to partake of his glory.

And look in verse 13. Here is the way that he did that: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Do you realize that in our salvation, God took us out of the kingdom of darkness, or the kingdom of Satan, and translated us—carried us, placed us, put us—into the kingdom of his own dear Son? In salvation there is a change of kingdoms, a change of ownership, and a change of rulership. The Apostle says, “Giving thanks unto God” who has done this great thing for us.

In Ephesians chapter one, beginning at verse 16, the Apostle Paul is praying for these Ephesian Christians. He says that he ceases not to give thanks for them, making mention of them in his prayers. Then he delineates specific requests. In verse 17, he prays that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” That is one request. In verse 18, he begins another request. This prayer emphasizes and highlights the greatness of our salvation that we have in Jesus Christ.

Paul prays that the eyes of the Ephesians' understanding will be enlightened, so that they may know the hope of God's calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. He is praying that

these Ephesian saints will know what God has done for them when He saved them. He continues by praying that they might know the exceeding greatness of God's power to us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

Here is one of Paul's prayer requests for the saints: that we might know, perceive, and understand what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. That is the prayer: that the eyes of our understanding might be enlightened, that we might know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Do you realize that the exact same power it took to raise Jesus Christ from the dead was the exact same power God exerted in saving us? The power of God in salvation is equal to the power of God in Christ's resurrection. That is what he said. That mighty power was according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His right hand in heavenly places.

The question I ask is this: How can we criticize the Old Testament saints for not understanding what God did for them in Egypt, in one sense of the word, when we do not even understand what God has done for us in Christ? We have a full, completed revelation in front of us.

Our problem is not insufficient data. We have the completed revelation of God. Our problem is not simply human limitation. It is true that we are limited, humanly speaking, but our human limitations are not really the problem. The problem is that we are just like the Old Testament saints. We are so caught up in our lives, so caught up in our work, so caught up in our families, and so caught up in our sins that we do not have time to pay attention. We do not have time to consider. We do not have time to think. In other words, it is really a matter of priorities.

Let me put it to you bluntly: God and His work do not count too much for us. You say, “Now, Brother Weaver, I’m a Christian.” Well, why do we not understand it? Look to Psalm 111:2. If we truly appreciate what God has done, let us emulate this verse: “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.”

Why is it that we really do not understand? Because we have not sought it out. And why have we not sought it out? Because we do not truly have pleasure in the works of God. If we have pleasure in the works of God, we will seek out those works and seek to understand them. Our ignorance is due to our own sin and rebellion and lack of consideration for God and His work.

The Sin of Ingratitude

Go back to Psalm 106:7. This verse contains twin sins. The first sin is the sin of ignorance. “Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.” That is ignorance. “They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies.” That is ingratitude.

Failure to consider always leads to failure to remember. Ignorance and ingratitude go hand in hand.

Notice one word in verse 7. The psalmist says, “Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt. They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies.” It is true that we tend to forget occasional things, but how can we forget a multitude? God did not do simply one thing for our fathers; He did a multitude of things. They did not remember the multitude of His mercies. God remembered them, but they did not remember Him.

Ingratitude enters into the very nature of iniquity at all stages. Some of you have experienced, or will experience, what I am about to tell you. Is it not grievous to continue to give and give and give to arrogant, presumptuous, ungrateful individuals? I am talking about individuals who take everything for granted.

Who ever thinks of the love and sacrifice behind the gifts? Once they receive those gifts, they easily and quickly discard, waste, or misuse them. What is your attitude toward an individual like that? Many individuals have children like that, mates like that, and family

members like that. How do you respond to someone who is so absolutely ungrateful?

It is exceedingly grievous when we give everything we can to those whom we love and who profess to love us, but in reality they take everything we give them, turn and use it against us, rebel against us, and seek to attack and destroy us.

I know what I would do. I would say, "Young man or young woman, if you think you're getting another penny from me, you're mistaken." I'd cut them off so quickly, it would make their head swim. Would you not do the same? You might persevere a little longer, but sooner or later you will come to the point of saying, "I'm not willing to help that individual any longer." It does no good. I'm wasting my time, my breath, and my resources.

The reason I said that is this: You take that same attitude of ungratefulness and wastefulness and multiply it by infinity. That is what we have done to our heavenly Father. We have taken and taken and taken, presumed upon His mercy, and been so ungrateful that we expect God to bless us whether we are obedient or holy or not. We expect God to continue. I want to show you how ignorant and ungrateful the fathers were whom God brought out of Egypt.

God had brought the children of Israel out. When Pharaoh drew near, the wilderness was on one side, the sea in front of them, the desert on the other side, and Pharaoh coming hard behind them. When the children of Israel lifted up their eyes and saw the Egyptians marching after them, they were very afraid, and they cried unto the Lord. They said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in this wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than we should die in this wilderness."

They would rather be slaves, in bondage and in their sin and iniquity, than out there trusting God. The only reason they believed Moses had brought them out was to kill them. They not only did not understand; they were absolutely ungrateful that God had brought them out of Egypt. Psalm 78:42 specifies it: "They remembered not

his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy." They were not only ignorant, but totally ungrateful.

What was the result of their ignorance and ingratitude? What effect did their ignorance and ingratitude have upon God? We forget many times that our sins affect God.

The Result: Provoking God

God has an intrinsic and essential glory, and God has an external and outward glory. Nothing affects God's essential and inherent glory. God is God, and God is perfectly satisfied and content in and of himself. He needs no one; he needs nothing. Our sin and rebellion, our goodness and our obedience—none of that can affect God's essential glory at all.

Consider Psalm 16. Do you realize that even the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ added nothing to God the Father? God the Father is already perfect. Since He is perfect, nothing can be added to Him nor taken from Him. In verse 1, the psalm of the Messiah says, "Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord." Then the Messiah says, "My goodness extendeth not unto thee." So everything that Christ did did not enhance God the Father's essential and inherent glory. God is God.

What did our Lord's obedience affect? Look at verse 2 again: "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth. And to the excellent in whom is all my delight." Our Lord's goodness did not do one thing for God the Father, but it did do something for us.

Understand this carefully: although God has an essential and inherent glory to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken, He also has an external glory, an outward glory, and that glory is affected either by our obedience or disobedience. In Isaiah 43:24, notice the complaint that God makes concerning His people: "Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices. But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins. Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities."

How can we make God serve with our sins? Because we are His people. When we are wicked, disobedient, or wrong, it is a reflection upon God's external and outward glory. Remember, Scripture says that no man lives to himself and no man dies to himself. Our sins always affect others, and if we are children of God, they also affect God Himself. He said, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins."

Consider Psalm 106:7 and this question: How did the sins of ignorance and ingratitude affect God in His external and outward glory? Here is the answer: "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt. They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." You know what our sins do to God? They provoke Him.

The word "provoke" here is marah in the Hebrew. It means to make bitter or unpleasant, or to provoke. How do our sins provoke God? What does it mean to provoke God? The best way to explain this word is to look at the other passages in the Bible where this same word is used.

Jeremiah 7:18 uses the same Hebrew word, marah, which is translated "provoke": "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the Lord." What is it to provoke God? It is to provoke Him to anger; it is to stir Him up.

Look also at Jeremiah 11:17: "For the Lord of hosts that planted thee hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Judah, the house of Israel, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal."

Our sins provoke God to anger. Jeremiah 25:6 says, "And go not after other gods to serve them and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands, and I will do you no hurt." If we do not provoke Him, He will not chastise us. Yet verse 7 continues: "Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the Lord, that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt."

Jeremiah 32:29 says, “And the Chaldeans that fight against this city shall come and set fire on this city and burn it with the houses upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth. For the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the Lord. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day, that I should remove it far from my face, because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger.” It then says, “They, their kings, and their priests, and their princes, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” What is God saying? He is saying, “You’ve ticked me off.” Literally: You provoke me to anger.

There are many other passages, but these are sufficient to show that our ignorance and ingratitude affect God. This is absolutely phenomenal: when we realize that ignorance and ingratitude provoke God, then, as long as we remain ignorant and ungrateful, we are purposefully seeking to stir Him up against us. Why in the world would we deliberately provoke Him against us?

Think about your sins—your rebellion and your wickedness. I do not care whether they were forty years ago, ten years ago, twenty years ago, yesterday, or this morning. Think about your wickedness. Remember what your sins do to God. They provoke Him.

Nevertheless, God Saved Them

And you would think that when these people were so ignorant and so ungrateful that they murmured against Moses and said, "It had been better had we died in Egypt, we could have stayed there and served the Egyptians. I mean, why did you bring us down here to die?" God would have been so provoked and incensed that He would have instantly cut them off, smiting them right there. When you stop and think of the sins that you committed, why did God not kill you way back then? Why does God continue to let us live now? Even though God was provoked, look at verse 8: "Nevertheless."

"He saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up. So he led them through the depths as through the wilderness, and he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy, and the waters covered their enemies. There was not one of them left."

Verse 8 says, "Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake." Their salvation was not due to their goodness, but to God's grace; not to their merits, but to God's mercy. The same truth is revealed in the New Testament. The "nevertheless" of Psalm 106 and verse 8 is equivalent to the phrase "but God" in Ephesians 2 and verse 4.

"And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Dead in trespasses and sins. What was our lifestyle? "Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation" or conduct "in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," and "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace you are saved, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." They deserved death. Nevertheless, He saved them for His name's sake. We deserve death. Nevertheless, He saved us for His name's sake. Do you realize everything we are, everything we have, we owe to God?

The Apostle Paul put it very bluntly: “I am what I am” by the grace of God.

Go back to Psalm 106 and look at verse 12. Everyone knows how the children of Israel were oppressed by Pharaoh and his army. God opened the sea, and Israel went across on dry ground. When the Egyptians sought to do so, God brought the waters back and they drowned. But look at verse 12: “Then believed they his words, they sang his song,” or “they sang his praise.” Then believed they his words.

When did they believe? When they saw. They were living by sight. What is the Apostle Paul saying in 2 Corinthians 5:7? “For we walk by faith, and not by sight.”

Now consider our Lord’s commentary in John 20. Our Lord had shown Himself to His disciples, but Thomas was not present at the first meeting. The other disciples therefore said unto him, “We have seen the Lord.” But Thomas said, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” After eight days, the disciples were within, and Thomas was with them.

“Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, Peace be unto you.” He said to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands. Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.” Thomas did not do it; he fell on his face and answered, “My Lord and my God.” Jesus said, “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

We are to live by faith, and not by sight. We do not need to see the miracles to believe in God. We believe in Him, and the miracles come every day.

Applications

The first application is this: the greater the blessings, the greater the culpability for our ignorance and ingratitude. Culpability means to incur censure, deserve blame, or be punished. Thus, the greater our blessings, the more blameworthy we are, and the more we deserve censure and punishment for our ignorance and ingratitude. When I was studying this week for this message, I thought, “Lord.”

Look at Christ that you've given for me. Look at the word of God, the ministry, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Look at my wife, my family, health, protection, prosperity, and providence. Look how you've taken care. Look at the air that you give me to breathe. We take everything for granted. I try every morning, when I wake up, before I move out of that bed, to thank God for his protection during the night, for the rest and sleep, and for his tender mercies and compassions that he's given just to preserve me during the night.

There may not be any millionaires in this assembly, but the truth is, none of us have gone hungry. All of us have clothes. We have health, family, and friends. That's more than enough to be grateful for.

The second application is this: The wonders of God, the miracles of God, and the mighty acts of God will never convince an unbeliever. Did you know that most of those that God brought out of Egypt, he killed them in the wilderness? They didn't believe.

You remember Luke chapter 16. Our Lord told about the rich man who died and went to hell. In hell he lifted up his eyes and saw Lazarus, a beggar who also died, in Abraham's bosom. He cried, “Father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I'm tormented in this flame.” Abraham said, “Son, remember in your life you were comfortable and Lazarus was tormented.” Now Lazarus was taken care of, and the rich man was being tormented.

The rich man said, “Send Lazarus that he may warn my five brethren, lest they come to this place of torment.” Abraham said, “They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.” The rich man answered, “But Father Abraham, if one returned from the dead, they will believe.” Abraham said, “Though one return from the dead, they would not believe. They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.”

If the word of God is insufficient for you, no miracle on earth will give you faith just by your observing it. They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them. Third application is this.

It is indeed a spiritual exercise to take the time to count your blessings and learn to be grateful and thankful to God for each and every blessing. Today, or at least sometime this week, set aside fifteen, twenty, or thirty minutes, sit down, and tell the Lord what you are thankful to Him for—for everything He has done for you. This is spiritual exercise.

Whatever God does for us, He does for His name’s sake and for Christ’s sake. He does not do it because we deserve it. When you come to the Lord and say, “Now, Lord, I’ve done this for You; You do this for me,” that’s hogwash, folks. If God did not give you breath,

you could not even breathe; if He did not give you strength, you could not move. Everything God does for us, He does because of His grace and mercy.

Let us make up our minds that we are not going to be ignorant or ungrateful. Instead, let us show ourselves approved workmen that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Father, we are thankful today for Jesus Christ, for His grace and mercy. We confess that we have been ignorant and ungrateful and have taken Thee for granted many times. We have presumed upon Thy mercy, even the breath that we breathe. Make us grateful and thankful unto Thee. Make us recognize Thy tender mercies and compassions and Thy great faithfulness to us. We commit our works unto Thee, asking You to establish our thoughts and grant Your continued grace and mercy. In Christ's name, Amen.

CHAPTER 4

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part Four of 16

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 106:1-15 (KJV)

Psalm 106, and let's read the first 15 verses. Psalm 106, beginning with verse 1. "Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise? Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times. Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou barest unto thy people. O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance. We have sinned with our fathers. We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedly. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt. They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless, he saved them for his namesake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up. So he led them through the depths as through the wilderness, and he saved them from

the hand of them that hated them and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies. There was not one of them left. Then believed they his words; they sang his praise. They soon forgot his works. They waited not for his counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul."

Introduction and Review

Now, this is the fourth message that we are bringing on Psalm 106. Remember, this short series is known as "The Hallelujah of Confession," because first of all, this is the first Hallelujah Psalm. And secondly, the content of this Psalm deals with confession. Just by way of review, remember, if you would please, the first five verses is an invitation where the psalmist gives us four reasons why he is inviting us to praise the Lord. The first one, of course, is found in verse 1, because of his goodness and his mercy. The second one is found in verse 2, because of the innumerable—and I might add, inability of ours to praise God as he is deserving—his innumerable mighty acts, and we cannot give him the glory due his name. And so he says, "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise?" So we ought to praise him at least because we need to start somewhere, and although we have an inability to give him the glory that's due to his name.

The Next Specific Sins: Forgetfulness and Impatience

Thirdly, he gives us another reason, and that's because of God's blessings upon obedience. The fourth one is found in verses 4 and 5: the psalmist is seeking that he may personally experience God's blessing, that he may see God's blessing upon his people and upon his nation. Then secondly, I dealt with verse 6 where he began his confession in general: "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity. We have done wickedly." I pointed out how we sin with our fathers—similarly, imputatively, representatively, nationally, and actually, because we engage in the same sins that they engage in. Then in verses 7 through 12 last week, he lists the first two specific sins: ignorance and ingratitude. I dealt with 1 John

1:9 and showed how confession has to deal with specific sins because real, genuine confession deals with repentance. It means to take the same attitude that God takes toward our sins, and therefore we turn from them. Now we'll skip down to verse 13, and we find the next two specific sins: "They soon forgot his works. They waited not for his counsel." So these two specific sins today are forgetfulness and impatience. The rapidity with which we move from one sin to another is astonishing. Here they move from ignorance and ingratitude to forgetfulness and impatience. It is true that one sin begets another sin, and usually there are links in the chain of sin that we have forged with our own lusts. However, the wickedness and the corruption of the human heart is manifested exceedingly in these verses. Look at verse 12.

Temporary Faith at the Red Sea

After the Bible says he saved them for his namesake in verse 8, the Bible says, "Then believed they his words, they sang his praise." Now remember, here they are at the Red Sea. They were encompassed with the wilderness on one side and the desert on the other side. The sea was in front of them and Pharaoh and his army was coming behind them. And God supernaturally and powerfully parted the Red Sea, where they went across on dry ground. After they saw that, verse 12 says, "Then believed they his words, they sang his praises." Let me give you the comment that John Calvin made on verse 12, and I want you to listen carefully. He says this.

"Overpowered by the grandeur of God's works, they were in spite of themselves compelled to believe in God and to give glory to him, and thus the criminality of their rebellion was increased because all their stubbornness was overcome. Yet they immediately relapsed into their former state of unbelief." And then he says this: "Their faith was temporary."

Now I want you to know two things. First, their criminality was increased by the grandeur, by the greatness of God's works. Second, their faith was only temporary—a non-saving faith. Hold Psalm 106, but look in your Bibles to Mark chapter 4 and verse 17.

In this passage, you have the parable of the sower, and our Lord is telling us the different responses that people give to the word of God.

You have the hard-hearted hearer—the seed that fell by the wayside. You have the stony ground hearer—the one that fell upon the stones. You have a thorny ground hearer—the one that fell among the thorns. And then you have the good ground hearer.

But note verse 17. In fact, go back to verse 16 and you'll see this is the stony ground hearer. He says, "And these are they likewise, which are sown on stony ground, who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness." Here's the type of individual that you think, "Man, this is going to be a great Christian. Look how eagerly and willingly and readily he received the word of God." But then he says in verse 17, "They have no root in themselves."

"And so endure but for a time. Afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the word's sake, they are immediately offended." What is our Lord saying? These endure but for a time. There is such a thing as a temporary believer. Now, I did not say a temporary Christian, but a temporary believer. Here is someone who is impressed with the works of God, with the greatness of God. He is so impressed that he believes at least until the next temptation comes along or the next persecution comes along or until it gets too exacting for him to believe in this, he relinquishes the faith.

Now go back to Psalm 106. You see these in Psalm 106 and verse 12 were only temporary believers. I'm going to show you how temporary they were. Look at Psalm 106 in verse 12. The Bible says, "Then believed they his words. They sang his praise." Ah, but look at verse 13. "They soon forgot his works."

The Rapidity of Forgetting God's Works

"They waited not for his counsel." Note that they soon forgot his works. In the Hebrew it is, "They hastened to forget his works." How soon was it they forgot his works? Turn to Exodus chapter 15. The exodus, the going through the Red Sea, occurred in Exodus chapter 14. Now look at Exodus 15 and verse 22: "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur, and they went three days into the wilderness and found no water." "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called

Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" In three days' time, they had forgotten the miracle at the Red Sea and were murmuring for water. They soon forgot his works. In Exodus chapter 16, beginning with verse 1 through 3, this took place only six weeks after the exodus. "And they took their journey from Elim, and the congregation of the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots and when we did eat bread to the full, for you have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." So within three days they were complaining because there was no water, and within six weeks they were complaining because they didn't have a sufficient amount of food. And if you look at chapter 17, within just a few days later they were yet murmuring about a lack of water again. "And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin after the journeys according to the commandment of the Lord and pitched in Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore, the people did chide with Moses and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said to them, Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do you tempt the Lord?"

When you look back at Psalm 106 and verse 13, and you read this phrase, "They soon forgot his works," it only took them three days to forget the miracle of the Red Sea. Six weeks later, they were murmuring for food, and a few days later again, they were murmuring over a lack of water. The sins of ignorance and ingratitude will always lead to the sins of forgetfulness and impatience. That's why he says in verse 13, "They soon forgot his works." Now let me deal for a little while with the sin of forgetfulness. The Bible said they soon forgot his works.

The Sin of Forgetfulness Defined

This word "forgot" occurs 102 times in the Old Testament. It is the word shakach, and it literally means to mislay or to be oblivious to.

That would be a total forgetfulness. Let me show you how this word is used. Turn back to Genesis chapter 40. Joseph is in prison. The butler and the baker have a dream, and Joseph interprets the dreams correctly. He tells the butler especially to remember him when he stands before Pharaoh, because Joseph has done nothing wrong to be in prison. In Genesis 40 verse 23, the Bible says, "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." The chief butler was restored to his butlership exactly the way Joseph said he would be. The only thing that Joseph asked was, "You remember me?" But the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. Now look in chapter 41 and verse 9. The chief butler is speaking to Pharaoh: "Then spake the chief butler to Pharaoh saying, I do remember my faults this day."

When he is telling Pharaoh this and remembering Joseph, there was a lapse of two full years. For two full years, the chief butler was oblivious to the existence of Joseph. He totally forgot him. But one day he did remember.

Is it possible to forget God? Is it possible to forget the works of God? The answer to both questions is yes. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 4. Let me just show you a number of passages without expounding them to demonstrate how extremely possible it is to forget God, and I'm going to demonstrate to you how easily we do exactly that. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse 9. Look what God tells the people.

He says, "Only take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life. But teach them thy sons and thy sons' sons." God says you better take diligent heed, lest you forget the things which you have seen. In verse 23 of the same chapter, God says, "Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image or the likeness of anything which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee." So it's not just possible to forget the works of God; it's also possible to forget the covenant of God. In Deuteronomy 6:12, he says, "Then beware, lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage."

Ah, now beware, lest you forget the Lord, not just his works, not just his covenant, but the Lord himself. Go to chapter 8 and verse 11. Deuteronomy 8 verse 11. He says, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, which I command thee this day." Now look again. "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping his commandments, his judgments, and his statutes."

Now I'm going to explain this in just a moment, but do you realize when God's law says, "Thou shalt not steal"—and no, we're not going to stick a pistol to someone's face and take their money. We know that's wrong. But when we beat someone out of something that is rightfully theirs, that is theft as well. When we defraud someone, that is theft as well. And when you and I act fraudulently, we have forgotten God. Because we have forgotten his covenant. And thus we forgot him, so he says in verse 11, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping his commandments." Look in verse 14. "Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." Verse 19, "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day, that you shall surely perish." So when we do not worship the one true and the living God, we have forgotten him. Turn over your Bibles to the book of Judges chapter 3 and look at verse 7. Judges chapter 3 verse 7. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and forgot the Lord their God and served Baalim and the groves." Note they forgot the Lord their God. Turn over to 1 Samuel chapter 12 and verse 9. 1 Samuel chapter 12 verse 9.

Notice if you would what Scripture says. 1 Samuel 12 verse 9. "And when they forgot the Lord their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hand of the kingdom of Moab, and they fought against them." When they forgot the Lord. Now turn over in your Bibles back to Psalm 106 and look if you would please at verse 21. Psalm 106 and verse 21.

How We Forget God

This is almost incomprehensible, and yet we do it daily. Psalm 106:21: "They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt." They forgot God, their Savior. It is not only extremely possible that we can forget God as individuals, as families, even as churches, but it's possible to forget God as a nation. Psalm 9:17: "The nations that forget God shall be turned into hell." So it's possible to forget God's works, God's covenant, and God himself. How do we do that? When we presume upon God, when we take him for granted, when we become oblivious to his person, his power, and his presence.

After God had done such a tremendously great miracle for Israel, parting the Red Sea, within three days' time they had forgotten all of that wonderful work. Jeremiah 2:32 is one of the most grievous verses in the entire Bible. Apply this first to yourself. "Can a maid forget her ornaments?" You ladies didn't forget your jewelry this morning. "Can a bride forget her attire?" How many brides have ever forgotten their wedding dress when they went to be married? No, you don't forget that. "Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number." How could God's people forget God? There are some things I just don't forget. I don't forget my carrot juice every morning. I want that first thing, and if it's not ready, I ask my wife, "Please make some right now. I'm ready for it. I want it." I don't forget that. There are a lot of things in your life that you don't forget. You don't forget to get up and go to work. You don't forget to go to bed at night. Kids don't forget to play. James, have you ever forgotten to play? I didn't think so. Have you ever forgotten to work, though? I thought that, yes. But there are some things we don't forget. Yet God says, "My people have forgotten me days without number." How is it that we forget God? Not by doubting his existence.

Not by forgetting the fact that there is a supreme power somewhere in the universe. How do we forget it? Yet he says, "My people have forgotten me days without number." Let me show you a verse. Look if you would please at Psalm 10 and verse 4. I want you to see the complaint that God lodges against the wicked. And this will explain how we forget God. Look at this complaint. Psalm 10

verse 4. "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts." Now look at that again. "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts." Now, how do we forget God? Do wicked people forget God? Well, of course. They're not interested in God. They're not interested in his word. They're not interested in his will. They're not interested in anything about God. Do you realize unbelievers go not only days and weeks, but months without thinking of God, years without thinking of God. God is not even in their mind. When an unbeliever has a problem, he doesn't think, "Oh, let me go to the Bible and see what the Bible says as to how to resolve this problem." No, he just does what he wants to do. He has no thought and no reference to God. God is not in all of his thoughts. How do we forget God? By exactly the same principle that the wicked man forgets God. Why does the wicked man forget God? Because God is not his center. You know, we talk about a theocentric universe. That is a God-centered universe. And we talk about an anthropocentric universe. That is a man-centered universe. Most people are anthropocentric. That is, everything they believe revolves around them. They are their own center. But to the believer, God is to be our center. It is true that we cannot sit here and think 24 hours a day of God. But what we can do is this. Whatever we are doing, we can think of that in reference to God. How would God have me to do this? What are the principles of Scripture? How does this apply to my life? How do I honor God? How do I glorify God? You understand what I'm saying? If I go to make a plane reservation, many times—and I try to do it every time, and I would say most of the time—I say, "Oh Lord, please put me on the plane that you ordained to land safely."

"I ask for your good providence and your protection. Help me to make the right reservations and the right connections." That's thinking of God, not forgetting God. I don't just pick up the phone and say, "Hey, I want to make a reservation." When I work, "Lord, help me to do this right, for your honor and your glory." But most of us perform our tasks daily without any reference to God. You think, "We don't need God to do that. We know what we're to do." I got news for you: if God does not give us breath and strength and ability, we'll not do anything.

Look in your Bibles to James chapter 4, verse 13. There are two words that ought always to be in our vocabulary. What does our Lord say? "Go to now, you that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain. Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. For that you ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that." James says we should be saying, "Lord willing." "We're going to go to Florida this afternoon and preach. Lord willing, I will be home next week doing what I ought to be doing. Lord willing, I'll be in New York preaching. Lord willing, I'll be at your house tomorrow at 10 o'clock." You don't presume upon God. You don't forget God. It is God who gives us our breath, our ability, everything, and we cannot leave God out of our lives. But most of us daily forget that God is our Father, our Sovereign, and our God, and we neglect any reference to him. God calls that a forgetting of God. And when we sin, we forget his covenant. You cannot sin without forgetting God's covenant or God's law. I don't mean it slips your mind, but you're purposefully oblivious of it. You're not going to obey God; you're going to do what you want to do. So God says, "My people have forgotten me days without number."

Impatience and Refusing God's Counsel

Now let me show you how this works out in our practical everyday life. Go back to Psalm 106. Remember, I told you that one sin begets another sin. Our ignorance and our ingratitude begat our forgetfulness. And also our forgetfulness begets our impatience, where he says in Psalm 106 and verse 13, "They soon forgot his works. They waited not for his counsel." Now, is it not revealing? "They waited not for his counsel." Now their impatience demonstrates that they had forgotten God. They weren't interested in his word, his will, or his way. They were too busy and in too big of a hurry to wait upon God. Do you realize we are just like Israel in the Old Testament? How many of us, when there is something important before us, wait to act until we've searched out the Word of God to make sure that's what God would have us to do? Then make sure we're not violating a principle of Scripture. Before we take a job, before we move, before we get married, how many really seek to

know the will and the word of God? Now watch, they waited not for his counsel. Do you know what our Lord said in Proverbs 8 and verse 14? In Proverbs 8, Jesus Christ is wisdom personified and in that verse he says this, "Counsel is mine and sound wisdom." Do you realize that one of the names of our Lord is Counselor? Do you realize in Proverbs 21 and verse 30, the Bible says, "There is no knowledge or wisdom or counsel against the Lord." Do you realize Ephesians 1 and verse 11 says that he upholds all things by his own counsel? And yet God says, "They forgot him and waited not for his counsel." What are the results of failing to wait for his counsel? What are the results of failing to seek his word and his will? I could sum them up under two heads, but let me show you a couple of scriptures. Look, first of all, at Psalm 107 and verse 11. This is amazing. "Because they rebelled against the words of God and contemned the counsel of the Most High." Note if you would, they contemned the counsel of the Most High. Why? Because they rebelled against His words. Do you realize when you do not wait for God's counsel, when you do not seek God's counsel, in essence, in practicality, you are condemning God's counsel. You're saying it is unworthy of your consideration. And you're wise enough in your own self that you don't need God. So there is a condemnation of God.

Psalm 106:43 says, "Many times did he deliver them, but they provoked him with their counsel and were brought low for their infirmities." So the two results for not seeking God are a condemnation of God on the one hand and his counsel, and on the other hand, a provocation of God. You're provoking God to anger by following your own thought, your own life, your own will, your own way without even checking with him. If he's your Father, how dare you not consult with him? If he's your Boss, your Sovereign, your Lord, your Master, how dare you not seek his counsel? Proverbs 1:25 shows how angry, how provoked God becomes when we refuse and condemn his counsel: "But you have set at nought all my counsel and would have none of my reproof."

"I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me for that they hated knowledge

and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices." God says, "You won't have my counsel? You condemn my counsel? You won't wait for me? You will follow your own self? Fine. I'll let you eat the fruit of your own doings. And when you come crying to me that you've made a mess of everything, I won't listen to you. I won't hear. I'll let you reap in full everything that you've sown." So the very fact that we won't wait upon God means that we condemn his counsel and we provoke him to anger.

Lusting Exceedingly as a Result

Let me show you how clearly this is brought forward. Psalm 106:13–14: "They soon forgot his works. They waited not for his counsel. But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert." The most obvious result of a failure to wait upon the counsel of God is found in verse 14: they lusted exceedingly. He who will not wait for the word of God will inevitably follow his own lust. In fact, that's why we won't wait on God. We want our own lusts, our own ways, our own will. Thus we purposefully forget God so that we may choose what we want.

Let me show you from the Scripture where this passage is taken from. Numbers 11:4: "And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting. And the children of Israel also wept again and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlics. But now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes." I want you to remember something. That manna was supernaturally given by God. That manna was absolutely, perfectly nutritious.

It was everything they needed. Everything. And yet they said, "We don't have our onions, our leeks, our garlic, our fish. Oh, I wish I was back in Egypt so I could eat leeks and garlic and onion and fish." Skip down to verse 18. God said, "Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and you shall eat flesh. For you have wept in the ears of the Lord saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? For it was well with us when we were in Egypt. Therefore, the Lord will give you flesh,

and you shall eat. You shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days, but even a whole month, until it come out your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you. Because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?" God says, "You want some flesh? I'll give it to you, till it comes out your nostrils. You don't want what I provide? You don't want my will and my word and my way? I'll let you have your way."

Turn to Psalm 78 for the psalmist's commentary. Verse 25 shows what the Bible says concerning manna: "Man did eat angels' food." They had plenty. They had everything they needed. "He sent the meat to the full. He causeth the east wind to blow in the heaven, and by his power he brought in the south wind. He rained flesh upon them as dust, and feathered fowls as the sand of the sea, and he let it fall in midst of their camp round about their habitation. So they did eat and were filled," watch carefully, "for he gave them their own desire. They were not estranged from their lusts, but while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them. And smote down the chosen men of Israel."

In their lusts, they tempted God. When they preferred their lusts, their will, their way, their word, more than the word of God, it condemned God's counsel and will and provoked him to anger, because they were choosing their own simple, ignorant, arrogant way above that of a holy and righteous God. It was not their lack of nourishment or nutrition that led them to complain. Everything that God does is perfect and right. It was their lusts. And they wanted their lusts more than God.

Leanness of Soul

Look at Psalm 106, verse 15: "And he gave them their requests, but sent leanness into their souls." That verse is a testimony against professing Christendom today. We have full stomachs, but lean souls. We think more of our physical well-being than our spiritual being. He gave them their requests, but sent leanness into their souls. The leanness of our souls testifies that we have not waited on the counsel of God or followed his word.

The Requirement of Waiting on the Lord

Now turn to Isaiah 40, a passage everyone loves to claim. Many can quote it, but I want to show you the requirement for this blessing. Beginning at verse 29: "He giveth the power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." Don't we want power and strength? Yes. "Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail." I like to show up a young man, because the youth in this country think if you're old, you're worthless. They don't understand that with age comes not only experience but wisdom—if we follow the word of God. God can make an old man young in many ways. "Even the youth shall faint and be weary. The young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary and they shall walk and not faint." If you want to walk and not faint, run and not be weary, mount up with wings of an eagle, and renew your strength, the requirement is waiting upon the Lord.

But they waited not for his counsel; they followed their own lusts. You and I cannot be renewed physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, or in any way until we learn to wait on the Lord.

Now look back at Psalm 106. Watch carefully: sin begets sin. The ignorance and ingratitude of verse 7 begat the forgetfulness and impatience in verse 13. Their forgetfulness and impatience was manifested by their lusting and following their own lusts instead of the Word of God.

Applications and Conclusion

Now let me try to tie this together and make some applications. The first one is this. Temporary faith, which I mentioned at the beginning of this message, or a temporary believer, will only last until there is a new and fresh temptation. Do you know one of the things that our Lord has promised? That he's going to separate the wheat from the chaff. I'm going to tell you one thing about temptation. One thing about persecution. One thing about opposition. One thing about hard times. It separates the true believers from those who are not true. And for those who only have a temporary faith, may I remind you of 1 John 2 and verse 19. What

did John say about those people who left him and the church? Listen to what he said. "They went out from us, that it might be made manifest that they were not of us. For had they been of us, no doubt, they would have continued with us." The proof that you are a real, genuine believer is that you continue to believe and you continue to trust and you continue to obey regardless of the circumstances and the situation. True believers never give in, give up, or give out. They hold on. Job says, "The righteous shall hold on to his way." There is a temporary believer. But their temporary faith, listen, is based upon experience. Look at Psalm 106, verse 12. "Then believed they his words." When did they believe? When they saw something. When they experienced something. Our faith is not based upon our experiences. Our faith is based upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His infallible Word.

The second application is this. You ought to remember this one. When men refuse to be led by God, they will be driven by their own lusts. When men refuse to be led by God, they will be driven by their own lusts. I want to tell you something. Most of you have known this truth from experience, but lust is a fearful taskmaster because he's never satisfied. Our lives are not to be ruled by our lusts and our desires, but by the Word of God. The third application is this. When men are not content with God's gracious provision, their lusts and desires for more are extremely grievous and heinous to the Lord. What more could Israel have wanted in the Old Testament? What more could they have needed? Supernaturally led, supernaturally provided for, supernaturally protected, and yet they wanted to murmur against God and complain against Him and tempt Him and provoke Him for a bunch of leeks and garlic and onions. I want you to understand that their desire for those things was in reality a revelation that they were wanting to be back in Egypt, in the old life. And it's grievous to our Lord when a real child of God, even momentarily, desires a life of sin

That is why the word of God is replete with verses such as "Envy not sinners." There is no reason to envy a wicked man or his lifestyle, because all he brings upon himself and others is judgment and condemnation. When you and I cannot be content with what God has graciously given us, when we want to tempt God and murmur

and complain against him when what he has given us is completely satisfactory, it is exceedingly grievous to him.

The fourth application is this. Why is man in general—and I could be extremely personal—why are you in particular so averse to waiting on God's counsel? The reason is that to tarry before God means we must subdue our lusts, submit to him, humble ourselves, and trust in his word alone. When we come before the Lord, we are confessing that we don't have sense enough to get out of the rain. Scripture tells us, "Lean not to thine own understanding, but in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy path." So when we have our problems—marital, family, personal, interrelational—and we wait for his word and leadership, search the scriptures, pray, and ask God to teach us, we are humbling ourselves and saying, "Lord, I know what I want to do. I want to smack him upside the head. But, Lord, I know that's not the answer."

Have you ever wanted to slap somebody upside the head and say, "Listen here, dummy, let me tell you something"? If that hasn't happened to you, either you're far more spiritual than I am, or you're a liar. Let me give you an illustration I just read yesterday. In Texas, there is a $10 million lawsuit against a certain teacher and a school district because three students went to school on Saturday on a makeup day, and two of the students were sisters and they carried their Bibles.

They were going to be going to a Bible class afterwards. And when the teacher saw those Bibles, she became so infuriated. She marched them to the principal's office. She snatched the Bibles away from those girls and threw them in the trash and said, "We don't allow garbage like this in this school." Another young boy had a Ten Commandments cover on his Bible and she made him take the Ten Commandments cover off the book, not the Bible, but off the book, made him take the Ten Commandments cover off and throw it in the trash.

I said, "Lord, if I want to do that, my question to you is, how do you put up with it?" I wanted to jerk a knot in her. I'm going to be honest with you. You don't want to slap sense into somebody. But let me ask you one question. If I drove to Texas and got that woman and slapped her around, who would be in jail? What good would it do?

You see what I'm saying? It requires you, if you're going to wait on the Lord, to submit your own passions to him and say, "Lord, I know that's what I want to do, but I know that's not what I should do. So Lord, you tell me what the right thing to do is." And the reason we don't wait upon God is the same reason the Israelites didn't. We want what we want, when we want it, and how we want it, and we want it right now. We want our own lust more than His word. One last thing is this. I want you to understand that just because we pray about something, or just because we ask God for something, and He gives it to us, does not necessarily mean that we have God's blessings upon us.

Because He gave them their request, but He sent leanness into their souls. What is asked for in passion is sometimes given in wrath. God can answer our prayers, according to Psalm 80, in wrath. That does not mean we have the blessing of God upon us just because God hears and answers our prayer. These people got their answer. When God got through, they wished they'd never tasted a quail in their life.

They learned a valuable lesson: it's more important to wait on the counsel of God than to follow your own lusts. How their sins are our sins. We piously say, "If we were alive then, we wouldn't do that." And we do exactly the same thing today, because we forget God, are impatient, and refuse to wait upon his counsel.

We end up in just as much trouble as they did. Let's pray. Father, we ask thee today to help us not to forget thee, not to forget thy works, not to forget thy covenant. Every day thou shouldest be the center of our lives. Thy word should be the center and focus of our thoughts. How we can apply our life to thee and to thy word should require our utmost attention. Lord, we have forgotten thee. As thy word did say, we have forgotten thee days without number. We've made plans without thee, done things without thee, said things without thinking them through according to your word. We simply sinned against thee, and we ask thy forgiveness and thy blessing and help in Christ's name. Amen.

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CHAPTER 5

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part Five of 16

Introduction and Review of Psalm 106

OK, let's open our Bibles today to Psalm 106, Psalm 106. And we're going to continue in this series. And as someone asked me the other day, how much longer are we going to be in Psalm 106? I said, I honestly do not know until we get through with it, I suppose. But I'm not going to go verse by verse on it. I'm just simply going sin by sin. So as those sins are mentioned, I'm trying to deal with them. Remember, if you would please, that Psalm 106 is we're covering this under the hallelujah of confession because it is the first hallelujah Psalm and it is a song that deals with confession. Now let's read our text today.

It's verses 16 through 18, and then I'll take a moment to review. Psalm 106 verse 16, "They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company, the flame burned up the wicked."

Now may I remind you that in verses 1 through 5 particularly, there the psalmist invites us or solicits us to praise the Lord, and he gives us those four reasons, which I'm not going to go over today. But there are four reasons given there in the first five verses as to why we are invited to praise the Lord. And then, of course, we begin then in verse six with the confession. And of course, I pointed out that verse six is a general confession where he says we have sinned with our fathers. We've committed iniquity. We've done wickedly. And in the second tape I explain how we have sinned with our fathers. We've sinned in them seminally, we've sinned in them imputatively, we've sinned in them representatively, we've sinned in them nationally, and then I pointed out fifthly, we've sinned in them actually. And then the first specific sins that are dealt with are found in verse 7. "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt."

"They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies. They provoked him at the sea, even the Red Sea." So the very first two sins mentioned specifically are ignorance and ingratitude. And then, of course, we skip down to verse 13. "They soon forgot his works. They waited not for his counsel." The second specific sins mentioned or the second set are forgetfulness and impatience. And today we come to verse 16 and you have the third specific set of sins and that is envy and insurrection.

"They envied Moses also in the camp and Aaron the saint of the Lord. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan and covered the company of Abiram and a fire was kindled in their company. The flame burned up the wicked."

The Nature and Progression of Sin

It is a fact of Scripture that as sins increase numerically, they also increase in intensity and severity. As one sin usually leads to another, the deeper one goes into sin, the more intense and the more severe the sin becomes. Why is that so? There are three answers. First, according to the Book of Titus, chapter 1 and verse 15, sin not only deadens, but it also defiles the mind and the conscience. So the more a man sins, the more insensitive he becomes to sin.

Secondly, lust always increases and demands more and more. That is why the Bible says in James, chapter 1 and verse 14, that

every man is carried away with his own lust. That is the danger of pornography, even what the world calls soft pornography, because as lust increases, it takes more and more to satisfy the lust. The third reason why sin always becomes more intense and more severe is because the Bible says in Proverbs 14 and verse 9 that fools make a mock at sin. That is, they sneer at it and make light of it. They jest concerning it and treat sin as nothing more than a joke or a game.

The ignorance and the ingratitude of verse 7 led to the sins of forgetfulness and impatience in verse 13, and the sins of forgetfulness and impatience led them to the sins of envy and insurrection in verse 16. Their progression of sin in Psalm 106 has now led them to open rebellion, to openly attack God's ordained ministers and leaders who were given to them by God himself. Thus, in verse 16, the people of Israel are attacking Moses and Aaron specifically. We now come to the sin of envy in verse 16. The Bible says, “They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron, the saint of the Lord.” Moses would be a saint as well, but the reason Aaron is singled out as the saint of the Lord is because of the particular holiness of his calling as high priest. They envied not only Moses, but Aaron as well.

The Sin of Envy Defined

The Hebrew word for envy here is qana, and it literally means to be envious, to be jealous, or to be zealous. The verb indicates and expresses a very strong emotion whereby some quality or some possession of another is desired by the one who is doing the envying.

The word envy occurs—the root word occurs eighty-seven times in the Old Testament. It can be used in several different ways. First, it may be used in a purely descriptive sense, as in Ecclesiastes 9:6, where it expresses that all of the living, when they die, have their envy die as well.

Secondly, and this is the sense we will emphasize, this word is used in a very derogatory sense, denoting hostility and extremely disruptive passions. Proverbs 27:4 says, “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?” Envy is the thing that will destroy individuals; no one is able to stand before it. Do you not remember that Pilate knew that it was for envy that they had

delivered the Lord Jesus unto him? Envy was one of the motives of those individuals who wanted Christ crucified. They wanted Him out of the way.

If you go back to Proverbs 14 and look at verse 30, the Bible says, "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones." Envy is the rottenness of the bones.

This word can be used in an extremely derogatory sense, but it is also used in a good sense in the Bible. Sometimes this word is translated zeal, as in Psalm 69:9: "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." This is repeated in the New Testament concerning Christ. Thus, the word can be used in a good sense as well, but usually it is used in a bad sense. It exemplifies someone who has extremely strong derogatory passions.

For instance, this is the word used to express Rachel's envy toward Leah in Genesis 30, when Leah was having children and Rachel was unable to have children. Likewise, in Genesis 37, it is the same word used of Joseph's brethren when they envied Joseph because of the coat and because of the dreams. Moreover, this word expresses Edom's deep jealousy of Israel in Ezekiel 35:11. The point is that the word expresses strong, extremely strong emotions.

It is the same word used in Psalm 37 and Psalm 73 when the psalmist tells us that we are not to envy the wicked, nor desire to be with the wicked in any way whatsoever. The emphasis upon this word envy—"They envied Moses and Aaron the saint of the Lord in the camp"—is that it is a strong word of passion. It denotes that those who envy want or desire something that another individual has.

What Moses and Aaron Possessed That Provoked Envy

What did Moses and Aaron have that would cause these people to be envious? Let us go back to the book of Numbers, chapter 11, and begin reading with verse 25. Moses had complained to the Lord that the people were more than he could bear and that their burdens were more than he could bear.

God told him to select some elders, and He would distribute some of the spirit that was upon Moses to them, so they could help him bear the burden. Numbers 11:25 says, “And the Lord came down in the cloud and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.”

“And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them.” What was Joshua doing when he said, “My lord, forbid them. Don't let them prophesy”? Moses responded, “Enviest thou for my sake?” Are you wanting me to be the only one who has the Spirit or the gift of prophesying? No, said Moses; you are wrong. Do not desire that they cease. “I would to God,” he said, “that all of God's people were prophets.” Although Joshua's intent, in one sense, was to protect Moses, Moses said, “I don't need protection. This is something that God has done now.”

Let us go back to our original question in Psalm 106:16: What quality or possession did Moses and Aaron have that some desired? The Bible says, “They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron, the saint of the Lord.” What was it that Moses and Aaron had that they desired? The answer is their office, their authority, their gifts, their calling, and their position.

Before we look at the historical account in Numbers chapter 16, remember this first proposition: it was God Himself who called Moses and Aaron. The call of Moses and Aaron is found in Exodus chapters 3 and 4. In Exodus chapter 3, beginning with verse 7, we read:

“And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people, which are in Egypt and have heard their cry by reason of their

taskmasters. For I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, look what God says to Moses, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee."

"When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." God has singled out Moses. One objection Moses had was that he could not speak well. God answered, What about your brother Aaron? He can, and I have given him to be with you.

So God specifically called Moses and Aaron. Secondly, I want you to understand that both Moses and Aaron were honorable men.

Now let me finish this statement. Both Moses and Aaron were honorable men, although they were not perfect men. And they were well spoken of, even after their deaths. I want you to look in your Bibles very quickly to Psalm 77. Psalm 77 and look at verse 20. Psalm 77 verse 20. Here the psalmist says, "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." So even after they're dead, the psalmist is exalting the fact that God gave them to lead the

people. And if you look at Psalm 99 and verse 6, Psalm 99 and verse 6, the word of God says, "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name."

"They called upon the Lord, and he answered them." Once again, Moses and Aaron are spoken of in a good light. So both Moses and Aaron were honorable men, although they were not perfect men. Did Moses sin? Yes. Did Aaron sin? Yes. But over and above all, they were still honorable men. The third point I want you to remember is this: that both Moses and Aaron were unassuming men. What do I mean when I say that both Moses and Aaron were unassuming men? I mean that they were not arrogant. They were not hateful. They were not tyrannical.

They were not individuals who were overbearing. If you would turn in your Bibles very quickly to the Book of Numbers chapter 12 and look at verse 3. If you have not known this fact before, I hope that you underline it in your heart now. The meekest man in the Old Testament was Moses. The Bible says in Numbers chapter 12 and verse 3, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Now let me show you how meek Moses was in light of this fact. I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy chapter 33. Deuteronomy chapter 33 and look at verses 4 and 5. Now remember the Bible says that Moses was the meekest man upon the earth. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 33 beginning there with verse 4. "Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together."

Do you realize that Moses had the position not just as a lawgiver, but as a king? And yet the Bible says that he was the meekest man on earth, so he was very unassuming. He was not arrogant, hateful, tyrannical, or overbearing. And if you go back in your Bibles to the book of Numbers, chapter 16, and look at verse 11, you will see the same is basically said for Aaron: “For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?” Why would you be murmuring against Aaron? Aaron is just as unassuming and meek. He is not an individual who is arrogant, hateful, boastful, or tyrannical.

So, first of all, God called Moses and Aaron. Secondly, they were both honorable men. Thirdly, they were both unassuming men, in the sense that they were not hateful, arrogant, or tyrannical. Fourthly, remember this proposition: We do not pick our spiritual gifts. God sovereignly dispenses them as He sees fit.

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, beginning with verse 7, God says, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." In other words, all of God's children have certain gifts. "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues." Then He says, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he wills."

God Sovereignly Dispenses Spiritual Gifts

Do you know why I have the gift of teaching? Because God gave it to me. It is just that simple. I did not wake up one day and say, "Lord, I sure would love to be a pastor. Why don't You give me the gift of teaching?" No. It did not happen like that.

I had a dear friend, now home with the Lord, who was the most kind, gracious, generous, loving individual you have ever met. You could be as mad and irritable as a wet setting hen, and he could smile at you; you would just melt. He could speak, and you would crumble—beyond anything I have ever seen in my life.

One day we were together, and he told me, "Brother Weaver, I would give anything in the world if I could teach like you." I said, "My dear brother, I would give anything in the world if I could just love like you." He had one gift; I had another, and the Bible says that the Holy Spirit divides to every man severally as He wills. If you look in your Bibles at 1 Corinthians 12:18, you will see the same truth repeated: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." Who is responsible for our position in the body of Christ? God is.

He makes one the head, one the hand, one the neck, one the chest, and one the knee. That is His business, not ours. Mark 3:13 tells us that when Jesus Christ was going to call the apostles, He went up into a mountain and "calleth unto himself whom he would." Who got to be the first apostles? Those whom Christ wanted to be the first apostles, and no one else. He is the One who sovereignly dispenses our gifts.

He was the One who gave Moses the gift of leadership. He was the One who gave Moses the gift of lawgiving. He was the One who gave Aaron the gift and calling of being the high priest. Therefore, it is important that we remember that we do not pick and choose our gifts; God sovereignly dispenses them to us.

Now go back in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 16. Let us begin looking at this historical account of how they envied Moses and Aaron. I want to make some applications from it. I am not going to finish this message today, because I am going to extend it next week and show you, hopefully, one of the problems that we have in the New Testament church today because of this exact thing. But let us read the first several verses from Numbers chapter 16 just to set the stage.

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 16:1-11 (KJV)

The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numbers 16)

> "Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown."
>
> These 250 princes were already men of renown. They already had some authority, some positions, and a calling. They gathered themselves together, "against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? And when Moses heard it, he fell

> upon his face: and he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him."
>
> "Even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi."
>
> "Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord?"
>
> "And what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?"
>
> Dathan, Abiram, and Korah have initiated a rebellion, a sedition, an insurrection against Moses and Aaron. Their envy has progressed to insurrection. It was God who called both Moses and Aaron. They were both honorable and unassuming men, and it was God who gave them their gifts. Korah was of the tribe of Levi.

He was a true Levite. But Dathan and Abiram were sons of Reuben, who happened to have been Jacob's firstborn. Undoubtedly, they were thinking, “Since we're the firstborn, we ought to have certain rights and privileges, and we're going to claim them whether you like it or not, or whether you believe it or not.” So it was these three men.

There were a multitude more who were with them. In fact, 250 princes were with them in this rebellion, and a lot of the people were with them as well.

Note verse 3 carefully: “And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.” They were publicly attacking

individuals whom God had sovereignly singled out, called, and anointed for special service.

Look at the wickedness of this. They gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron and said unto them, “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?”

Here is what they were assuming. First, they assumed that they were equal to Moses and Aaron. Second, they assumed that Moses and Aaron had lifted themselves up; in other words, that they had personally and willingly taken this position because they wanted it.

Their attitude and presupposition are shown in their words: “All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them.” Their position was this: We are all God's people. We are all holy. The Lord is with us all. We are all equal. Therefore, you have no business ruling over us.

Many people get these two things confused. There is a vast difference between standing and position. Is a wife just as much a saint of the Lord as her husband? Certainly. Does not a godly wife have equal access to the throne of grace, just like her husband? Yes. Is she not equally saved? Yes. The wife has the same standing before the Lord as her husband. She is created by God, a sinner, and redeemed by God's grace. The standing is equal.

But are the positions equal? No. God called the husband to be the head of the home. There is a difference between standing and position.

Now, let me make the application. Are we not all God's people? Yes. Do we not have equal access to God's grace and throne? Yes. Can you pray for yourself? Yes. You do not need me to pray for you; you are a priest as well.

My question is this: Do you have the same position that I do? The answer is no. There is a difference between standing and position, and what these people were doing in Numbers 16:3. They were saying, because we all have equal standing, therefore we can all have the same position. That is not so, because God does not qualify everyone for the same position.

This is his argument in 1 Corinthians: If all were the eye, where would the hearing be? If all were the ears, where would the speaking be? God gives different positions.

The problem with Dathan, Abiram, Korah, and their followers was this: they believed in a democracy and not a theocracy. They believed that they should determine what they could do instead of God determining what they should do. They believed that they could call themselves instead of God calling individuals. Their design was to overthrow Moses and Aaron and substitute themselves as leaders.

Moses' Response and the Rebels' Defiance

This principle is true in the family, in the church, and in civil government. Whenever anyone wants to get rid of a leader, it is so he can take his place, one way or the other. A lot of churches have problems today because the pastor cannot be the pastor, because some deacon is; he runs things, whether he has to preach or not. Or some woman or some doctor. These are some committees. I like that little slogan: “For God so loved the world that he didn't send a committee.” I am thankful for that. But do you realize that every time God wanted something done, He chose an individual? He chose an individual.

Now look at verses 5 through 11 in Numbers chapter 16, because there Moses deals with Korah. Remember, Korah and his company, or those of his family, were Levites. Verse 5 says: “And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.” Then verse 6 says: “This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.”

Notice in verse 5 the expressions “who are his,” “who is holy,” and “whom the Lord had chosen.” In verse 7, Moses says, “the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy.” In context, all these expressions refer to God's chosen and ordained leaders, specifically Moses, but particularly Aaron, because Aaron was chosen to be the

high priest. Moses said, “Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.”

“And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?”

Korah and the Levites already had a calling. God had already given them gifts and separated them. The question is, can you not be satisfied with what God has called you to do and with the gifts that He has given you?

Deuteronomy 10 gives a quick summary of what God had called the children of Levi to: “At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day. Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the Lord is his inheritance, according as the Lord thy God promised him.”

What did God separate the Levites to do? To carry the Ark of the Covenant, to carry the tabernacle, to take care of the instruments, and to assist Aaron and his family when they needed help; to stand before the Lord, to minister unto Him, to sing to Him, to praise Him, and to bless His holy name.

They already had a calling. That is why Moses said, “Seek ye the priesthood also?” Of course, cannot you be satisfied with what God has called you to do? Why do you not do it, and do it holily, in faith, and for His honor and glory? Must you have the priesthood also? God has given you a calling. Why can you not be satisfied with what God has done for you now?

Dathan, Abiram, Korah, and their company were even worse and more wicked. Moses said, “For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?” Then Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, who said, “We will not come up.”

"Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?"

"We will not come up." Now, you are talking about insurrection, sedition, and rebellion. Dathan and Abiram and their company would not even acknowledge Moses. When Moses sent for them, they would not come. They were saying, "You have no authority over us. You cannot make us come to you. We are not going to come to you."

Moreover, they falsely, wickedly, and maliciously accused Moses of usurping authority. In verse 13 they said, "Except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us." In other words, "Who gave you authority, Moses? You just made yourself a prince. You do not have any authority over us. You just elevated yourself." They were failing to recognize the call of God upon Moses, the office God gave him, and the gifts God gave him.

These people were so envious and so rebellious that they praised Egypt and their life in Egypt while defaming God. They said, "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey? To kill us in this wilderness?" They were talking about Egypt. I did not understand that milk and honey were back in Egypt. I always thought it was leeks, onions, garlic, and slavery. They were bolstering where they had been, their sin, and their position.

Then, in verse 14, they directly reproached God: "Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields or vineyards." In other words, "You have not given us what you said you were going to give us; neither has God." Let me translate it: "We had it better back in Egypt. We prefer our slavery. We prefer our sins to you, Moses, and to your leadership."

They were not going to obey Moses or follow him anymore. "Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up." They were

saying, “We are not going to obey you, and there is nothing you can do about it. What are you going to do? You will put our eyes out? You cannot make us.”

Divine Judgment on the Rebels

Moses is not going to do anything, but God is. In verse 15, Moses said unto the Lord, “Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.” Moses said to God, Lord, I have not done anything wrong with these people. I have not hurt them, and I have not stolen from them. Lord, respect not their offering.

There are three separate and distinct judgments in this chapter from God Himself. First, the earth opens up and swallows Korah and his company. Numbers 16:28 says, “And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.”

“And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained unto them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.” Here the earth opened up and swallowed them.

Moses said, If they die an ordinary death, God has not sent me. But if the earth opens up, you know God has sent me.

Then verse 35 records the judgment upon the 250 princes: “And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.” These men, Levites who had gone along with Korah, had sinned by fire. They had a foolish,

unbiblical fire in their censers, and God punished them with fire. He sent fire down from heaven and consumed them.

There are times when I genuinely believe that these Old Testament people were very, very slow. Sometimes I want to use the word dumb or stupid. God had just opened up the earth and swallowed up these rebels. He had sent fire and killed 250 princes. Here is the third judgment. On the morrow—all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord." Moses and Aaron had not killed anyone. God had done all the killing.

It came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation. The cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, "Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment." They fell upon their faces. Moses said unto Aaron, "Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun." Aaron took as Moses commanded and ran into the midst of the congregation. He put on incense, made an atonement for the people, and stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

Those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside those who died about the matter of Korah. Here are three distinct judgments, and it all began with envy and insurrection. These people were so wicked that they would not even recognize God's judgments in the earth opening up and fire coming down from heaven. They then blamed Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of God."

Principles of Lawful Authority and Rebellion

Listen carefully to what I am about to say. It is indeed rebellion to resist lawful government, and I do not care which way you take it: family, church, or state. If the government is biblical and lawful, to resist it is rebellion. Look at Romans chapter 13. I am not through

with my statement; let me finish. This is exactly what the Apostle Paul is talking about in verses 1 and 2.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." No matter how high you are in authority, someone is always higher than you. "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." Family, church, and state. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation"—or condemnation. It is indeed rebellion to resist God's lawfully ordained authority.

Rebellion can only be to lawful authority. If I resist usurped or unlawful authority, that is not rebellion; that is resistance to tyranny. Do you see the difference? You can only resist a lawful authority.

So if I told Sue, “Sue, get up and get me a glass of tea right now,” she could look at me and say, “Well, now, wait a minute, Pastor. If you ask me, I’ll be happy to, but just don’t command me to do anything.” And I say to Tony, “What the trouble with your wife is, she’s just rebellious.” Sue cannot be rebellious to me as a husband. You know why? I have no lawful authority over her. She’s Tony’s wife, not mine. You follow me? So rebellion can only be to lawful authority. To resist lawful authority is rebellion, but to resist a usurped, tyrannical, unlawful authority is not rebellion; it is resistance.

As Numbers 16 and verse 11 states, all rebellion against lawful authority is rebellion against God Himself. Look what he says: “For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against whom?” Who did they gather together against? The Lord. Now, in verse 3, it says they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. Well, were they really against Moses and Aaron? No; in reality, they were against God. Moses and Aaron just happened to be the visible authorities there. So all rebellion against lawful authority is against God. It may be directed at men who are the representatives of God, but it is, in reality, against God Himself.

It is our responsibility to determine whether or not authority is lawful. Did you hear what I just said? It is our responsibility to determine whether or not authority is lawful. Suppose our state legislatures pass a law that says we must abort every other child.

Well, they have laws like that in China. You can only have one child there. It is the law of the land. Now, my question is this: Is it my responsibility to determine whether or not that law is lawful? Of course it is. We do not obey laws just because they are passed. Even the Constitution of the United States says the Constitution is the supreme law of the land. What does that mean? It means any statutes or ordinances passed in contradiction to the United States Constitution are null and void. In fact, the Supreme Court has ruled that. The Supreme Court says they are null and void ab initio, from the beginning, as if they had no authority at all.

Do you believe that Amram and Jochebed should have obeyed Pharaoh's edict that they were to murder all the male babies? No. It is our responsibility to determine whether or not authority is lawful. As it is wicked and wrong to support a usurped, unlawful, tyrannical government, it is also wicked and wrong to rebel against a lawful, biblical government. We must know not only which authority is biblical and lawful, but also the limits of that biblical, lawful authority.

All authority except God's sovereign authority is limited. God has ordained the family, the church, and the state. Does a husband have absolutely tyrannical rights over his wife and children? No. Does he have authority over them? Yes. Is that authority unlimited or limited? Limited. He cannot do whatever he wants to do. God gave him authority to obey Him, not to disobey Him.

As the pastor of the church, I have authority. But does that mean I can do whatever I want to do as a pastor? No, it is limited. Civil government has authority, but can it do whatever it wants? No, it is limited. I do not care which government you look at—self-government, family government, church government, or state government—it is all limited.

We must know which authority is biblical and lawful, but we must also know the limits of that lawful authority. Let me give you a very practical illustration. I want to show you one of the reasons our homes and families are in such danger today. Look in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 33. I am going to expand upon this principle next week.

Application to Marriage: Reverence and Love

When the Lord is talking about the relationship of a husband and wife, He says, “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself;” That is my responsibility: to love my wife as myself. Then He says, “and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” That is her responsibility. God says I have a responsibility to love my wife as myself, and my wife has a responsibility to reverence her husband. Why does God require the wife to reverence her husband?

The answer is simple: because of his office and position. I realize that some husbands are, in themselves, worthless and characterless individuals. Yet Scripture does not say merely that the wife respect her husband; it says that the wife reverence her husband. She must reverence him even though he is worthless—not because of his worthlessness, but because of his position.

This is a very touchy matter, but we cannot despise the office of authority simply because the man holding that office is despicable. I cannot even stand to watch or listen to Bill Clinton. I do not care what his speech is; I never listen to him. He is a pathological liar and a reprobate. But does that mean I am against the office of President of the United States? No. If a godly man occupied that office, I would rejoice, but I would still respect the office of authority, although it is now held by a despicable individual.

A wife must therefore make sure that she reverences her husband. She must recognize his position, his headship, and his office, even though he may not himself merit respect. The office he holds is important. The Bible says in verse 33, “and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” The word reverence is the Greek word phobeo.

The verb means, “I fear,” or utter fear. The noun is phobia, from which we get our English word phobia. A phobia is a fear, as in hydrophobia, the fear of water. But phobeo, “I fear,” also means to stand in awe, to reverence, or to revere.

Consider 1 Peter 2:17: “Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.” The word translated fear is phobeo—the same exact word as in, “wife, see that you reverence her

husband." Thus the verse could be read: "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Reverence God. Stand in awe of God. Honour the king."

Revelation 14:7 says, "Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him." That is, reverence God, stand in awe of God. This is not a lone verse; there is a multitude of passages teaching the same truth. Revelation 15:4 asks, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" Who shall not reverence the Lord? Who shall not stand in awe of the Lord and glorify His name? Our Lord said in Matthew 10:28, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The word means to stand in awe of, or reverence, God. Acts 13:16 is another passage teaching that we are to stand in fear of God.

Why, then, is the same word used in Ephesians 5:33: "Wives, see that you reverence your husband," when it is used of God all throughout Scripture? Why does God tell a wife to reverence her husband when the same word is used to say that we should reverence God? The answer is very simple: the office of the husband as the head of the house has been instituted and ordained by God Himself. Part and parcel of a wife's reverencing God is her reverencing her husband.

Remember Numbers 16:3. They gathered together against Moses and against Aaron, but later Scripture says their rebellion was against the Lord. The reason God tells the wife to reverence her husband is because of the position God has placed him in and ordained for him. In 1 Peter 3:1, God says, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands."

"That, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." Now, the Word of God says that Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.

Just because the Bible says the wife is to reverence the husband—to stand in awe of him, revere him, and acknowledge his headship—does that mean the husband can act hatefully, wickedly, and tyrannically, demanding and demeaning his wife? Of course not. Look at verse 7. We are in 1 Peter 3: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge," not simply knowledge of the wife. Yes, that is included, but also knowledge of your authority, the limitations of it, and the extent of it. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." And what did he say in Ephesians 5 and verse 25? "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

The point is this: the husband and the wife must each understand their positions. Their standing is the same before the Lord, but their positions are different. They must understand where the authority is, what the lawful authority is, and also the extent of that authority. One of the greatest reasons for failed marriages and divorces in this country is a lack of this knowledge. Women do not reverence their husbands, and husbands do not love their wives as Christ loved the church.

You find each talking despicably and hatefully toward the other—not merely occasionally, but frequently. My wife's grandmother has been dead a number of years now. Her husband's last name was Jay, J-A-Y. She always referred to him as Mr. Jay. She never called him by his first name: Mr. Jay. You say, "Well now, Pastor, do you want Alice to call you Mr. Weaver?" Not really.

"Your Highness" would be sufficient. I am joking. The truth is, I really do not care what she calls me, provided that she reverences my position and my office. We must understand that part of the problems in this country is that men have been emasculated by their wives, the authority of the husband has been stolen by the wife, and husbands are no longer the heads of their houses; the wives are. The

point is that there is a biblical and lawful authority, and we must understand what that authority is, the extent of it, and our responsibility unto it.

We cannot become tyrants, and we cannot be tyrannized. We cannot submit to usurped authority, but we must submit to biblical and lawful authority.

Concluding Applications and Warnings

Let me make a couple of applications. Authors of sedition and insurrection in any area—family, church, or state—who resist biblical authority highly provoke God to punish them for their sins, as He did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. I challenge you to read Proverbs 6:16–19 when you get home. Seven things are listed there that God hates, and one is "he that soweth discord among the brethren." Sedition and insurrection are discord of the highest caliber.

The second application is this: wicked men do not want, nor do they recognize, God's authority in any area. No matter how gentle the leadership is, like Moses, the meekest man on the earth, they resented the fact that God had called Moses and not them. We must remember this truth: all men by nature are anarchists and rebels. It is only the grace of God that can save us and teach us to surrender and submit to biblical and lawful authority.

Those who refuse to submit invite upon themselves the judgment of God. "But he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" or condemnation. It does not matter whether it is in the home, the church, or the state. If the authority is biblical and lawful, we must submit. We are living in such a day of anarchism that most would not submit to authority even if they read it in black and white from the Bible itself. I am not talking about submitting to usurped authority or tyranny, or to individuals who steal authority. I am talking about biblical and lawful authority.

They envied Moses and Aaron. Most fights in most churches and most church splits are over authority: Who is going to run it? Who is going to be the head? If we are ever going to get our homes, our churches, and certainly our government back as they ought to be, we

must cut out all usurped, unbiblical, ungodly authority and come back to the biblically lawful and biblically limited authority in the Word of God. Only then can we submit and be right ourselves.

Let us pray. Father, help us to grasp these simple and yet important principles: one sin leads to another, and as it does, they become more and more grievous and destructive. Help us to see that while there is so much anarchy and tyranny on the one hand, there is indeed a biblical authority on the other hand. We must submit to and honor that, because thou hast ordained it so. Make us not rebels to thee and thy authority, but resistors of all ungodly, usurped, and tyrannical authority. May we stand for your truth. In Christ's name we ask it. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part Six of 16

Introduction and Review of Psalm 106:16-18

Psalm 106, and let's begin reading there with verse 16. In fact, in all probability, we will be on this passage next week as well. Psalm 106 and verse 16. The Word of God says they envied Moses also in the camp and Aaron, the saint of the Lord. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan and covered up the company of Abiram and a fire was kindled in their company.

The flame burned up the wicked. We've been on this psalm, the Hallelujah of Confession now. This will make six weeks. You will remember the first five verses I told you was an invitation or solicitation without me having to go over those four reasons why the psalmist invites us to praise the Lord. Then we got to verse 6, and we saw there the psalmist confesses sins in general, and I dealt with the phrase, we have sinned with our fathers, and showed you the five ways in which we have done that. And then we came to verse 7, where we looked at the first set of specific sins, and those two sins mentioned in verse 7 were ignorance and ingratitude. And after

having dealt with ignorance and gratitude, I showed you how those two sins led to the next set of sins, forgetfulness and impatience in verse 13.

They soon forget his works. They waited not for his counsel. And of course, the result of forgetfulness and impatience is lusting exceedingly and tempting God. And then last week we began with the third set, and that is envy and insurrection in verses 16 through 18.

Now, without me having to repreach basically what I taught you last week, I showed you how envy, according to the Bible, is known as the rottenness of the bones. Now, Scripture says who can stand before envy? And I pointed out the fact that envy was when one desired to possess a certain quality or possession that someone else had. And I had to ask, what was it that Moses and Aaron possessed that the people were envious about?

Of course, the answer was their authority, their office, and their position. We went back to the historical setting, Numbers chapter 16, and saw how Dathan, Abiram, and Korah rebelled against Moses and Aaron. You remember the three judgments mentioned in that chapter: the earth opened up and swallowed Dathan, Abiram, Korah, and their company alive into the pit; fire came down from heaven and destroyed the two hundred and fifty princes; and, a little later, the people began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, and God sent the plague. Fourteen thousand seven hundred people died, besides those who died in the swallowing up of Dathan, Abiram, and Korah and in the fire that killed the two hundred and fifty princes. God then is exceedingly grieved at envy and insurrection, or envy and sedition, and envy always leads to insurrection and sedition. I want to emphasize this truth: there is indeed a lawful and biblical authority that God has ordained and established.

That is true in the family, in the church, and in government. Please keep in mind that I am not talking about tyranny, and I am not talking about usurpation. I am talking about the fact that there is indeed a lawful, biblical authority. I gave an illustration of that and tried to develop it from the Word of God last week.

That illustration was from Ephesians chapter 5, verse 33, where Scripture says, “And the wife see that she reverence her husband.” The word reverence is the Greek word phobeo, which means “I fear,” and is the same exact word used concerning God: “Fear God.” Literally, reverence God; stand in awe at God.

Why should a word used concerning God be used concerning the husband? The answer is that it is God who ordained the husband as the head of the home. It is God who placed him in that position of authority. Therefore, although many times he is wrong himself, and although he is a sinner himself, God says the wife must reverence her husband—that is, stand in awe of the position in which God has placed him.

It is our responsibility as husbands to see that we love our wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. It is the wife's responsibility to see that she reverence her husband, not ridicule him, mock him, make fun of him, or be insubordinate to him.

Does that mean that husbands, therefore, can be tyrants? The answer is absolutely not. The whole emphasis of last week's teaching is this: we must know that there is indeed a God-ordained authority. But may I remind you that I also emphasized this: in every God-ordained authority, there is always a limitation to that authority. There is a limitation in the home, a limitation in the church, and a limitation in the state.

Psalm 106:16–18, which we read today, deals primarily with envy and insurrection against Moses and Aaron, who were the men of God. What I wish to do today and, Lord willing, next Lord's Day, is expand upon this theme and demonstrate to you that sedition, insurrection, and rebellion exist today inside the church. Just as Israel of old envied and rebelled against Moses and Aaron, so likewise today most church members rebel against God's ordained pastors.

Two Major Problems in the Church Today

There are many problems in the church today, but within the scope of this text, Psalm 106:16–18, there are two major problems. There are two major ones that exist within the scope of this text. What are

they? First, pastors do not realize, comprehend, know, or exercise the authority of their pastoral office.

In 1 Timothy 3:1, the Word of God says, “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” Here is the word office: “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” The word office there is the Greek word episkope, which literally means to oversee, to superintend, and to take the oversight.

Most pastors do not know, comprehend, or exercise the authority of their pastoral office. God has instituted that office, and He has cloaked it with authority. Here is the second problem, which I will deal with next week, Lord willing: Christians, generally speaking, do not realize, comprehend, know, or submit to pastoral authority.

The first problem is that pastors do not know or exercise the authority of their pastoral office. The second problem is that Christians do not know or submit to that pastoral authority. The average Christian is an anarchist. That is, he is an anarchist in the sense that he does that which is right in his own eyes. He does not consult God's preachers. He does not consult God's Word. If by chance he does, he normally views that merely as advice, which he is free to accept or reject at his own discretion. Usually, neither God's preachers nor God's Word is consulted, even in what you and I would call life-altering decisions.

Three Cautions Before Discussing Pastoral Authority

Before I begin today, I want to give you three cautions, three warnings, and please make sure you take these to heart. The first caution and the first warning is this: Everyone should know this, but not all preachers are God's preachers. When I am talking about the pastoral office, I am not talking about an unconverted minister. I am not talking about a hireling. I am referring to God-ordained and God-called preachers.

Matthew 7, beginning with verse 21, demonstrates that not all preachers are converted and not all preachers are God's preachers. Our Lord says, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord,

have we not prophesied in thy name? And in my name have cast out devils, and in my name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." "Have we not prophesied in thy name?" That is preachers. Here is an excellent illustration that not every preacher is converted. Gifts do not equal conversion.

John 10, beginning with verse 12, says, "But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep." After the Lord announces that He is the Good Shepherd and gives His life for the sheep, He identifies the hireling as one who does not care for the sheep. So let us be honest.

There are preachers who are unconverted, preachers who are nothing more than mere professionals. Our Lord calls them hirelings. So when I speak about pastoral authority, I am not speaking about the authority of a hireling, because he has none. I am speaking about the authority God invests in His men whom He calls and ordains.

You say, "Pastor, how can I tell whether or not a man is God-called and God-ordained?" The answer is very simple in one sense. The first way you can tell is Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony"; if they agree not, it is because there is no light or no truth in them. The very first way you know is that God's men preach God's Word. They teach the truth of God. The second way is this: Our Lord says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Are their lives in conformity with the Word of God? God's men will always live biblically and scripturally, and they will always preach and teach the Word of God.

When I speak about the authority of the pastoral office, you must realize that not all preachers are God's preachers. Here is the second warning: even though there is a pastoral office imbued with pastoral authority, you must remember that there is a limit even to pastoral authority. Just because God gives me some authority does not mean that I have all authority. No pastor who seeks to be biblical will become a tyrant over God's heritage. First Peter 5:3 says to the

pastors, to the elders, “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” God gives His pastors pastoral authority, but there is a limit to that authority, and they cannot become tyrannical. What happens when a pastor becomes tyrannical? The same thing that happens when a civil ruler becomes tyrannical.

The Pastoral Office and Authority

He must be resisted and corrected, because usurped authority carries no binding influence upon anyone. We must know lawful authority from unlawful, and the limits placed upon lawful authority.

The third warning is this: it is your responsibility as a Christian to search out, find, and apply the truth to your life in this area. It is not simply my responsibility to teach you the truth; that is my responsibility. But it is also your responsibility to make sure that what I am teaching is the truth and that you apply that truth to your lives. What does the Bible say in Acts chapter 17 and verse 11 concerning those Bereans?

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they search the Word of God daily as to whether these things were so. The Bereans checked up on the Apostle Paul’s preaching and made sure that what he said was true.

With these three warnings in mind, I want to begin today with the pastoral office and authority. The Bible says in verse 16 of Psalm 106, “They envied Moses in the camp and Aaron, the saint of the Lord.” Moses and Aaron had an office and authority. Each office that God ordains is given limited authority to carry out the functions of that particular office. Whether the kingly, priestly, prophetic, husbandly, or patriarchal office, every office God has ordained is clove of power so that it may execute its functions according to the limits placed upon it by the Word of God. Likewise, there are offices in the New Testament.

The Pastoral Office and Authority: Biblical Foundation

For instance, in 1 Timothy chapter 3, the Bible talks about two particular offices in the New Testament church: the office of the pastor and the office of a deacon. Verse 1 says, “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” God then lists the qualifications for that office. Verse 10 speaks of the deacons: “And let these also first be proved.” Then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Verse 13 says, “For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” So here are two offices that are mentioned: the office of pastor and the office of deacon.

There was indeed an apostolic office as well. In Romans 11:13, the Apostle Paul says, “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.” The Apostle Paul had an office, and he magnified that office.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 6, Paul speaks concerning the Corinthian church and those Corinthian Christians: “And having in a readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled, do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ’s, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ’s, even so are we Christ’s. For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed.”

God has given us authority, and Paul is saying that he prefers to use it for their edification and not for their destruction. Yet the authority can be for destruction. How can it be for destruction?

What do you think church discipline is all about? Read 1 Corinthians chapter 5, where the Apostle Paul exercised church discipline upon the wicked, ungodly church member who was living in incest with his stepmother. The Apostle Paul said, “Put that wicked one out from among you, that he may be destroyed, that his body may be destroyed, that his spirit may be saved.” In other words,

there is an aspect of authority for destruction, but Paul said he preferred to use it for edification.

Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 10. Once again, he says the same thing: “Therefore, I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power or the authority which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.” So he says, God has given me power and authority, but I prefer to use it for edification. In verse 2 he says, “I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and all other.” If I come again, I will not spare. What is he saying? You do wrong, and I will nail you to the wall.

Look in chapter 12, verse 21: “Unless, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.” Paul said, yes, authority can be used for destruction, but he prefers to use it for edification.

You and I realize that if there is no authority, there is no office. What point is there in having an office with no authority to carry out the functions of that office? The source of all authority is God Himself. Romans 13:1 says, “There is no authority but of God.” God has ordained the office of pastor, and consequently has ordained the authority that goes with that office.

So you have to ask yourself this question: What do pastors have authority to do? Generally speaking, I will not have time to go into detail and depth. If you want me to, I can come back and expand upon these things, but I want to show you a number of things pastors have absolute authority to do. Number one is this: pastors have the authority to be the servants of the Lord. Let me show you several verses very quickly.

Pastors Have Authority to Be Servants of Christ

Look in your Bibles to Romans chapter 1 and verse 1. We'll also turn to the book of Galatians and 2nd Timothy, but look in Romans 1 and

verse 1. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.

Now, notice, if you would, what he says. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ. And the word servant is basically a bondslave. Paul, a servant or a bondslave of Jesus Christ.

Now, I'm going to show you how important this phrase is in just a moment. Paul, a bondslave of Jesus Christ. Turn, if you would, to the book of Galatians, chapter 1 and verse 10. Galatians 1 and verse 10. Look what the Apostle Paul says. Galatians 1 and verse 10. For do I now persuade men or God? Do I seek to please men? Watch. For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Did you hear what he said? If I seek to please men, I should not be the servant of Christ. Who is the pastor to serve? Christ. He is not to please men. He is to please Christ. Then if you will turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 2, and I could multiply passages, but these are sufficient. Look in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 24. And Paul is writing to Timothy. Timothy is a pastor, and here's what Paul tells him. 2 Timothy 2, verse 24. And the servant of the Lord is a descriptive phrase of the pastor. And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. Note the pastor is here referred to as the servant of the Lord.

Now, if I were to take the time today, I could show you James, Peter, Jude, and others use this terminology as applicable to themselves. They were called the servants of Christ. Now listen carefully. Do not get this confused. I want you to hear this. Pastors are not primarily servants of the church. They are servants of Christ primarily. It is true that one of the ways they serve Christ is by serving the church. But primarily, they are servants of Christ. Are you listening?

Let me just quote it. Mark 3, 13 and 14. And he, Christ, goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would. And he ordained twelve, number one, that they might be with him. And number two, that he might send them forth to preach. What was their first responsibility? To be with him. Why? Because they were his servants. I hope you can see the applications. But do you realize the average pastor, practically speaking, has ceased serving Christ

and he serves a deacon board or a committee? Because he does not have the ability to please Christ now, he has to please the deacon board or the committee.

Does not the master have the absolute right to tell the servant what to do? The answer is, of course, yes. If pastors are the servants of Christ, who has the responsibility to tell the pastor what to do? Christ does. So, who directs your pastor? Who directs the average pastor? Is it Christ or is it the Lord? From whom does the average pastor receive his marching orders—from Christ or from the church? If Christ is the master, the head, the Lord, and the sovereign of the pastor, why does he need permission from the church before he does anything?

Why does he have to consult with the deacon board? If Christ is the head, and Christ is to be the one telling the pastor what to do, why is the pastor of the average church required to run everything by committee before he acts? I have known of pastors who could not even buy church supplies over fifty dollars without consulting a committee or a board. Who was running the pastor?

If you want an exercise in amusement, try picturing the Apostle Paul, Samuel, or Elijah in a modern-day church. You know about run-ins, clashes, and fights. How long do you suppose the average church would put up with the Apostle Paul? And how long do you suppose the Apostle Paul would put up with the average church? I have said it publicly, to preachers, to my wife, and to innumerable people: I would not, and I could not, pastor the average church. No amount of money in the world could entice me to be in a position where I was not free to obey Christ.

The pastor, first of all, has authority to be the servant of Christ. He answers to Christ, is responsible to Christ, and Christ is to direct him. I will show you this later, and he is to direct the church. Number two: the pastor has authority to be the overseer of the church and to watch over it.

Pastors Have Authority to Be Overseers of the Church

Look in your Bibles to Acts chapter 20 and verse 28. The Apostle Paul says to these Ephesian elders—in fact, let us go to verse 17 so

that you can see that Paul is talking to preachers: “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.”

Do not be confused by certain words. You will find words such as pastor, bishop, and elder. They all refer to the same man in the same office, but they describe different aspects of the ministry. Elder comes from the Greek word presbyteros, which literally means “a bearded one” and has reference to the man’s age. Bishop refers to the office, his bishopric and authority. Pastor comes from shepherding, from feeding sheep.

Paul called these men the Ephesian elders. Look carefully at what he told them in verse 28: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” The Apostle Paul told these elders to take heed to themselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers.

Now here is the way it really works. Christ is the chief Shepherd, and the chief Shepherd calls under-shepherds—the pastors—under Him, whom He works through. He calls these under-shepherds to be over the church. That means, simply, that the pastor, under Christ, is the head of everything. There should be nothing in any church over which the pastor has no knowledge, authority, or control.

This does not mean that the pastor does everything. It is impossible for a pastor to do everything. But how in the world can you oversee something if you do not even know what is going on, or if you have no authority or control over it? You go to the average pastor and ask about something, and he says, “I don’t know; see such-and-such committee.” He ought to know because he is the head under Christ. The pastor is the under-shepherd, Christ is the chief Shepherd, and therefore the pastor is basically responsible for everything that goes on in the church—or that does not go on.

Turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 39. The word overseer is episkopos; that is where we get the word Episcopal. Episkopos literally means overseer: someone who takes charge, superintends, or sees over. Look at Genesis 39, verses 4 and 5.

SCRIPTURE READING - Genesis 39:3-6 (KJV)

> And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight and he served him. And he made him overseer over his house and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from that time that he made him overseer of his house and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field, and he left all that he had in Joseph's hand.

He knew not all he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person and well favored. Since Joseph was made an overseer, what did he see over? Everything. In fact, Potiphar did not even know what he had, except to sit down to eat. Joseph had authority over everything that Potiphar had.

In 2 Chronicles 2:18, Solomon set three score and 10,000 of them to be bearers of burdens, and four score thousand to be hewers in the mountain, and 3,600 overseers to set the people to work. Of all the people who were working, he had 3,600 overseers. What did these 3,600 overseers do? They made sure the other multiple thousands were doing what they were supposed to do. They were not doing it for them. They were in charge, overseeing and watching over.

In 2 Chronicles 34:12, the men did the work faithfully, and the overseers of them were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, the sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward, and other of the Levites and all that could skill of instruments of music. They were over the bearers of burden and were overseers of all that wrought the work in the manner of the service of the Levites. They were scribes and officers and porters.

So what were the overseers doing? They were seeing over. They were in charge, checking everything and making sure it was right.

Proverbs 6:6-7 says, “Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider ways and be wise, which having no guide, overseer, ruler, it provided their meat in the summer and gathered their food in the harvest.” Is it not amazing that we are supposed to be the superior of all God's

creation, and yet ants do not need an overseer to make them to work? But I am going to tell you what: if Alice and I did not stand over Roy, he would not do a thing, would he, Alice?

The truth of the matter is this: We need overseers, don't we? We need someone to make us do what we're supposed to do. That's a fact. That's what an overseer does.

Please remember what Acts 20:28 says. Paul told those elders, "Take heed of yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." It is not the people who are in charge. It is not the deacons who are in charge. It is not the committees who are in charge. It is the pastor, because it was God who made him the overseer.

In fact, turn back in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 5 and look at verse 2. Look at the admonishment that Peter gives to the elders, to the pastors: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint"—in other words, no one has to make you—but willingly; "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready man." Peter tells the pastors, "You take the oversight." Do not make anyone force you to be an overseer. You do it willingly. You do not do it just for money. You do it because God has called you to that position.

Pastors, then, have authority to be the servants of Christ and to be the overseers of the church. Number three: Pastors have authority to preach and teach the Word of God.

Pastors Have Authority to Preach and Teach the Word of God

You say, "Brother Weaver, I know that." But go in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 4. You might as well mark this passage; we will come back here a little later as well. In 2 Timothy 4:1, the Apostle Paul tells Timothy, who is a pastor: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word." I charge thee. I command thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at the appearing of his kingdom: Preach the word.

"Be instant in season and out of season." In 1 Timothy 4:11, Paul tells Timothy, "These things command and teach." There is a difference between preaching and teaching. The word preach is the Greek word kerusso, which means to herald, proclaim, or publish the gospel. Thus, the pastor has authority, in one sense of the word, to herald, proclaim, and preach the gospel, but he also has authority to teach. The Greek word there is didasko, which means to teach or instruct in doctrine.

The Apostle Paul said in Acts 20:27, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." Why mention that pastors have the authority to preach and teach? You say everyone knows that. Let me go a little bit further. Pastors have authority to preach and teach even those truths that you do not want to hear, that you do not agree with, that you do not like, or that you personally do not believe.

You go to the average church, and there are certain things the pastor would never preach on. You do not know how many preachers across this country have told me personally, "Man, if I preached that in my church, I'd be run off." That would be the first thing I preached if I went there. Whether you like it or not, whether you agree with it or not, or whether you believe it or not, is of absolutely no consideration. The only consideration that you should have is this: Is it the Word of God? If it is the Word of God, you must bow to it and submit to it, whether you like it or not.

When someone takes an attitude other than what I have just given you, one of two things will happen. Either, number one, the person who rejects teaching from the Word of God will become a judge of the Word. By that, he will bring everything to the bar of his own reason; if he does not like it, he will reject it and say that it ought not to be preached. Or, number two, he will get angry and leave.

The Pastor Has Authority to Shepherd the Flock

In John 6, Jesus had taught in the synagogue at Capernaum that He is the bread of life, that His flesh is meat indeed, and that His blood is drink indeed. When many of His disciples heard this, they said, "This is a hard saying. Who can hear it?" When Jesus knew that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, "Does this offend you?

What if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit in their life. But there are some of you that believe not." Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray Him. He said, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me except my Father, except that we are given him in my Father."

From that time forth, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. See, if you do not come to the realization that the Bible is God's Word, then, whether you like it or not, whether you agree with it or not, and whether it upsets you or not, it is God's Word, and you must bow to it. If you do not come to that realization, you will either begin to judge the Word of God for yourself, accepting and rejecting what you like and do not like, or you will get mad and leave.

I have had people get mad at my preaching and leave. They have not merely gotten up and walked out of the service; they have gotten up and walked out and never come back. But I have authority to preach and teach any and everything in the Word of God. Whether people like it or not, or agree with it or not, is beside the point. You have to come to the realization: if it is the Word of God, I must bow to it.

I hope you are beginning to see why I said at the beginning of this message that there is rebellion and sedition and insurrection in the church today. Number four: the pastor has authority to shepherd the flock.

Pastors Have Authority to Shepherd the Flock

Now go back in your Bibles to First Peter, chapter five. Let us begin reading with verse two. We will read several verses; I want to read a little bit more. In fact, let us read verse one, just so that you can see that Peter is talking to pastors. He says, "The elders which are among you, that is, the pastors who are among you, I exhort."

Peter, who was also an elder, exhorts preachers as a witness to the suffering of Christ and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

He tells the pastors, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” We are to shepherd the flock.

In Acts 20:28, what did the Apostle Paul tell those elders? “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God.”

Shepherds are required to lead the sheep to pasture. They pick out the greenest and best pastures; the shepherds pick out the pastures, not the sheep. It is the shepherd who determines what the sheep need. If the sheep do not follow the shepherd, they starve or die.

Peter said in 1 Peter 5:2, “Feed the flock of God which is among you.” The word feed is the Greek word poimaino, which literally means shepherd. He says, literally, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you”: tend to the flock and supervise them as a shepherd supervises the sheep. In John 21:15–17, Peter had denied Christ three times, and three times Christ asked, “Do you love me?” Each time Peter professed his love, our Lord said, “Feed my sheep.” In verses 15 and 17, Christ used the Greek word bosko, meaning “to pasture my sheep”—to lead them to pasture. In verse 16, He used poimaino, meaning “shepherd” or “feed my sheep.”

Look in your Bible at Revelation 7:17. Here is a Scripture that deals with Christ: “For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Literally, the verse says, “For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.” So He literally says, “Shepherd ye the flock.”

In Acts 20:28, Paul told those Ephesian elders to take heed to themselves and to the flock of God over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, to feed the flock of God. The word feed there is literally to shepherd the flock of God. One of the main chores, or responsibilities, of pastors—one of the leading responsibilities—is to

feed the flock of God. That is one of the ways we lead and one of the ways we do many things: by feeding the flock of God.

You would be amazed, my dear friend, at the real lack of Bible teaching and Bible preaching in professing Christendom today. Yet God says that this is one of our foremost responsibilities. Shepherding involves more than feeding and grazing the sheep. There is protection, correction, and comforting. There is much more than simply feeding the sheep, but whatever shepherding involves, the pastor has authority to do it. Everyone here can quote Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Shepherds have a rod and shepherds have a staff. Yes, that shepherd would use his crook and pull a sheep out from time to time and deal with that one sheep personally. But do you know what that rod was for? Correction. Many times that sheep felt the rod of the shepherd when it wanted to wander off and go astray. Whatever shepherding involves, pastors have the authority to do it.

Pastors Have Authority to Rebuke, Correct, and Confront

Pastors have authority to rebuke, correct, and confront. In 2 Timothy 4:1, Paul says, "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing in his kingdom," and then commands, "preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." What is the pastor to do besides preaching and teaching? Reprove, rebuke, and exhort.

Titus was also a pastor. Paul tells Titus in Titus 1:13, "This witness is true. Wherefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." Then, in chapter 2, verse 15, he says, "These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." What does that mean? If you receive a pastoral rebuke, reproof, or exhortation, God says you had better not despise the man who is doing his duty and responsibility and fulfilling his office.

First Timothy 5:20 says, “Them that sin rebuke before all that others also may fear.” I do not want to take time to deal with this verse in detail, but Scripture says that those who sin are to be rebuked before all, so that others also may fear. If there are public sins, there must also be a public rebuke. Why? That others also may fear.

Understand that everything has to be done within the bounds of lawful authority. Although I have authority, and any godly pastor has authority to rebuke, reprove, and exhort, that authority has boundaries.

Do you know some of the limits that God has placed upon us in doing that? He told us in 2 Timothy 4, verse 2, to exhort, rebuke, and reprove with all longsuffering and doctrine. What does that mean? If I rebuke you, it needs to be with the Word of God. You are either not doing something that you should be doing, and I can show you the Scripture where you should be doing it, or you are doing something incorrectly, and I can show you the Scripture that would correct your actions.

In other words, I cannot come up to Tony and say, “Tony, I am your pastor. I do not like the way you comb your hair. You ought to change your hairstyle.” I have no authority to tell him how to comb his hair. I have no authority to go to Don and say, “Don, I think you ought to drive a Volvo. You ought to get rid of your car.” But if he is mistreating his wife, I have authority to say, “Don, you are not treating Josh right. Here is where you are in error. Let me show you.” I could say, “Don, you are not doing right in your business dealings. That is wicked and wrong. Let me show you what God says.” I have a right to confront him, rebuke him, and exhort him, but I do not have to do it hatefully. I must do it with longsuffering.

I do not have to do it in an ugly manner or an arrogant attitude. Let me ask you a question: What would be your response if I came up to you and told you, “Bless God, I am your pastor. You just do what I say and keep your mouth shut”? What kind of response would you give me? If you held your tongue, you would probably say, “Hmm, you just wait and see.”

Anything like that is absolutely stupid and wrong and wicked. Long-suffering means that I come to you and teach you and show you kindly from the Word of God. I am not coming arrogantly.

Let me tell you a good illustration. I had a good friend who asked me a question. I answered his question. The next week, he asked me the same question, and I gave him the same exact answer. The third week, he came to me and asked me the same exact question. I looked at him and said, "Doc, how many times have I got to answer that question for you? I have already answered it twice." I was not mad, but it kind of got me that he had asked me three weeks in a row. He dropped his head and said, "I am sorry. I guess I am just stupid."

"I cannot understand it." I looked at him and said, "No, sir. I am the one who is sorry. I should not have said that. How can I expect you to know what I know when God has given me the opportunity to study incessantly, while you work a ten-hour day and only cram in thirty or forty minutes, or perhaps an hour, of study each night? How can you know in one hour of study, or five hours of study a week, when I get to study fifty and sixty hours a week? I apologize to you, and I am going to answer that question. If you do not understand it, ask me again tomorrow, and I will explain it again."

We are to rebuke, but with long-suffering and doctrine. May I remind you of Revelation 3:19: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Rebuking is a demonstration of love. It is not to be a demonstration of anger, arrogance, haughtiness, or pride. Pastoral authority therefore includes the authority to rebuke, exhort, and confront whenever there is anything wrong in the life.

Pastors Have Authority for the Maturing of the Saints

Please remember, it is not an act of arrogance; it is an act of love and authority.

Pastors have authority for the exercise and the maturation, or maturing, of the saints. Look in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4, beginning with verse 8: "Wherefore he said, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended

up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastor-teachers." That is one office.

Why did He give them? "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Notice verse 12. Here is why He gave pastor-teachers: for the perfecting of the saints. The Greek word for "perfecting" is katartizo, and it literally means the thorough equipping of the saints—for the adjusting, repairing, and restoring of the saints. Let me put it in good Southern colloquial terminology: for the working over of the saints. It is doing whatever is necessary to get them equipped and adjusted right.

Now turn back in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 13, beginning with verse 9. Paul says, "For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection." But look at verse 10: "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power or the authority which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction." He wished for their perfection, but that perfection, that equipping, was through the authority of the Apostle Paul.

Go back to Ephesians chapter four. We have authority to thoroughly equip the saints, whatever it takes, working them over to get them ready for the work of the ministry. Who is to do the work of the ministry? The saints. What is the pastor's responsibility? To prepare the people for the work of the ministry. It is not the pastor's responsibility to do everything. His responsibility is to be the overseer, the shepherd, and the teacher. It is the shepherd who prepares the sheep. Shepherds don't produce sheep, or do sheep? The pastor's responsibility is to thoroughly equip, adjust, repair, and restore the saints for the work of the ministry.

Do you realize that the average pastor is killing himself trying to do what the saints are supposed to do? That's a fact. I learned a

lesson the hard way many years ago in the ministry: I can't do everything. Since I can't do everything, I'm not going to try to do everything. I can only do one thing, and that's what God has called me to do, what God has enabled me to do, and what I'm going to do. And I'm going to do it first.

Whatever else I do comes in second. If you don't believe that, ask my wife. She has been wanting me to cut some limbs and dig some stumps for several months. I haven't had time. I'll do it sooner or later, but my studies and preparation, preaching, counseling, and ministry come first. There are some things I am required to do, other things I need to do, and a few things I want to do. The required things come first.

God says it is the pastor's responsibility to prepare the sheep for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ—that is, the building up and strengthening of the body of Christ. If you don't listen, learn, and apply, you will never be thoroughly equipped or thoroughly adjusted for the work of the ministry. How much adjusting do you need? How much equipping do you need? Let me show you.

Number 13 is the positive: “Till we all come in the unity of faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, into a perfect or mature man, under the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Until you come into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, you still need some work, adjusting, and equipping. Are you already at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ? That is the positive. Look in verse 14; that is the negative.

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Have you come to the point where what men say does not bother or affect you? You know the Scripture. It is not these way-out theories, stupid assumptions, or philosophies of man that tantalize you; it is the Word of God. You are able to reject all that and not be moved by it. We cannot be children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine and cunning craftiness whereby men lie in wait to deceive.

How important is it that pastors study the Word of God? Look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 13. Paul tells Timothy, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." That is my life. That has been my life. That is what I am supposed to do: give attention to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine.

He says, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery"—that is the ordination. Then he says, "Meditate upon these things," that is, reading, exhortation, and doctrine. "Give thyself wholly unto them, that thy profiting may appear to all." Now watch: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." So, if I am concerned about you, I have to be concerned about myself in fulfilling what God has told me to do.

Pastors Have Authority to Do the Work of an Evangelist

In order to teach, I must know. In order to lead, I must know. In order to rebuke, I must know. In order to mature, I must know. Your spiritual maturation is the same as physical maturation: you must educate yourself, eat, and exercise. The pastor has authority to mature you in every one of these areas.

Pastors have authority to do the work of an evangelist. Look in your Bibles at 2 Timothy 4:5: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof by ministry." Have you ever wondered why God told the pastor to do the work of an evangelist? Ephesians 4 says plainly that, in the giving of gifts, God gave some to be prophets, some to be apostles, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastor-teachers.

Why, then, has God told the pastor to do the work of an evangelist? The answer is that the office of evangelist has ceased, just as the office of prophet has ceased, and just as the office of apostle has ceased. We no longer have the twelve apostles.

We no longer have prophets in the sense that the Old Testament had prophets and the New Testament had prophets while the Bible was being written. We often refer to a pastor as a prophet, but there

is a difference. In the Old and New Testaments, a prophet foretold—that is, he foretold the future—and told forth the Word of God. We do not have prophets today receiving divine revelation as Elijah or Samuel did, because the Word of God is complete. We do have prophets in the sense that we tell forth what is written here, but we no longer have the office of an apostle with us.

I do not care how many men call themselves apostles; they do not have the authority of the original apostles. I know of no apostle today who can raise the dead; they did originally. I know of no apostle today who can pass by someone and have that person healed; they did originally. That office has ceased. The office of a prophet has ceased. The office of evangelist has ceased in the sense that pastors are now required to do the work of an evangelist. That office has basically been joined to theirs, and the only office basically left is that of pastor-teacher.

The pastor is to be the servant of Christ, and not the servant of the church. There are churches that will call a pastor and say, "We're going to let you be gone for two weeks each year." How can a pastor do the work of an evangelist if the church tells him he can be gone only two weeks? What if God wants him in four meetings that year, or six? Once again, who is the head? Is it Christ, or is it the church? If I am to do the work of the evangelist, then the church must allow me to do that work and recognize that it is a calling of God.

Look in your Bibles at 1 Samuel chapter 30. We will be reading verse 22 in just a moment. God has given our small group an exceedingly large ministry, and our church has touched a lot of people. I realize that I am the one who usually does the traveling and preaching, but I could not do those things without your prayer, your support, and your understanding.

Remember how David at Ziklag was raided by the Philistines. Everything was taken, including the women and children. David was on the trail after the men, but some of the men—two hundred of them—were so upset and had wept so much that they could not pursue the enemy. David then returned with all the spoils and all the people.

And David came to the 200 men who were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide by the brook Besor. And they went forth to meet David and to meet the people that were with him. And when David came near to the people, he saluted them. Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that were with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them all to the spoil that we have recovered, save every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away and depart. In other words, the only thing we're going to give them is their own wife and children. Then said David, You shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us and delivered the company that came against us into our hand.

"For who will hearken to you in this matter? But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike." It was from that day forward that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day. What does that say? Whatever blessings God gives me in doing the work of an evangelist—in preaching, teaching, and traveling—whatever blessing God gives me, spiritually speaking, half goes to you. They shall part alike. God will not allow the man who simply does the battling to have all the glory and all the blessings. They go also to those who prayerfully and faithfully support him and help him.

That is why it is so important for you to be faithful here while I am gone. I do not care who is teaching—Tony, Melvin, or anyone else. I cannot be in two places at one time, but when I have opportunities, especially to preach and teach preachers, I want to take them. If I can teach five pastors and five pastors grasp the truth, we have enlarged our ministry five times. Sometimes I get to preach to many more pastors than five. Sometimes people grasp the truth, carry it to their church, and their pastor catches it later.

In just the last several weeks, I have heard from numerous churches across the country where these tapes have reached them, teaching where we are and how we got here—the biblical doctrine of war. It is amazing what God is doing. God says, "They shall part, and they shall part alike."

Applications: Resisting Authority Is Rebellion Against God

Let me make two quick applications. I will deal with this more next week. To resist biblical authority—that is, authority exercised within its proper limits—is sedition and rebellion. It does not matter whether the office is that of a husband and head, parents, godly pastors, or civil rulers, so long as they are acting biblically. To resist lawful authority is rebellion and sedition.

The second application is this, because this is where we are today: "They envied Moses in the camp and Aaron, the saint of the Lord." Most of us fail to understand and comprehend the fact that godly pastors exercising their God-given authority within its proper limits represent God himself. Remember Numbers chapter 16 and verse 3? They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, but in verse 11 he said, "You have rebelled against the Lord." Do you remember what Jesus Christ told His disciples in Matthew 10 and verse 40? He said, "Whosoever received you, receive me."

Do you realize the opposite is also true? Whoever rejects the representatives of Christ rejects Christ. So rebellion against a godly pastor exercising godly authority within the limits of that authority is rebellion against God himself. Children, to rebel against godly parents exercising godly authority is rebellion against God himself. It is true that there is a limit to godly authority. But there is God, the authority, and when it is exercised within its limits, we must submit to it and obey it.

Let us pray. Father, help us today in the name of Jesus Christ. We ask that You would teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. Lord, what a problem we have in our country—not just with a wicked, ungodly government, civilly speaking, but also with wicked and ungodly governments, ecclesiastically speaking, as well as in the family. Lord, help us. Give us grace to understand that there is a lawful authority, and when it is exercised within the limits prescribed by the Word of God, we must submit and obey. Help us to be what we should be. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask. Amen. Peace.

CHAPTER 7

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part Seven of 16

Introduction and Review of Previous Weeks

We have been on this song for seven weeks. It is the Hallelujah Confession: “Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord.” This is the first song that has it, and its content deals with confession. The first five verses were a solicitation, and in these verses he gives four reasons why we should indeed worship and honor the Lord. I dealt with confession in general in verse 6, and specifically with the phrase, “we have sinned with our fathers.” Then I dealt with the first two sins mentioned in verse 7: ignorance and ingratitude. I showed how they pave the way for the next two sins mentioned in verse 13: forgetfulness and impatience. Forgetfulness and impatience led to envy and insurrection in verses 16 through 18, which is what I am dealing with now.

The Historical Background of Envy and Insurrection

Psalm 106:16-18 says: “They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord. The earth opened and swallowed up

Dathan, and covered up the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked." I dealt initially with verse 16 and showed how envy led to insurrection. The historical background for this passage is Numbers chapter 16.

We went back and looked at Numbers 16 in detail. Three judgments are mentioned there: the earth opened and swallowed Dathan, Abiram, and their company; fire came down from heaven and consumed the 250 princes; and then God sent a plague because the people still murmured against Moses and Aaron, killing 14,700 of them.

The whole point of this song is to show that the same sins our fathers committed, we still commit today. I concluded that sermon generally by demonstrating that there are so many people in rebellion. I dealt with Ephesians 5:33: "and the wife see that she reverence her husband." I took the word "reverence" and showed that it was the same word applied to God, and that God had indeed established certain authority. We are not to become tyrants in any way whatsoever, but that does not mean there is no lawful and legitimate authority.

Last week I was showing you how pastors have basically forsaken their pastoral office. I am still demonstrating that sedition and insurrection exist even in the church today; they are alive and well.

The Two Main Problems in the Church Today

I pointed out that there were two main problems in the church today. The first one was this: pastors do not realize, comprehend, or exercise the authority of their pastoral office. The second point was that Christians do not realize, know, or submit to that pastoral authority. After giving you three warnings, I showed you several things that pastors had authority to do. First of all, pastors have the authority to be the servants of Christ. Secondly, they have the authority to be the overseers of the church. Thirdly, they have authority to preach and teach the Word of God. Fourthly, they have authority to shepherd the flock. Fifthly, they have authority to correct, reprove, and rebuke. Sixthly, they have authority, of course, to mature the saints, according to Ephesians chapter 4. Seventhly, they have the authority due to the work of an evangelist. You can see

how most pastors today do not do any of those things simply because they do not understand or know the authority of their office.

Today I want to deal with the second major problem that exists from this text. Look back at verse 16: "They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord," which led to the insurrection, which led to the justice that God executed upon the insurrectionists and the wicked. The second problem is this: Christians do not know, comprehend, or submit to pastoral authority. As most pastors fail in exercising their pastoral authority, so most Christians fail in submitting to pastoral authority.

The Church as a Monarchy, Not a Democracy

The Church of Jesus Christ is not a democracy, nor is it a camp of anarchists. The Church of Jesus Christ is in reality a monarchy where Jesus Christ is head. He is the Lord; He is the sovereign; and He always leads His church through His under-shepherds, through the pastor.

Ask yourself this question: How are Christians in rebellion today, and how could they possibly be classified as seditionists and insurrectionists? Remember that we are talking about biblical and lawful authority. We are not talking about usurped, tyrannical power. We are talking about that authority that God has ordained and placed in the church.

What does God require of you toward a biblical, godly pastor? More generally, what does God require of all of His people toward biblical, godly pastors? Keep in mind that not all pastors are converted, and not all pastors are God-called and God-ordained. Some have entered into the ministry simply as a profession. I am not talking about the hirelings or the tyrants. I am talking about those whom God has lawfully called and ordained. What does God require of you toward them?

First Requirement: Know Your Pastors

Let me try to answer that today. Look in your Bibles, first of all, to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and let us read verses 12 and 13. I will take these verses one at a time. God requires a number of things from all

of His people toward His pastors. You can judge for yourselves whether or not Christendom is in rebellion, sedition, or insurrection toward God and toward those whom He has ordained. Look in 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 12.

The Apostle Paul says, “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.”

Go back to verse 12. First of all, he says, “we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.” The very first requirement that God gives here is to know them.

The Greek word for “know” is from the Greek word *eido*. It means to recognize, to acknowledge, to appreciate and value, and to consider very much. In a modern-day phrase, the word speaks of intimacy, affection, to have regard for, to cherish, and to pay attention to. When God admonishes His people to know their pastors, He is not merely admonishing them to know their names.

It is kind of like a fellow I met in Jesup one time. I was going to invite him to our church, and I said, "I'm Pastor Weaver, and I'd like to invite you to attend our fellowship." He said, "There's no reason to invite me. I'm already a member of a church." I asked, "What church are you a member of?" He said, "I'm a member of the Baptist Tabernacle." I said, "I'm glad to hear that, because I've been the pastor there for the last twelve years, and I've never seen you in my life. I'll expect you there Sunday since you're a member there." Of course, he was not a member and had never been a member. He did not even know who I was. Very clearly, he could not have known his pastor.

God requires you to know them that labor among you, who have the rule over you, and admonish you. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5, the Apostle Paul says, "For our gospel came not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; and ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." Here is the very same word: "ye know what manner of men we were." In other words, you know something about those men. You know them

intimately, you know them effectually, and you know what their lives consist of.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:2, the same word is used again: "For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus Christ." The Apostle Paul says you are not ignorant of these truths or commandments. We have charged you with them. You are intimately aware of them and have regard for them. Verse 4 says, "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour."

Two other passages show the impact of the word "know." In 2 Timothy 1:12, the same exact Greek word is used when the Apostle Paul tells you that you are to know those who labor among you, are over you, and admonish you in the Lord.

In 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 12, the Apostle Paul says: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." When Paul says, "I know whom I have believed," do you believe he had an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ? He knew something about Jesus Christ, the ministry, the love, and the grace of God. Of course, it is the same word.

In 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 18, once again, we find the same identical Greek word. Peter writes: "Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Peter is saying that you know about your salvation. You know how intimate it is. You know how valued it is. You know that it was not by works or traditions, but by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The word "know" therefore has this intimate knowledge.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 16, beginning with verse 15, the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthian Christians: "I beseech you, brethren, (you know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

that you submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboreth."

What did they know? They knew that the house of Stephanas had addicted themselves to the ministry. In other words, they had given their lives to working for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 12, the Apostle Paul says: "And we beseech you, brethren," that is, we exhort you, "to know them who labor among you, and are over you, and admonish you." Note the three phrases identifying the pastors, the elders: they labor among you, they are over you, and they admonish you. The Apostle Paul says you should know them.

Now let me show you a contrast. You hear people all the time saying, “I love you.” Most of the time, it is simply words. A husband may tell his wife that he loves her, yet run around on her. Or a wife may tell her husband that she loves him, yet treat him like a dog. You know as well as I do that it is not what an individual says, but how they act that really counts.

Here is what God says concerning these wicked individuals who use their mouths, but not their lives: “They profess that they know God”—there is the same word, “know”—“they profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

Now when the Apostle Paul says, “I beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you,” he is not just talking about having a mental or an intellectual or a head knowledge. He is saying, you know them, you know them intimately, you know them affectionately. You have regard for them. You know something about them. You know something about their manner of life. This is true knowledge demonstrated in conduct, not merely in words.

Here is why. Let us go back to 1 Thessalonians 5:13, because this is the second requirement God gives, and these requirements are tied together. Verse 12 says, “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.” Verse 13 says, “And esteem them very highly in love for the work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.” The reason

God requires you to know your pastor is because He also requires you to esteem them very highly in love for the work's sake.

Second Requirement: Esteem Them Very Highly in Love

The Greek word translated "esteem them very highly" is absolutely phenomenal. It is what you and I would call a super-deluxe word. There is no one English word that can really translate it. It literally means most exceedingly, super abundantly, or beyond measure. Let me give you two illustrations. The first one is in Hebrews 11:26, concerning Moses: "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater treasure than all of Egypt."

The word "esteeming" is exactly the same Greek word that is used here for "esteem them very highly." Now what did Moses do? He esteemed the reproach of Christ. He esteemed the offense of the gospel. He esteemed the hatred of truth greater treasure than everything in Egypt.

Consider also Ephesians 3:20: "Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Look carefully at that verse: "exceeding abundantly above all"—those four English words translate this one simple Greek word. "Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all." The same word is used in 1 Thessalonians 5: "to esteem them very highly in love." This is a super-deluxe word. Here is the command: esteem them very highly. Here is the degree: exceedingly or abundantly. Here is the sphere: in love—biblical love. Here is the reason: for their work's sake.

You do not esteem a godly pastor just because he has a good personality or a winning smile. If you are going to esteem someone for that, there are plenty of television personalities with that syrupy smile the whole time who may degrade the gospel of Jesus Christ. No, Scripture says to esteem them very highly in love for the work's sake.

A failure to esteem a godly pastor very highly will always lead to dissension, division, and sedition. That is exactly what happened in Numbers chapter 16. They said to Moses and Aaron, "Why, you take

too much upon yourselves. All of God's people are holy, and all of us could do what you're doing. Why do you think you're doing this? Who do you think you are?" When Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, they would not even obey him or come to talk with him. They treated him contemptuously and wickedly.

God says, first of all, know them. Secondly, esteem them very highly and love them. Why? For the work's sake. There is no work that can continue with fussing, fighting, and feuding. Then he says, "and be at peace among yourselves." Was there peace among Dathan, Abiram, Korah, and the 250 princes? Was there peace among those nearly 15,000 whom God killed? No. There was fussing and fighting, because they failed, first, to know Moses and Aaron, and second, to esteem them very highly in love for the work's sake.

Let us read verses 12 and 13 together: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." This implies a willingness to listen, to be taught, and to be led. You will never be led by, nor taught by, anyone whom you disrespect.

Third Requirement: Remember Your Pastors

Now let us go to Hebrews chapter 13 and consider the third thing that God requires. There is enough sedition in the church today to merit the very judgment that God brought upon the Old Testament saints. Hebrews 13:7 says, "Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." Last week I gave you a general overview of the authority of the pastor; today I am giving you an overview of your responsibility to godly pastors. I cannot examine the context of all these passages, but pay close attention to verse 7: "Remember them."

"Who have the rule over you?" Remember Acts 20:28, where Paul told those Ephesian elders, "Take heed to yourselves and the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." That is, you were to see over them. Now he says, "Remember them." You are to remember them that have the rule over you, and he identifies who

those are: "who have spoken unto you the Word of God." So the very third thing here is the word "remember." Remember them.

The word "remember" means to be mindful of. It means to remember; it has the implication of constantly thinking of. Galatians 2:9-10 shows that this word has the impact and implication of constantly thinking of. Paul and Barnabas were being sent out by James and the others. Galatians 2:9 says, "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor"—that is, constantly think of the poor—"the same which I also was forward to do." So when he says "remember them," it has the implication of constantly thinking of them.

Look at Ephesians 2:11-12: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ..." He said, you remember what you were and where you came from. That admonition is given in Isaiah when God says, "Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the pit from which you were digged." Don't forget who you are. Don't forget where you came from. Don't forget what God has done for you. Constantly remember: it's the grace of God that made you what you are.

So he tells us to remember them, back in Hebrews 13 and verse 7, “who have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God.” The truth enjoined in Hebrews 13:7 is basically the same truth that was enjoined in the Old Testament regarding the Levites. Who was it in the Old Testament that taught the law and the Word of God repeatedly and consistently? The Levites. It is true there were prophets, but the Levites were given the responsibility of teaching. Deuteronomy shows us how many times, in that one book, God tells us to remember the Levites.

Much of this has to do with the tithes, the rejoicing, the first fruits, and all this. Remember, the Levites did not have an inheritance among the children of Israel. The Lord was their inheritance.

It is true they had cities and suburbs, but they did not receive land to pass down to their children the way the children of Israel did.

In Deuteronomy 12:12, God says, “And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates.” Why include the Levite in your rejoicing? “Forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.” In other words, God says, do not forget the Levite. Concerning the offerings, verse 18 says, “But thou must eat them before the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.”

What is God saying? Remember the Levite. Here is the tithe of rejoicing: "And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thy household, and the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee." Here is a tithe of rejoicing. God says, when you start rejoicing, remember the Levite.

Here he is dealing with the poor tithe: "At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: and the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest."

So God includes the Levite with the widow, the stranger, and the fatherless. What is he saying? Don't forget them. "And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place his name there." "And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou,

and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates."

Deuteronomy 26:11–13 shows that special consideration was to be given to the Levites:

“And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you. 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; then thou shalt say before the Lord thy 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.”

In every instance, God told those people to remember not just the poor, the widow, and the stranger, but those Levites who constantly teach them the Word of God. Hebrews 13:7 says, “Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the Word of God.” What does God require of you in this word “remember”? I would say at least two things.

First, you should remember your pastors prayerfully. You must constantly pray for them, and many times with them over certain issues and certain things. It was Samuel who said, “God forbid that I should sin against God in ceasing to pray for you.”

I’m going to be honest with you. Very few Christians really wrestle for their pastors in prayer. Very few. You know what we want? We want men like Jonathan Edwards, who stood and read a sermon—he read it—“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” People held on to the pews; they were shaking, and the power of God and conviction were so great that people were screaming for him to stop preaching. Hundreds were converted. The Great Awakening began. We want preachers like that.

But we fail to realize that the men in Jonathan Edwards' church had spent that entire night in prayer for him before he preached that message that morning. We must remember to pray for them. Secondly, we must remember them financially. That was exactly the thrust of all those Old Testament passages concerning the Levites.

Now look in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 6. By the way, I'm not saying this for you to give me anything. I'm teaching the principle; I'm teaching the truth. I'm not asking for money. I've never asked for money, and I'm not about to do so now—unless it is to borrow something from Henry, and I'll at least pay it back to old Henry. Henry came to my rescue a few months ago. I wanted to give money to someone, but I did not have enough with me, so I borrowed some from Henry and gave away his money. I gave it back to him the next week, all right?

Look in your Bible at Galatians chapter 6, verse 6. Here is the principle: "Let him that is taught in the word"—that is you, if you are learning anything—"let him that is taught in the word communicate," or give, "unto him that teacheth in all good things." What is God saying? He is saying, You take care of those who teach you. Now look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 17. Here are pastors specifically.

He says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor"—that is literally double pay—"but the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor 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." What does God say? Do you have a man who labors in the word and doctrine? Pay him double. Why? Because Scripture says—and I am not going over this passage with you now—"Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," and, "The labourer is worthy of his reward."

There are two principles enunciated. We have to remember the pastors. I am saying this because there are going to be other Christians hearing this and other Christians listening, so they can apply it to their pastors if they have a godly pastor. Most people do not realize that pastors usually have far greater expenses than the average Christian. For instance, they usually have to have suits to

preach in, to marry in, to bury in, and to go to meetings. The average Christian man has one suit, and he wears it only once or twice a year.

When people come through, hospitality is one of the requirements of a pastor. If you stop and think, pastors are usually not only required to give; they want to give. A godly man does. I have had people give me money, and I turned right around and gave it to someone else. I gave away money this week. That is simply the way things go in the ministry. And God is saying that we ought to remember the pastor.

Let me tell you about an incident that happened to me years ago, and I've never forgotten it. I was in a pastor's house, and on his wall he had a little plaque, only about six inches by six inches. All it said was “Great Smoky Mountain National Park,” and it had a mama bear and two cubs. He pointed it out to me. He said, “You see that, Brother Weaver?” I said, “Yes, sir.” He told me that a certain family had gone on vacation up in the Smoky Mountains and brought the plaque back to him. It probably did not cost ten dollars, or even five dollars; to be honest, they probably got it for a couple of bucks.

But the important thing, he said, was that they remembered him. They thought about him. He had that thing hanging on his wall as though it were a $100,000 picture. He was so proud and thankful that his people had thought about him. Remember them. That's what God says.

Fourth Requirement: Follow Your Pastors

God says, “Know them, esteem them very highly in love for the work's sake, and be at peace among yourselves.” He says, know them. Hebrews 13:7 says, “Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” There is the fourth thing that God requires: follow them. “Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

The interesting thing is that the Greek word “follow” is where we get our English word “mimic” from. Literally, he says, mimic them, imitate them. Follow their faith, their example, their conduct, their doctrine, and their leadership.

Please listen to me carefully. No mere man, not the best of men, is to be our pattern or example absolutely or in all things. That honor is due to Jesus Christ alone. But the apostle does tell us that we are to follow them—that is, in those areas where they indeed are examples and are eminent, and when they are teaching the truth.

In 1 Corinthians 4:16, the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up one against the other." Paul says, "I'm applying this to myself and to Apollos for your sake." In other words, look at us. We are going to be your examples in this matter.

Philippians 3:17 says, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example." Did you hear that? "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example." What is he saying? Follow me. I'm your example in this case.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6, he says, "For our gospel came not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord." What were they doing? They were following the Apostle Paul and the Lord.

Now let me show you the limitation on following men, or the limitation on following a pastor. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, the Apostle Paul says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." What is he saying? You may follow me as long as I follow Christ. But if I cease following Christ, you'd better cease following me. The limitation is that you only follow those men who are following Christ. So Paul says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

As long as we are of Christ, as long as we are biblical, and as long as we are godly, you are required to follow. Let me tie this together for you. Hebrews 13:7 says, "Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

Does God require you to follow me, or any pastor, blindly, ignorantly, and stupidly? No. What did He say? Follow them, considering the end of their conduct, considering the end of their conversation. The Greek word "consider" means to observe diligently. It means to weigh thoroughly and carefully so as to apply to your heart the truth. You must consider our end. You must consider our outcome. You must consider our conduct. You must learn from it. You must profit by it.

As long as we are living biblically and holily, God says, follow them. You see, it is impossible to lead sheep if they do not follow. James gives an illustration of what this means. In James chapter 5, verses 10 and 11, he says: "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

Take them, my brethren. Look at them. Look at their lives. Look at the outcome. "Ye have seen the end of the Lord," considering the end of their conversation. So God requires us to know our pastors, to esteem them very highly in love for the work's sake, to remember them, and to follow them.

Fifth Requirement: Obey and Submit to Your Pastors

Let me ask you to think with me about Christendom in general. How many Christians follow a godly pastor in godly living, in applying the law of God, in seeking to live righteously and holily in every situation and in every circumstance? How many? How many Christians yearn to be shown the way of truth and righteousness? How many say, "If I just had someone to show me what was right, I would do it"? Very few. What am I trying to say? Sedition and insurrection are alive and well in the Church of Jesus Christ today, because very few really remember and follow their pastor.

Hebrews chapter 13, verse 17, says: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." Notice carefully that he says, "Obey them that have the rule over you."

The Greek word for “obey” literally means to render obedience or to actively obey. Arthur W. Pink’s commentary on the book of Hebrews quotes Adolf Saphir, John Brown, John Owen, and other scholars as they discuss Hebrews 13 and verse 17. These cited authorities speak directly to the stated ministry and its recognized office within the local congregation. Adolf Saphir, who is very far from being a Nicolaitan, was right when he declared that verses 7 and 17—“Remember them and follow them,” and “Obey them and submit to them”—showed that there was a stated ministry, with recognized and regular teachers and pastors in the congregation, whose gifts not only but whose office was acknowledged. It is impossible that any unprejudiced and impartial mind should attentively consider the terms and implications of these verses and come to any other conclusion. The principle of subordination is absolutely essential to the well-being of any society that is to be rightly ordered and conducted.

This principle is adumbrated even in the organization of our bodies. The Greek word for “them that have the rule over you,” *hegeomai*, is rendered “chief” in Luke 22:26 and “governor” in Acts 7:10: “and he Pharaoh made Joseph governor over Egypt and all his house,” which sufficiently intimates its scope. They—that is, the pastors—have received power from Christ to preside over His assemblies, to declare His will and execute His laws, and to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all authority and long-suffering.

They have no arbitrary power except what Christ has given them; yet, within the limits He has prescribed, they are rulers, and it is the duty of their members to obey them. John Brown says: "It is of equal importance that the office bearers in the church should not aspire to a higher degree of authority, and should not be content with a lower degree of authority than that which their Master has assigned them, and that the members of a church should equally guard against basely submitting to a tyranny which Christ never instituted, and lawlessly rebelling against the government which He has appointed."

No pastor should aspire to a higher authority than what God has granted him. No pastor ought to want to be a dictator or a tyrant. On the other hand, no pastor ought to want anything less than what God has ordained for him. The danger is that if a pastor becomes a tyrant,

some will ignorantly follow a usurpation of power, while others will rebel against lawful authority being exercised biblically and scripturally. There is a danger on both counts.

When he says, "Obey them that have the rule over you," he continues: "It is abundantly clear from these words that in the days of the apostles, there were two distinct classes among God's people, namely the rulers and those that were ruled. And this is not merely an historical statement, but a specific exhortation. It is equally clear that the same is binding upon Christians throughout the entire course of this age. This, of course, presupposes a settled church state among them in which the distinctive duties of each class is here distinctly defined according to the office of the one and the obligation of the other."

Look again at Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you." How many Christians obey the teaching of the Word of God? How many Christians obey the counseling from the Word of God? How many Christians really take to heart biblical reproof, biblical rebuke, and biblical exhortation?

When preaching, teaching, counseling, rebuke, reproof, and correction are biblical, God says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." Christians have the responsibility as well as the duty of submitting to the truth of God when it is delivered, whatever form it takes—preaching, teaching, rebuke, or correction. It does not matter. God says you are to submit to that.

I can think in my ministry of men who have repeatedly said, “Well, pastor, you know, I know you’re probably right, but I’ve got to do what I think is best.” What are they doing? Rebelling against the Word of God. God requires that you obey and submit when His Word is delivered through His man.

Look in verse 17. Someone says, “Brother Weaver, I don’t want to obey. I don’t want to submit.” I’m not trying to be ugly when I say this, but if you don’t, it’s no skin off my nose. I can’t live for you. But you will answer to God for that rebellion.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.” Why? “For they watch for your souls.” That is what pastors are supposed to do: watch for your spiritual benefit. The word “watch”

denotes awareness of spiritual dangers and beguilements. “For they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account.” Do you realize that I will give an account to God for every one of you?

Boys, girls, men, and women, whatever. Now look what the Bible says about my giving an account: “that they”—that is, the elders, the pastors—“that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.” Then it says, “for that is unprofitable for you.” The correct way for me to give an account is to say, “Lord, I want to tell You about Don Thomason. He was faithful. He knew me. He esteemed me very highly. He remembered me. He obeyed me. He followed me. He submitted to me.” God is going to say, “Well, that’s going to be good for old Don.”

But if I had to say, “Lord, let me tell You about Henry, that hard-headed rascal. He wouldn’t listen to me. I tried to show him from the Bible, but he just laughed in my face: ‘Well, who do you think you are?’” What does God say? If I have to give it with grief and say with a broken heart, “Lord, he didn’t do any of those things,” God says it will be unprofitable for him—not for me.

Isn’t it amazing that God is going to require an accounting for even the relationship between pastor and people? Some people will be highly upset when that pastor gives a report. Some will rejoice, but with the insurrection, rebellion, and dislike for any authority today, most will probably be grieving.

So God says in verse 17, "Obey them and submit." A. W. Pink says, "The duty here enjoined may be summed up in: cultivate an obedient, compliant, and submissive spirit toward your pastors and church officers. To obey and submit denotes a subjection as of inferiors to superiors." It is not a servile subjection, but that reverent respect which God requires.

It is a submission which issues from love and has for its end the honoring of those to whom honor is due. It includes doing everything in the power of the members which would make the lot of their rulers easier and lighter, and, of course, providing for their temporal sustenance. Those rulers are appointed by God, standing in His stead. The Lord Christ declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20).

Let me give you one other word of warning. I have to keep repeating it because I do not want anyone thinking that I am advocating some type of tyrannical, dictatorial authority. That is not at all it. When God says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves to them," it must be taken within the context of lawfully ordained and biblically given authority.

It is just like the passage in Ephesians 5 when God says, "Wives, obey your husbands and submit to them in everything." Can I tell my wife, "Take this pistol and go rob a bank and bring me the money"? No, I do not have authority to do that. There is a limitation on husbandly authority, and there is a limitation on pastoral authority as well.

Sixth Requirement: Do Not Rebuke an Elder

Now, let me show you two other things before we close today. Look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 5. Here is the sixth thing that God requires of you. God not only requires you to know and esteem very highly, to remember and follow and obey and submit, but He also requires you not to rebuke a pastor. "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren."

The word “rebuke” means to chide, to upbraid, or to chastise with words. So God says, “Rebuke not a pastor.” Do not jump up and down in his face, point your finger at him, and cuss him out. What if the pastor is wrong? Entreat him as a father.

How many of you, when you were boys, shook your finger in your father’s face and said, “Dad, let me tell you something. You better listen to me, Daddy”? Some of you who did it may have done it only once. If there was a problem, you went to him and said, “Now, Dad, we need to talk about something. I’m concerned. Please listen to me. Would you consider this?” You did it lovingly and kindly.

It is true that a pastor is only a man. He makes mistakes and does and says things that are unkind and unwise, numerous times. But God says you do not jump up and down and cuss him out; you entreat him as a father. You can give him the same courtesy you would give any brother. What does He say in Matthew chapter 18? “If your brother is sinning against you, go to him and tell him his

fault between thee and him alone." When you deal with a pastor, treat him as a father. That does not mean you cannot confront him as a brother. You may confront him, but you must do it biblically and rightly.

Seventh Requirement: Salute Your Pastors

Lastly, Hebrews 13:24 gives another requirement: "Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you." Why would the apostle have to tell Christians to salute their pastors? Because people have not changed. We are just as depraved today as they were then. When the average Christian becomes upset with his preacher, he will not speak to him, stop coming, or sit in the corner with a scowl on his face while he preaches, then get up and walk out. What is God saying? You must never have that attitude. You ought always to be willing to salute them and speak civilly and kindly toward them.

I remember hearing a pastor years ago tell about an incident. He had gotten up on Saturday morning to cut his grass. He was wearing a pair of old, dirty jeans and an old T-shirt with holes all in it. This pastor had dark black hair and a dark, heavy beard, the way mine used to be. When I was a young man, I had to shave twice a day. My beard was so heavy and so black that I had five-o'clock shadow by twelve noon. This man had a dark beard like that, and he had not shaved since Friday morning.

He was out cutting the grass, and right before he finished, the lawnmower tore up. He got down and started working on it, wiping grease everywhere. He got grease all over him, all over his shirt, and under his fingernails. He finally got the broken part and realized that the hardware store was just a couple of blocks down the road. So he jumped in his vehicle, took his old hat, and pulled it over his head. "Well, maybe nobody would recognize me."

When he entered the hardware store, he happened to look over and see one of the young children from his church. He had always told those children, "Never be ashamed of your pastor. Always speak to your pastor." He glanced at the boy and turned around, hoping the child had not seen him. He pulled his cap down, but it was too late.

There he was, with holes all in his T-shirt, grease all over him, grease under his fingernails, and his hat pulled down in the shade. The child saw him. All of a sudden, where everybody in the store could hear, the boy said, “Hey everybody, there’s my pastor!”

Sometimes you may not feel like speaking. When God says you better speak, you salute all those who have the rule over you. The truth is this: just as they envied Moses and Aaron in the camp, and just as there was insurrection and sedition against Moses and Aaron, so likewise there is insurrection and sedition today against the men of God, those who genuinely want to do what is right. But understand this: pastor-teachers, according to Ephesians chapter 4, are indeed the gift of Christ to His church. And here is what He says in the book of Jeremiah, chapter 3, and verse 15.

Conclusion: Pastors as Gifts from Christ

He said, "I will give you pastors according to my own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Any pastor who labors in the word and doctrine and feeds and teaches the people deserves your prayer, respect, and encouragement. It is just as easy for God to remove His pastors as to give them. I have known churches all over this country that mistreated their pastors and went year after year without a godly man. If they get a man, they run him off, and all of a sudden God does not send them anymore.

It is important how you treat me and how I treat you. We will give an account for our relationship.

Let us pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, when we look around this country and Christendom as a whole, how far we have fallen from Your standard, principles, and truth. There was a time in this country when Your men were honored, consulted, and followed. Today they are mocked, ridiculed, and made fun of. Bring us back to the position where we will honor Thee and honor Thy Word, and be a biblical people in every area of our lives. Help us, Father, to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

Sometimes you may not feel like speaking. When God says you better speak, you salute all of them that have the rule over you. Just as they envied Moses and Aaron in the camp, and just as there was

insurrection and sedition against Moses and Aaron, so likewise there is insurrection and sedition today against the men of God, those who genuinely want to do what is right. Pastor teachers, according to Ephesians chapter 4, are indeed the gift of Christ to His church. Look in your Bibles to Jeremiah, chapter 3. Here is what He says in Jeremiah 3 and verse 15.

He said, "I will give you pastors according to my own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Any pastor that you know who labors in the Word and doctrine, and will feed and teach the people, deserves your prayer, respect, and encouragement. It is just as easy for God to remove His pastors as it is to give them.

I have known churches throughout this country that mistreated their pastors. Those churches have gone year after year without a godly man. If they get one, they run him off, and eventually God sends no more.

It matters how you treat me and how I treat you; we will give an account for our relationship.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, when we look around this country and Christendom as a whole, how far we have fallen from Your standard, how far we have gone from Your principles and Your truth. There was a time in this country when Your men were honored, consulted, and followed. Today, Lord, they are mocked, ridiculed, and made fun of. Bring us back to the position where we will honor Thee and honor Thy Word, and be a biblical people in every area of our lives. Help us, Father, to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 8

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part Eight of 16

Introduction to the Fourth Set of Sins

Psalm 106, verses 19 through 23 lays the historical and biblical foundation for idolatry and insolence.

> They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped the molten image. Thus, they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt; wondrous things in the land of Ham and terrible things by the Red Sea. Therefore, he said that he would destroy them had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.

The fourth set of sins in this psalm, the Hallelujah confession, are idolatry and insolence, dealt with in verses 19 through 23. The first five verses are introduction. Verse six just deals with confession of sin in general. And then we dealt with ignorance and ingratitude and, of course, forgetfulness and impatience. And for the last several weeks, envy and insurrection.

The sins of our fathers are very present with us today; we're basically guilty of the same sins. When I deal with idolatry and insolence, then we tend to think, well, at least here are two sins that maybe I'm not guilty of. I mean, come on, idolatry and insolence? Well, certainly you would think we could not be classified as idolaters.

All of us are idolaters in one degree or the other. Now, we may not be guilty of gross idolatry, but the truth is, if we are ignorant of God and His worship, to the degree that we're ignorant, to that degree, we are basically idolaters. We're basically guilty of the same sins that the Old Testament saints were guilty of as well. Human nature has not changed. Depravity has not changed. Ignorance is still ignorance.

The historical background for Psalm 106, verses 19 through 23 is found in Exodus 32 and Deuteronomy chapter 9. Exodus chapter 32 begins:

Historical Background from Exodus 32

> And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted

themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people.

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.

And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. And Moses said unto

> Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.
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> For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf. And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD's side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made. Moses had gone up into the mountain and he was there 40 days, which is relatively a short period of time. In the

Bible, 40 is the number of probation or the number of testing. So literally what God was doing was testing Israel as to whether or not they would remain true and faithful to him. Clearly, Israel failed this test.

She did not pass at all. One of the most distressing realizations that has ever dawned upon a child of God is his inability to be faithful and true to his Lord even for a short period of time.

Try to pray and keep your mind focused upon the Lord. You will find within just a few minutes, your mind begins to wander and you will be thinking of things and praying for things and saying things that should never even have entered into your mind. And yet it's there. What did our Lord say in John chapter 15 and verse 5?

He said, without me, you can do nothing. This truth teaches us how desperately we need the grace of God. You remember the song that we have sung for years, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above."

Here is that particular proneness of man to sin against God. The Bible says in Proverbs 24 and verse 10, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." And certainly we find out that's exactly what the children of Israel did in the day of their adversity. They fainted.

Israel's Impatience and Forgetfulness

Exodus 32, verse 1: "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."

The word "delayed" in Exodus 32 is significant. Psalm 106 deals with the confession of sin. And the psalmist confessed the sins of ignorance and ingratitude in verse 7, forgetfulness and impatience in verse 13, envy and insurrection in verse 16. These three sets of sins now culminate in idolatry and insolence. Exodus 32, verse 1 says, "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of

the mount." Remember, Moses was only up in the mount 40 days, 40 nights. When the people saw that Moses delayed.

What does that tell us? It tells us the people did not think that Moses returned when he should have. According to their timetable. In other words, God was not working according to their plans. Here is once again a demonstration of their impatience. They wanted Moses back in order that they could get on with their lives and get on into the promised land. Since Moses was not back, they decided to take matters into their own hands.

In verse 1, They said unto Aaron, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." Note, "make us gods, which shall go before us." What are they saying? We're going to leave Moses here. It's time for us to move on. Doesn't matter what God says. Doesn't matter where Moses is. We're going to go take that land and we want a God to lead us. And so you make us gods which shall go before us.

Exodus chapter 20 had already been delivered to the people. It is true, Moses is up in the mountain, getting them inscribed by the finger of God. But these words had already been communicated to the people through Moses. Exodus chapter 20, verse 3 says, God says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to 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." Exodus chapter 20, verse 23: God says, "Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold."

Exodus chapter 23, beginning at verse 32: Here talking about the heathen, God says, "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee." So God had basically already forbidden what Aaron and the people did. Now, the concept that is expressed in Exodus chapter 32 and verse 1 is almost incomprehensible. Exodus 32, verse 1 says,

"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us." Now, how did I say that the concept expressed here is utterly incomprehensible?

The Incomprehensibility of Idolatry

How in the world could these people just recently removed from Egypt, having seen the mighty miracles and the power of God which He had performed in the land, how He divided the Red Sea, how they came across on dry ground, how in the world could they forget all that God had done and assume that that great and mighty and awesome God could now be replicated in an image?

This shows you how forgetful they were. Psalm 106, verse 13 says, "They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel." Verse 21: "They forgat God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea." They totally, absolutely forgot God.

In just a short period of time, all of the miracles, all of the wonders were over. And they assumed that they could make a God, or a representation of that God, who would lead them.

You ask the question, how could a people be so stupid? A better question is, Why did Aaron consent to their sin? Why did Aaron say, "Break off the golden earrings and bring them unto me"? There is no answer to that question that I just asked. There are several possibilities. The first one is Aaron may have been trying to dissuade the people by letting them know how much it's going to cost them. That could have been it. I don't know. The Bible doesn't say. Or it could have been that if Aaron was going to make a representation of God, so to speak, he wanted the best. And so he asked for the gold. I don't know. But God had already prohibited Aaron from doing what he did. He had already prohibited the people.

Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 10 tells the people, "Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that

they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children."

This is before the writing of the law. It had been given orally. Verse 11: "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. And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice." The only thing you did was hear. You didn't see anything. Verse 13: "And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it."

He 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: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day."

God said, You heard a voice. But you saw no similitude. You saw no shape. You saw absolutely nothing. And there's a reason for this. God says, I don't want you trying to replicate me or make an image of me. It's absolutely impossible. How can you make a visible image of the invisible God?

First Timothy chapter 6, the latter part of verse 14, shows that Jesus Christ is in the context. It says, "until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:" verse 15, "Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of

lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." "To whom be honour and power everlasting." First Timothy 1, verse 17: Paul gives this doxology, this hymn of praise. He says, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." Colossians 1, verse 15 says that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. So if someone really wanted to know what God would look like in a form of some type, they would have to have seen Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ was God incarnate. Now, the Bible says in John 4 and verse 24, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

That truth was just as true in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament. For in Malachi 3 and verse 6, God says, "I the LORD change not." God has always been spirit. God has always been the invisible God. So how in the world then can you make a visible image of the invisible God?

When you try to envision or imagine what Jesus Christ looked like in your mind, that's just as much idolatry as making a golden calf.

Where in the world do you think we get the word "image" from anyhow? Imagination. You see, most people are idolaters in their minds. Just because you don't bow down in front of an image, a physical image, does not mean that you're not an idolater.

Aaron was Moses' brother. Exodus 32, verse 1 says: "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."

"This Moses." How in the world could Aaron tolerate the attitude that's being displayed toward Moses? Moses was not only the leader, he was not only the prophet, he was also the brother of Aaron. "This Moses." The term "this Moses" is a term of contempt. Daniel 6, verses 5 and 13 show that when those other presidents wanted to get something against Daniel, they said, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." And then a little bit later on, they called him "that

Daniel." "This Daniel," "that Daniel." "This Moses," "that Moses." You do not contempt. And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."

The Scripture is complete, but I want you to infer what is being said. It could be expressed in four words or five words. "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." The next five words express their attitude: "And we do not care." That was their attitude. We don't know what happened to him. We don't care. We want to get on with our lives. You make us some gods that will lead us. We're going to get out of this place. You talk about an attitude. Shades of Numbers 16 all over again. Envy and insurrection are always part and parcel of idolatry and insolence. One of the most pressing questions is, why did Aaron make a calf? Verse 4: "And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Why a Calf? Historical and Biblical Reasons

If you were going to make yourself an idol that would be your God, or at least represent your God, would you make it a cow? Why would you make it a cow? Why would you make it a calf? Maybe this is where we Southerners get our expression "holy cow" from. I don't know.

In India cows are worshipped still, along with rats, elephants, and snakes, and a multitude of other things. Why in the world would Aaron make a calf? A lengthy quote from ISBE, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, under "Golden Calf," helps answer that. The term "animism" is a term that refers to the worship of animals. And animal worship has been around ever since men rejected God. Romans chapter one makes it exceedingly clear that

God gave them up. And then they began to worship all forms of animals, even creeping things. ISBE's section under ancient calf worship says:

"The origin of animal worship is hidden in obscurity." Well, that's not really true if you understand Romans 1, but as far as maybe how it actually began, it could be true. But here it is. "The origin of animal worship is hidden in obscurity, but reverence for the bull and the cow is found widespread among the most ancient historic cults. Even in the prehistoric age"—by the way, I hate that term. There is no such thing as a prehistoric age. Prehistory? If there's no history, how can it be prehistory? How do you know what historically happened if there's no history at that time? I despise that term. "Even in the prehistoric age, the influence of the bull symbol was so powerful that it gave its name to one of the most important signs of the zodiac." Taurus the bull.

"And from early historic times, the horns of the bull were the familiar emblems of the rays of the sun, and solar gods were very commonly represented as bull gods. The Egyptians, close neighbors of the Hebrews in all eras from that of the Exodus onward, worshipped living bulls at Memphis and in Heliopolis as incarnations of Ptah and Ra. One of the most elaborate rituals was connected with the life-size image of the Hathor Cow while the sun was revered as the Valiant Bull and the reigning Pharaoh as the Bull of Bulls." I have at home in one of my books the pictograph of the Hathor Cow and it's just a cow with big horns and with the emblem of the sun between her horns. Remember the Pharaoh was known as the Bull of Bulls.

"But far more important in this connection is the fact that calf worship was almost, if not quite, universal among all the ancient Semitic peoples. If the immediate ancestors of Abraham did not revere this deity, they were certainly quite unlike their relatives, the Babylonians, among whom, according to all tradition, they lived before they migrated to Palestine. For the Babylonians revered the bull as the symbol of their greatest gods, Anu and Sin, and Marduk, the ideograph of a young bullock forming a part of the latter's name. While Hadad-Rimmon, an important Amorite deity, is pictured standing on the back of a bull. And Phoenicia, also the bull was a

sacred animal, as well as in northern Syria, where it ranked as one of the chief Hittite deities, its images receiving devout worship. Among all these peoples, the cow goddess was given at least equal honor." The cow goddess. It's almost hard to keep a straight face when you read some of this stuff, but I mean, how in the world could anybody worship a cow?

"Among all these peoples, the cow goddess was given at least equal honor. In Babylonia, the goddess Ishtar has the cow symbol on very ancient seal cylinders. And when this nude or half-nude goddess appeared in Palestine, she often stands on a bull or cow. And under slightly different forms, the same goddess is revered in Arabia, Moab, Phoenicia, Syria, and elsewhere. While among the Semitic Canaanites, the bull was the symbol of Baal and the cow of Astarte. Recent excavations in Palestine have shown that during all eras no heathen worship was as popular as that of Astarte in her various forms."

And then they go on and tell us about her fertility cults. "Is there any rational motif which can account for this widespread calf worship?" "Is it conceivable that this cult could so powerfully influence such intelligent-minded nations as the Egyptians, Babylonians, if it were wholly irrational and contained no spiritual content?"

When they say "spiritual," they're not talking about biblical. Just relating to worship. "And is there no rational explanation behind this constant fusion of the deity which controls the breeding of cattle with the deity which controls vegetation? How did the bull come to represent the corn spirit so that the running of a bull through the corn, the most destructive act, came to presage good crops? And how did the rending of a bull, spilling his lifeblood on the soil, increase fertility?"

"The one real controlling motif of all these various representations and functions of the calf god may be found in the ancient awe, especially among the Semites, for the mystery of life. This seems to offer a sufficient reason why the bull, which is most conspicuously example of life-giving power, should be so closely connected with the reproductive processes of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and also with the sun, which from earliest

historic times was considered as preeminently the giver of life. Bull worship was not always an exhibition of gross animalism, but certainly in Bible times often represented a concept which was the product of reflection upon one of the deepest mysteries of nature." Here is an Egyptian hymn addressed to the bull god, to the god Sin of Harran and the heifer of Anu:

"Strong, young bull with strong horns, with beard of lackless, lucid color, self-created. Full of developed fruit, mother womb who has taken up his abode, getter of all things, exalted habitation whose hand rest the life of the whole world, O Lord, thy divinity is full of all like the far off heaven and broad oceans." Can you imagine saying that to a false god?

See how the fertility cults really gained the upper hand in the worship of the bull and the cow and how it was related even to the vegetation and to the increase of crops. And of course, since the sun is needed to grow crops, that was included as well. And so when they worshipped these bulls, many times they had, like the Hathor cow, the emblem of the sun as well. With this background, it can be readily seen why Aaron fashioned a golden calf or a molten calf.

The Hebrews lived in Goshen, the best of the land in Egypt. The Egyptian words "Apis" or "Serapis" signifies the head of an ox. ISBE says, "Some of the chief gods of the pasture land of Goshen, where the Hebrews had resided for centuries, were the bull gods."

"the special god of this district had its symbol as a bull calf and one inscription actually speaks of the statue of a golden calf of 600 pounds weight. While another inscription mentions a statue of gold." So in the land of Goshen, there was the false gods of the bull and the calf worship. Exodus 32, verse 4 says, "He received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf." So he made it a molten calf, and then he made sure it was engraved properly.

And they said, the people said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

How in the world could those people who have seen the power of God in the Exodus now think that that calf that they had just made was God? In all probability, although they said, "These be thy gods,

O Israel," in all probability they did not intend for the calf to be a God. In all probability they intended for it to be a representation of God. That is why in verse 5, "And when Aaron saw it," that is not the calf, he had already seen the calf, he made it. But when he saw the people bowing down to that calf, saying, "These be thy gods," when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." Jehovah. In other words, not a feast of the golden calf, but a feast of Jehovah. In other words, what Aaron was trying to say is, this is not God, but this is just a visible representation of God.

Now, undoubtedly, this is where Jeroboam got the idea in First Kings chapter 12 to make the two golden calves, you remember the one he put in Dan and the other put in Bethel, 500 years after all this has happened. In fact, if you read First Kings chapter 12, he even took the words of Aaron and used them. Even if we give Aaron the benefit of the doubt, and even if we give the people the benefit of the doubt, if we say that they were not worshipping that golden calf as God, that they were just worshipping that golden calf as a representation of the One True and the Living God, Psalm 106, verse 19 shows how God took it: "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image." They didn't worship God, they worshipped the molten image.

When you do not worship God in the way that God has ordained, you're not worshiping God. You may be worshiping something else, but you're not worshiping God.

The Insult of Idolatry

What is so horrible about idolatry? What is so horrible about this sin of making the golden calf? Psalm 106, verse 20 says, "Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass." Now, what was so wrong with making the golden calf? God said they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. What was Israel's glory? God. God was Israel's glory.

All you have to do is read Deuteronomy 4. No nation on earth had a God like the God, the One True and Living God.

While Psalm 106 and verse 20 says they changed their glory into an ox that eateth grass, Romans chapter 1 makes it exceedingly clear what happened. Romans 1, beginning in verse 22: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." When they changed their glory, what they were doing was they were changing God's glory. Can you imagine, dear friend, the great sovereign, majestic, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, sovereign God of the universe being made into a dumb animal? You're talking about insolence. Insolence. Making God into an ox that eateth grass? Do you know that cows are dependent upon man? And so they were making God into what he was not, and they were making him into an object that would be dependent upon their whim and their desire.

Isaiah 40, verse 18 shows the absolute wickedness of idolatry. God asks, "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"

What likeness would you make God into? You have never seen God. There is the story of the little girl. The Sunday school teacher had the kids coloring and the little kid, the Sunday school teacher came around and the little kid was asked by the teacher, "What are you drawing?" She said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." But the teacher said, "But no one knows what God looks like." She said, "If I get through this, they will." This is the question: To whom will you liken God? How? How can you make an image of God? You don't even have any idea what God is like. Or what likeness will you compare unto him? Verse 19: "The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains."

> "He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved." "Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out

the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:"

"That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number:" "he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" "there is no searching of his understanding." How can you make an image of God? Everything in this world, everything in the universe, everything that exists, exists by the very fact and by the power of God? God created it and the Creator is far greater than the creation. If you were to take all the gold and all the silver and all the diamonds and all the wood, you still could not make an image of God. That's what he means.

"I sit upon the circle of the earth. I made all these things." What insolence. What an insult to think that we could take gold or silver or wood or a pencil and make a visible representation of God. All forms of idolatry are an insult to God. Why? Because in idolatry, you try to make God into something that He is not. You try to make God into something that you want, or that you imagine, or that you desire, and you refuse to worship God as He is. All idolatry is an insult.

I gave you the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, what they said about the golden calf. But I want to answer the question for you biblically, why did Aaron make that golden calf? Acts chapter 7 answers that question. In this passage, Stephen is giving his testimony before he is stoned to death. Verse 37:

"This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren,

like unto me; him shall ye hear." Moses was a prophet, and so he prophesied that another prophet is going to arise, of course, which is Jesus Christ.

Verse 38: "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us." Now who was it with Moses on the mount who gave him the oracles? It was Christ himself. This is he that is the prophet that he's talking about in verse 37. This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers, who received the lively or living oracles to give unto us. Verse 39: "To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."

"And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands." Why did they make that calf? The answer is found in verse 39: "and in their hearts they turned back again into Egypt." In other words, in their hearts, they went back to the world, to humanism, to the flesh. The making of the golden calf was only the evidence that they were idolaters. They were already idolaters before they made the golden calf. For in their heart, they had already turned back into Egypt. Something had to have happened to turn them back to Egypt, which would enable them to want that golden calf. What was it? Acts 7, verses 38 and 39 show what happened before they turned back to Egypt in their hearts and made the golden calf.

Rejection of Christ Precedes Idolatry

"This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them." First, there was a rejection of Christ. A rejection of the word.

And then they turned back to Egypt in their hearts, which resulted in the golden calf. You cannot go into idolatry without rejecting the

one true and the living God and his word? Anytime there is any idolatry, there has previously been a rejection of Christ and his truth. Psalm 115, beginning in verse 1, shows the insolence involved in idolatry. "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." In other words, our God is sovereign. Verse 4: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat."

"They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." Just as that idol is dumb and dead and worthless, so the psalmist said, so is everyone who makes them and trusts in them. What an insult to the one true and living God to turn our backs upon him and embrace a dumb, dead, worthless idol. Whether it is a physical image or a mental image, it matters not. No wonder the Bible says in Acts 7 verse 42, "wherefore God gave them up." An insult. You cannot go into idolatry without insulting the sovereign God of the universe. There are two applications. First, Psalm 106, verses 21 and 22 say:

Applications: Miracles and True Worship

"They forgat God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea." These two verses should be the answer for anyone who believes that all that is needed for sinners to repent and believe is to see miracles and mighty works and wonders. Miracles, mighty works, and wonders will not build one's faith, nor will they give someone faith. This passage serves as a severe warning to all who believe that miracles are the answer to a weak faith. Witnessing great, spectacular, and marvelous miracles may encourage someone for a moment, but it will not ensure or guarantee a mature or continued faith in the time of temptations that lie ahead. It is not miracles that we stand upon, but it's the Word of God. It's the truth of God. It's the principles of God.

If there has never been a miracle performed and if there never shall be a miracle performed, God is still and his word is still true. If you think miracles will make men repent, you need to read Revelation 9, especially verses 18 through 21. When God sent those miraculous signs, those miraculous judgments, he sent them in time past, when he sends them again, what do these people do? They cursed God and repented not of their murders, fornications, and idolatry. It's not miracles we need. It's God Himself and His Word. Secondly, God cannot be worshipped any way that we choose. God must be worshipped in the way that he directs. And if we're not worshipping God in the way that he directs, we're all guilty of idolatry. We may not be bowing down to an idol, but we're guilty of idolatry. Because the only way that we can worship the one true and living God is to worship him according to spirit and truth. In John 4 and verse 24, we must worship him in the manner, in the method, in the way that he ordains. Or we're guilty of idolatry.

There are idolaters today that are just as insolent as the ones back in Exodus 32. What an insult to God that we would refuse Him and reject Him for some mental God in our head or some physical God that someone has manufactured. What an insult. We must worship God according to his terms. Father, we're thankful today for Jesus Christ and for his love and for his truth. Help us to see, Lord, that thou art worthy to be honored and that thou must be worshiped and honored according to your word and your truth and your direction. May heavenly Father, our thoughts of thee be biblical and scriptural so that we may render Thee acceptable worship. Help us now, Father, to live for Thee this week. Protect us. Keep us safe. And may we bring honor and glory to Thy name. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part Nine of 16

Psalm 106, beginning with verse 19 and reading through verse 23. This is lesson number 9. "They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham and terrible things by the Red Sea. Therefore, he said that he would destroy them had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them."

Review of Psalm 106 and the Progression of Sin

Let me very quickly review this psalm. In the first five verses, the psalmist gives four reasons why we should praise the Lord. Verse one: because the Lord is good and his mercy endures forever. Number two: because his mighty acts are innumerable and we cannot praise him sufficiently. Number three: because he blesses obedience in verse three. Number four and five: the psalmist asks for the Lord's blessing that he may see a revival and awakening among God's people. Then when we came to verse six, I dealt with this

phrase: "We have sinned with our fathers. We've committed iniquity. We've done wickedly." I've shown you how we have sinned with our fathers: we sinned in them similarly, imputatively, representatively, nationally, and with them actually.

Then the psalmist begins to confess specific sins in verses seven on down, and in each of these sections I have shown you how, number one, these sins are not only prevalent and current with us today, but number two, how one set of sins always leads to another set of sins. The first two specific sins dealt with in verse seven are ignorance and ingratitude. Then, as we develop those, we skip down to verse 13, where you have the second set of sins: forgetfulness and impatience. Those two sins led to the next set of sins, which are envy and insurrection in verses 16 through 18. And then envy and insurrection, along with the other sins, led to and culminated in idolatry and insolence.

Last week we established that the historical background for Psalm 106:19–23 is Exodus 32, also found in Deuteronomy 9. We read Exodus 32, where Moses was on the mount receiving the written commandments of God. The people came to Aaron and made the golden calf: they broke off their earrings, gave them to Aaron, and he fashioned a molten calf. Then the people said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." We dealt with the fact that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, and the people literally took matters into their own hands because God was not working according to their plans and desires. When Moses came down, he saw the camp dancing, shouting, and playing. He broke the Ten Commandments and said, "Whoever's on the Lord's side, let him come over to me." He drew a line in the sand, and the sons of Levi came over. He said, "Gird you on every man's sword, go in and out among the camp and slay every man his brother." Three thousand people died. Previous to that, Moses had burned the calf, ground it into fine powder, sprinkled it in the water, and made the people drink it. Evidently those 3,000 who were killed refused to drink and were put to death because of their rebellion.

Historical Background: The Golden Calf (Exodus 32)

I tried to answer the question, why a golden calf? If I were going to make a god, or at least a representative of a god, I certainly would not make it a cow. Why would you want to worship a cow?

Why a Golden Calf? Spiritual Apostasy

I went back to the history and showed you the history of bull, calf, or cow worship. It was not simply among the Egyptians, but among a lot of people. Pharaoh was worshipped as the bull of bulls. I went into all that history and background. But then I concluded with Acts chapter 7 and showed you what really was taking place spiritually, because Acts 7:39 said that they turned back in their hearts to Egypt.

And they made the calf. When they made the calf, they had already turned back in their hearts to Egypt. What made them turn back? Verse 38 shows they rejected Christ and His Word, then turned back in their hearts to Egypt, and thus made the calf.

Last week I made two quick applications. First, miracles alone are insufficient for faith. If miracles alone were sufficient, these people should have had the most mature and wonderful faith that ever existed, for they saw God's mighty hand in Egypt, the deliverance, and everything God had done. Yet the Bible says they forgot God. So miracles are insufficient to produce biblical faith.

Second, which I will develop today: God cannot be worshipped any way except the way He has ordained.

1 Corinthians 10: Old Testament Examples for New Testament Believers

Without going back to Exodus 32, hold Psalm 106 and turn to 1 Corinthians 10, where Paul deals with Exodus 32 much like the psalmist. Read the first eleven verses. Paul writes, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and did all eat the same spiritual meat and they did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them and

that rock was Christ." Now watch: "But with many of them, God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

"Now, these things were our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed and fell in one day, three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

In 1 Corinthians 10, the Apostle Paul gives a series of sins to be avoided at all costs. In verse 6 he says, "Now these things were our examples." What happened to Israel of old are our examples today. These examples should not only warn us about God's judgment and justice, but also deter us from committing the same sins they sinned. Their sins and judgment may prove our deliverance if we take to heart what God is saying through them. Paul is saying, don't think what happened to them has no bearing upon what is happening to you, and he makes the application to the Corinthian church. In verses 7 and 8 he deals with the allurement of idolatry and all its intended impurities. In verses 9 and 10, which we're not going to deal with, he deals with the cherishing of discontent and presumption. Verse 6 is a warning in general, covering all sins forbidden by the Ten Commandments: "Now these things were our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." Do not think every time you hear the word lust it has to do with sexual impurity. A lust can be anything. The Greek word is epithumia; thumia is the word for soul or thumos. Epi is a preposition meaning upon. Your lust is whatever you set your desire, passion, or soul upon. You could lust after this red confederate tie if you wanted to, and George does. If you set your lust upon a new Cadillac, it's still a lust; it has nothing to do with sexual impurity at that point. He said that to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. So all such lusting is wicked and evil. The general admonition not to lust after evil things is broken down into four particulars. We're only going to cover one of them. The first is

idolatry in verse 7; the second is fornication in verse 8, which we will hit slightly upon; the third is tempting the Lord in verse 9; and the fourth is murmuring in verse 10.

The Urgency of Fleeing Idolatry

These four particulars are based upon the history Paul repeats in verses 1 through 5. Let's go back to verse 7, where I want to begin today. He says, "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them. As it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." Since the apostle repeats this same warning in verse 14, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry," you can understand the urgency he gives us to flee from idolatry. There's an interesting passage I want to show you. Turn to First John, chapter five, verse twenty-one. Some of you probably know this, but I'm going to share it with you again since we're dealing with idolatry. There is a great deal of scholarship that demonstrates that the book of Revelation was not the last book written chronologically speaking. In other words, Revelation is the end of our Bible, but that does not mean that it was written last. Some scholars say that the book of 1 John was written last. I find that interesting. Whether it's accurate or not, I'm not going to judge or say, but if that were true, the very first verse in the Bible is, "In the beginning, God," and the last verse would be, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." That would be an interesting parallel, would it not? So the Apostle Paul warns of idolatry twice in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Let's go back now to verse 7. He says, "Neither be ye idolaters as were some of them." First of all, let me tell you what the Greek word idolaters is here. It is made up of two Greek words. The first one is eidolon, which is where we get our word idol from. It means a false god or a false image or an idol. And also it is made up of latreia, which means a hireling, a slave, or a servant. You put the two words together and you have eidololatres, which means a slave to worshiping an idol.

Aspects of Idolatry: Image Worship and Unauthorized Aids

Paul's reference in verse 7 is again to the historical account of Exodus 32. He says, "...neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them." Thank God, not all of them were idolaters, but some really

were. Likewise, continuing the application I started last week, not all Christians are gross idolaters, but some are. I said last week that all of us are idolaters in some degree, and I'll prove that today: to the degree that we're ignorant of the one true and living God, and to the degree that we do not worship him according to the way he's ordained in his word, to that degree we are all idolaters.

Most of us have a very limited concept of idolatry. Mention the word, and instantly everyone thinks about bowing down to an idol made of stone, wood, gold, or some precious metal. That is the grossest form of idolatry. But idolatry is a declension, a degrading of the norm. It is never a step toward pure religion; it is always a debasing of and a stepping away from pure religion.

Turn to Romans chapter 1, verse 21. This one text will demonstrate that idolatry is always a declension. "Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and fourfooted beasts and creeping things." So idolatry is always a declension.

One aspect of idolatry is indeed image worship or idol worship. But God has already said very clearly in Exodus chapter 20 and Deuteronomy chapter 4, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image." God absolutely forbids it. Look in Leviticus chapter 26, verses 1 and 2. God says, "...you shall make you no idols, nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall you set up any image of stone in your land to bow down unto it, for I am the Lord your God." Now God says, just simply, don't do it. Go back to Leviticus chapter 19, verse 4. Here God says, "Turn you not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods, I am the Lord your God."

I read the passage last week from Deuteronomy chapter 4. You remember what God told the people? He said, you take heed, because when you heard the voice in the mount, you saw no similitude, you saw no shape, you saw no form. And he said, you only heard a voice. And he said, do not even attempt to make a graven image of God. And last week I dealt with this in detail. How

in the world can you make a visible image of the invisible God? It's utterly, absolutely impossible. And God is spirit. And if someone tried to make an image to represent God, you've got to remember, God created everything. Therefore, if you took everything in creation and made an image, God is still greater than that because the Creator is greater than His creation. It would be impossible to have any image that would represent God.

Over and over, this is forbidden in the Scriptures. Let me give you one last passage on this. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 11, beginning with verse 16: "Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them. And then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up heaven, and there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit, unless you perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord your God giveth you." Then in Deuteronomy 27:15, note this curse: "Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination to the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and put it in a secret place, and all the people shall answer and say, Amen." So God absolutely forbids any image-making at all. That's why we have no pictures in church. If I were to say the word Jesus, what comes to your mind? That picture with Him with long hair, maybe a halo or a crown of thorns. Do you realize no one knows what our Lord looked like physically? Secondly, he certainly never had long hair. Read 1 Corinthians 11: it was a shame for a man to have long hair, and our Lord would not have had it. Thirdly, the Caesar cut was in style in those days, extremely short. Have you ever noticed, if a Frenchman paints Jesus, he looks French; if a Dutchman paints, he looks Dutch; if an Italian paints, he looks Italian. When I pastored in Jessup, Georgia, they had pictures everywhere, hanging on all the walls. Richard Johnson was a deacon, a great big old fella, used to be a professional football player. I said, "Richard, follow me." I went around the building and took every picture down and handed them to him. He had a handful of pictures. He said, "What do you want me to do with these, Pastor?" I said, "Well, that depends. If you want the frames, take the pictures out and throw them away and save the frames. If not, you can throw everything away as far as I'm concerned."

He looked at me and said, "Yes, sir." He got rid of every one of them. If anybody got mad, I'm going to say Richard threw them away. I was Richard. Nobody wanted to touch Richard. No, I explained to the people why I took them down. That leads me to the second point. Another aspect of idolatry: when you actually do not bow down to an idol or an image, you try to use such as a help or as a mediation or meditation or as a way to God in worship. Do you realize that is just as idolatrous as bowing down to a literal idol? What does 1st Timothy chapter 2 and verse 5 say? "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." The only aid, the only help we need to get to God is Jesus Christ. Stained glass windows, while they may be beautiful, they do not help us to get to God. You might have a beautiful image over here of some supposed saint, but that image does not help you get to God. You can only approach unto God by God's ordained way. What did Jesus Christ say in John 14 in verse 6? "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me." The only way you can get to the Father is through Jesus Christ. You can't get to the Father through some image, or through some stained glass window, or through some other little thing. I never will forget, I was preaching in North Carolina, and a lady came to service that night, and I noticed there was this little statue on her cardash. And I looked at it, and it was supposedly a statue of Jesus. And I looked at her, and I said, "Ma'am, what is that statue on your cardash?" "Oh," she said, "that's my statue of Jesus." She said, "I wouldn't think of going anywhere without my Jesus." I said, "Ma'am, neither would I. But he lives in my heart, not on my cardash." You see the difference? At any time we use any outside means without divine authorization, it is idolatry. Idolatry is not just bowing down before an image. You can try to use that image the way those people have seen, that's what Aaron did. When the people said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," in Exodus chapter 32, when Aaron saw that, then he proclaimed a feast to the Lord, to the one true and the living God.

He made an altar. In other words, what Aaron said, "We're just going to use this calf as a means to get to God." You know what God said? God said they weren't worshipping him, they were worshipping the calf. Whenever you try to use anything other than what God has

ordained to reach him, it is idolatry. Thirdly, listen to this. Idolatry also consists of placing anyone or anything above the Lord. It is when we give honor, recognition, praise, and glory to anyone or anything that properly should be given to God alone.

Idolatry as Placing Anything Above God

Now, I want you to turn to Isaiah 42. May I remind you, in the book of Exodus chapter 20, God said, "I am the Lord, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, thou shalt have no other gods before me." Look in Isaiah 42, and notice if you would please verse 8 of what God says, Isaiah 42 verse 8. He says, "I am the Lord, that is my name."

"And my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." Now God said, "I'm the Lord. There is none beside me." And God said, "I am not about to share my glory with another, nor am I going to give my praise to a graven image." Now, wait a minute. "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another?" Do you realize when we place our mates, our children, and our friends ahead of God, it is idolatry. When we choose to please our mates or to please our children or to please our friends at the expense of obedience to God, it is idolatry.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Luke chapter 14. And let me show you a passage that will probably need some explaining. Luke chapter 14 and notice if you would please verse 26. Luke 14 verse 26.

Our Lord says, "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." What a strange thing for our Lord to say. "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Why would our Lord say something like that? Is our Lord commanding me to hate my parents, to hate my wife, to hate my children?

Idolatry and Sexual Immorality

And the answer is no. The Word of God says husbands, love your wives. The Word of God says children, obey your parents, honor your mother and your father. Well, what in the world is he talking

about when he says, "If any man come to me and hate not his father and his mother"? Here he is using this language comparatively speaking. What he is saying is this, that our love for him should be so great that our love toward our parents and our husbands and wives and children and friends would appear as hate. In other words, we're going to put him first. Put him ahead of my wife. She's to put him ahead of her husband. We're to put him ahead of our children. Did you hear that? We're to put him ahead of our children. We're to obey him rather than please them if what they want to do is wicked and wrong and contrary to God. And whenever we try to place our children or loved ones ahead of God or before Him or please them at His expense, we are guilty of idolatry. And by our pride, our arrogance, and our self-will, we do that often. You know what James 4 and verse 17 says? "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." But we know what we ought to do, and we don't do it. God says it's wicked and wrong. It's idolatry. It is sin. I want you to look in 1 Corinthians 10, back at verse 7. This may also take a little explaining, but I think I can do it rather quickly. 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 7 will show you another aspect of idolatry that you probably never thought about. But here it is. Promiscuity, perversions, and all sorts of sexual sins are part and parcel of idolatry. Look at 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 7. "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written," now look, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." You see, part of the seduction and attraction of idolatry is the fulfillment of the lust of the flesh. Most of the idolatry in the Old Testament and in the New Testament was sexually oriented. Now, he warns against idolatry in verse seven, and then he talks about eating and drinking and playing. Now, let me tell you something, folks, the same idea is very prevalent today. Have you ever seen these caps and T-shirts and have you ever heard people say, "I'm a party animal"? What are they talking about? They're not talking about playing Monopoly or playing checkers.

Now, the word play does not carry the connotation of innocent games. Rather, it implies exactly the opposite. Let me show you. Look back in your Bibles to two passages. First of all, Exodus 32. This is where the passage comes from. We'll read that, and then I will show you how the same word is used. Exodus 32 and look if you

would please at verse 6. "And they rose up early on the morrow and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." Well, they rose up to play. Let's skip down to verse 25. "And when Moses saw that the people were naked, for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies." Now, wait a minute. The Bible says in verse 6, they sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Well, if you're playing Monopoly, you don't have to get your clothes off. Verse 25 says Moses saw that they were naked. Now let me show you what the word play means.

Look in your Bibles to Genesis 26, verse 8. You remember Isaac told Abimelech that Rebekah was his sister. "And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife." The word sporting or playing means to fondle, to caress, to make sexual advances. All such is proper and right with one's own husband and mate, but it is totally improper, unlawful, and ungodly outside of God-ordained institution of marriage. Idolatry is always a feeding of the flesh in more ways than one.

Turn to Galatians chapter 5, and begin reading with verse 19, where the Apostle Paul is talking about the works of the flesh. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." The point is that adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness—all of that is connected with idolatry.

Now let me show you two other passages. Turn to Ephesians chapter 5, and then to Colossians chapter 3, because we're going to read one passage right behind the other. Ephesians 5, verse 5: "For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Isn't that interesting? A covetous man who is an idolater—and look at the context, a whoremonger, an unclean person. What is he doing? He's coveting after some other woman or some other man's wife, and God calls it idolatry.

Colossians chapter 3, verse 5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry." Once again, he lumps all of that together and calls it idolatry. So the covetousness that the Apostle Paul is talking about deals with sexual impurity as well, which is all part and parcel of idolatry. Do you not remember in Philippians chapter 3, verse 19, the Apostle Paul spoke of those individuals whose God was their belly?

It means they only live to fulfill the lust of their flesh. You talk about a society today that lives only for the fulfillment of its own lust—this is an idolatrous society. You cannot violate the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," or the last commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," without having first violated, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." For the one true and living God says, "Thou shalt not."

Look in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 3. Here is the true statement of a child of God: "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles," that is, the unconverted, "when we walked in lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." Peter said, if you're a real child of God, you've had your fill of all that. You don't want any more. Therefore, verse 4: "...wherefore they," that is, the world, "...think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." It is absolutely amazing the pressure put on Christians in corporations and big companies to drink and party. When Christians refuse, they're passed over for promotions and raises because the world thinks it strange that we don't do the same thing. But fornication, adultery, lasciviousness, all uncleanness—all of that is part and parcel of idolatry. Are people guilty of idolatry? Yes. You can be an idolater and never bow down to an image.

Idolatry as Wrong Thinking

Fifthly, idolatry consists of wrong thinking—thinking that is unbiblical. When you think about idolatry, you think about an image. Where do you get an image? From your imagination. All idolatry begins in the mind. Cars do not begin in Detroit or Atlanta; they begin in some engineer's mind who designs them, and then

they're built at those places. So all idolatry basically begins in the mind. An idol cannot be fashioned until it is first imagined or conceived in the mind.

Now, look in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy chapter 29. Let me show you several passages. Deuteronomy 29, beginning with verse 17: "And you have seen their abominations and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which are among them, lest there should be among you man or woman or family or tribe whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations, lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." What is the man doing first? He is imagining that God is going to bless him even though he is disobedient and rebellious and ungodly. Look in Deuteronomy 31 and verse 21: "And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness, for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed. For I know their imagination, which they go about even now before I have brought them into the land, which I sware." What does it say? I know what they are imagining. Turn over to Jeremiah chapter 3. Now, I'm leading you up to one particular point. Jeremiah 3, verse 17: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. Neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil hearts." Jeremiah chapter 7 and verse 24: "But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward." They walked in the imagination of their evil heart. Jeremiah 9 verse 14: "But have walked after the imagination of their own hearts and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them." And Jeremiah 11 and verse 8: "Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked everyone in the imagination of their evil heart."

"Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant which I commanded them to do, but they did them not." Now, why am I emphasizing the imagination? I told you that idolatry also

consists in wrong thinking. Do you realize that an aspect of our salvation, in fact I would say our salvation, greatly involves our mind. You would be amazed to go through not only the Old Testament but the New Testament and see how many verses there are dealing with the mind. Did you realize that the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4 that the unconverted are enemies and they're alienated from God through their own minds. In Colossians chapter 1, I believe it's verse 21, he talks about men who are enemies in their minds. What do you do with all those verses where God says, "Be renewed in your mind"? "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Why am I emphasizing this? Turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 10. Here's what I'm showing you. 2 Corinthians chapter 10. And let's begin reading there with verse 4. 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 4. The Apostle Paul writes, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Now watch. Let me just stop there. The Apostle Paul is using a military illustration for the weapons of our warfare, not carnal. Now, Paul is not putting down weaponry. He's not saying don't own a weapon. That's totally ridiculous. What the Apostle Paul is saying in this context is carnal weapons are insufficient for this particular battle, and this particular war that we're engaging in. He says, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." What is a stronghold? It's a military term. It's a place of defense. For instance, if someone came through those doors shooting a .357 Magnum, I'm going to jump behind this pulpit if I can. If not, I'm going to dive behind Ed. Let Ed get shot first. No, I'm teasing. But you see, whatever I dive behind, that's my stronghold. That's my place of defense. Now watch what he says. Look at verse 4. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Here are our strongholds. Watch this. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing or every high thought that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Now my question is this, how many thoughts are you and I to have that are unbiblical? None. We're required to bring every thought into captivity to Christ.

Idolatry as Forsaking God's Law

Now, if you are thinking unbiblically on the subject of marriage, or money, or education, if you're thinking unbiblically about discipline, guess what? To the degree that you think unbiblically, to that degree, you are an idolater. Because Christ requires that every thought be brought into obedience to Him. And when we imagine God to be what He is not, we're guilty of idolatry. When we think that God is what He is not, we're guilty of idolatry. In other words, our thoughts of God, our thoughts of Christ, our thoughts of truth, our thoughts of sin, our thoughts of anything should be biblical. And that includes when you pray trying to conjure up in your mind some mental image of Christ. That's idolatry. You don't need a mental image of Christ when you pray. It's sufficient that He is our way, He is our access unto God the Father. And when we try to imagine in our mind what God is like, rather than accept what Scripture says, and when we try to imagine in our mind what Christ is like, rather than bowing to the Word of God, we are idolaters. Every thought is to be biblical. We are not to walk, everyone, after the imagination of our hearts. God's Word is truth, not what we think, and not what we imagine, unless what we are thinking and imagining is biblical. One last thought, and I want you to see this, that idolatry also consists in forsaking God's law. Now, dear friend, I got news for you. If there was one point that condemned this nation as an idolatrous nation, that would be this point as well. Idolatry consists in forsaking God's law. God rules by his law. When one forsakes God's law, he at the same time forsakes God himself. I want you to go back in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy chapter 31. Deuteronomy chapter 31. And note if you would please beginning there with verse 16. Deuteronomy 31 verse 16. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and this people will rise up and go whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me and break my covenant which I made with them." Now, how do we know that the children of Israel forsook God? Because they broke his covenant, they forsook his law. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 28 and verse 20. Deuteronomy 28 and verse 20. Here's part of the curse, he says, "The Lord shall send upon thee cursing and vexation and rebuke in all that thou settest thine hand unto to do, until thou be destroyed, until thou perish quickly because of the

wickedness of thy doings whereby thou hast forsaken me." You cannot forsake God's law without at the same time forsaking God. God and his law are one. And God rules by his law. There's an interesting passage.

In 1 Kings 18:18, Elijah answers King Ahab: "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." When Ahab asked, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Elijah replied, "It's not me, you dirty reprobate; it's you and your house, because you have forsaken the Lord and serve Baalim." In other words, you have turned from God and his law to a false God. One last passage: Jeremiah 5, beginning at verse 11. God says, "For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord. They have belied the Lord," that is, they've lied against him, "and said, It is not he."

"Neither shall evil come upon us, neither shall we see sword or 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 you 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 afar, O house of Israel, saith the Lord, it is a mighty nation, an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. Their quiver is an open sepulcher, they are all mighty men." Why is God bringing judgment upon Judah and Israel? The answer is simple: they forsook God's law. Why did they forsake God's law? Because they forsook God. Anytime an individual forsakes the law of God, it is because he has forsaken God. In our country today, we are in desperate straits because we have forsaken God. I got some encouragement this morning: Indiana has passed a state law allowing the Ten Commandments to be posted in courthouses, and yesterday in Orange County hundreds of people turned out for a ceremony where they posted the Ten Commandments, sang "God Bless America," prayed, and preached. Judge Roy Moore is still standing in Alabama, still has the Ten Commandments posted in his courthouse, and says he is not taking them down. Just because a man does not bow down to an idol does

not mean he is not an idolater. Of all the sins the psalmist confesses in Psalm 106, we are still guilty of those same sins today.

Conclusion: Unchanging Human Nature and God's Mercy

Human nature has not changed; depravity is still the same. But one other blessed truth: God hasn't changed either. He's still the same God, still merciful and gracious, and He still commands that we turn from our sins and obey Him. Let's pray. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ today for Your blessing and help. Turn us from idolatry. While we are not gross idolaters bowing down to a stock, stone, or image, many times we foolishly and ignorantly try to use things as a help to get to Thee when the only individual we need is Jesus Christ. Many times we covet and lust, which are wicked, wrong, and idolatry as well. We must confess that so many times we think wrongly, not biblically and scripturally. And there are times we have forsaken thy law, disobeyed thee when we have known better. That's nothing short of idolatry. We ask forgiveness, repentance, and Your help to bring us back to thyself. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask it. Amen and Amen.

CHAPTER 10

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part Ten of 16

Introduction and Context

So if you'll open your Bibles to Psalm 106, I told you we'd get back to that Psalm, Psalm 106. And today we're going to be picking up, beginning there with verse 24, and read through verse 27. Now, let me just go ahead before I even read the Scripture and tell you that the message today will be incomplete. I have three points to this message, and I'm only going to be able to cover one today.

And I do ask that you listen carefully. And then before I re-preach the next two points, I'll take a moment and review. But there was no way that I could get all three points in today. So I'm just going to simply deal with one point. But look in Psalm 106, beginning with verse 24. Scripture says, "Yea, they despised the pleasant land. They believed not his word."

"But murmured in their tents and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord. Therefore, he lifted up his hand against them to overthrow

them in the wilderness, to overthrow their seed also among the nations and to scatter them in the lands."

Now, we've been dealing with the hallelujah of confession. You remember, I told you this is the first song that deals with hallelujah. "Praise ye the Lord" has that at the very beginning of it, and then the whole song deals with confession. Very quickly, I told you in time past, the first five verses give us four reasons why the psalmist invites us to praise the Lord. Verse six is a general confession and acknowledgement: "We've sinned with our fathers," and I gave you five ways in which we've sinned with our fathers. And then beginning with verse seven, he began to specifically confess and acknowledge sins. And in verse seven, you had ignorance and ingratitude, which led down to verse 13 to faith, forgetfulness, and impatience, which led down to verse 16, envy and insurrection. And then in verse 19, idolatry and insolence.

And that brings us today to verse 24, which actually there are three things, and I'll give them to you. You have despisement in verse 24, "Yea, they despised the pleasant land." You have disbelief in verse 24, "They believed not His word." And then disobedience in verse 25, "And hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord." So we're going to just cover despisement today.

The entire point of this series is to demonstrate that the sins of the fathers are still with us today. We may not commit the sins in exactly the same way that they committed them, but the truth is that we still commit the same sins in principle. If we commit the same sins in principle as they did in the Old Testament, then undoubtedly the judgments and the curses are still the same as well. However God rewarded these sins in the Old Testament is, in all probability, the same way that He will reward those same sins in our day and time. This study should conclusively demonstrate that we do indeed commit the same sins in principle.

Historical Background: Numbers 13–14

The historical context of Psalm 106:24 is Numbers 13 and 14. Verse 24 says, “Yea, they despised the pleasant land.” In Numbers 13 we begin to see how this despisement, disbelief, and disobedience took

place. Moses had sent out the twelve spies. They searched the land and returned. The Bible says in verse 21:

"So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath. And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were."

Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. The spies came to the brook of Eshcol and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, bearing it between two upon a staff. That must have been some cluster of grapes. They took two men to carry it. They also brought pomegranates and figs. The place was called the brook Eshcol because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

They returned from searching the land after forty days and came to Moses, Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh. They brought back word, showed them the fruit of the land, and said, "We came into the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it."

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 13:28-33; Numbers 14:1-3 (KJV)

"Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great, and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south, and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites dwell in the mountains, and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and by the coast of Jordan."

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it." But the men that went up with him said, "We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, "The land through which we have gone to search it is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which

> come of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."
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> And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, and the whole congregation said unto them, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" And they said one to another, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, "The land through which we pass to search it is an exceedingly 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. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us, fear them not." But all the congregation bade stone them with stones, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me for all the signs which I have shown among them?"

Definition of Despisement

Psalm 106:24 says, "Yea, they despised the pleasant land."

What is involved in despisement? In actuality, what they were doing was simply this: they were despising God's gracious provision. If you despise the provision, it means that you also despise the provider. To despise the promise is also to despise the promisor. The Hebrew word here is "ma'as," and it literally means to spurn, to condemn, to despise, to disdain, to loathe, to treat as utterly vile and

contemptuous. So actually what they were doing was treating God's gracious provision as something vile and contemptuous.

Numbers 14:22 says, "Because all those men," that is, those that came out of Egypt, "which have seen my glory and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times and have not hearkened to my voice." God did ten great wonders and signs in Egypt. Ten times the people failed to hearken to God, and they ended up despising His gracious provision. So the tenfold temptations or provocations of God by the Israelites are set over against the tenfold wonders that He did in the land of Egypt.

Now, I want you to turn to Deuteronomy 32 because I want you to see this question in light of what I'm about to share with you. Look in Deuteronomy 32, verse 6. So in light then of the wicked responses of the Israelites to God's gracious provision, God's gracious protection, I want you to look at the question God asked. Deuteronomy 32, and note if you would please, verse 6.

"Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?" Now listen to that. "Do ye thus requite the Lord?" Remember what the word requite means? It means to pay back.

Now what is God saying? God is saying, look at everything that I've done for you. Look at all my promises. Look at my protection. Look at my provision. Look at my presence. You look at everything that I've done for you. And what do you repay me with? Despisement. Disobedience. Disbelief.

Now let me ask a question to make this very personal. How do we repay God? How do we requite God? It was God's mercies that allowed you to awaken this morning. It's God's mercies that feed you, that sustain you, that give you air to breathe. How do you repay God for everything that God has done for you? Thus, what these Israelites did, basically, they treated God contemptuously by despising His gracious promise and provision.

Now, the Bible says, in verse 24 of Psalm 106, that they despised the pleasant land. The same word "pleasant" in 2 Chronicles 36 and verse 10 is called "goodly." That is, they despised the goodly land, or they despised the land of desire.

Now I want you to look at two passages. The first one is Numbers 13 and verse 27. One of you don't have to turn there. We've already looked at that. I'll just put it for you. Remember how Caleb and Joshua described the land? It was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Now, if you look in Deuteronomy chapter 8, Deuteronomy 8, and let's begin reading in verse 7. Look what God says. Deuteronomy 8, verse 7. "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water and fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills. Wait a minute. For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks, and fountains, and depths, that spring out of the valleys and hills, a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of oil olive, and honey, a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass."

Looking at Circumstances Rather Than Christ

Does that sound like a land that should be despised, rejected, and treated contemptuously? And yet the truth is, the Bible says they despised the pleasant land. You must ask yourself these questions: Why did they despise the pleasant land? How did they despise that land? What made them despise that land? The answer is extremely simple. They despised it in the same way that we despise; or, we could make that vice versa: We despise in the same way that they despised.

First Way: Looking at Circumstances Rather than Christ

These are a few of the ways that they despised this pleasant land. Numbers chapter 13 shows how and why. The spies had come back. Only two, Joshua and Caleb, had given an honest report; the other ten gave an ill report. In verse 28, they said, “Nevertheless, the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great. And moreover, we saw the children of Anak there.”

Here is the first way in which the children of Israel despised the land: They were looking at circumstances rather than Christ. They were looking at walled cities, fortified cities, the sons of the

giants—strong, powerful people. They were looking at the circumstances rather than Christ.

Before someone objects, “But, Pastor, Christ was not born in the Old Testament,” remember that there are, first of all, numerous Christophanies in the Old Testament. What is a Christophany? A Christophany is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. That is, Christ actually appeared in bodily form in the Old Testament before He was ever born. First Corinthians chapter 10 reminds us that they got water out of that rock, and the Bible says that rock followed them; “that rock was Christ.” Christ was in the Old Testament, in numerous places and in numerous ways.

What the people were doing was simply this: they were looking at the circumstances rather than Christ. It is true that their enemies were multitudinous. It is true that their enemies were strong. It is true that they had fortified cities. But so what? Is not Christ sufficient? Is not Jesus Christ omnipotent? Are there any that can overthrow or defeat Jesus Christ? And the answer is no.

Circumstances never make or break a man; they just reveal him. Someone says, “Well, man, that battle sure made a hero out of him.” No, he was a hero already. The battle just revealed him. “Well, the battle sure made a coward out of him.” No, he was a coward already. The battle just revealed him. We would not know what we were if we did not go through the fire. Only gold and silver remain when you put them in the furnace. All the trash is burned up.

But just as this is true individually, it is also true nationally. Circumstances never make or break a nation or a people; they just reveal that nation or that people. Look in Numbers chapter 13, verse 30, at the difference between Caleb and the other spies. “And Caleb stilled the people before Moses and said, Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it.” What does Caleb say? Let’s go up and take it. It’s ours. We’re well able to overcome it.

But verse 31 says, “But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we.” We can’t fight them. We can’t quit them. They’re bigger. They’re stronger. They’re more powerful. They have more resources.

Here's Caleb and Joshua again in Numbers 14, verse 7: "And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we pass 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. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us."

"And their defense is departed from them." What was Joshua and Caleb's position? They did not stand back and say, "Look at all those walls. Look at how strong those people are. Look how multitudinous they are. Look at all their resources." They said, "Man, look at all we're going to have to eat when we conquer them. We're going to destroy them. They're bread for us." Do you see the difference between Joshua and Caleb and the other spies? Joshua and Caleb were looking at Christ, while the others were looking at circumstances.

This is why so many of us are easily discouraged, quickly depressed, and readily defeated: we look at the circumstances rather than Jesus Christ. We look at our enemy's resources, strengths, and multitudes and say, "How can we? It's humanly impossible." Instead, we should look back and say, "What a sovereign, powerful, omnipotent, great and holy and just and righteous God we have. Our God can give us the victory. Our God can defeat our enemies." Instead of dwelling on the greatness, sovereignty, and power of our God, we dwell on the power of the enemy. No wonder we're so easily defeated.

Psalm 115 and verse 3 says, "But our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." God, and God alone, is sovereign. He alone is in absolute and total control. Psalm 2 asks, "Why do the heathen rage?" The kings of the earth and the rulers have gathered together against our Lord. They say, "Let us break his bands from us. Let us cast them from us." They are in rebellion against God. But scripture says in verse four, "But God who sits in heaven shall laugh. Our God shall have them in derision."

Which is more encouraging: to dwell on the strength of our enemies or the power of our God? Do we look at circumstances, or do we look at Christ? If we are absolutely honest, we must confess

that we are usually creatures of circumstances. You can ask the average Christian, “Well, how are you doing?” and hear, “Well, all right under the circumstances.” Then the question comes back, “Well, what are you doing under the circumstances?” You ought to be over them in Christ, because Christ has given us victory in every area.

What do we do? We look at our poverty instead of His wealth, our weaknesses instead of His strength, and even our children’s sins and rebellions more than we look at His power to save, change, convict, and convert. We look at the complications and complexities of our problems more than we look at His wisdom and truth. The very first reason these people despise is because they were looking at circumstances instead of Christ.

May I remind you of something? When you spend more time considering the circumstances than the greatness, power, wisdom, and truth of Jesus Christ, you are despising Jesus Christ. Why? Because the Bible says in Colossians 1:18 that in all things He must have the preeminence. Does that mean we ignore our problems? Of course not. Does it mean we do not think of our problems? Of course not. But it does mean we think that Jesus Christ is the answer, and that His power, mercy, and grace are sufficient to work every one of our problems out.

I never will forget a pastor friend telling me years ago that he was going through a time when he was extremely depressed. He said he was driving down the road when he looked ahead and saw a huge oak tree beside the road. The thought entered his mind, “Why don’t you just run into that oak tree and end it?”

Looking at the Multitudes Instead of Mercy

A man once said, “I did something very foolish. I seriously began to consider that.” As he drew closer to an oak tree, he noticed a sign nailed to it, though he could not tell what it said. When he reached the tree and had to determine whether to veer into it or go straight, the sign became exceedingly clear. Someone had nailed a metal sign to the oak tree that simply said, “Christ is the answer.” And that is a fact. He is the answer to all our problems. We need to look at Christ more than we look at the circumstances.

Let us give Him the preeminence. Now go back to Numbers chapter 13 and look at verse 29. Here is the second way in which they despise the land. Verse 29 tells us, "The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south, and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains, and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and by the coast of Jordan." How is it that they despise the land?

Second Way: Looking at Multitudes Rather than Mercy

Secondly, here it is: looking at the multitudes instead of mercy. The Amalekites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites were all enemies of God and enemies of God's people. Here they were together in one huge confederation, so to speak, against God and against the people of God. Have you ever considered such powerful combined forces?

Seemingly, this little band of Israelites could not possibly have prevailed against such a multitude. But you and I both know that they ultimately did, only through the mercy of God. It is God, in His mercy, that gives us victory over our enemies. In fact, the psalmist said, "Through thy mercy, cut off mine enemies."

Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 7. Begin reading with verse 17: "If thou shalt say in thine heart, 'These nations are more than I. How can I dispossess them?' Thou shalt not be afraid of them. But thou shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and all of Egypt, the great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm whereby thy Lord thy God brought thee out. So shalt the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid." What is He saying?

Do not let a multitude excite you. Do not let their strength and power disturb you. Remember what God has done for you, and remember that God is just as capable of wiping out present and future enemies as He has been of wiping out past enemies.

Deuteronomy 20:1 says, "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies and seest horses and chariots and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them, for the Lord thy God is with thee, which

brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Verse 3 says, "And shall say to thee, 'Hear, O Israel, you approach this day into battle against your enemies. Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them.'" Isn't that interesting? God is telling us that we are not to be afraid. We will deal with that a little bit more later.

When you see a multitude, you are not to be afraid. In 1 Kings 20:13, concerning King Ahab and the Syrians, a prophet said, "And behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab, king of Israel, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude?' Behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." There were a lot of Syrians. God says, "You see all these people? It does not matter. Of My mercy, I will deliver them into your hand today."

Verse 28 says, "And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, 'Thus saith the Lord, because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not the God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.'" Multitudes mean nothing to God.

Second Chronicles, chapter 20, is such a powerful passage. Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David, and Jehoram, his son, reigned in his stead. He had brethren, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah and Jehiel, Zechariah and Azariah, Michael and Shephatiah. All these were the sons of Jehoshaphat, king of Israel. Their father gave them great gifts of silver. That is not the passage I wanted.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 20:1-12 (KJV)

> It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazontamar, which is Engedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the

> cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.

"Lord, Lord, we have a great multitude coming against us. We do not know what to do. We do not know where to turn.

"And all Judah stood before the Lord with their little ones and their wives and their children. Then upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation. And he said, 'Hearken ye, all Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou King Jehoshaphat. Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid, nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's.'

"'Tomorrow go ye down against them. Behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz. And ye shall find them at the end of the brook before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight this battle. Set yourselves, stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Fear not, nor be dismayed. Tomorrow go

out against them, for the Lord will be with you.' And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshiping the Lord.

Here is the great multitude that has come out against Jehoshaphat. What does God tell him? Do not be afraid. I am going to take care of it. In fact, you will not even need to fight. God caused the enemies to turn on each other, and when the children of Judah arrived, all they did was go down and pick up the spoil. It took them seven days to pick it all up. What were they doing?

They were fearing multitudes in Numbers 13 and 14. It is the trusting in God's mercy. In 2 Chronicles 32:1, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came and entered into Judah and encamped against the fenced cities, for he thought to win them for himself. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, he took counsel with his princes and with his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains that were without the city, and so they did help him. Hezekiah strengthened himself, built up all the wall that was broken, raised up the towers and another wall without, repaired Millo and the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.

"And he set captains of war over the people, and he gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city and spake comfortably to them, saying, 'Be strong and courageous. Be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him. For there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh.' 'But with us is the Lord our God to help us to fight our battles.' And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, King of Judah."

When Sennacherib came around to Jerusalem, did Hezekiah sit back and do nothing? No. He repaired the walls, built another wall, and got swords, shields, and darts in abundance. But then he said, "Look, folks, we're not depending upon our fortifications nor our armament. We're depending solely upon the mercy of God. It is God that must make it effectual. It is God that must use it. Our trust is in His mercy and not in our arms."

Of course, you know the story of what God did. God sent an angel, and in one night, with one stroke of the sword, He killed 185,000 Assyrians. So it is the mercy of God that cuts off our enemies. No matter how great, multitudinous, or powerful they are, to look at man and his strength more than God and His omnipotence is to despise God.

The Bible says in Proverbs 29 and verse 25, "The fear of man bringeth a snare. But whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall dwell safely." You remember Matthew chapter 10? Our Lord said, "You want to know who to fear? I'll tell you who to fear. Don't fear him who can destroy the body. But you fear him whom after he has destroyed the body is able to cast you into hell." The proper person to fear is God Himself, not man.

Third Way: Listening to Wickedness Instead of the Word

So far we've seen two ways in which they despise the land: looking at circumstances rather than Christ, and looking at multitudes rather than mercy. Here's the third way, in verse 32: listening to wickedness instead of the word. "And they," that is, the ten spies, "brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, 'The land through which we have gone to search it is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature.'" What were these spies doing? The truth is, they were lying.

It was a wicked lie told by wicked men and believed by a wicked multitude. I find it absolutely amazing that people will believe a lie more easily, readily, and quickly than they will believe the truth. Isn't that astonishing? You can tell a lie and people will believe it; you can tell the truth and they will think you are lying.

Here they were on the verge of entering the promised land. They had already been told that God had promised them a land full of milk and honey. They had promise after promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moreover, they had seen all the miracles, signs, and wonders God had done. God had them right on the border, and they believed a lie rather than the truth.

You know what the Bible says in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 23? "He brought us out, that he might bring us in." God did not bring them out of Egypt to drop them in the desert. He brought them out to bring them in to Canaan land, in to the promise. The truth of the matter is this: the people chose to believe a lie rather than the truth. This is absolutely an amazing thing to me.

You look at the faithless men who are preachers, liars, and perverts, who do not preach and teach the Word of God, and they have thousands in attendance every Sunday and more money than they can shake a stick at. Yet you get some faithful man who will preach the Word, and there is one little group that will believe the truth. I like what our Lord said: "Fear not, little flock. It's the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Why is it that such a handful will congregate around truth? Because the multitude had rather believe a lie. One way they despise the land is by believing the wickedness of these wicked spies, who lied against God, rather than believing the Word of God Himself. I do not know about you, but I would much rather believe God than man. You will get in quick trouble with God when you believe man over God. When you do that, you are in actuality calling God a liar. Wicked. So they listened to wickedness instead of the Word.

Fear Rather Than Faith

Fourth Way: Looking Through Fear Rather than Faith

Fourthly, in Numbers chapter 13, verse 33, we see the fourth way in which they despised the land: they were looking through the eyes of fear rather than the eyes of faith. “And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants. And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers. So we were in their sight.”

If you do not memorize any other verse this week or this year, please memorize 2 Timothy 1:7: “For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and a sound mind.” God has not given us a spirit of fear. The world may give you fear. The devil may give you fear. The flesh may give you fear. Your enemies may give you fear. But God does not. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Now watch this. In Numbers 13:33, they said, “And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers. So we were in their sight.” Fear not only diminishes our own strength and abilities in our eyes—we are grasshoppers in our eyes—but fear also magnifies the enemy’s strengths and abilities in our eyes: “And so we were in their sight.” How did they know they were as grasshoppers in their enemy’s sight? Did they ask them? Of course not. Their fear was magnifying their enemy’s power and ability. They did not have that power; they did not have that ability. But their fear was magnifying it.

Now look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 8, verse 26. Christ was asleep in the boat during a great tempest. The disciples cried out, “Awaken, save us or we perish.” Matthew 8:25 says, “And the disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, ‘Lord, save us, we perish.’”

"And he saith unto them, 'Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?'" Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? What is He teaching us? If you are fearful, you are not exercising faith. If you are exercising faith, you are not fearful. Faith and fear are mutually exclusive. You cannot walk by faith and walk in fear at the same time. You cannot walk in fear and walk in faith at the same time. You are either fearful or exercising faith. One cannot have faith in God and fear of his enemies at the same time. Fears always dissipate and disappear before faith.

The Bible says in 1 John 5 and verse 4, "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." How do we get victory over the world, the world system? By faith.

And the children of Israel failed. They despised the pleasant land because they were looking through the eyes of fear rather than the eyes of faith. When we hold on to our fears, we are despising God, because faith expels fear.

Application: Despising God's Provision Today

Now, let me make some applications. Go back in your Bibles to the book of Numbers, chapter 14. I want to review the first four verses. Watch carefully: "And all the congregation lifted up their voice and

cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, and the whole congregation said unto them, 'Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would God that we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?' And they said one to another, 'Let us make us a captain, and let us return into Egypt.'"

One of the greatest insults and clearest evidences of despisement is manifested in these verses. The people did not believe the land was worth fighting for. They saw giants and fortified cities and said, "Wouldn't it be better for us to die in Egypt? Wouldn't it be better for us to die in this wilderness?" They proposed making a captain and returning to Egypt. What were they saying? What God had given them was not worth fighting for, nor worth hazarding their lives to possess. What an insult—what a despising of God's gracious provision. To add insult to injury, they were saying that Egypt, in all of its sin and slavery, was better than freedom and God's provision.

Do we not do the same thing today? We do not think God's truth is worth fighting for, and we do not fight for it. Failure to act upon God's Word is, in reality, a despising of God's Word. When you know the truth and refuse to obey and perform it, you are despising God and His truth.

What does James 4:17 say? "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." But it is more than sin; it is a despising of God and His Word. Thus the Scripture says these Israelites despised the pleasant land. They looked at circumstances rather than Christ, at multitudes rather than mercy, and listened to wickedness rather than the Word. They looked through the eyes of fear rather than the eyes of faith, and ended up despising God's gracious provision and the Provider of that provision.

We must act upon God's Word and God's truth, making sure that in every area of our life we give Him the preeminence.

Father, help us today. Teach us. Build us up in the most holy faith. Each of us has sinned against Thee so many times, looking at our circumstances rather than Christ, at the multitude rather than Your

mercy, and listening to wickedness rather than Your Word. We have certainly looked through the eyes of fear rather than the eyes of faith.

But Lord, we ask for repentance, help, and strength to do that which is right, and to trust Thee for the results, knowing Thou art too loving to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake. And we give lives into Your hand and trust Thee explicitly through our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part 11 of 16

Introduction and Review

We are dealing with the topic, the Hallelujah Confession, expositionally, and today we come to verse 24 through 27. This is actually message number 11. Psalm 106:24–27 says: "Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: to overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands."

The word hallelujah, of course, means "praise the Lord." This is the first song that introduces itself with "praise ye the Lord," or hallelujah, and the song deals with confession of sin. The first five verses give us four reasons why the psalmist invites us to praise the Lord. Verse six gives a general confession: "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." We have sinned in our fathers seminally, imputatively, representatively,

nationally, and actually. We have sinned in them in each of these ways.

When you come to verse seven, you have the first two specific sins: ignorance and ingratitude. Skipping down to verse thirteen, you have the next two specific sins, unfaithfulness and impatience. Then, in verse sixteen, the next two specific sins are envy and insurrection. In verse nineteen, the next two are idolatry and insolence.

Last week, we began with verse twenty-four: “Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word.” I dealt only with the phrase, “Yea, they despised the pleasant land.” The whole point of this series is to demonstrate that the sins of the fathers are still with us today. We sin in principle in exactly the same way that our fathers have sinned. The circumstances may have changed. The situation may have changed, but the principles certainly have not.

The word “despised” literally means to spurn, to treat contemptuously, to loathe, or to absolutely hate. God asked the people in Deuteronomy 32:6, “Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?” In other words, everything that God had done for them, they then turned around and literally despised him.

Four Ways We Despise God's Provision

Last time we met, I gave you four ways in which we despise God and His gracious provision. The first way, going back to Numbers 13, was looking at circumstances instead of Christ. We took the historical account of Psalm 106, verses 24 through 27, whose historical setting was Numbers 13 and 14. There the spies saw the Amalekites, the giants, and the walled cities. Scripture teaches that Christ was indeed in the Old Testament. First Corinthians 10 says that the Rock that followed them was Christ.

Secondly, they despised God by looking at the multitudes instead of God's mercy. Numbers 13, verse 39. They began to name the Amorites, the Jebusites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and all these multitudes that were against them. Over and over in Scripture, God says that we are not to fear the multitudes or the greatness of the

enemy. The Word of God says in Proverbs 29 and verse 25, "The fear of man bringeth a snare."

The third way they despised God was by listening to wickedness instead of the Word. What did the people do? They listened to the evil report of the wicked spies rather than the Word of God. Lastly, we look through the eyes of fear instead of through the eyes of faith. The people finally said, "Are not the children or the sons of Anak? Are they not the giants?" They were desperately afraid. Scripture says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Here is despisement, and these are exactly four ways that we despise God. Now let us begin today with verse 24 and take up the second point: "Yea, they despised the pleasant land. They believed not his word." The second sin mentioned here is disbelief. Thus, there is despisement and disbelief. However, there is a third sin mentioned in verse 25: "But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not to the voice of the Lord." To hearken not means that they were disobedient. So we have despisement, disbelief, and disobedience. Despisement always leads to disbelief and disobedience.

The Sin of Disbelief

When you are guilty of one of these three sins, eventually and inevitably, you will be guilty of all three, because they stand or fall together. He who despises God will certainly disbelieve God, and he who disbelieves God will certainly disobey God. So let us go back to verse 24 and take this second point: “Yea, they despised the pleasant land. They believed not his word.”

The historical account of this passage in Psalm 106 is found in Numbers chapter 14. Beginning with verse 20, the Word of God says: “And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened unto my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: but my servant Caleb, because

he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

"Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley. Tomorrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: your carcases shall fall in this wilderness."

God declared concerning those who had murmured against Him: "And all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise."

"I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die. And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord."

Here was the historical account of how the people despised and disbelieved God. In Deuteronomy 1:29–32, Moses recalls it: "Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; and in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man

doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God." What is God saying? I brought you out; I did everything that I said I was going to do. Yet in this thing, in this instance, you did not believe the Lord your God.

Over and over, Scripture records that here were a people of no faith. Psalm 78:22 says, "Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation."

And then one last passage: Hebrews chapter 3, because even the New Testament writes concerning this ungodly act of the children of Israel. In Hebrews chapter 3, beginning with verse 18, we read: "And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" Then, in chapter 4 and verse 2: "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. In other words, once again, here is a way of saying they did not believe.

Now, I want you to try to picture this. God has sovereignly, powerfully, and providentially brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. They have seen their enemies destroyed. They have seen the Red Sea open. They have seen His marvelous provision. They have already fought Sihon and Og, defeated them totally, and conquered all their lands. And here they are now in sight of what God promised them. Look at that: they would not believe.

It is difficult at times to walk by faith because we are creatures of sight. It is difficult to walk by faith, but in this particular instance, these people were not even walking by faith; they were walking by sight. The promise was there in front of them. They saw its fruition, and yet they did not believe. When people see the plain fulfillment of God's Word and the clear evidence of His promise and still refuse to believe, it demonstrates the wickedness and depravity of the human heart.

They had seen the fruits of Canaan. They had heard the reports of the faithful spies. They had the promises of God, including the promises He had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In light of all this, they still refused to believe. Instead, they preferred to believe

the lies, the untruths, and the misrepresentations given them by the unfaithful spies.

Applications of Unbelief

Applications of Disbelief

Scripture says they disbelieved. They did not believe God. What applications can we make for our lives in this day and time? To disbelieve that God is true and that God cannot lie is to make God a liar. It is extremely dishonoring and is a provocation unto God.

Scripture says that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie. One of the immutable—that is, unalterable, unchangeable—truths is that it is impossible for God to lie. Scripture calls God a God of truth and without iniquity. But when we disbelieve God and choose to believe sight, feelings, or the reports of others, in actuality we are saying that God is untrue, that God is a liar.

Revelation 21:8 describes those individuals who will perish in the lake of fire and brimstone: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." What about this phrase, "and all liars"?

It is true that lying is a sin if you owe someone the truth. But when the Bible says, "and all liars," I believe the context primarily refers to those who make God a liar. God says, You are the liar, for you are lying against me. You refuse to believe me. You refuse to believe my word. Therefore, you shall be punished for your brashness and your wickedness in making me a liar.

To disbelieve God is to say that he is not a God of truth. It is in essence to call God a liar. It is indeed a serious sin and a dishonoring provocation to God when we refuse to believe the word of God.

The Wickedness of the Flesh

The second application is this: I want you to see the exceeding wickedness of the flesh and understand something about its evil

nature. The flesh will allow you to see the fruits of victory, but it will stop you from gaining the victory. What did they bring back? They brought back the fruits of Canaan—grapes so large, delicious, and heavy that two men had to carry them on a pole. The two faithful spies gave a good report: “It’s the land that flows with milk and honey.” There were other fruits there. The flesh allowed those people to see the fruits. They had them within their grasp. They were there, but the flesh stopped them from getting the victory: “We’re not going to fight for it. We’re not going to work for it. It’s too much trouble.” That is exactly what our flesh does.

Some of us lie awake at night and dream of losing twenty pounds. We determine to lose twenty pounds until ice cream and cake are put in front of us. Then suddenly our dream is shattered because our flesh likes the ice cream too much. Do you follow what I’m saying? That’s flesh.

If I were to say, “All right, men, we’re going to get up at four o’clock tomorrow morning and go on a deep-sea fishing trip because Tom knows where we can load the boat down, but we have to leave at four in order to get there and catch the fish,” I guarantee that every man who likes to fish, would like to catch fish, or would like to go fishing would be up and ready at four o’clock. In fact, you would probably wake up at one, two, or three because you would be so excited you could not sleep. But if I say, “All right, men, we’re going to meet here at four o’clock and pray until six,” isn’t it strange that you just cannot seem to get up?

Your flesh will cooperate with you as long as what you are doing is not holy, spiritual, and right. This is a truth we need pounded into our minds. Look in Romans, chapter 8, beginning with verse 6.

God says, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." The carnal mind is enmity against God: "for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Enmity is a strong word for hatred. Because the fleshly mind is hatred against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Man by nature, in and of himself, cannot do one thing to please God. When God saves you, the principle of your flesh does not

change. It is true that you are a new man, and it is true that now you are to have power over your flesh through the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. But the evil principle is still there, in one sense of the word—that is, in the flesh.

That is why Romans 13:14 says, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts.

What is true in the physical realm is true in the spiritual realm. If I want to lose weight, my wife better not bring home donuts and ice cream from the store. Just as surely as she sets them in front of me, inevitably I am going to sneak—well, I am going to just take one. And what is just taking one going to do? It is going to lead to a second, a third, and so on. When you say, "I'm going to sin just a little. I'm going to satisfy my flesh just a little," it always leads to more and more and more.

That is why God says, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Colossians 3:5 says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." What does mortify mean? Kill or make dead. That is where we get the word mortician from; he works with dead folks. Literally, God is saying that these fleshly desires are to be killed. You say, "Well, how in the world are they to be killed?"

Galatians 5:16-17 says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

If you really want to subdue your flesh, learn to walk in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit means that you obey the Word of God. As great as the Apostle Paul was, he still had troubles. What did he say in 1 Corinthians? "I die daily." I wish that I could die once and for all to my flesh and it would be over with. But the truth of the matter is, I have to mortify and I have to die daily, sometimes hourly, sometimes

for a few minutes, if I am going to walk in the Spirit and have victory in that sense of the word.

Our flesh is always willing to let us see the fruits of victory, but it will stop us from getting the true victory if we give in to it. It should be exceedingly evident by now that men will not believe except by the supernatural work of grace. No amount of evidence is going to make a man believe.

If evidence was going to make somebody believe and have faith in God, what should the destruction of Pharaoh and his army have done? What should the parting of the Red Sea have done? What should the defeat of Sihon and Og have done? What should the gracious provision of God have done? They had evidence aplenty. When you try to convert someone by convincing them by a preponderance of evidence that Christianity is true, you are wasting your time. Christianity is true, but people are not converted by evidence; they are converted by the grace of God.

What does Ephesians 2:8-9 say? "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." It is not evidence that converts people, but grace. Consider Luke 16 and the story our Lord told about the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man died and went to hell.

The rich man lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. He said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” The rich man went to hell, and Lazarus went into Abraham’s bosom. But Abraham said, “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”

“Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” The rich man then asked that Lazarus be sent to his father’s house to testify to his five brothers, lest they also come into that place of torment. Abraham answered, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” They had the Word of God; the Word of God was being preached.

When the rich man replied that if one went to them from the dead they would repent, Abraham answered, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and look how many still disbelieve.

It is not evidence that people need. It is grace and mercy.

Fourthly, understand the propensity of natural men, of unsaved men, to believe anything and anyone over and above the Word of God. Here were two faithful spies and ten unfaithful spies. The multitudes had the Word of God, the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the report of the two faithful spies. In light of all the evidence, they chose to believe the lies of men more than the Word of God.

If I am preaching the Word of God here, and next door there is a noted atheist giving a lecture, men will believe him far quicker than they will believe me, because of the evilness and wickedness of their hearts. People do not want to acknowledge God. Why? To acknowledge God means that you must acknowledge that you are a sinner, that you are responsible, that you are accountable, and that you will be judged. Who wants to be judged? Who wants to be condemned? So humans would rather deny God and believe a lie rather than the truth of God. Thus God says they despised Him, and their despisement was followed by disbelief.

The Sin of Disobedience

Go back to Psalm 106 and look at verse 25, because here is the third sin mentioned: disobedience. It says, "But they murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord."

It should be evident by now that anyone who despises God and disbelieves God will take the next step into disobedience. Despisement, disbelief, and disobedience are sins in and of themselves. Why? First John 3:23 says, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." This is His commandment. When people disbelieve, they are automatically sinning and despising, and disobedience is the next step.

Look again at verse 25. Here is a very important word: "...but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord." One of our problems today is that when we hear a word, we put a modern-day interpretation upon it. If I were to say, "Hark," or, "Did you hearken to that call?" you would think I was asking, "Did you hear me?"

But the word hearken means far more than the audible reception of vibrations that go forth from my mouth. The word hearken is the word shema. It literally means to hear intelligently, to obey, to be obedient.

Go back in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 15. This is the classic passage, and everyone should know the story. God sends King Saul on a mission to kill all the Amalekites: men, women, boys, girls, children, suckling, ox, and ass. God said to kill everything. But Saul and the people spared Agag the king, the best of the sheep, and the best of the oxen, refusing to utterly destroy them, while destroying everything vile and refuse. Then Samuel the prophet comes to Saul. When Saul sees him, he says, "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord."

About that time, something went wrong. Samuel asked, “What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” Saul, if you had obeyed God, I should not be hearing anything; everything should be dead. Saul responded, “But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.” He said that the people spared them for the sole reason that they were going to sacrifice them unto God. Samuel then said to Saul, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Then he explains why.

“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” What was the penalty for witchcraft in the Bible? Death. “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” What was the penalty for idolatry? Death. So he says, “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and

stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

Now let us go back to verse 22: "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" What he is saying is this: What God wants is obedience. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice."

Here is the same Hebrew word, Shema: "and to hearken than the fat of rams." We understand this first point: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." Let us say there are five bullets, and here you stand. Had God rather have your obedience or the sacrifice of those five bullets? Your obedience, that is plain enough. But what does it mean when he says, "and to hearken than the fat of rams"? The fat of rams was the chiefest part of the sacrifice, and it was always consumed and offered to God in the burnt offerings. What does that mean? It means that to obey and to hearken are synonymous; they are one and the same thing. When he says that to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken is better than the chief part of sacrifice, to hear intelligently and to obey, he is saying, is the best thing that you can give God.

No one ever really hears the Word of God until he heeds the Word of God. No one ever really hears the Word of God until he obeys the Word of God. Augustine, one of the early church fathers, said it like this: "I heard the Gospel all my life, and then one day I heard it." What did he mean? He obeyed Him. He really, genuinely heard it.

The word hearken is also used in negative passages, and it will also be used in positive passages, because hearken means to obey. In the book of Exodus, chapter 4, the same Hebrew word shows that, in a negative sense, it means to disobey. It is not merely a refusal to hear; it is a refusal to obey. Exodus 4:1 says, "And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice." That is, obey my voice.

In Exodus 4, Moses gives objections to God, saying, "The Lord hath not appeared unto thee," and that the people will not believe him. In verse 8, God says, "And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign." Then in verse 9: "And it shall

come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice," that is, obey thy voice. If they would not hearken, or obey, the first signs, God would give another sign: "That thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land." The word hearken has to mean obey.

Look in Exodus 7:4. God said, "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments." Did Pharaoh listen audibly to Moses? Yes. Moses stood before him and told him every plague that God was going to send. But did Pharaoh obey? No. The word hearken means to obey.

In Leviticus 26, the word is used in connection with the law of God. Verse 14 says, "But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments." In verse 18: "And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me," that is, obey me, "then I will punish you seven times more for your sins." Verse 21 says, "And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me," that is, will not obey me, "I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins." Verse 27 says, "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury." God says the word hearken means to obey.

Deuteronomy 4:1 shows the same word used positively: "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you." God said, I want you to hear intelligently. Why? That you may do them. So you do not really hearken, you do not really hear intelligently until you obey.

Deuteronomy 7:12 says, "Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers." Hearing intelligently is equal to obedience.

Deuteronomy 11:13 says, “And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.” Did you hear that? “It shall come to pass, if ye hear intelligently and obey,” says God, “then I’m going to do this and this for you.” Deuteronomy 15:5 likewise says, “Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day.” Isn’t that amazing? “If thou carefully hearken.”

Deuteronomy 18:15 is a prophecy concerning Jesus Christ: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.” Moses says God is going to raise up a prophet out of your brethren, “unto him ye shall hearken.” “According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me”

God said, “You requested a mediator. I will give you one.” “And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”

What is God saying? He said, “I am going to put my words in the mouth of my prophet,” that is, Jesus Christ. The people who will not hear Him intelligently and obey Him, He will require of them; He will judge them. What did our Lord Himself say in Luke 6:46? “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” In other words, to hear the Word of God is indeed to obey the Word of God.

All you have to do is read Deuteronomy 28, where God gives the blessings and the curses. He uses the word hearken over and over.

The principle is simple and can be stated in black and white: If you tell me that you have heard the Word of God, and then walk out these doors and do not obey the Word of God, you have demonstrated that you have never heard the Word of God.

Murmuring as Evidence of Disobedience

So many people come, sit, listen, get up, and walk out. What they have heard never changes their lives or affects them. They never bring their lives into conformity to the Word of God; they simply continue as they always have. Have they heard the Word of God? No. I do not care what sin or truth is being dealt with. God demands that you make application of that truth to your life and bring your life into conformity to the Word of God.

Psalm 106:25 says, "but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord." They despised, disbelieved, and disobeyed. One evidence of their disobedience was not merely that they would not go into Canaan land as directed, but that they murmured in their tents and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord—instead of obeying God.

They sat around, murmuring and complaining. Numbers 14 gives the historical account behind Psalm 106: "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!" We better be careful how we complain against God. He might just give us what we are complaining about.

God asked, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me." Then He said, "Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me."

Let me make a very important point. We try to stress this to our children, but we never think about it in relationship to our Heavenly Father. Have we not all taught our children—or, if we have not, should we not have taught them—this simple principle: delayed obedience is disobedience? What were those Israelites supposed to have been doing? They were supposed to have been marching into that land and conquering it. Instead, they delayed, sat there complaining and murmuring, bellyaching and saying, "Wish we were back in Egypt."

Later, when God rebuked them and told them He was going to kill every one of them because of that, some got their swords and said, “Well, we're going to go right now. We're going to go take the victory.” Moses said, “You better not go because you're going to be defeated because God's not with you.” Delayed obedience is disobedience. When you hear the truth from the Word of God and say, “I know God's Word is right. I know things are wrong in my life. I know things ought to be corrected and made right, but I'll deal with that next week,” that is disobedience. What God demands of each of us is active, willing, prompt obedience. He does not expect or demand a sulky, complaining, murmuring disobedience.

This is not a message on murmuring, but have you ever thought about why we murmur? Why do we complain? I will give you three quick answers. This certainly does not exhaust the list, but one reason is that we do not have what other people have.

I don't have as much as Dr. Holmes. I don't have as much as Al. I can't do what Doc does. I can't do what Roy does. A second reason is that sometimes we endure what we think are more afflictions than others. Therefore, we charge God with inequality and dealing unfairly with us. I don't care how badly you're suffering or how much you're afflicted.

If you look around, inevitably you will always find someone worse than you are. You will learn to be thankful that God has not dealt with you according to your sins nor according to your iniquities. That is one reason we complain. A third reason is that things do not go the way we planned or desired, and we cannot do what we want to do. So we complain and murmur against the providence of God, failing to consider that God is absolutely sovereign. He does in our lives that which is for our good and for His glory.

In Matthew 20, the Lord gives a parable about a man who went out and hired workers. He agreed with those hired at the beginning of the day for a penny a day. At nine o’clock he found others standing idle in the marketplace and said, “You go to work and I’ll pay you that which is right.” At twelve o’clock he found more and said the same. At three o’clock he found more and sent them in. At five o’clock, one hour before quitting time, he found others and said, “Whatever is right, I will pay you.”

"When even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee."

Then he says, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" Suppose I had a thousand dollars in my pocket. I do not, but suppose I did. I gave five hundred to Don, three hundred to George, and two hundred to Al.

I did not owe him any money; I simply gave it to him. Is Al going to get mad and say, "That dirty low-down rascal. He gave Don 500, he only gave me 200. He gave George 300, he only gave me 200"? Is George going to get upset and say, "Well, bless God, at least I got more than Al, but he did not give me as much as he gave Don"? I do not owe any of them anything. The fact that I gave them anything is grace.

Why cannot they be thankful for what they did get rather than complain about what they have not gotten? That is what our Lord is saying. "I can give to whomever I want to give. I can do what I will with mine own." You have money, and you do not want anybody telling you how to spend it. Do not get upset, then, if God does not consult you about how He gives out His gifts, His graces, and His providence. That is entirely up to Him. If we understand that, it will cut down on our murmuring.

God's Response: Lifting Up His Hand

Now look back to Psalm 106, because here is an important principle that needs to be understood and exercised. The people despised God, disbelieved God, disobeyed God, and sat murmuring and complaining. What was God's response? Look in verse 26:

"Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: to overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands."

What does it mean that He lifted up His hand against them? Does it mean instantaneous judgment? Not necessarily. If you go back to Genesis chapter 14, you will see what the lifting up of the hand means. Genesis 14:22 says, "And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest

Thou shouldest say, "I have made Abram rich." Now look what he said: "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord." The lifting up of the hand means that he is swearing unto the Lord; he is taking an oath. Now look in Exodus chapter 6 and verse 8: "And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord." God lifted up His hand to Abraham and said, "I'm going to give you a land." He swore to Abraham. Did you know the Bible says in the book of Hebrews, "And because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself"? You remember those two immutable things in Hebrews chapter 6? One of them was that God cannot lie. The other is that once God swears, He does not change. When you go back to Psalm 106, when God lifts up His hand, He is now swearing that He will destroy them.

Did He destroy them instantly? No. Some He did, but it took forty years for their carcases to fall in the wilderness.

Now, let me show you something that you may have overlooked. Verse 26 says, "Therefore he lifted up his hand against them to overthrow whom?" To overthrow whom? What is the next word? "Them." That is, those existing people, those who were alive right then and there. He said, "I'm swearing against you right now. I'm going to overthrow you in this wilderness." Then look at verse 27: "To overthrow whom?"

So God is not just declaring war against the ones then living, but also their seed who will follow in their fathers' footsteps, who likewise will despise, disbelieve, and disobey the Word of God. He

said, “and I will scatter them in the lands and overthrow their seed among the nations,” which he did to Judah and Israel. Not only does the curse of God come upon this generation, but also future generations of those who despise, disbelieve, and disobey. What does the Bible say that God does? He punishes the iniquity unto the third and fourth generation of those that hate him.

Application to Today and Conclusion

Does God change? No. Immutability is an attribute of God. Malachi 3:6 says, “I am the Lord, I change not.” If God does not change, would He punish the same sins today, and would He punish them in the same way? The answer is yes. God will not only curse us, but our children, and our children’s children, and our children’s children’s children, for our despisement, our disbelief, and our disobedience. Which means this: if we want to help our nation, if we want to help our families, each of us needs to learn to be as obedient, as holy, and as godly as we can be by the grace of God. For He said in 1 Samuel 2:30, “Them that honour me I will honour, saith the Lord.”

“But they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” God says, “You don’t think much of me? I won’t think too much of you.” I don’t know about you, but I’d rather honour Him and obey Him.

Father, we’re thankful today for Jesus Christ and for the truth of Scripture. Lord, how we have committed these same sins. We despise Thee because we murmured and complained at Thy providence. We disbelieved Thy promise. We disobeyed Thy Word. But Father, we ask for repentance. We ask for faith. And we ask, Lord, that You make us obedient, but, Lord, that You also make us instantly obedient. Teach us the truth that delayed obedience is disobedience. Enable us, Father, to serve Thee effectively with reverence and godly fear. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen and Amen.

CHAPTER 12

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part 12 of 16

Introduction and Reading of Psalm 106:28-31

The message begun today will not be finished until next Lord's Day. I want you to hear next Lord's Day, because I will be dealing with the latter part of this passage and with Phinehas. If you do not know who Phinehas was, you need to find out, because Phinehas was the priest who took a javelin and killed two people.

"They joined themselves also unto Baal Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions, and the plague brake in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment, so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations forevermore."

The Progression and Desensitization of Sin

I am not going to take the time today to review everything in Psalm 106 as I have in time past, but it should be duly noted and impressed

upon your minds by this time that one sin always leads to another sin. As sin progresses, it always becomes more intense and more wicked. For instance, in verse 19, the Bible says, “They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.” Thus, they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. In those two verses I dealt with idolatry and insolence, because here Israel made themselves a golden calf and said, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

Certainly, that is wicked, vile, and wrong. However, as wicked, vile, and wrong as the sin of verses 19 and 20 was, those sins were almost a Sunday school picnic as compared to the sins of verses 28 and 29, where they joined themselves unto Baal Peor and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

While verse 28 could also be classified as idolatry, it is more than idolatry. It is a sin of a darker hue and a deeper dye. The sins of verse 19 brought forth threats from God, and the rebellion of the people brought about the deaths of 3,000 men by the hands of the Levites. However, the sins of verse 28 brought forth a plague directly from God Himself, in which 24,000 people died. Continued sin not only desensitizes individuals, but it also desensitizes nations.

For instance, you'll remember in January of 1973, when the Supreme Court ruled on Roe versus Wade, there was a huge gasp across the nation. Everybody understood that abortion was murder and that abortion is wicked and ungodly. There was a great deal of protest in the years following concerning abortion. Although there is some protest today, it is very small and insignificant by comparison. Why? Because we as a nation have become desensitized, and we just put up with it.

The same thing could be said with sodomy. The same thing could be said with Marxism and socialism. Sin, then, desensitizes not only an individual, but a nation as well.

I want you to see how far Israel went in verse 28. The Bible says, “They joined themselves unto Baal Peor and ate the sacrifices of the dead.” The historical background for this passage is Numbers, chapters 22 through 25. We are not going to read all of those

chapters, but I do want to read some out of each chapter to give you the historical background and continuity of thought.

Historical Background: Balaam and Balak (Numbers 22-24)

Overall, in Numbers chapter 22, Balak, the king of Moab, summoned Balaam, the false prophet, and asked him to come and curse Israel. You know the story of how the dumb ass spoke. In this instance, the donkey was smarter than the man. The donkey saw the angel of God, and, of course, Balaam did not.

Numbers chapter 22, beginning with verse 1: "And the children of Israel set forward and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho. And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was sore afraid of the people because they were many. And Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. He sent messengers, therefore, unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt."

"Behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me. Peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and whom thou cursest is cursed." And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand, and they came unto Balaam and spake unto him the words of Balak.

God told Balaam not to go. But the children of Moab came back with greater rewards. He said, "I'm going to check with God again." God says, "Don't go." And anyhow, the third time they came back, he went.

"And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams. And Balak did as

Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram. And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go, peradventure the Lord will come to meet me, and whatsoever he showeth me, I will tell thee. And he went to a high place, and God met Balaam, and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram. And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return to Balak, and thus shalt thou speak. And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt offerings, he and all the princes of Moab. And he took up this parable, and said, Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me, Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

"How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him, lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

And Balak said to Balaam, "What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse my enemies, and behold, thou hast blessed them altogether." And he answered and said, "Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord has placed in my mouth?" That was the second time Balak tried to get Balaam to curse Israel, and God put a blessing in his mouth.

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 24:2-7, 10-13 (KJV)

Now look in chapter 24, beginning with verse 2. Here's the third time:

"And he lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents, according to their tribes, and the Spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, the man whose eyes are open hath said; he hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!

As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the riverside, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as

> cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.
>
> Now, skip down, if you would please, to verse 10. He's blessing Israel again:
>
> "And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together; and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place. I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour. And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak?"

In Numbers 25, Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. They called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; the people did eat and bowed down to their gods. Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. The Bible says, not only in Numbers 25 but also in Psalm 106, that the children of Israel joined themselves unto Baal Peor and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

To comprehend the magnitude of Israel's sin, we must know who Baal Peor was. The word Baal simply means Lord or Master. The forms under which Baal was worshipped were necessarily as numerous as the communities that worshipped him. Each locality had its own divine Baal, or divine Lord, who frequently took the place of the city, the mountain, or the town to which he belonged.

The Identity of Baal Peor

There are numerous Baals in the Bible. For instance, there was Baal-azor, or Baal of Tyre; Baal-hermon, or Baal of Hermon; Baal-lebanon; and Baal-peor, or Baal of Peor. At other times there were proper names, such as Baal-merodach, the Lord Merodach; Baal-meon of Tyre; Baal-gad, which was just north of Palestine;

Baal-zebub, which you find in 2 Kings 1, meaning Lord of the Filth or Lord of the Flies; and Baal-hammon, meaning Baal of the Heat or Baal of the Sun Pillar. The word Baal simply means Lord. It was the name ascribed to numerous local gods. Baal-peor was simply Baal of Mount Peor.

In Numbers 23:28, we read: “And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon. And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams. And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.” They were on the top of Mount Peor. So Baal Peor

then just simply refers to the Baal of Mount Peor. Now who in the world was Baal of Peor? Now, the Baal of the Ammonites was Molech. The Baal of the Moabites, which we're reading about here, was Chemosh. In fact, in the Bible, the Moabites are oftentimes called the people of Chemosh. Go back in your Bibles to the book of Numbers, chapter 21, and look at verse 29. Numbers 21, verse 29. Look what is said. 'Woe to thee, Moab.' So we're talking about the people of Moab. 'Woe to thee, Moab. Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh.' Now Chemosh was the false god. He was the false Baal of Moab. Look in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 48. Jeremiah 48 and verse 46, 'Woe be unto thee, O Moab, the people of Chemosh perisheth, for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives.' But once again, the Moabites are referred to as the people of Chemosh. And if you would turn back to 1 Kings 11. 1 Kings 11.

Unhappily, it was King Solomon who introduced the worship of Chemosh into the land of Israel. 1 Kings 11. And notice, if you would please, verse 7. 'Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.' So the Baal of Mount Peor was nothing more than Chemosh. He was the god of Chemosh, or the God of the Moabites.

Now, let me just show you something about Baal Peor, and I want you to look with me very quickly at four passages. I want you to understand that every time you see the words Baal Peor in the Bible, it refers to this single incident that is reported in Numbers chapter

25. For instance, go, if you would, back to Numbers 25 to begin with. Numbers 25. Look in verse 3 and then verse 5. Look at verse 3 and verse 5. We'll look at these verses a little bit later, so be sure to hold them. 'And Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against him.' Now, verse 5. 'And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, slay ye every one of his men that were joined unto Baal Peor.' Now, the second passage is Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse 3, Deuteronomy 4. Look at verse 3. 'Your eyes have seen that which the Lord did because of Baal Peor. For all the men that followed Baal Peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you.'

Note he calls it Baal Peor. Then the next passage, which we don't have to read, we've already read Psalm 106 verse 28. The Bible says they joined themselves unto Baal Peor and the next passage is Hosea chapter 9 and verse 10. I do want you to turn there because I want you to hold this passage. We're going to come back to this passage a little bit later. Hosea 9 verse 10. Look what God says. Hosea 9 verse 10. God says, 'I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness.

I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time, but they went to Baal Peor. And separated themselves unto that shame. And their abominations were according as they loved.' So every time you read Baal Peor in the Bible, it refers back to the incident of Numbers 25. Now listen to me, Numbers 25 is the first time that Israel worshipped foreign gods. Now, it's not the first time she committed idolatry, but it's the first time she worshipped foreign gods, and certainly it would not be the last time.

The Meaning of 'Joined' and 'Separated'

Now, I want to call your attention to Psalm 106, verse 28, and then I want you to turn back to Numbers chapter 25. Look in Psalm 106, verse 28. The Bible says, '...they joined themselves unto Baal Peor.' Look at the word, joined. Then if you'll go back in your Bibles to Numbers 25, verse 3, '...and Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor.' Verse 5. 'And Moses said unto the judges of Israel slay ye every one of his men that were joined unto Baal Peor.' Now the word joined is very significant. The Hebrew word is the word Samad, which literally means to bind together or to join. This same word is used in 2

Samuel chapter 20 in verse 8 to the fastening of a sheath that contained a sword around someone's waist or loins. Now, I want you to turn to two passages. We've already read them, but look back to Deuteronomy 4 and Hosea chapter 9. Let's go to Deuteronomy chapter 4 first. And look at verse 3 again. Now the Bible says that Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor.

In Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse 3. 'But your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal Peor. For all the men that followed Baal Peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you.' Now here is the word followed. It's a very easy word, it's a light word, and you and I, when we understand it, it just simply means to go on the way of it. They followed the way of Baal Peor. Now, I want you to go in your Bibles to Hosea chapter 9, because when the Bible says that Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor, what in the world does that mean?

Is it possible for Christians today to join themselves unto Baal Peor? What would be classified as joining yourselves unto Baal Peor? Look in Hosea 9:10 again. God says, “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time, but they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves unto that shame. And their abominations were according as they loved.”

Verse 10 does not say that they merely followed. The Bible says they separated themselves unto that shame. When the Bible said that Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor, even the very word joined indicates an agreement, a covenant, an oath. I joined myself to my wife; we understand there was a covenant and an oath involved in using the word joined. But when you come to Hosea 9:10, it is not simply indicated; it is outright stated. The Bible says, in verse 10, that they separated themselves unto that shame.

The Hebrew word for separated is Nazar. Let us see what is involved in Nazar. Numbers 6:1-6 says, “And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord: He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of the

vow of his separation, there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow."

"All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall come at no dead body." The word separated and separateth in verses one through six of Numbers chapter 6 is exactly the same Hebrew word as in Hosea 9, verse 10. What does the word separated mean in Numbers chapter 6? When they talk about a Nazarite vow, they vow to separate themselves. Nazar is where we get the word Nazarite from. What did the Nazarite do? He vowed a vow to God. He entered into an agreement with God. He said, "God, here is what I'm going to do. I'm separating myself unto You." So the Bible says in Hosea 9 and verse 10, they separated themselves unto that shame. That is, they entered into a covenant. They entered into an oath. They entered into a vow with Chemosh of Baal Peor.

Initiation into Mystery Religion

Does anybody remember what LXX means when you see it in a theological book, commentary, or encyclopedia? LXX is the Roman numerals for 70. What does it refer to? The Septuagint. What is the Septuagint? It was translated by 70 scholars in Alexandria, Egypt. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Christ quoted from the Septuagint. The apostles used the Septuagint, and they quoted from it as well. Since we are talking about joining oneself unto, being separated unto that shame, Herodotus, who was an early Greek historian, said that the word teleo, which is used for "join" in Psalm 106, verse 28, is the Greek word used in the Septuagint. Herodotus, the early Greek historian, used the word and said it meant this: "To initiate into the mysteries."

What in the world was happening when Israel joined, covenanted, and vowed at Baal Peor? They were being initiated into a mystery religion. In Baal Peor, what Israel was actually doing was forsaking the One True and the Living God and His Word to be initiated into the mystery religion of the Moabites. How in the world did Israel get hooked or seduced into doing something so absolutely stupid? How did they get involved in a mystery religion?

How did they fall into that trap? Look back in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 24 and verse 10. Remember that every time Balaam was to curse Israel, God turned the curse into a blessing. God refused to allow Balaam to curse Israel. In Numbers 24 and verse 10, "Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together, and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times."

Now the question you have to ask yourself is this: Why would God not allow Balaam to curse Israel? As Psalm 106 makes clear, they had a sufficient number of sins. Their rebellion was pretty well known. Why, then, would God not allow Balaam to curse Israel? He did not refuse because Balak, the king of Moab, was wicked and his people were more wicked. He did not refuse because Balaam was simply a false prophet, although Balaam was that. Why would God not allow Balaam to curse Israel?

Balaam's Doctrine and the Seduction of Israel

Look in Numbers chapter 23, beginning with verse 20. This is amazing. Balaam says, "Behold, I have received commandment to bless and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it." Then he makes this statement: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob. Neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them."

Look at the first part of verse 21: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob. Neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." You have to ask yourself: Did God go blind temporarily? How could He say that? Certainly the individuals were sinful, and the nation was sinful. Psalm 106 is full of the sins of Israel. How can it be said that God had not seen iniquity in Jacob or perverseness in Israel? How could that be true? It could not be true individually, familially, or nationally. It was true judicially.

What do I mean by that? Up until this point, all of the sacrifices that God had commanded were being fulfilled. God saw Israel as judicially clean, but not necessarily personally clean. It is just like you and I today. Let me ask you a question. Are you saved by the grace of God through faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ? The

answer is yes. Here is my next question: Do you still sin? The answer is yes. While you are personally a sinner, you are still judicially clean because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

God had provided the sacrificial system, the system of cleansing, and the other boundaries and areas of separation for Israel. Up until this time, Israel had stayed within those boundaries. Every time that Balaam tried to curse Israel, God turned it into a blessing and said, "You cannot curse whom I have blessed. And I am not seeing their sin because they are judicially clean."

These sacrifices are being offered, and Balaam could not get Balak to curse Israel. But Balaam was a false prophet, and Balaam liked money. Turn in your Bibles, first of all, to 2 Peter 2, verse 15. Here God is talking about false prophets in general, and then he mentions Balaam particularly: "Who have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Balaam was a false prophet. He was a prophet for hire. Look in your Bible to the book of Jude, verse 11, right before the book of Revelation. Once again, here is a condemnation of the false prophets: "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah."

So once again, Balaam is singled out as a man who wanted reward. Balak had offered Balaam all kinds of rewards to curse Israel, but God would not let him curse. Do you think Balak was going to pay him money to come over and bless his enemies? No. Balaam still wanted the money, and Balaam was smart enough to know this: Although God will not allow me to curse Israel, I know how to get God Himself to curse Israel. All we have to do, Balaam told Balak, is draw Israel away from covenantal obedience to God and get them into an alien covenant and an alien law system.

You say, "Brother Weaver, did that really happen?" Oh, yes. Let me show you two passages. Look in Micah 6:5. Micah is a minor prophet, right after Jonah and right before Nahum. God says, "O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." Now, God

says, you better remember what Balak consulted and what Balaam answered.

Here we are in the book of Revelation, in the letters to the churches, and Jesus Christ is saying in Revelation 2:14, "But I have a few things against thee because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." Whoa! The doctrine of Balaam is still in existence? Balaam was back in the Old Testament. Yet here we are in Revelation, and Jesus Christ is saying, "But I have a few things against thee because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication."

Balaam, the false prophet, taught Balak, the wicked king, how to get Israel to sin so that God would curse Israel. How in the world could Balaam and Balak do that? The answer is by promising to the children of Israel knowledge, experience, satisfactions, rewards, fulfillment, and that they could be a part of the inner circle.

You can be initiated into this mystery religion. You can know what no one else knows, what only a few chosen ones know. Moreover, if you look in Numbers chapter 25 and verse 1 and couple that with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, the Bible says, "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab." Here is a religion where power, control, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life reign supreme. You get initiated into this mystery religion through ritual prostitution. What is more appealing to flesh than to consider that you are one of the chosen ones, that you can have secret knowledge and secret power, and all of your lusts satisfied and opened up?

Eating the Sacrifices of the Dead

What Baal Peor was to Israel in Numbers 25, the mystery religions are to Christians today. All mystery religions promise the same things: the inner circle, the chosen few, power, an elite group, satisfaction, and fulfillment of lust. I do not care whether you look at masonry, the occult, the Illuminati, the New World Order, Gnosticism, or New Ageism; it is all the same. They have one thing in

common: in order to be a part of them, you must enter into a covenant. You must take an oath. You must take a vow.

What most people do not realize is that, in doing so, they are disowning the one true and living God and His truth. It is absolutely impossible to be a Christian, be obedient to the Word of God, and be a member of a mystery religion. Inevitably, invariably, you must turn your back upon God and upon the truth and enter into a new covenant and a new agreement. As Solomon of old said, there is nothing new under the sun. It is all the same.

What does it mean when it says that Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor and ate the sacrifices of the dead? Were they celebrating dead people? Were they worshiping their ancestors? No. Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor, was initiated into the mystery religion, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Psalm 115, beginning with verse 4, shows what it means. In fact, let us read verse 3. Verse 3 teaches the absolute sovereignty of the one true and living God. The psalmist says, “But our God is in the heavens.

“He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” There is a big distinction between our God and the gods of the heathen.

“Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not. Eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not. Noses have they, but they smell not. They have hands, but they handle not. Feet have they, but they walk not. Neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them.” They are dead, dumb, and worthless.

What Israel was doing was this: they had left the one true and living God and His covenant, entered into a covenant in a false mystery religion, and were now eating sacrifices to a dead God who was worthless—helpless and hopeless, unable to speak or hear.

Now let us notice one other thing in Psalm 106 before making some applications. In verse 29, after it says that they joined themselves unto Baal Peor and ate the sacrifice of the dead, it says, “Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions.” That is an unusual word: inventions.

Do you know what the Bible says in Ecclesiastes chapter 7 and verse 29? It is a good verse to memorize: “Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright.” In other words, He created him with original holiness, righteousness, and knowledge. “God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.” The word inventions does not refer to mechanical progress. It has to do with wickedness, sin, and rebellion. Thus, when the Bible says that they provoked Him to anger with their inventions, it means their new ways of sinning, their rebelliousness, and their ungodliness.

Applications: Beware of Departing from God's Word

The first application is this: It is a trick and a seduction of the enemy to draw us away from the Word of God, which is the covenant of faith. Anything or anyone who seeks to draw us away from the Word of God is seeking to separate us into a false God and an apostate religion.

Romans 1:1 says, “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.” Do you realize that when you entered into a covenant of faith with the one true and living God through Jesus Christ and His propitiatory sacrifice, you became separated unto God? You are His. You belong to Him—body, soul, spirit, mind, emotions, matter, blood, cells, whatever. You belong to Him.

How in the world is it possible to be separated unto the one true living God and a false god at the same time? It is impossible. Therefore, in order to be separated unto a false god, you must leave the one true and living God. How do you leave Him? By leaving His Word, by leaving His law, and by ceasing to obey Him.

It is true that idols are dead, but that does not mean there is no power behind an idol. Many false religions have power. Where do they get it? First Corinthians 10:20–21 says, “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.”

What is he saying? The same thing: You are either going to worship the one true and living God, or you are going to end up worshiping a dead god backed by demonic powers. So the very first application is this: Beware of anyone, anything, any religion, or any group that seeks to pull us away from the Word of God, or that has books in addition to the Word of God.

Applications: Blessing in Obedience, Cursing in Disobedience

The place of blessing is the place of obedience and faithfulness. If you want to be blessed by God, be obedient and faithful. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4, "Moreover, it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful."

Do you realize the greatest ability is dependability? If you and I could learn to be faithful—consistent in tithing, in studying, in prayer, in attendance, and in worship—and faithful in our lives to the Word of God, we would experience blessings like we would not imagine. The place of blessing is the place of obedience and faithfulness. The place of cursing is disobedience and unfaithfulness. If you want to be cursed, just be disobedient. Just be unfaithful and turn from that which you know is true.

Applications: Reject Forbidden Knowledge

The third one is this: It is ever the place of a mystery religion to try to promise you knowledge, power, and control over and above and beyond the Word of God. I do not give a second's worth of time to someone telling me, "Well, by this time next year, Jacksonville, Florida is going to be underwater three feet deep." Will it make? But I have news for you. If it is, it is not because someone had a special revelation and happened to be accurate in judgment. If it is, it is that way because of their sin, and the sovereign God of the universe has judged them and cursed them for their sin.

Do not come to me saying, "Well, now, wait a minute. If you come over here, I can give you some special knowledge." That is what witches and warlocks are all about. That is what fortune tellers are all about. That is what the occult is: an attempt to know things apart from God and His divine revelation. It is all condemned in Scripture.

Deuteronomy 18, verse 9, says, “When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.” God says, stay away from the heathen and their practices.

'There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer,' that's someone who talks to the dead. 'For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord. And because of these abominations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.'

Why do people talk to the dead? They're trying to get knowledge. Why do they go to a wizard or fortune teller or witch? They're trying to get knowledge or power or control. So he says in verse 13, 'Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.'

'For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times and diviners. But as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.' 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken.' That's Jesus Christ. 'According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.'

'And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth. And he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.' God said, 'I'm going to give you my prophet. And my prophet is going to speak to you. And if you don't listen to him, I'll require it of you.' And the prophet is none other than Jesus Christ himself. Now here Jesus Christ stands in stark contrast.

Look in Deuteronomy 29:29. Here is what it all boils down to: “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God. But those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we

may do all the words of this law." All I need to know, and all you need to know, is in the Word of God. If it is not in the Word of God, if it is not revealed, then it is forbidden knowledge. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, and you better not pry into them.

Your responsibility is to obey this book. It is like my father, when he and my mother were walking hand in hand at a county fair many years ago. They were young, in love, and recently married. As they walked by the fortune teller's booth, the fortune teller said, "Come inside, and I'll tell you when you're going to get married." My father said, "If you knew anything at all, you'd know we already were," and kept right on walking.

Conclusion and Prayer

I have news for you: anything that is not in the Word of God, you do not need to know. Once you start trying to find out that which is over and above and beyond the Word of God, you are getting into the mystery religions, which is the sin of Baal Peor.

Let us pray. Father, help us today. Enable us, Lord, to determine that we will be faithful unto Thee. We are separated unto Thee through Jesus Christ; we are separated unto Thy truth, Thy Word, and Thy law. May we, Father, be content to master the Word that You have given us. In fact, Lord, there is more in this Bible than we will ever know and understand. How can we reject truth and seek after error? Give us, Lord, a determination to be holy and faithful. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 13

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part 13 of 16

Psalm 106, and also Numbers 25. Let us begin by reading verses 28 through 31. Psalm 106, beginning at verse 28, says: “They joined themselves also unto Baal Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions, and the plague brake in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment, and the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations forevermore.”

Introduction and Review of Psalm 106 Series

Before we turn to Numbers 25, let me refresh the minds of those who were not here in the last week or so, and our visitors, concerning what I have been doing. I have been preaching a series on Psalm 106 entitled “The Hallelujah of Confession.” This is the first psalm that begins with “Praise ye the Lord,” hallelujah, and the whole content of this psalm deals with the confession of sins. The impact of this psalm is to teach us and show us that the sins of the fathers are really still with us today. I have been dealing with this for thirteen weeks in a row, and we are actually down to verse 30.

The first five verses give us four reasons why we should praise the Lord. Verse 6 is a general confession. Then, beginning in verse 7, specific sins are confessed: ignorance and ingratitude in verse 7; forgetfulness and impatience in verse 13; envy and insurrection in verse 16; idolatry and insolence in verse 19; and, in verse 24, despisement and disbelief. Now we are down to verse 28, where we are dealing with the sin of Baal Peor.

The Sin of Baal Peor and Its Consequences

Baal Peor is a specific sin dealt with in Numbers 22 through 24, actually 25, which we are still considering today. Baal Peor was where the children of Israel, for the first time, worshipped a foreign god. They were guilty of idolatry before, but their idolatry involved an idol of their own making. Now they were worshipping a foreign god. The Bible says that Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor. I am not going to preach the sermon I gave you last week, but the impact of the word "joined" literally is this: they were initiated into the mystery of religion.

The power of secret religions is that they promise knowledge unavailable to anyone else. They promise power and control. Literally, the Israelites were seduced into being initiated into a secret religion. Thus, they had to turn their backs upon the One True and the Living God. The Bible says they ate the sacrifices of the dead—that is, to a dead idol who was no God at all and had absolutely no life any.

Because of that sin, God pronounced the death penalty against all who were involved in that particular sin. Verse 28 says, "They joined themselves unto Baal Peor and ate the sacrifices of the dead." That was the sin. "Thus, they provoked him to anger with their inventions and the plague brake in upon them." Verse 30 says, "Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment. And so the plague was stayed and that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations forevermore."

Now turn in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 25, and let me read what Phinehas did. Notice Numbers 25, verse 1: "And Israel abode in Shittim and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of

their gods and the people did eat and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Take all the heads of the people and hang”

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 25:1-18 (KJV)

Reading of Numbers 25: The Account of Phinehas

them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned from Israel.' And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, 'Slay ye every one of his men that were joined unto Baal Peor.' And behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand. And he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 'Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.'

Wherefore say, 'Behold, I have given him my covenant of peace. And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God and made an atonement for the children of Israel.'

Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianite woman, was Zimri, the son of Sallu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites. And the name of the Midianite woman that was slain was Cosby, the daughter of Zur, and he was the head of a people in the chief house in Midian. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 'Vex the Midianites, and smite them, for they vex you with their wiles. Wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in

> the matter of Cosby, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, who was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.'
>
> Now, Numbers 25 is a very important passage, and it's important in this sense, because it has been literally misconstrued and misinterpreted and in recent days has been used to teach lawlessness, wickedness and rebellion. The context has been ignored. The historicity of the text has been perverted and the scope of the text has been twisted for personal gain and wickedness.

Modern Misinterpretations of Phinehas

In recent years, individuals have committed and excused acts of murder, mayhem, bank robbery, and other heinous crimes on the basis that they were Phinehas priests. Some have stated orally and in print that a Phinehas priest may act unlawfully lawfully. That is a contradiction: they claim it is lawful for a Phinehas priest to commit unlawful acts, or acts otherwise considered unlawful.

But the Bible says in 1 John 3:4, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law.” It is never right to violate the law of God. There is no lawful way for an individual to commit an unlawful act. By unlawful act, I am not necessarily referring to man's laws, but to God's laws.

Here is one comment by an author: “As the Kamikaze is to the Japanese, as the Shiite is to Islam, as the Zionist is to the Jew, so the Phinehas priest is to Christendom.” Then he says, “Only the fool ignores the Phinehas priest of God.” A kamikaze pilot, a Shiite Muslim, and a Zionist are understood as people who will push any act to accomplish their goal. Their philosophy is simply this: the end justifies the means.

In Denver, Colorado, an anti-Christian radio announcer stepped from his Volkswagen and was greeted with a hail of gunfire. In North Carolina, men entered a homosexual porno parlor, shot the occupants, and burned the parlor to the ground. In the Midwest, interracial couples jogging together fell one after another before the carefully spaced shots of a distant sniper. In Seattle, a bomb exploded in a porno movie theater.

In Washington state, a Brinks car was held up and money taken to finance further acts of wickedness. In Louisiana, Vietnamese fishing boats were set aflame. In Chicago, a pedestrian drew a pistol and shot down two assailants. In D.C., a white prostitute and her black pimp were found shot to death. It makes little difference whether you agree or disagree with a Phinehas priesthood. It is important that you know it exists, is active, and, in the near future, may become a central fact in your life.

Basically, if you claim to be a Phinehas priest, then you have the right to kill, murder, maim, whatever. In fact, here is a quote from another author, and this makes it exceedingly plain: "For lack of a better term, the Phinehas priest is God's commando." Basically, Phinehas was given a license to kill. Sounds like James Bond, doesn't it?

The question that you have to ask is this: Who in the world was Phinehas? It is true that Phinehas executed some individuals that needed executing, and when he executed those individuals, he acted righteously. But you still have to ask some questions. Was Phinehas a private person, or was he a public person? Was his situation unique, or is it to be applied universally? And the third question you must ask is this: Is it possible to have, or to be, a Phinehas priest today?

Phinehas as a Public Person

The word Phinehas literally means "mouth of brass." Phinehas was the son of Eleazar, who was the son of Aaron. So Phinehas was no ordinary individual. He was in the high priestly line.

As priest, he was the one sent by Moses in the expedition against the Midianites. In Numbers, chapter 31 and verse 6, when Moses sent the army out against the Midianites, the Bible says that Moses sent them to war, a thousand of every tribe of them, and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the priest to the war, with the holy instruments and the trumpets to blow in his hand.

Of course, priests participated in battles. They had a very important part. Most of the Levites were musicians, and in God's battles the musicians usually led the way; they preceded the fighting

men, so to speak. A lot of the Levites fought as well. But the point is that Phinehas the priest, the son of Eleazar, was sent out with the Israelites to fight the Midianites.

In 1 Chronicles 9:19–20, we find that Phinehas was also the leader of the Korahites. The passage says, "And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren, of the house of his father, the Korahites, were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and their fathers, being over the host of the Lord, that is the army of the Lord, were keepers of the entry, and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, was the ruler over them in time past, and the Lord was with him." Here, then, is Phinehas, who was the ruler over these individuals. They were not only soldiers, but guardians of the tabernacle as well. May I point out the fact that when Aaron died, Eleazar, his son, succeeded him as high priest. When Eleazar died, Phinehas, his son, succeeded him as high priest as well.

It was also Phinehas who gave the decision to fight in Judges 20:28. It was also Phinehas, by the way, who was sent to those tribes in Joshua 22—Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh—when they had built the altar and called it Ed, which simply means "a witness." It was not necessarily an altar on which to sacrifice. So you find that Phinehas was quite an individual.

He was indeed a priest. He was the head of a certain number of the Korahites. He was the man who was sent to initiate wars. Very clearly, Phinehas would have to be classified as a public person and not a private person.

Now let me explain just a little bit. I will say more about it later. By a public person, I mean that he was invested with an office and authority. It was God who ordained the office, and it was God who established the divine authority. Moreover, you have to remember something else about priests. In the Bible, a lot of the priests were judges, and many times in the Bible you will find priests associated with judges.

For instance, Deuteronomy 16:18 says, "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout the tribes, and they shall judge the people with just

judgment." Now, if they were going to judge with just judgment, that means they must know the law of God. May I ask you, who was it that was given the task of teaching the law of God?

It was the Levites, who were priests. In Deuteronomy 21:5, God says concerning the priests, "And the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near. For them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him and to bless in the name of the Lord." By their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried. It sounds to me like the priests were judges as well, for by their word was every controversy and every stroke to be tried. Deuteronomy 19:17 says, "Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days." Evidently, some of the priests were judges, or at least closely connected with them.

Now let us go back to Numbers 25, because we have to ask a question. Here is a man of the tribe of Simeon named Zimri. He brings a Midianitish woman named Cosby into the camp, takes her into the tent, and is in the act of committing fornication. Phinehas, the priest, takes up a javelin, runs into the tent, and executes both the man and the woman.

Was Phinehas acting as a private person, or was he acting as a public person? Did Phinehas act on his own initiative? Did Phinehas act independently? Did he simply decide, "Well, that man and that woman needs to be killed and I'm going to kill them"?

I have often said that I am thankful I am not God, because I think of a lot of people who need to be killed, and then I get to thinking that I might be one of them. I am glad God is gracious and has not given me that power and authority. But did Phinehas just say, "Those are two people need to be killed and I'm going to kill them"?

And the answer is absolutely no. He did not act independently, nor did he act on his own initiative. What do I mean by that? Look in Numbers 25 and verse 4. Look what the Lord said: "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Take all the heads of the people and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.'" What has God done? God has

communicated unto Moses that those who had joined themselves unto Baal Peor were to be executed.

May I remind you who Moses was? Moses was not only a prophet; Moses was also the highest civil authority in the land at that time. Deuteronomy 33:4-5 says, "Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob, and he, Moses, was king in Jeshurun when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together."

Isn't that interesting? Moses then was king in Jeshurun. He was not only a prophet holding a spiritual office; he was also the highest civil leader in the land, holding a civil and a judicial office, because he was king in Jeshurun.

Now, here's what God has said: "Moses, I want every one of them killed." What did Moses do? Look in verse 5: "And Moses said to the judges of Israel, 'Slay ye every one of his men that were joined unto Baal Peor.'"

Here the highest civil ruler of the land has communicated to the lesser magistrates what the penalty and punishment is to be for those who join themselves unto Baal Peor: death. Moses said, "Look, God said they're to die. I'm passing the sentence on down to you. It's your responsibility as a judge to execute everyone that has joined himself unto Baal Peor."

At verse six, “And behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” Note the phrase “the whole congregation,” or “all the congregation of the children of Israel.” The congregation of Israel does not refer to every flesh-and-blood individual who was alive. It refers to the judicial and civil leaders. Not every Israelite could have gotten in front of the door of the tabernacle. The rulers, the elders, and those who held offices were there before the door of the tabernacle, weeping. Now, why were they there weeping?

What would you do if some of your good friends and perhaps relatives were dropping dead like flies around you because the plague had broken out, and you had just received an order from God

through Moses that you were to hang those people you knew? I do not know why these people were there weeping. Maybe they were so broken up emotionally, or so drained emotionally, that they could not function. I have seen people, and I know people personally, who have lost loved ones—husbands, wives, and children—and have wept until they had drained themselves so emotionally that they could not even move. They could not function. They were like zombies.

I do not know why these people were weeping. Maybe it was because of their friends and loved ones. Maybe it was because of the wickedness of the sins. Maybe it was because God's glory had been tarnished and attacked. Joel 2:17 says, "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar and let them say, 'Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathens should rule over them. Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?'" Here is a passage where God says, "Let the priests, let the rulers weep and say, 'God, spare your people.'"

Maybe that is what they were doing. I do not know. The Bible does not say. All it says is that they were there weeping before the door of the tabernacle, and either they were unable or unwilling to act. When Zimri brought Cosby into the camp, you are talking about flaunting your sin—a flagrant violation of God's Word and God's law. He was a man so unashamed of his wickedness. He took this Midianite woman into his tent. Everyone knew what was going on. Everyone knew.

The Doctrine of Interposition

Phinehas said, "I am going to take care of the situation. Everyone else may be unable to function, but I am." He took the javelin and thrust them through.

Now, listen to this, because it is very important that you understand it. This is the doctrine of interposition. Phinehas may not have been the highest of the priests; he may not have been even the highest of the civil officers. But the doctrine of interposition says that when a higher magistrate fails to fulfill the functions of his office and carry out his duties, a lower magistrate who is duly elected and has the authority and power may step in, take over, and carry out the

functions of that office that the higher magistrate would not carry out.

Let me put it plainly. Please do not laugh; I am not trying to be funny. I know the unlikelihood of this occurring, but I am still describing the doctrine of interposition. Civilly speaking, who should be leading this nation back to God and righteousness and dealing with corruption and wickedness? Who should be doing it? Bill Clinton. I know he is not. I know he is wicked in and of himself.

But if he will not do it, then Al Gore should. If Al Gore will not do it, then the Speaker of the House should. If the Speaker will not do it, then the individual congressman, after perhaps the whip—whatever the order is there—should. If they will not do it, the governors of the state ought to do it. If the governors will not, the lieutenant governors should; then the speaker of the state houses; then the state legislators. If they will not do it, you go to your county government. If the county government will not, then you go to the city government. You see what I am saying?

Here is the doctrine of interposition: when a higher magistrate fails to fulfill the functions of his office, a lower magistrate may step in and do so. If you have not read my first book, The Christian Civil Government, go back and read the seventh chapter, especially where I deal with the pastor as a magistrate. You will find that during the American War for Independence, when the king had all of his officers over here, the people followed the pastors, who are magistrates—spiritual magistrates, but still magistrates.

Phinehas was not a vigilante. He was not merely acting out of anger, frustration, revenge, or malice. He acted upon principle, in the authority of his office, which God had ordained and entrusted to him. Since some of the higher magistrates were not acting, he knew what needed to be done. The will and word of God had already been communicated to him through the proper channels, and so he acted.

Notice Psalm 106:30: “Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment.” He executed judgment. The word “judgment” is variously translated in the Bible. Sometimes it refers to prayer, but it means to intervene or to judge officially or judicially. Thus, according to Psalm

106:30, what Phinehas did was a judicial act. He was carrying out the functions of an office.

Now return to Numbers 25:11. God says, “Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, hath turned away my wrath, away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them.” God says that what he did, he did for His sake. Verse 13 says, “And he shall have it and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God.” He was not acting independently; he “made an atonement for the children of Israel.”

The word “atonement” is the Hebrew word kaphar, which means to cover, to expiate, or to placate. These terms demonstrate very clearly that all Phinehas was doing was carrying out the functions of his priestly office. He was not acting independently, nor was he acting out of revenge, frustration, or maliciousness.

In Numbers 16, God sent another plague upon the children of Israel because of their sin and wickedness. They were murmuring against Moses, Aaron, and God. We read in verse 47, “And Aaron took as Moses commanded and ran into the midst of the congregation. Behold, the plague was begun among the people. And he put on incense and made an atonement for the people.” Then, “he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed.” Aaron put on the sacrifice, took the incense, and ran between the dead and the living, and the plague stopped. He stood.

Contrast Between Aaron and Phinehas

Now look in Numbers 25 and verse 7: “And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation.” Here is the picture of a righteous man rising up from the midst of an inactive multitude to carry out the functions of an office which God has ordained.

These two Scriptures form a strong contrast. In Numbers 16, Aaron stands with incense, with a true priestly heart, making atonement. Phinehas, on the other hand, is a minister of righteous vengeance, turning away wrath by striking out and executing God’s

judgment. Aaron makes an atonement by saving life, and Phinehas makes an atonement by taking life.

What God is saying is that some folks need to be killed. Aaron stayed the plague by standing between the dead and the living. He was saving life. He made an atonement by saving life. Phinehas made an atonement by taking life. Here is a very important principle: the destruction of the wicked is the preservation and the salvation of the righteous.

There are so many people who do not understand the reason behind the death penalty in the Bible. The death penalty is indeed biblical. God has ordained it very simply: if the wicked die, the righteous live; if the wicked live, the righteous die. Or, to put it another way, if the wicked live, society dies.

Look at what God says in Deuteronomy 19, beginning at verse 11: "But if any man hate his neighbor and lie in wait for him and rise up against him and smite him mortally that he die, here's a premeditated murderer and fleeth into one of these cities that is a city of refuge. Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him from thence and shall deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood that he may die."

"Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee." How do you put away the guilt of innocent blood? By slaying the wicked.

Now look back to verses 9 and 10. God says, "If thou shalt keep all these commandments," Deuteronomy 19:9, "if thou shalt keep all these commandments and do them which I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk ever in his ways, then shalt thou have three cities more unto thee besides these three, that innocent blood be not shed in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance and so blood be upon thee."

When innocent blood is shed, blood is upon us. What happens when those whom God condemns to death are allowed to live? They inevitably murder someone else, and thus blood is brought upon the land. Deuteronomy 21:9 says, "So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is

right in your own eyes"—is that what it says? "When you do what is right in the sight of the Lord."

"Well, Brother Weaver, I think that murderer needs to spend at least fifteen years in prison." I do not. I think he needs to be hanged, or shot, or gassed, or electrocuted, because God says, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." It is just that simple.

The point I am trying to make is this: when Phinehas acted, he acted as a public person, not a private person. The wicked needed to die in Numbers chapter 25, and because the wicked died, the righteous lived. Twenty-four thousand people died before Zimri and Cosby were executed.

Private vs. Public Person in Taking Life

Let me distinguish between a private person and a public person with an illustration everyone can understand. Here I am in my home, in my office studying. Alice is in the kitchen preparing a meal, and I hear her scream and shriek. I jump up and see a man standing there attacking her. I pull open a desk drawer, take out a .357 pistol, and blow his head off. I call the sheriff. When he arrives, I say, "Here was a man; he broke into my house, was attacking my wife, had a knife, and was going to cut her up, and I killed him." Please tell me what is going to happen to me. I do not want to say, first of all, nothing, because something would happen: I would be investigated.

But if the facts were brought to a jury, or to a grand jury that had one eye and half a sense, what would they do? They would acquit me: self-defense, plain and simple.

As a private person, I have the right to defend myself and my family. Do you understand that?

Now suppose the man attacked Alice, but I was not there. He got away. The sheriff investigated, found evidence, but could not find the man. Two weeks later, while we were riding down the road, I said, "That is him, that is him, that is him right there on the street." I asked, "Are you absolutely sure?" She said, "Yes, I am sure."

I stopped the car, reached into the back seat, got my rifle, put my scope right between his eyes, pulled the trigger, and dropped him

like a fly. My question is this: What is going to happen to me? I am going to be arrested. What am I going to be charged with? Murder.

Although I had the right to defend my wife, my life, and my family, here was a situation where I was not defending anything. I was simply executing someone. I was taking vengeance.

There would be nothing wrong with my taking my rifle out of the back seat, going up and sticking it in his face, and saying, "Just give me one reason to pull this trigger." Alice called the sheriff. Let the sheriff come and arrest him. Let him then be tried and sentenced to death. You see what I am saying?

As a private person, that is as far as I can go. But let us suppose the man killed my wife. I could not get to her in time to save her, but I saw his face and knew who he was. Two weeks later, I see him on the street. I walk up to him, stick a pistol in his face, and say, "You are under arrest. Do not even move." I call the sheriff, and the sheriff comes and arrests him. Let us say we have a biblical jury, and the jury sentences him to death in the electric chair.

It just so happens that I am the duly appointed executioner for the state of Georgia. I strap him into the electric chair, go back, pull a switch, send the current through his body, and kill him. What is going to be done to me now? Nothing. But I killed him. Why is nothing going to be done to me? Was I acting as an individual? No. Was I acting as a private person? No. I was acting as a public person for the state, which encompasses all of its citizens.

Phinehas was not acting merely as a private individual, saying, "Well, bless God, I think those two ought to die." No. He was a priest, a judge, and a civil officer, and he carried out the functions of that office.

The Bible says, "an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, stripe for stripe, wound for wound." Do you realize that the three times this is stated in the Old Testament—Exodus 21:21–25, Leviticus 24:16–23, and Deuteronomy 19:15–21—every time God says, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and life for life, foot for foot, burning for burning," He is giving that to the judges? The punishment is to fit the crime.

Biblical Justice and Personal Vengeance

Consider Deuteronomy 19, beginning with verse 15. This is a civil or criminal proceeding: “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.” “If a false witness rise up against any man, to testify against him that which is wrong, then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord.” They shall stand “before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days. And the judges shall make diligent inquisition.” If the witness is false and has testified falsely against his brother, “then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother. So shalt thou put the evil away from among you, and those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.”

“And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” If Dr. Holmes, in a court of law, perjures himself in trying to get me executed, and it is proven that he is a perjurer, what should happen to him? He is to be executed according to biblical law. That is eye for an eye. That is perfect justice.

Justice is God’s and not man’s. Whenever man gets involved, dishing out what he thinks is justice, usually—it ain’t justice.

God has never entrusted to a private individual the power to take life at his whim, pleasure, or vengeance. No individual has that right. I cannot say, "Joe's made me mad, I'm going to go kill him." I could, but it would be wicked and wrong. I cannot say, "Bill Clinton needs to die and I'm going to go kill him." I do not have that power or authority as a private individual. I have no authority to take anyone's life, nor, as the head of my house, to take any of my children's lives.

What does God tell me as a private individual? "Recompense no man evil for evil." Just because you do me wrong does not mean I have to do wrong back. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Then he says, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but

rather give place unto wrath. For it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

When he says, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves," he is saying, Do not go around with a vengeful attitude: "You did me wrong, I'm going to do you in. You did this to me, I'm going to get you back." Who does vengeance belong to, according to this text? God. It does not belong to us.

Why does God not intervene on our behalf more often than he does? Because we are not willing to step aside and wait for God to execute vengeance. We want to do it ourselves. God is just. If I execute vengeance upon Ed, is God going to execute vengeance upon him? No, he is not going to take the payment twice. If I want God to deal with Ed, I have to step out of the way and say, "Lord, you handle him." And by the way, I have news for you: God can clean plows a lot better than I can any day of the week.

When people do us wrong, it does not give us the right to do wrong back. God says we are to control our spirits: “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink. For in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” Then he says, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

You may say, “Brother Weaver, you don’t know what’s been done to me.” I know a lot of things that have been done to some of you. They are wicked, wrong, and ungodly, but that does not give you the right to be vengeful, hateful, retaliatory, or ugly. You must step out of the way and say, “Sick ’em, Lord. I’m going to let You take care of it. I’m not going to do it. I’m going to let You handle it.”

Applications and Warnings

Let me make this clear. When I say, “Avenge not yourselves,” I am not saying, “Do not defend yourselves.” Self-defense is biblical and obligatory. If Don comes up to me and tries to knock my head off, I am going to stop him as best I can. I have a right, biblically, constitutionally, and every other way, to defend my life. But if Don does things I do not like, lies about me, or continually tries to get me in trouble, I have no right to be vengeful toward him, try to get him in trouble in return, or lie about him. That is what “avenge not

yourselves" means. It does not mean that self-defense is wrong; self-defense is right.

Secondly, let me put this out. This is one of our greatest failings: there is a time when the tenderness of man is cruel. Can't you see the modern-day liberals weeping and saying, "Oh Phinehas, why did you have to kill that man and that woman? They were just expressing themselves. Love is such a beautiful thing." You have people who would weep for Zimri and Cosby and never weep for the twenty-four thousand who were killed in the plague. Why in the world would you weep for a premeditated murderer and totally ignore his victims? There is a time for tenderness and concern, but tenderness and concern are not to be at the expense of righteousness and justice.

Thirdly, look back at Numbers chapter 25. Consider a present-day application. Do you know who brought all this trouble upon Israel? It was leaders. Look at Numbers 25:14:

"Now, the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianite woman, was Zimri, the son of Sallu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites."

Here was a prince, a ruler. That is not all. Verse 15 says, "And the name of the Midianite woman that was slain was Cosby, the daughter of Zur, who was head over people, and the chief of a house in Midian." Here was another princess. Verse 18 says, "For they vex you with their wiles, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cosby, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister."

Here, then, were two leaders, two politicians, two congressmen. Our leaders tend to think that law applies to everyone else except them. God's law applies to them as well. Here were these civil leaders, these spiritual leaders, weeping before the door of the tabernacle, unable and unwilling to do what was right.

We've got a Congress and a judicial system exactly in the same spot. They are unwilling and unable to do what is just and right. One last thing: in Numbers 25, after God said in verse 17, "Vex the Midianites and smite them, for they vex you with their wiles," that which you and I must be on our toes against and guarding against is

the wiles of the enemy. No, the enemy does not normally come up and slap you in the face.

I said, "I'm going to chew your head off and spit it out. I'm going to execute you." No, the enemy does not do that. He comes with his wiles and seduces us into his arena, plans, programs, and everything he can use to destroy us, just as the children of Moab and Midian did to the Israelites. God says, "You better watch out for the wiles."

What did the Apostle Paul write? We are not ignorant of the devil's what? His wiles—his strategies. Phinehas was a public person, and what he did cannot be applied universally to every individual. We do not have the right to go about executing those who need to be executed. Just because we have a corrupt judicial system that will not function as it should does not mean murderers will get by and get away.

God will see to it that they are dealt with. Inevitably, invariably, they will attack the wrong individual in the wrong place and time, and they will receive the due reward of their sin. Years ago, I read about a man in Mobile, Alabama, who came to the police station and confessed to a murder committed twenty years earlier. The police laughed and said, "We know you did not do this."

He replied, "I assure you, I am the murderer. This has been on my conscience. I cannot live with it anymore. I want to be arrested." They told him to go home while they investigated. When they went to his home, they found him hanged by the neck, dead. He had taken his own life.

No one will escape the righteous judgment of God. We must remember that God's paydays are not always on Friday, but they do come, and He pays to the full.

Father, help us today to live for Thee and honor Thee. Help us always to do what is right, holy, and biblical, and to bring our lives into conformity to Thy Word. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 14

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part 14 of 16

Today we are going to read verses 32 and 33: “They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes, because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.”

Introduction and Review of Psalm 106

We have been in this psalm for fourteen weeks, and the title of this series is The Hallelujah of Confession, because this is the first psalm that begins with “Praise ye the Lord,” or hallelujah, while the content of the psalm deals with confession. All through this psalm, specific sins are being acknowledged, confessed, and recognized. The whole theme of this psalm, basically speaking, is to show that the sins of the fathers are still with us today. Everything that Israel did in the Old Testament, we are still doing today.

I dealt with ignorance and ingratitude in verse 7, forgetfulness and impatience in verse 13, envy and insurrection in verse 16, idolatry and insolence in verse 19, despisement and disbelief in

verses 24 and 25, and then, in verses 28 through 31, foreign gods—that is, idolatry—and judgment. Now we come to verse 32, where it says, “They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sake.”

The Principle of Romans 14:7

The lesson today is a clear illustration of Romans chapter 14 and verse 7. Since most of you may not know what Romans 14 and verse 7 says, I want you to turn there. I can quote it, but I want you to see it because it is a very important verse. Look, if you would, please, at Romans chapter 14 and verse 7. Notice what the Scripture says.

"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." You say, "Brother Weaver, what in the world has that got to do with me?" Well, look at it again: "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Have you ever said, or have you ever heard someone say, "Well, it's nobody's business what I do"? Sure you have. You've said it. But what we fail to understand is this: our lives always affect others. Our sins always affect others. No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. Whatever we do is ultimately going to affect not only our family, but our friends, our church, Christianity, and the ministry as a whole.

This truth is exemplified in Psalm 106, verses 32 and 33. In Psalm 106, verses 32 and 33, this truth is plainly stated: "They angered him"—they, the people—"they angered him also at the waters of strife so that it went ill with Moses for their sake because they"—the people—"provoked his spirit." That is Moses' spirit, so that he—Moses—"spake unadvisedly with his lips." So the sins of the people then affected even Moses and Aaron.

Historical Context: Numbers 20

Now there are serious implications in this passage. The historical context is found in the book of Numbers, chapter 20. There we read the first thirteen verses and see the historical context: "Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month, and the people abode in Kadesh, and Miriam died there and was buried there. And there was no water for the congregation, and they gathered themselves together against Moses

and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses and spake, saying, 'Would God that we had died with our brethren when our brethren died before the Lord? And why have you brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness that we and our cattle should die there?'"

"And wherefore have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us into this evil place? It is no place of seed or figs or vines or pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink.' And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly under the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces, and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 'Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water. And thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock, so shalt thou give the congregation and their beasts drink.' And Moses took the rod from before the Lord as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the Lord, and he said unto them, 'Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?' And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice.

"And the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, 'Because you believe me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.' This is the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the Lord and he was sanctified in them."

This incident is known as Meribah Kadesh. The reason for emphasizing this is that there is another similar incident known as Meribah Rephidim. Deuteronomy 32:51 says, "Because you transgressed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, because you sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel."

We will see both passages in a moment: Meribah Kadesh and Meribah Rephidim. Although the children of Israel were constantly and continually sinning, as we have observed in Psalm 106, a number of these sins are dealt with and specified. However, in Psalm

106, verses 32 and 33, the sins specifically dealt with are the sins of Moses and Aaron. There are three sins that are stated.

The Three Sins of Moses and Aaron

Three sins are plainly dealt with. What are they? First of all, unbelief. Look at Numbers chapter 20 and verse 12: "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because you believe me not." There is the sin of unbelief. The second sin dealt with is a failure to sanctify the Lord. He said in verse 12, "Because you believe me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel." The third sin is mentioned in Psalm 106 and verse 33: Moses "spake unadvisedly with his lips."

There is a time to keep your mouth shut, and it is usually when you are visibly upset. So Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips. This is an application that will be addressed again, but it is plainly illustrated here.

Undoubtedly, there are other sins implied in this context, but these three are named specifically. Psalm 106:32 says, "They angered him also at the waters of strife." Now you have to ask the question: Who does the "him" refer to, or to whom does the "him" refer? It would be either God or Moses. In the context, I believe the answer is Moses.

Obviously, God is never pleased with sin and rebellion. Psalm 7:11 says that God is angry with the wicked every day. There is not a day in which God's anger does not burn hot toward the wicked. But when you deal with the anger of God in Scripture, you find an amazing truth: there are more Scripture references dealing with God's anger toward His people for their disobedience and rebellion than there are concerning His anger toward the ungodly. Although God is angry with the wicked, and although God is angry with the rebellion of His people, I still believe the reference to "him" has to be Moses, because the verse continues, "They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sake."

Returning to Numbers chapter 20, there was enough sin and rebellion among the Israelites to even make Moses sin. Verse 2 says, "And there was no water for the congregation." What did the congregation do? "They gathered themselves together against Moses

and against Aaron.” The first thing they started to do was bellyaching, complaining, and whining to Moses: “It’s your fault.” Verse 3 says, “And the people chode with Moses.”

In other words, they were angry, mad, thirsty, and upset, and they were burning Moses' hide, so to speak. They chode with Moses and spake, saying, "Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord." Remember those thirty-eight years or so when they wandered in the wilderness and people died daily? That is what they were saying: "Would God we had died when they died during the wanderings."

We sure better be careful what we wish for. God might just work it out for us. They said, "Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord." Then they asked, "And why have you brought up the congregation of the Lord into the wilderness?" They had forgotten who was leading them. Who was leading the children of Israel? God was, with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

May I remind you, it was not God's fault; it was Moses' fault, according to their accusation: "You brought us out here. Why have you brought up the congregation of the Lord in this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us into this evil place?"

They had not gotten into the promised land, so they were complaining: "It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink." They were provoking Moses.

The Provocation of Moses

If you look back to Psalm 106 and verse 33, it says, "Because they provoked his spirit," and the "his" refers to Moses, "so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." Moses was so provoked that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips. Have you ever heard the expression, "It's enough to make a preacher cuss"? Undoubtedly, this is where that old expression came from, because they really set Moses off.

Now, what made this provocation so unusual and so great? Look in Numbers, chapter 12, verse 3. Speaking of Moses, the Word of God says, "Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men

which were upon the face of the earth." Moses was considered the meekest man on earth.

What in the world is meekness? Meekness is not a false humility. Meekness is not being a floor mat. Meekness is not letting someone wipe their feet all over you. Meekness, according to the Word of God, is disciplined strength. So Moses was an individual who had disciplined strength. He was controlled. He was in control. He had control. He was gentle and subdued. Yet in this instance, the meekest, most self-controlled, disciplined man on earth was provoked.

Moses acknowledges his sin, but he does not excuse the people either. In Deuteronomy 1:37, he says, “Also the Lord was angry with me for your sake, saying, ‘Thou shalt not go in thither.’” The Lord was angry with him for their sakes.

I want you to note something. If you look back in Numbers chapter 20, evidently the anger that Moses displayed was the seething, boiling kind. What kind of anger is that? Everyone can immediately identify with it. There are times in your life when you just explode like a volcano. There are other times when your sinful anger does not explode. You keep your mouth shut and hold it in. Then the more you think about it, the madder you get. Has that ever happened to you? Come on, be honest. It has. It happens to me. Maybe I am just a unique sinner, but there are times when, if I meditate on some things, the more angry I get. That is what happened to Moses.

How do you know that? Look down to verse 6. When they first started accusing Moses and Aaron, their first response was the correct response. Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces, and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them. Their very first response was the accurate one. They went to the Lord and said, “Lord, look at what is happening. Look at what is being said.”

Since they went to the Lord for an answer, notice how simple and straightforward it was. The Lord said to Moses, “Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and

speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock, so that thou shalt give this congregation and their beasts drink."

God told Moses to take the rod. Moses had used it before in Egypt as a negative sanction when he cursed the Egyptians. He had also used it positively at Horeb when he smote the rock and brought water from it. Thus, the rod was a symbol of God's sovereign authority; it represented God Himself.

God said, "You take this rod, you gather the congregation together, you speak to the rock, and the water will come out." But look at what Moses did. "And Moses took the rod from before the Lord as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock. And he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?' And Moses lifted up his hand and with the rod, he smote the rock twice and the water came out abundantly. And the congregation drank, and the beasts also."

Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you believe me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Moses did not do as God commanded. God said, "Speak to the rock"; Moses smote the rock. In Exodus chapter 17, we find where Moses brought water from the rock the first time.

This is the water of Horeb. This is Meribah Rephidim, which I spoke of earlier. In Exodus 17, all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of sin after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. The people chided with Moses, saying, "Give us water that we may drink." Moses asked, "Why chide ye with me? Wherefore, do you tempt the Lord?" The people thirsted there for water and murmured against Moses, accusing him of bringing them out of Egypt to kill them and their children and their cattle with thirst. Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do unto this people?" They were almost ready to stone him.

The Lord told Moses to go before the people, take with him the elders of Israel, and take his rod, wherewith he smote the river, in his hand. He was to proceed to the rock in Horeb: “Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.” Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, Meribah Rephidim, because of the chiding of the children of Israel and because they tempted the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us, or not?” In this passage, God did tell Moses to strike the rock.

Now, you have to ask yourself this question: Why did God tell Moses to strike the rock in Exodus 17 and only speak to the rock in Numbers 20? What is the difference? Let me give you the standard theological answer. I do not doubt that this is true, but this is the answer you will ordinarily receive, because many scholars have observed that the rock was Christ.

First Corinthians 10:4 says, “And they did all drink that same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.” The Word of God says it very plainly. Let me ask a simple question: How many times must Christ be smitten?

The answer is once. Hebrews 9:28 says, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." So Christ was once offered. Hebrews 10:14 adds, "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." So Christ was offered once and for all.

If that rock was Christ, and God told Moses initially to smite the rock in Exodus 17, then the picture fits in beautifully. But when Moses smote it the second time in Numbers chapter 20, he violated the representation of Christ, because Christ was only to be smitten once. The picture was that Christ would be smitten once, not repeatedly, and the action therefore misrepresented what Christ would accomplish.

Although Moses misrepresented the picture of Christ, that is not what he was charged with in Psalm 106. That is not what he was

charged with in Numbers chapter 20. Very clearly, God charged him with unbelief, with a failure to sanctify God, and with speaking unadvisedly with his lips. The failure to sanctify God in the eyes of the children of Israel and the failure to speak correctly with his lips may be understood as the results of the first sin, which was a failure to believe in God.

I want to read a quotation to you and enlarge upon this. The quotation is from the Old Testament commentators Keil and Delitzsch, concerning Numbers 20:12. Listen carefully to what they say. In fact, let us read verse 12, Numbers 20, verse 12.

The Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, "Because you believe me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." The want of belief or firm confidence in the Lord through which both of them had sinned was not actual unbelief or distrust in the omnipotence and grace of God, as if God could not relieve the want of water or extend His help to the murmuring people. The Lord had promised to help Moses, and Moses did what the Lord had commanded him. It was simply the want, or lack, of a full believing confidence—a momentary wavering of that immovable assurance which the two heads of the nation ought to have shown to the congregation but did not show.

Moses did even more than God had commanded him. Instead of speaking to the rock with the rod of God in his hand, as God directed him, he spoke to the congregation. In these inconsiderate words, "Shall we fetch you water out of this rock?"—words which, if they did not express any doubt in the help of the Lord, were certainly fitted to strengthen the people in their unbelief—they are therefore described in Psalm 106:33 as a praying or speaking unadvisedly with the lips.

He then struck the rock twice with a rod, as if it depended upon human exertion and not upon the power of God alone, or as if the promise of God would not have been fulfilled without all the smiting on his part. In the ill-will expressed in these words, the weakness of faith was manifested. The faithful servant of God, worn out with numerous temptations, allowed himself to be overcome, so that he stumbled and did not sanctify the Lord before the eyes of the people

as he ought to have done. Aaron also wavered along with Moses, inasmuch as he did nothing to prevent Moses' fall.

Their sin was not unbelief in the sense that Moses and Aaron did not believe God could send the water. Certainly they believed God could send it. They knew that God was able. Their sin was a lack of full assurance—simply failing to take God at His word and do what He commanded.

Here is a question that must be asked: Why did Moses smite the rock? What was going on? God had told him to speak to the rock. How was it that Moses and Aaron did not fully believe? What is the import of striking the rock? Why did Moses call the people rebels and assume that he and Aaron would fetch the water?

Why Moses Struck the Rock

Listen to what he said in the latter part of verse 10: "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch water out of the rock for you?" Or, as though God had not given it, we are going to get it for you. What was actually going on? Moses should have believed God and acted upon God's Word alone. God had given Moses an unconditional promise: "Speak to the rock, and the water shall flow."

You must remember, folks, God's Word is sufficient. Did not God simply speak this world into existence? The Bible says in Psalm 33 and verse 9, "He spake, and it stood fast. He commanded, and it came to pass." All God has to do is speak. Moses knew that. Why, then, did Moses strike the rock?

Acts 7:22 gives us a truth about Moses that we often forget: "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." One of the most difficult things for you and me to do as Christians is to unlearn all that we have been previously taught that is unbiblical. We are creatures of habit, and we find ourselves acting and responding in ways that we should not.

I am going to tell you what I believe is the correct answer and explain why. Moses struck the rock because, in his lack of full belief in simply the Word of God, he was thinking that there must be an intermediary causation. In other words, there had to be something between the speaking and the water flowing. For Moses, that

something was a ritual. After all, he had smitten the rock in Exodus chapter 17.

What did his unbelief consist of? It consisted simply in this: Moses did not believe that the word of God was sufficient alone to bring water out of the rock. Moses believed it had to be the word of God plus something—plus his ritual, that of smiting the rock. Every time you read in the Bible about Meribah Kadesh, Moses makes it clear that it was because of this.

He could not lead the people into the promised land because, in this instance, Moses, instead of acting as a prophet of God, was acting like a pagan priest. Everybody has rituals. I do not care if you are Roman Catholic, a cultist, a Mason, or a Baptist. Everybody has rituals. Just by virtue of the fact that you are a man, you have rituals. You get up in the morning, brush your teeth, wash your face, comb your hair, go to the bathroom, and eat your breakfast. That is a ritual. It may not be a religious ritual, but everybody has rituals.

Magic, Ritual, and Covenantalism

When it comes to religion and investing words with power, there are three main views. The first is referred to as the magical view, or realism as it is called. The second is traditionalism, which is nominalism. Realism and nominalism are pagan philosophies, by the way. The third is judicial, or covenantalism, and that alone is biblical.

The magician, or realist, believes that ritual infuses words with power. That is why there is abracadabra. What is the magician doing? He is using words, or using the ritual, to infuse those words with power. The ritualist believes there is a power that can be tapped out there somewhere through the use of a ritual. That is why witches have their séances. It is all ritualism.

Traditionalism, or the nominalist, believes that rituals persuade men that words have greater authority. In other words, if we can perform this little ritual, everybody will believe there is a greater authority to our words. The covenantalist, or judicialist, believes that ritual only evokes or invokes and calls down power when those words are lawfully uttered.

Let me give you an illustration. I have had people curse me. And you know what I do? I laugh and go on my way.

Now, when I say curse me, I do not necessarily mean taking God's name in vain. They wish me ill and wish something bad would happen to me. Why can I laugh at that? Because their words are not lawfully uttered. You cannot condemn whom God does not condemn. You cannot curse whom God does not curse. Balaam found that out, do you remember? Balak hired him to curse Israel, and God turned every curse into a blessing. I can pronounce a curse upon you, but the curse would be useless and worthless and in vain unless it were a lawfully ordered curse according to the word of God. So the judicialist, the man who believes in biblical law, believes that words have power only when they are lawfully uttered.

When Moses smote the rock, what he was doing was acting as a magician. He was acting as a realist. What he was saying was that his act was needed to infuse power into the words that would make the water flow. In all pagan religions, pagan magical religion always sees the priest as an intermediary, someone between the supernatural and the natural. You have to have a go-between. All you have to do is read Deuteronomy chapter 18. That is why God talks about the wizards, the warlocks, the magicians, and the soothsayers, and condemns every one of them. That is what Pharaoh was. Pharaoh claimed to be the intermediary, the link between heaven and hell, or the underworld and the world above. All of the wicked kingdoms in times past, whether Egyptian, Chaldean, Babylonian, or whatever they were, had a king-god as their intermediary.

So when Moses smote that rock, what he basically was doing was acting as a pagan priest, because here is what he said. In his own words, "Must we fetch water out of this rock for you?" When he relied upon the rod as the means of bringing water from the rock, he was adopting the mentality of a magician. You have to remember how that rod had been used in Egypt by Moses. He brought all the negative sanctions, or curses, upon the Egyptians. He smote the river with the rod, and the river turned to blood. He smote the earth, and the dust became lice. He smote the rock in Horeb, and the rock brought forth water. So that rod had been used negatively and positively.

But here is his sin: he did not see that the word of God alone was sufficient. It had to be the word of God plus the ritual, or plus the rod.

Here is what Moses was doing: he was putting the authority in the symbol, in the rod, rather than in God Himself. He was moving in the area of a pagan priest.

In Numbers chapter 20, verse 10, he said unto them, "Hear now, you rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" In one sense, when Moses made that statement, he pronounced a judicial invocation against Israel for their sins. They were rebels, and what they wanted was a public display of God's power rather than reliance upon God's promises. But in doing that, Moses condemned himself. He, too, was relying upon a public demonstration of power rather than the promise, because he smote the rock. Through his unbelief and his failure to sanctify God before the eyes of the children of Israel, he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

"We're going to do it. It's our ritual. It's our act." He was adding his words to God's promise, his ritual to God's word. May Moses and Aaron fail to sanctify God in their office? And what did God do? God disinherited them from their office. God said, "You don't want to follow me. You don't obey my word. All right, Moses, you're not going into the land." Joshua would take them in. Aaron would die there, and Eleazar, his son, would be the priest of the land. God cut them off. Over and over, Moses says, "For this cause, I could not go in."

Applications for Believers

There are plenty of applications today. Cause and effect in history is covenantal—not magical, not ritualistic. Magic is a religion that substitutes ritual for ethics, morality, and obedience. You may go to a witch, a warlock, or someone cultic; they do not care how you live or what you do, so long as you follow their ritual and practice. That's the Roman Catholic Church. They do not care how you live, so long as you go to confession, attend mass, and take care of their rituals.

Deuteronomy 28 deals with the blessings and the curses. Proverbs 11:31 shows that cause and effect in history are covenantal: "Behold,

the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth." That is, we are going to be rewarded in the earth. Then he says, "Much more the wicked and the sinner." So, as we obey, what are we going to be? Rewarded and blessed. Those who disobey will be judged and cursed. That is covenantalism.

Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." You may not have thought of this verse in this light, but here it is. What does our Lord say is first and paramount? Obedience. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." That is, you do what is right. You do what is biblical, what is lawful, and what is godly. That is the cause, and the effect is that all these things will be added to you.

Of course, the opposite is true. If you disobey, none of those things will be added to you, except the curses and the judgments. The truth is that cause and effect are covenantal. It has nothing to do with magic. It has nothing to do with traditionalism. It has to do with obedience and disobedience.

The husband and wife who obey God and do what is biblical and right will have a happy and successful marriage. It is that simple. The husband and wife who do what is wrong and disobey God will have a miserable marriage and probably end up in divorce. Cause and effect are covenantal.

Here is the first application: 1 Samuel 2:30 says, "Them that honor me will I honor, saith the Lord. And they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." God says, "You honor me, I'll honor you. You despise me, I'll despise you." It is just that simple. Cause and effect are covenantal. If we want the right effects in our life, we must, in one sense of the word, cause those effects by relying totally upon God and His word and being obedient unto Him. Here is the second application: look back to Numbers chapter 20 for this one.

People have not changed. In Numbers 20:2–5, there was no water for the congregation, and they gathered against Moses and Aaron. The people chided Moses, saying, "Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord? And why have you brought up the congregation of the Lord into the wilderness, that we and our

cattle should die there? And wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt to bring us into this evil place? It is no place of seed or of figs or of vines or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink."

Here is the application: It is the tendency of men always to complain about their covenantal disobedience and God's negative sanctions, or God's judgment, and to place the blame on someone else—most usually, God's preachers or prophets. It was just like Ahab. Who was to blame for the drought? Elijah was. According to Ahab, "If I can get my hands on him, I'll kill him," as though killing Elijah would relieve the drought. No, God sent the drought, and the cause of the drought was the people's rebellion against God. All Moses did was announce it.

Whatever goes wrong in the local church today, it is always the preacher's fault. If we do not have good attendance, it is the preacher's fault. If the Spirit of God is not moving, it is the preacher's fault. If the sermon is not what we think it should be, it is the preacher's fault. If folks get sick, it is the preacher's fault. If our home breaks up, it is the preacher's fault; he did not give us enough counsel or the right counsel. It is never our sins, rebellion, and wickedness. The tendency is always to blame someone else, especially, as Numbers 20 says, the people of God.

We must not be provoked into evil by others. What got Moses into trouble? Thinking about their rebellion. He thought about it and was so vexed that he allowed it to provoke him to do wrong. Exodus 23:2 says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." If everybody in this building does wrong, that does not give me the right to do what is wrong, because the majority is doing it. Usually the majority is wrong, not right. First Corinthians 15:33 says, "Be not deceived. Evil communications corrupt good manners." What does that mean? It means this.

Keeping the Heart and Tongue from Evil

Stay away from wicked people and wicked places. You are not going to lift them up; they are going to pull you down. You will be provoked into doing evil. Proverbs 22:24–25 says, "Make no friendship with an angry man and with a furious man, thou shalt not

go; lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to thy soul." So, cuss, do not be provoked. Do not let others provoke you into doing what is wicked and wrong.

This next application is the flip side of the third one. The third application was that we must not be provoked into evil by others. The flip side is this: no matter what others say or do, we must always keep our hearts and our tongues from evil. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." That is one of my favorite verses, and it is a very important, fundamental truth. Why? Because out of the heart are the issues of life.

Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue. And they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Proverbs 21:23 says, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles." How many of us have let our tongues overload our heads? We always get in trouble when we should have kept our mouths shut.

I am not talking about not rebuking sin and not rebuking evil. I am not saying that you do not tell someone how the cow eats the cabbage if they need to hear it. But, as Ephesians 4:15 says, you speak the truth in love. You speak it, but you do not speak it all bent out of shape and angry, because nobody is going to listen to you.

I heard an excellent illustration of this: a Christian man who happens to be an attorney was representing the church before a judge. The judge chewed him up one side and down the other—not because he had done anything wrong, but because of the principles of Scripture on which he was standing. She endeavored to upset him and anger him. What she wanted was for him to become angry so that she could hold him in contempt of court, making him say something.

He simply kept his tongue and smiled. Inevitably, the judge then changed, and I think that fellow basically won the day, or at least that round. If somebody stands up and cusses me out, that does not give me the right to cuss him back. I have to keep my heart and my tongue from speaking evil, regardless of whether anybody else does or not.

I will tell you the truth, and I may tell you forcibly; you may not like the way I say it. I am not going to pull any punches, but I am not going to let you make me angry and then make me jump down your throat. I will tell you how to catch the cabbage before you get that far. Everyone in here knows this: all magic and the occult are wicked, wrong, and ungodly. Stay as far away from them as you can, even from innocent games you think are harmless. I would never have anything to do with Ouija boards or balls supposed to tell the future. That attempts to know the future apart from God and God's Word, and it is condemned over and over in Scripture.

We are Christians, not pagans. Our authority is the Word of God and the Word of God alone. His Word is invested with power; we do not need rituals to make it powerful. We need to speak His Word, but we speak His Word lawfully. For whom God blesses, he is blessed, and whom God curses, he is cursed. Moses wanted to add his ritual and words to God's Word, but God said it does not work like that. What did He say in Isaiah 42 and verse 8? “I am the Lord and besides me there is none other, and my glory I will not share with another.”

Father, we thank Thee for Jesus Christ, for His grace, love, and mercy to us. Help us always act like Your children and trust totally, solely, and completely in Your Word and authority. May we rest upon Your truth alone. In Jesus Christ's name, we ask it. Amen and Amen.

CHAPTER 15

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part 15 of 16

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 106:34-48 (KJV)

Introduction and Context of Psalm 106:34-39

Psalm 106, beginning with verse 34:

"They did not destroy the nations concerning whom the Lord commanded them, but were mingled among the heathen and learned their works, and they served their idols, which were a snare to them.

Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a-whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.

And he gave them into the hand of the heathen, and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed

> them, and they were brought in subjection under their hand. Many times did he deliver them, but they provoked him with their counsel and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction when he heard their cry. He remembered for them his covenant and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.
>
> Save us, O Lord, our God, and gather us from among the heathen to give thanks unto thy holy name and to triumph in thy praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say amen. Praise ye the Lord.
>
> We are approaching the last portion of this chapter, and it is my intention, if the Lord allows it, to wind this passage up next Lord's Day. There is one important subject in these verses that I want to deal with, but hopefully I will be able to finish the passage next Lord's Day. Notice, beginning with verse 34: "They did not destroy the nations concerning whom the Lord commanded them." There is a break between verse 33 and verse 34, and I will tell you what that break is.

Remember, this series is known as The Hallelujah of Confession. Once the psalmist began specifically confessing the sins in verse 7, down through verse 33, those were the sins committed prior to the Canaan conquest. When you get to verse 34 through the rest of the chapter, here are the sins committed after the Canaan conquest. The sins continue after they conquer the land, as well as before they entered it. In fact, the sins increased in intensity and wickedness so much that God judged the people. Skip down to verse 40: "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance, and he gave them into the hand of the heathen. And they that hated them ruled over them."

I intend to deal with this passage as a whole because it is tied together contextually. Moreover, when you observe the passage as a whole, it is much easier to discern how one sin not only leads to another, but how those sins increase in intensity when compounded. I want to deal with one point today. Lord willing, I will cover verses 34 through 39. Here is the one point I want to emphasize: the source of sin.

The Source of Problems: Disobedience

You could make this point the source of troubles or the source of problems. Understand that the cause of Israel's problems in the Old Testament is the cause of our problems in this day and age as well. What was the source of their problem? Look in verse 34: "They did not destroy the nations concerning whom the Lord commanded them." The source of their problems can be summarized in one word: disobedience. They literally disobeyed God.

The Bible says in 1 John 3 and verse 4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." Allow me to emphasize once again that the source of our problems, the source of our troubles, 99.9% of the time comes from our own disobedience to the Word of God. I realize that God is sovereign. God could, if he saw fit, sovereignly intervene in our lives as he did in the life of Job, or occasionally in the life of other individuals recorded in Scripture.

Those cases are few and far between. Most of the time, it is not God simply dumping problems upon us. We bring problems upon ourselves because of our own disobedience. Inevitably, disobedience leads to multitudinous problems and heartaches. The amazing thing is that when we begin to disobey and sin, our sin seems so small, insignificant, and trifling. We think, "Surely this cannot possibly bring the heartache and trouble the Word of God says it will." But inevitably and invariably, it does.

In fact, note this: everything recorded in Psalm 106, verses 35 on down through the rest of that chapter, is the result of their disobedience in verse 34. Everything that happened happened as a result of their disobedience. The truth is that we not only reap what we sow; we also reap more than we sow. That is a law not only of nature, but of Scripture. You can plant one grain of corn and reap hundreds of grains, or one peanut and reap hundreds of peanuts. But you sow one sin, and you can reap a hundred heartaches.

God's Command to Destroy the Canaanites

Verse 34 says, "They did not destroy the nations concerning whom the Lord commanded them." Now see how God commanded them to

destroy those nations. Exodus 23:20 says, “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.”

God further says, “Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.” God said, “I want them cut off. I want them executed, and I do not want you making any kind of covenant with them. I do not want you bowing down to their gods. I want them all destroyed.”

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 34:11-17; Deuteronomy 7:1-6 (KJV)

> God says, "Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee.
>
> But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: for thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a-whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a-whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a-whoring after their gods. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods." Once again, God says, "You are not to enter into covenants with them. You're to throw down every altar, cut down every grove, destroy everything that has any religious significance, get rid of it."

> "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.
>
> But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

God said two simple things in reality. Number one, I want you to execute all of them. Number two, you destroy every vestige of their worship, of their religion. You make no covenant with them whatsoever. You make no marriage with them. You do not take their daughters. You do not give your daughters. You make sure you stay away from the heathen.

Spiritual Application: Mortifying Our Canaanites

Israel failed to obey and consequently reaped a fearful harvest. You say, "I can see that and I understand that, but how in the world would that relate to our lives?" Well, very simply, as there were physical Canaanites in the land in Old Testament times, there are not only physical Canaanites in our land, but there are spiritual Canaanites that we all have to face. Do you realize the command of God is still the same? We are to mortify, we are to execute our spiritual Canaanites. You say, "What in the world are you talking about?" Look in your Bibles to two, well actually three passages.

The first one is Romans chapter 13 and verse 14. Romans chapter 13, and notice verse 14. Here is a powerful passage, a simple truth, and yet very often disobeyed. The Bible says, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

What is he talking about? He is talking about our lusts. He is talking about that which we want by nature, which is absolutely wicked and wrong and contrary to God. So he says, "Here is the answer. You put on the Lord Jesus Christ, you obey Him, and you do not make any provision at all to fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Now, go back in your Bibles to Romans 6. Here he says it very plainly. Note, beginning there with verse 11: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Now look what he says: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin."

Our old man has been crucified with Christ. Therefore, we need to count, or impute, ourselves dead indeed unto sin. What effect does lust have upon a physically dead man? None. He cannot sense anything; he is dead. What about greed, power, evil thoughts, or wicked desires? They have no influence over a dead man.

This is what our Lord is saying: we have to reckon ourselves spiritually dead indeed unto sin. Sin is not to have dominion over us; it is not our lord, nor is it to exercise kingship over us. We do not have to obey sin because we have been delivered from sin by the power and by the blood of Jesus Christ. Consequently, when sin comes along, we are to say, “No, we are dead. We are dead in Christ, and our life is hid in God, in Jesus Christ. We refuse to do that which is wicked and wrong.”

Many times, we do not do that, and consequently we reap a fearful harvest. The Apostle Paul outlines this same truth in Colossians chapter 3, beginning with verse 1: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” In other words, He is to be our source of attention. “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Then he says, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these…” He then tells us what all we are to put off.

What is he saying? We have the same command as the Old Testament Israelites: we are to make dead the spiritual Canaanites in our lives. We are to reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He has called us to subdue, mortify, and make dead these spiritual Canaanites. But we must ask: What happened to Israel in the Old Testament when they failed to obey God? And what happens to us in the New Testament era when we fail to obey God in the same sense?

First Consequence: Mingling with the Heathen

Let us go back to Psalm 106 and look at verse 35. Verse 34 tells us that they did not destroy those nations concerning whom the Lord commanded them. Here is the first result: “But were mingled among the heathen.”

The word “mingled” is the Hebrew word “arab,” which means to become a surety for, to undertake for, to give a pledge to, or to intermix.

Hold Psalm 106, but look back to Joshua 23. Joshua gave the Israelites a fresh warning, even after Moses had repeatedly warned the people. Joshua had taken them into the land, and he gave them this fresh warning, beginning with verse 11.

Joshua warned Israel: “Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.”

Joshua said that they had better make sure they obeyed, because disobedience would bring problems. What did the people do? They mingled with the heathen. Their mingling was not limited to business dealings, nor to political or military alliances. It went deeper than that. Ezra chapter 9 records the result: “Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.”

Their political, military, and business alliances culminated in marriage covenants and mingling with the heathen. The consequence was that they learned the ways of the heathen. The same principle is taught in the New Testament: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” That is a simple command. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and

will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Now, what is he saying? "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

Let us say, for instance, Henry is an unbeliever. Thankfully, he is not. But suppose he is an unbeliever, and I am a Christian, and we are talking about going into a business partnership together. What does God say? Do not do it. Why? Because Henry's standards are not going to be my standards. His rules are not going to be my rules. Inevitably, invariably, darkness and light are not going to mix. Righteousness and unrighteousness are not going to mix, and there are going to be problems. There is going to be trouble.

Now, if that is true in a business partnership, how much truer is it in a political partnership, a military partnership, and how much even truer is it in a marriage relationship? So God says, "We are not to enter into covenants with the heathen." Does that mean we cannot be civil toward them? Of course not. Does that mean we cannot be kind and gracious to the heathen? Of course not. Does that mean we cannot evangelize them? Of course we may. But what God says is that we do not enter into a covenantal relationship with the heathen. It is just that simple.

"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." That is why the law forbade plowing with an ox and a mule. It is an unequal yoking together. Israel, of course, refused to obey, and very clearly Christendom today is refusing to obey as well, because Christians think nothing of entering into business alliances and marriage relationships with the heathen.

Second Consequence: Learning Their Works

Now we will look at the result. Go back to Psalm 106, once again, verse 35. He says, "...but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works." "...and learned their works." Note that the heathen were not learning godly works. The godly were learning ungodly works. The godly do not lift up the heathen by joining in covenantal relationships with them. Rather, the heathen always pulls the godly down. The Bible says they learned their wicked works.

The word “learned” literally means to goad or to teach. How is it, and why is it, that when a godly man yokes up with an ungodly man, it is not the ungodly man who learns from the godly, but the godly man who learns from the ungodly? The answer is very simple: there is nothing in the ungodly man that will respond to righteousness and holiness. What does the Bible say in Romans 8 and verse 9?

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." In other words, there is nothing in an ungodly man that can please God, nothing in him that is righteous and holy or wanting to do right. He is not going to respond to a godly man. Yet although a godly man lives in a sinful world and environment, and still has his flesh, his flesh will respond to the wicked works of the ungodly.

Even righteous people need money. The unrighteous can get money in ways the righteous cannot. When a righteous man is in a tight place, he may be willing to compromise truth and principle if an ungodly man offers him a quick way out. There is nothing in an ungodly man that will respond to God, but there is something in a godly man that will respond to a wicked man.

God says in Deuteronomy 18:9, "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations." Do not learn their works or their deeds. In Deuteronomy 20:17-18, God says, "But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee: that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the Lord your God." Why did God say to destroy them? So they would not teach Israel to do evil, and Israel would not learn from them.

We are forbidden to learn from the wicked. Their ways are not God's ways, their thoughts are not God's thoughts, and their plans are not God's plans. Yet Christians constantly listen to the world, learn its ways, use its wisdom, rely upon its provisions, and seek its pleasures. We are doing exactly the opposite of what God has commanded.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” That is advice. We do not take the advice of the ungodly. When you start taking their advice, pretty soon you are going to take the next step: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners.” That is association. Once you start taking their advice, you will start associating with them. Then he says, “nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” The last step is that you will finally end up agreeing with them. The way to stop agreeing with them is never to associate with them in these covenantal relationships, and never, ever listen to their advice.

The godly man delights in the law of the Lord, and in that law does he meditate day and night. Why? He wants the wisdom of God and not the wisdom of man. What does God say in 1 John 2:15? “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

God has told us not to learn the works of the wicked, and yet we do it every day, many times unconsciously, sometimes deliberately. We bring God’s judgment upon ourselves exactly the way Israel did in Psalm 106, because we are disobeying God’s command about not mingling with the heathen and learning their wicked works. Now, go back to Psalm 106, because that is not the only result of disobeying God.

Third Consequence: Serving Idols as a Snare

Look at verse 36: “and served their idols, which were a snare unto them.” You see, when you begin taking their advice and associating with them, you will eventually end up agreeing with them; consequently, you will be serving their idols, which were a snare unto them. The serving of idols in the Old Testament was the cause

of multitudinous heartaches to the Israelites. I want you to compare two passages. Hold Psalm 106, and look at Exodus 10 and Deuteronomy 7. I want you to hold those passages. We will look at Exodus 10 first, then turn to Deuteronomy 7. Exodus 10—not Exodus 20. I knew I did not have the correct verse. Look at Exodus 10, verse 7.

"And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" What does a snare mean? It means misery, destruction, and heartache. They said, "This man's a snare to us. We've been caught in a trap. We're destroyed."

Now, look in Deuteronomy 7. Here is the same word, in verse 16: "And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee." Just as the snare was the destruction of Egypt, serving idols is our destruction as well.

I can hear people say, "But Pastor, I don't serve idols. I don't bow down to a graven image." May I remind you that an idol can be an idol without being a graven image? Ephesians 5 and verse 5 says, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." You do not have to bow down to an idol to be an idolater; as long as you are covetous, you are an idolater.

Colossians 3 and verse 5 says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

Philippians 3, verses 18 and 19, says, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Whose God is their belly.

That doesn't necessarily mean that they simply love to eat all the time. Certainly food can be an idol to us. But when he says, "whose

God is their belly," he clarifies: "whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." In other words, they are consumed with this life and this world, with pleasure and greed and money and power and sex and family and convenience—anything other than God. You do not have to bow down to an idol to be an idolater. Anything that comes before God is an idol, whether literal, mental, emotional, or spiritual.

Go back to Psalm 106 and see how this ties together. The consequences are the same. Verse 36 says, "they served their idols, which were a snare to them."

Fourth Consequence: Sacrificing Children to Devils

Now look at the fourth result, or consequence, of their disobeying God. Verses 37 and 38 say: "Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood."

You may object, "But Brother Weaver, I don't know anyone in this country who would physically sacrifice their child to a false god." I believe I can change your mind on that subject. The key evil in the Old Testament was Moloch worship, which was an aspect of Baal worship. The word Moloch is used different ways in the Bible: Melech, Milcom, Malcam, or Malcham. Though spelled differently, it is still Moloch worship.

Moloch was the god of the Ammonites. The word Moloch means king or kingship. Moloch worship was a political religion in which the king was worshipped as God. Political correctness—we almost have that today, with the government as God.

Who introduced Moloch worship into Israel? It was Solomon, the good king. First Kings chapter 11 records that Solomon loved many strange women whom God had forbidden him to love and marry. He sinned against God and built altars for his pagan wives. One of those altars was to Moloch.

Moloch worship sometimes involved the actual burning of children to this false god. He was worshipped in the valley of the

sons of Hinnom, basically the garbage dump of Jerusalem. Sometimes that valley is referred to as Tophet.

In fact, Jeremiah 32:35 says, "And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin." Notice that it is called Molech here, and it was in the valley of the son of Hinnom. The passage says that this was an abomination, something God commanded them not to do, and that it caused Judah to sin.

Sometimes children were indeed sacrificed. Here is an illustration of it. In 2 Kings 3:27, we read, "Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land." This shows that children were actually offered as burnt offerings.

Second Kings 23:10 says, "And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech." The valley of the son of Hinnom was sometimes called Tophet. Molech was a huge brass statue standing with his arms extended. There was a hole in his belly. A fire was kindled in the bottom of the statue until his hands and arms began to glow with red-hot heat. At that time, they would take a baby and put him in the hands of Molech, and the baby would roll down the arms, screaming in pain, into his stomach to be consumed in the flames. They would roll the drums, and the word "Tophet" means to roll a drum, to drown out the cries of the baby as it was literally burned to death in sacrifice to Moloch.

Psalm 106:37-38 says, "Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood." Evidently, a lot of children were sacrificed that way. Numerous children, therefore, were sacrificed physically.

Their lives were given up to Moloch. However, if you look back in your Bibles to 2 Kings 23:10, you read: “And he defiled Topheth,

which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech." There was another way of passing through the fire to Molech, or Moloch, that did not involve the death of the child.

That was simply called lustration. Lustration was an act of purification. The priest of Baal would take the dedicated child, or the child to be sacrificed to Moloch, and pass him over the flame, or over the heat in his hand, without the child actually being hurt. It was an act of dedicating that child to Molech. He was Molech's child, Molech's servant. Thus it was called a passing through the fire as well.

Do we physically sacrifice our children to devils today? Yes. What do you think abortion is about? We are sacrificing children to the god of convenience, to the god of political correctness, to the god of population control. Unhappily, even some Christians have done it. Ignorantly, stupidly, some may have done it purposely and deliberately, and it is still murder. Why? Because they have learned the ways of the heathen. They have mingled with the heathen.

Those Christians who would never have an abortion, who would never physically sacrifice their child, yet sacrifice their children to the god of political correctness, to the god of public or government education, so that the children turn out to be great little statists and great global citizens. That does not count how we sacrifice our children to the gods of fashion. Is it not amazing how children always want the latest in style? We sacrifice our children to the gods of humanism, greed, lust, and pleasure.

Let me put it to you rather bluntly: when we do not set our children apart for Christ, we set them apart for Moloch. Paul said in Romans 1:1, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, separated unto the gospel of God." You cannot be separated unto Christ and separated unto Moloch at the same time. We sacrifice our children to Moloch by failing to set them apart for Jesus Christ, teaching them His Word, His Law, and His Wisdom.

There is a proverb in ancient Israel: "He who does not teach his son the Law, that is the Law of God, and a trade, teaches his son to

be a liar and a thief." If you are not set apart for Christ, you are set apart for Moloch. Now look in verse 39 of Psalm 106.

Defilement and Spiritual Adultery

Psalm 106:39 says, "Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a-whoring with their own inventions." This verse is certainly applicable today. We are defiled as a nation, as a people, and many times as churches and families, with our own works. The word "defiled" literally means filthy, contaminated, that which is foul. We are contaminated, fouled up with our own works because our works are contrary to God and His Word. Do you remember what Isaiah said in Isaiah 64:6? "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

We are all as an unclean thing in sight. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:19, concerning all his works of righteousness, "I do count them but dung." Anything we do apart from Christ, apart from His Word, His truth, and His law, is nothing more than dung. Psalm 106:39 says, "They were defiled with their own works and went a-whoring after their own inventions."

That is what has happened in our land today. We have gone a-whoring after our own inventions. As Isaiah 53 says, "We have turned every one to his own way." We like what we like and want what we want, and it does not matter what God says. Instead of being faithful to God and His Word, we have become a nation of spiritual adulterers, sacrificing to the gods of humanism and political correctness. The results are the same whether you lived in Old Testament times, New Testament times, or today. As the Apostle Paul put it, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Let us pray. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ for Your mercy to be given to us. Lord, our nation is in a mess. Our churches are in turmoil. Families are divided, all because of false gods and disobedience to You and to Your Word. Regardless of what other people may do, enable each of us to be faithful to Thee and faithful to Thy Word. May we honor Thee, be true to Thee, and bring our lives

into conformity to Your truth. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask it. Amen.

Whatsoever man soweth, that shall he also reap. And he that soweth the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Let us pray. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ for Your mercy to be given to us. Lord, our nation is in a mess, our churches are in turmoil, and families are divided, all because of false gods and disobedience to You and to Your Word. Regardless of what other people may do, enable each of us to be faithful to Thee and to Thy Word. May we honor Thee, be true to Thee, and bring our lives into conformity to Your truth. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask it. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

The Hallelujah of Confession

Part 16 of 16

Let us open our Bibles to Psalm 106. We are going to finish this psalm, beginning with verse 40: “Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen, and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did he deliver them, but they provoked him with their counsel and were brought low for their iniquity.”

“Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction when he heard their cry, and he remembered for them his covenant and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord.”

Introduction and Review of Psalm 106:34-39

In lesson number 15, we looked at verses 34 through 39. I pointed out that the sins confessed there were committed after the Canaan conquest, whereas the previous sins, beginning with verse 7 and continuing through verse 33, had been committed before Israel entered the land. Obedience is important, for verse 34 says that they did not destroy the nations concerning whom the Lord commanded them. Because they disobeyed in this one area, all these other sins followed: they mingled themselves with the heathen, learned their works, served their idols, and sacrificed their sons and daughters.

Now we come to verse 40, and the Bible says concerning their sin, "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance." When I dealt with the sins of Moses and Aaron in verses 32 and 33, I emphasized Romans 14:7: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Our sins always affect other people. No one can say, "Well, this is my life."

"I'm going to live it the way I want to live it, regardless of what happens." Whatever we do invariably has an effect upon other individuals. It does not matter whether it is our family, our friends, our church, or our ministry. It is true that whatever we do affects others. You have heard the proverbial saying of the old drunk who said, "Well, I'm going to get drunk. It's nobody's business but my own," until he gets in the car and kills another family. The truth of the matter is that, even if he does not kill another family, his sin still affects his wife, still affects his children, and still affects a lot of other people as well.

The Effect of Sin on God's External Glory

As important as the principle of Romans 14:7 is—and it is important—there is still yet another, more important principle that we need to consider in relationship to sin. How do our sins affect God, the sovereign Judge of heaven and earth? Most of the time, we do not think about that principle.

Let me make a statement and explain it. It is true that our sins do indeed have an effect upon God. There is a difference between God's

intrinsic and essential glory and God's external and outward glory. When we speak of God's intrinsic and essential glory, there is absolutely nothing that can change it, have an effect upon it, or be added to or taken from it, because God is absolutely perfect.

Hold Psalm 106, but turn to Psalm 16 and look, beginning with verse 1. Psalm 16 is a Messianic psalm; that is, it speaks of Jesus Christ. Verse 10 shows this: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." This verse is applied directly to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. In verse 1 of Psalm 16, the Bible says, "Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord." Now look at what the Messiah says: "My goodness extendeth not to thee."

As perfect, holy, and obedient as Jesus Christ was, His perfection, obedience, and holiness added nothing to the essence of God. What do you say? Who did they add to? Verse 2 explains it: "My goodness extendeth not to thee," that is, not to God, "but to the saints that are in the earth and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." His holiness and obedience do indeed extend to us. But even the perfection of Christ added nothing to the essence and intrinsic holiness of God, because God is perfect in and of Himself.

While God has an intrinsic and essential holiness that cannot be added to nor taken from, He also has an external holiness that can be affected by man, by our obedience or by our disobedience. Psalm 50, verse 23, says, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." What do we do? We praise God. What are we doing? We are glorifying and honoring God. Are we adding to God's essential or intrinsic holiness by praising Him? No. But we are declaring that God is God, and we are worshiping His external holiness.

Romans 15, verse 6, says, "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Note the words, "that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God." It is possible that our actions will have an effect upon God's external holiness—not His essential holiness, not His intrinsic holiness, but His external holiness.

Let me put it to you very bluntly: it is true that our obedience and our praise have an effect upon God's external holiness, and equally true that our sins and our rebellion can have an effect upon God's external holiness. As we can obey God and praise God, likewise, we can also abhor God and be a disgrace to His external holiness.

Isaiah 49, verses 6 and 7, is a Messianic passage. Isaiah 49, verse 6, says, "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel."

Isaiah 49 gives a verse quoted in the New Testament and applied directly to Jesus Christ: “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.” We are talking about Messiah. Verse 7 continues: “Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.” Note, if you would please, that it is possible for man to despise and to abhor God as well.

Isaiah 43 contains an extremely soul-searching passage showing just how our sins do indeed affect God. In verse 24, God complains of His people: “Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices.” In other words, they did not bring what He asked them to bring. But He continues: “But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.” Isn’t that an amazing statement? “Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins.” When we are in covenantal relationship with God, there is a sense in which what we do, He does.

This is shown even more plainly in 1 Corinthians 6, in a passage against fornication that shows how wicked and vile it is, as well as the added insult to the act of fornication for a Christian. “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them.” Then: “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.” God did not make our bodies to be a fornicating machine. He made our bodies for Him. Verse 14 says, “And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by

his own power." Now look carefully: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid." Perish the thought; do not even let it enter your mind.

"What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication." We are covenantally joined to the Lord. Our Lord says that if we commit the act of fornication, it is the same as joining the Lord to a harlot, because we are one spirit.

That is what it means in Isaiah 43 and verse 24 when God told his people, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins." We are in a covenantal bond. We are one spirit, and what you do does indeed have an effect upon me, says the Lord.

What is God's response to such wickedness and sin? Is he pleased with such attitudes and actions? The answer is clearly no. Think about this statement: It is possible to turn love into loathing. Our rebellion and our sins as Christians turn love into loathing. Does God love his people? Yes. Does that love ever change? No. But does God at times loathe his people? Yes.

God's Loathing of His People in Psalm 106:40

Look at Psalm 106 and verse 40. In light of all their sins and rebellion, the Bible says, "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance." The word "abhorred" is very strong. Sometimes it is translated "refused," "rejected," "cast off," "cast away," or "contend." It literally means to treat as foul and stinking, or to loathe. Thus verse 40 says, "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he loathed his own inheritance." He treated them as foul.

I will answer biblically a little later, but consider this: Is it possible to love and to loathe at the same time? The answer is yes. Probably all of us have family members—not necessarily immediate family, though sometimes they are immediate family—whom we love because they are family. At the same time, we do not want to be around them. We do not like them. We loathe them. In fact, I was

talking to a pastor friend of mine yesterday and said, "Let me throw something out at you."

I quoted this verse: “Is it possible to love and to loathe someone at the same time?” He said, “Yes. My two brothers, for example.” He loved them because they were his brothers, but he loathed them because they were wicked and ungodly, and everything they did was contrary to Scripture and contrary to the Lord. So it is possible to love and to loathe at the same time.

Let us be more specific. Verse 40 says, “Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.” He loathed his own inheritance. Has this thought hit you yet? Sometimes we do not want to be around people because we dislike them and loathe them. Equally, sometimes God does not want to be around His own people because He loathes them.

Now, if Psalm 106 and verse 40 was an isolated text, if there was no other text in Scripture, this one text would still be sufficient, because it is exceedingly clear. The Bible says, "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred, he loathed his own inheritance." Now, one may not like the text, one may not like the thought, one may not like the truth, but the truth is so clear and plain it cannot be misunderstood. There are times that God loathes his own people. But the truth is, this is not an isolated text. There are other texts that teach exactly the same thing. For instance, look in your Bibles, if you would please, to Psalm 78. Psalm 78, we'll come back to these passages a little bit later. Psalm 78, and look, if you would please, at verse 59. Psalm 78 verse 59. The Bible says, "When God heard this, he was wroth and greatly abhorred Israel." There's that word "abhorred" and "greatly abhorred Israel." Look in your Bibles to Psalm 89 and verse 38.

Psalm 89 verse 38. And of course, in the context is dealing with his own people. He says, "But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed." Isn't that amazing? "But thou hast cast off and abhorred," that is loathed, "thou hast been wroth" or angry "with thine anointed," that is with God's people. Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 32. Deuteronomy 32, and let's begin reading there with verse 18. Deuteronomy 32 verse 18. The

Word of God says, "Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters." In other words, his sons and his daughters were provoking God and therefore God abhorred or loathed them. Look in your Bibles to the book of Amos chapter 6. Amos chapter 6. Hosea, Joel, Amos. Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos. Amos chapter 6. Look, if you would please, at verse 8.

You talk about a passage that cannot be misunderstood. Here it is. "The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein." What is God saying? I love my own people. I'm going to punish them. Then if you will turn back to the book of Lamentations right after Jeremiah, Lamentations chapter 2. And look at verse 7, Lamentations 2 and verse 7. Let me show you how God responds to sin. Lamentations 2, verse 7, "The Lord hath cast off his altar.

“He hath abhorred his sanctuary. He hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces. They have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a solemn feast.” In other words, the people had sinned so against God that God even hated his own temple, his own sanctuary.

I do not know about you, but when I was looking at Psalm 106, verse 40, I thought, What an awesome and yet horrible thought: we can be loved by God and yet loathed by God at the same time.

I want you to stop and think about this. There are family members that we love. I can think of some right now in my own family. I do not like their attitudes. I do not like their actions. I do not like what they do. I do not even want to be around them. In fact, some of them, I do not even want people to know that they are in my family.

The same thing is true among many Christians. What am I talking about? There are a lot of Christians, many times, that do not act like Christians. They do not talk like Christians. They do not think like Christians. Their attitudes and their actions are downright cantankerous, and I do not want to be around them. I can point out a number of Christian groups that I know right now, some churches,

that are fussing and fighting between themselves. They call each other by horrible names. They are angry, bitter, resentful, and full of malice and animosity. I want to be honest with you: I do not want to be within a hundred miles of them. I do not want to be around them, and I do not even want to be identified with them. They are immature, petty, and divisive.

Now the question is this: if I do not want to be around them, if it upsets me and bothers me, how does it affect God? God is far more holy than I am—far more holy than any of us, and all of us put together. The prophet Habakkuk speaks of this in chapter 1. As it is written in 1 Peter chapter 1, “Be ye holy; for I am holy, saith the Lord.”

God is demanding that we be holy as He is holy. But listen to what the Bible says in the book of Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 13. Here is what the prophet says of God: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Now wait a minute. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." What does that mean? Certainly, we know that God sees evil and wickedness, for He judges it. The Bible says in Proverbs 15, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." So we know that God sees it, and yet here is a verse that says, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." How are we to understand that verse? Very simply: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil" condoningly, "and canst not look on iniquity" approvingly.

In other words, God does see sin in order to judge it, in order to mark it, but God never condones it and God never approves it. The point is this: If such actions and such attitudes are repulsive to me, and I do not want to be around people who act like that, God is far more holy than I am. He does not like it either. If I can loathe people like that, so can God.

Now, let me ask a question. In fact, I am going to ask and answer several questions. How does one become loathed by God? The Bible says in Psalm 106, verse 40, "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred" or loathed "his own inheritance." How does one become loathed by God?

Generally speaking, the answer is sin. That is disobedience and rebellion.

How Sin Provokes God to Loathing

Specifically, Psalm 106 begins to identify and confess particular sins. The psalmist says in verse 7, "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt." That is ignorance. Ignorance. "They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies." That is ingratitude, "but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Thus there are ignorance and ingratitude.

Psalm 106 records Israel's forgetfulness and impatience: “They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel.” It records envy and insurrection: “They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord.” It records idolatry and insolence: “They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.” It records despisement and disbelief: “Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word.”

They worshipped foreign gods: “They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.” They angered God at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: “because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.” The sins of the people so affected Moses and Aaron that Moses and Aaron sinned. Verses 34 through 39 then show all these other sins that they did.

What is God saying? In light of all these sins, “Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he loathed his own inheritance.” These sins that I have preached on for the last fifteen weeks, individually and collectively, are enough to make God loathe an individual or a nation.

Notice the context of Deuteronomy 32. Three main passages teach exactly the same thing this Psalm 106 is teaching. In verse 15, “But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.” That is, he grew fat and sassy and rebelled. “Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” He did not think much of God. “They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with

abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, he loathed them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters." Specific sins—forgetting God, lightly esteeming God, and engaging in idolatry—produce loathing on God's part. Psalm 78 gives us the same truth: "...and might not be as their fathers,"

Psalm 78 describes "a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God." "They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law." "And forgat his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them." "Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?"

Then verse 35 says, "And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer." Verse 42 is what I wanted: "They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy." Verse 56 continues, "Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: but turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow." Verse 59 says, "When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel."

Note the specific sins that turn love into loathing. Amos 6:1 says, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!" God says woe to those who are at ease and trusting in Samaria—that is, trusting in government, not God. Verse 4 says, "That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall." They are rolling in prosperity.

"They chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." In other words, they do not care anything about anyone but themselves. Therefore, verse 8 says, "The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I

abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein." In each of these texts, the people were continually sinning against God. Although they were God's people, God loathed them.

How does one know whether or not he is loathed by God? How does one know that God does not want to be around him? It is an interesting question. Sometimes some of us are so cantankerous, we do not even want to be around ourselves.

How can we tell when a nation is loathed by God? Psalm 106:40 says, "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred, he loathed his own inheritance." Verse 41 states, "And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them." In other words, the person or nation is basically subdued, subjugated, captivated by their enemy.

Evidences of Being Loathed by God

Now put two and two together concerning our nation. You say, "Brother Weaver, Red China hasn't overrun us." No, Red China hasn't, but a whole lot of other enemies have, and they're in control in the government. That's why we're not a constitutional republic any longer. But now they call us a democracy. But that's not all. Verse 42 says, "And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them."

"Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand." That is the second evidence: oppression, persecution, and affliction by enemies. You say, "Wait a minute, Brother Weaver, we're not persecuted. We're not afflicted. We're not oppressed." Do you realize there are more types of oppression than physical oppression? There are plenty of people who are being physically oppressed. Look at the Christians who are now being charged with paper crimes, which are no crime at all. The government wants them to do fifteen, twenty, and thirty years in prison, though they have not done a thing wrong.

What about economic oppression? Yes, we are economically oppressed. You say, "Brother Weaver, we've got more money than we've ever had before." But it is worth less than it has ever been

worth before. It requires more money because the value of our money continues to go down, down, down, down. When Alice and I got married, I used to give her ten bucks a week to buy groceries. That included meat. I would fuss if she did not bring three or four dollars back. We bought a week's worth of groceries for six or seven bucks. You cannot even buy a week's worth of groceries for a hundred bucks today.

There is also mental oppression. You say, "Brother Weaver, we're not mentally oppressed." Have you ever heard of political correctness? You just make a statement that is not politically correct, and notice what happened to John Rocker. Everybody will want you to go to sensitivity training. That is the most ridiculous thing you have ever heard, and everything John Rocker said was true. He just said it in the wrong place, where pressure could be brought against him.

Look in verse 43; here is another evidence: "Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity." You say, "I can understand subjugation, oppression, persecution, and affliction, but I do not understand this verse." Here is the third evidence that an individual or a nation is loathed by God: they refuse to listen, learn, and receive reproof, correction, and instruction. They do their own thing, and God has to knock them down over and over and over and over. They did not want God's way; they wanted their way. They did not want God's word; they wanted their word.

"And were brought low for their iniquity." Jeremiah had to complain about what we can just about voice as the same complaint today: "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?" Now look what he says: "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." What's he saying? God, you beat the devil out of them and they're still rebelling.

Isaiah 1:5 asks, "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." In other words, correction doesn't do any good. You won't

listen. You won't learn. The question is not whether correction has come, but whether you will receive it and return.

Then Hosea 6:4 says, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Here's the average professing Christian: you're not going to be obedient for long. You won't listen. You won't learn. Your goodness disappears like a morning cloud and the early dew.

So God says that when an individual or a nation refuses to receive correction and instruction, it is evidence that that nation, or that individual, is loathed by God. And you could say number four is found in verse 43 as well: simply following one's own counsel instead of God's counsel.

Some of you can quote Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6; some of you may not, but let me quote it for you: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." The individual that is loathed by God trusts to his own understanding. He listens to his own counsel. He refuses the Word of God.

Is it possible to be loved and loathed at the same time? The answer is yes. I have already given you that answer, but I never gave you the Scriptures. Now I want to give you the Scriptures. Psalm 106, verses 41 through 43, deals with loathing. Verse 40 says that he abhorred, or loathed, his own inheritance. Verse 41 says that he gave them into the hands of the enemy. Verse 42 says that the enemy oppressed them. Verse 43 says that they would not learn but followed their own counsel. When you get to verses 44 through 46, however, it deals with loving. Verse 44 says, “Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry.”

God's Love Evident Even in Loathing

How do we know that God still loves us, even when he loathes us? Here is one of the answers: “Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry.” In other words, God was concerned about their suffering, just as he was concerned about the

suffering of the saints in the Old Testament. He heard their cries, even when they were suffering for their own sin and rebellion.

Let me ask you a question as a parent. Have there been times when your children did things that were so horrible and awful, and you were so incensed that when you whipped them, you whipped them well? Yet when they were weeping and crying, you still felt sorry for them. That is what God did. He whipped them well, but when they cried out because of their affliction, God heard them and considered them. That is not all. Look at verse 45.

Here is another evidence of love: "And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies." He remembered for them his covenant.

Why did Israel get into the place where she was? Because she did not remember the covenant, and she did not obey the covenant. But the Bible says that God remembered for them his covenant. They may not remember it, and they may not be faithful, yet God is going to be faithful. He is saying, "I am going to judge them, but not as partially as they deserve." That is what it means when it says, "and he repented according to the multitude of his mercies." In other words, he did not finish them all.

He allowed them to live. Psalm 103:9 says, "He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever." Can you agree that this verse is true in your life? "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Aren't you thankful that God has not given you what you deserve? That is what He did for them. He remembered His covenant. That is love. He could have destroyed them, but He did not.

Verse 46 gives another evidence of love: "He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives." God gave them pity in the eyes of their captors, so that their captors would not deal harshly with them.

There is a Scripture that says, "In wrath remember mercy." That is exactly what God does, even when He loathes His people in His wrath against them. He remembers mercy. Love and loathing may therefore be in the same person at the same time. Although God loathed His people, He loved them as well.

Loathing Does Not Change God's Essence

Does loathing constitute a change in God? Of course not. When we say that God is immutable, we mean that He is unchangeable. Nothing changes the essence, being, or character of God. In Malachi 3:6 He says, “I am the Lord, I change not.” When the Bible says that God loathes His people, that is not a change in His essence, being, or character. It means that God is dealing differently with the people and administering another aspect of the covenant. Instead of administering blessing, He is administering curses. The change is not in God; it is in the people, who changed from obedience to disobedience.

Therefore, God refused to bless them, but rather cursed them and was angry with them because of their sin. God is just as free to exercise His wrath as He is His mercy, and just as free to demonstrate His loathing as He is His love. There is no change in God. The change was in the people. God was functioning according to the covenant.

Verses 47 and 48 contain the final prayer: “Save us, O Lord our God,” and gather us from among the heathen, “to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.” Then comes the doxology: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord.”

The Final Prayer for Salvation from Sin

What did the psalmist mean when he said, “Save us”? If he meant, Save us from affliction, persecution, oppression, and our enemies, then he was not speaking of the deepest need. What good would it do for God to save us from oppression and persecution if there were no repentance in our lives? It would only be a matter of time before we were right back in them again.

When the psalmist said, “Save us,” he meant, literally, save us from our sins. Sin brings oppression, persecution, and trouble. Matthew 1:21 says, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Salvation is not primarily salvation from judgment or punishment; it is salvation from sin, which brings

judgment and punishment. Thus the prayer is, “Save us, O Lord our God, save us from our sins.”

Applications: The Insult of Sin and Call to Holiness

Here is the first application. When a Christian sins, rebels, and disobeys, he reveals that he values his sin, lust, and wickedness more than God's fellowship, approval, and blessing. What an insult to a holy God! He is essentially saying, “God, you are insufficient. You are not the all-sufficient God proclaimed in the Bible. You are insufficient to satisfy me. I must have this sin—this fornication, this covetousness, or something beside you.” What an affront to God. I hope you are beginning to see how God can loathe us when we act like that.

When we sin, we are saying that we prefer our sin more than the approval, blessing, and fellowship of God. If you understand what I have taught today, it should be an incentive to live a holy, godly, obedient life. Do you realize that it requires holiness to satisfy a holy God? That is why He wrote, "Be ye holy; for I am holy, saith the Lord." If we really want to give God praise, glorify God, and have God's blessing and approval, then we will live a holy life in obedience to His Word, for God is holy.

To not have a biblical attitude and corresponding biblical actions is to provoke God to loathing. Let me say that again: when you and I do not have a biblical attitude with corresponding biblical actions, we are provoking God unto loathing. Read your Bibles, go back over these passages, and look up the word "provocation" or "provoke." Over and over, the Bible says Israel provoked God. When you and I do that which is wrong, when we do that which is unbiblical and ungodly, we are provoking God to loathe us.

There are some folks I just do not want to be around, even though they are Christians. I love them, but I do not want to be around them because I do not like their attitudes or actions. They are unbiblical and unscriptural. If I can believe that and act like that, do you not think that God, who is far more holy than each of us, would do the same?

When we fail to act biblically and maintain a biblical attitude, we provoke God into loathing. Hosea 5:6 says, “They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them.” Why? “They have dealt treacherously against the Lord.”

There are times when God does not want to be around us because of our attitudes and actions. We provoke Him to loathe us. What an awesome and horrible thought: that we can be loathed by the God who loves us.

Father, we ask You, in the name of Jesus Christ, to speak to our hearts. Help us, Lord, determine to be holy, to do what is right, to be obedient, and to bring our lives into conformity to Your Word. May we, Father, be the saints of God that others always want to be around and that Thou dost want to be around. Help us, Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

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