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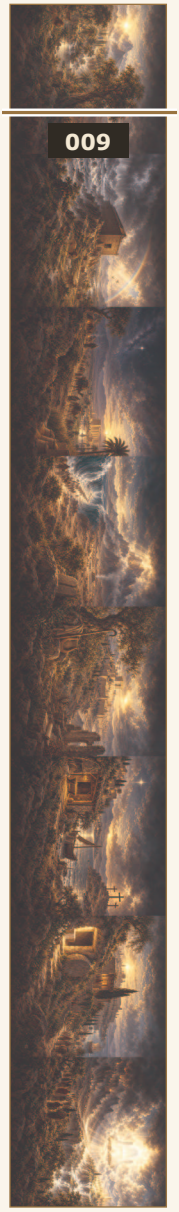
“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



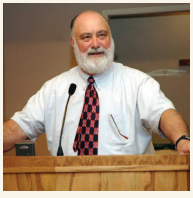
Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

PROVERBS 14:34

John Weaver examines civil power, national life, and constitutional order through the lens of biblical teaching. These sermons consider the relationship between public institutions and moral responsibility, using Scripture alongside historical examples. The collection presents his arguments for readers to weigh carefully, distinguishing the authority of God's Word from the claims of human government.

“Obviously, time does not make principles and truth irrelevant.”

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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Civil Government: Power, Nations, and Constitutional Order

Civil Government

John Weaver

Weaver Bible College

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Civil Government: Power, Nations, and Constitutional Order

John Weaver

Weaver Books
Weaver Bible College

Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Review edition. Existing edited chapters are preserved; newly restored chapters are based on their source transcripts and remain subject to editorial and publisher approval.

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CHAPTER 1

Why America Must Remain a Democracy

Introduction to Hosea and the Title

Let us open our Bibles to the book of Hosea, chapter 1. Ten years ago, I preached a series through Hosea. It took me seventy-five messages to get through the book. This past week, I was preaching in Alabama, and they asked me to deal with Hosea for most of the services. As I did so, all this came rushing back to me, and I wanted to bring this message I preached ten years ago for your consideration today. I think it is even truer today. It was just as true back then, but you can see its application far more clearly today.

We will read verses 1 and 2, although primarily we will deal with verse 1: “The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, the beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord.”

The title of the message is “Why America Must Remain a Democracy.” I hope you will understand the title before I finish today. I am going to answer an objection as I give you the title.

You are going to say, “But Brother Weaver, we have a republic. We even pledge allegiance to the United States and the republic for which it stands. Our founding fathers gave us a republic.” I know that, and you know that. Most of us also know that our republic was traded for an empire under the presidency of Abraham Lincoln. Our republic has basically disappeared, and in its place there has developed a democracy that is mob rule. So, in all practicality today, we do not have a republic. That is practically speaking.

I have a cartoon on my desk at home. A pastor friend asked me for it because he wanted it printed in his paper. It shows a man standing before the judge. The judge looks over the desk and says, “The Constitution? We don't have time for nostalgia around here.” You understand where I am coming from.

The Context of Hosea's Ministry

“The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel.” The name Hosea means helper, savior. It is the same root word from which Joshua is derived. Do you remember that the word Joshua means savior?

The Bible tells us that Hosea was the son of Beeri. There is absolutely nothing further revealed to us in Scripture about Beeri. All we know is that he was the father of Hosea. Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah were contemporaries; that is, they all preached at exactly the same time. Isaiah and Micah preached primarily to Judah, while Hosea and Amos were primarily to Israel, the ten northern tribes.

The book of Hosea is very easily divided. In fact, it is divided into two parts. The first part is chapters 1–3, which contain a symbolical and introductory prelude to Hosea’s message. Chapters 4–14 may be outlined as follows. Chapter 4, verse 6, through chapter 6 and verse 3 presents the magnitude of Israel’s moral degradation and its just punishment. From 6:4 to 11:12, we see the incorrigibility of the sinful

nation, with its obstinance, persistence in idolatry, and unrighteousness. Lastly, chapters 12–14 present the ripeness of Israel for punishment, notwithstanding the long-suffering and faithfulness of God.

Hosea and Amos preached primarily to the ten northern tribes. You cannot possibly understand the book of Hosea unless you understand Hosea's mission. His mission was to convince the Israelites of their abominable idolatry and wickedness, denouncing their sins with the most awful and severe threatenings and fearful destructions from God Himself. Hosea was out to warn Israel. In order to understand the book of Hosea, we must understand what Hosea was preaching against.

Look at verse 1 again and pay close attention to it, because I am going to ask you a question. "The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel." This makes clear that Hosea had a lengthy ministry.

The Striking Detail in Hosea 1:1

Probably some sixty to seventy years. I do want you to remember that Hosea was sent primarily to Israel, to the ten northern tribes. Now what stands out very strikingly and very obviously in verse 1? Look at it again: "The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel." The word of the Lord stands out, but there is something else that should be very obvious.

Look at what is listed. "The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel." If Hosea was sent to Israel, and he was, why did he mention only one king of Israel while mentioning four kings of Judah?

You would not know this without studying, but although Hosea mentioned Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, there were at

least six other Israelitish kings through whose reigns Jeroboam ministered: Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, Pekahiah, and Hoshea. So we must ask why he mentioned four kings of Judah and only one king of Israel, since he was sent to Israel, and why he mentioned Jeroboam the son of Joash at all.

First, Hosea lists the kings of Judah because they were the true kings, the true lineage of David. God did not ordain the Israelitish kings, the kings of Israel. They broke away from the house of David; they were corrupt kings, and they forsook the true service and true worship of the one true and living God.

Why, then, did he mention Jeroboam the son of Joash? The answer is very simple: that we may know the state of the kingdom under which he was ministering. When you study the life of Jeroboam the son of Joash and the state of the kingdom, it was one of corruption, degradation, wickedness, sin, and rebellion against God.

Another interesting thing is this: Jeroboam the son of Joash is mentioned, and he is indeed a corrupt king, but God did use him to deliver Israel militarily from the Syrians.

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and he reigned forty and one years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

Jeroboam the son of Nebat is known as Jeroboam I. Jeroboam the son of Joash is known as Jeroboam II. So we are talking about Jeroboam II. He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet that was of Gath-Hepher. God delivered Israel under the hand of Jeroboam, the son of Joash.

For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter, for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. And the Lord said that he would not blot out the name of Israel from

under heaven, but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam, the son of Joash. Now all the rest of the acts of Jeroboam and all that he did in his might and how he warred and how he recovered Damascus and Hamath, which belonged to Judah for Israel, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

So Jeroboam was indeed a mighty warrior. God used him to deliver Israel, militarily speaking, from the Syrians, but he was a wicked, ungodly king. What does the Bible say specifically about Jeroboam the son of Joash? He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Kings 12:25-33 (KJV)

The Sin of Jeroboam the Son of Nebat

What specifically was the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat? This is a very important passage, and we will be coming back to it.

"Then Jeroboam built Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David. If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their Lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel and made two calves of gold and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.

"Behold thy God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and he put the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

"And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah. And he offered upon the altar, so did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the

> priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart. And he ordained a feast unto the children of Israel, and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense."
>
> This is the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

This sin is so important. God mentions it fifteen times directly, not counting the passing allusions and references to it. God speaks of this sin specifically fifteen times.

In 1 Kings 16:26, we read about Omri: “For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities.” In verse 31, we read about the sin of Ahab: “And it came to pass that if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.”

In 1 Kings 22:52, we read about Ahaziah, the son of Ahab: “And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.” The other passages are 2 Kings 3:3; 2 Kings 10:29; 2 Kings 13:2 and 11; and 2 Kings 14:24.

2 Kings 15, 9, 18, 24, and 28; 2 Kings 17, verse 21; 2 Kings 23, verse 15; and one other passage, with which we will close. 2 Chronicles 13. Here are fifteen specific references to the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

Why does God emphasize this sin over and over in Scripture? Because it was Israel’s sin, and Israel’s sin was idolatry. The sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, was the sin of Baal worship.

Some of you know your Bible history fairly well, and you are going to give me two objections. First: “Well, now, Brother Weaver, Israel worshipped the One True and the Living God. They just worshipped that One True and the Living God under the symbol of the calves.” My answer is this: God called it Baal worship, and I am going to show you the chapter and verse in just a moment.

Then you will give me another objection: “But Brother Weaver, I read my Bible, and I know that one of the kings of Israel, Jehu, wiped out Baal worship out of Israel.” It is true that Jehu did a good job eliminating much of the Baal worship. Let us go to 2 Kings 10, beginning with verse 24.

Jehu gathered all the priests of Baal into the temple of Baal and proclaimed a great sacrifice. Then he placed his soldiers around the temple, saying, “If you let anybody escape, your life is for his.” They were to go in and kill them all.

“And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him. And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, and slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast them out, and they went to the city of the house of Baal. And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them.” They broke down the image of Baal and the house of Baal, making it a draught house unto this day.

Thus, Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. You say, there it is black and white. The Bible says he wiped Baal out of Israel. Yes, it does. It does say that, and he did eliminate the raw, outward, external worship of Baal. But read the next verse: "Howbeit, from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel and that were in Dan." Isn't that interesting? Verse 31 says, "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all of his heart, for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin."

God explains the nature of this calf worship in Hosea 2:8. He says concerning Israel, "For she did not know that I gave her corn and wine in the time thereof, and oil and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for what?" For Baal. So when they were worshipping the calves, God says they were worshipping Baal. Hosea 2:13 says, "And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim," when she burnt incense to them, decked herself with earrings and jewels, went

after her lovers, and forgot Him, saith the Lord. God is saying that the calf worship was nothing less than Baal worship.

What Jeroboam the son of Nebat did was institute the worship of God under the color and the cover of the two calves. This was a transgression of the covenant, but God did not call it His worship. He called it Baal worship.

It is very important to see exactly what Jeroboam did. There are parallels with what is going on in our land today, but first consider what Jeroboam did and why God referred to this sin fifteen times specifically and was so angry with the kings of Israel. The Bible tells us in 1 Kings 12:28, "Whereupon the king took counsel and made two calves of gold and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." He made two golden calves. Note what the Scripture says: "Whereupon the king took counsel."

The Five Actions of Jeroboam's Idolatry

This was deliberate, purposeful, premeditated, and done by design. Jeroboam made these two calves. What was his sin? First, he misrepresented the true and living God by making a physical representation of God.

You know the first commandment from Exodus 20: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” The second commandment is, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any” what? “Graven images.” Hold 1 Kings 12, and turn to Deuteronomy 4. Look at the warning God gave Israel when He spoke to them from Mount Sinai, beginning with verse 12.

“And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire.” Now look at this warning. “You heard the voice of the words, but you saw no similitude, only you heard a voice. 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 you might do them in the land whither you go over to possess it.”

“Take you therefore good heed unto yourselves, for you saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in

Horeb out of the midst of the fire. Lest you 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 anything 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 hosts of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all the nations under the whole earth."

God said, "You heard a voice. You saw no shape. You saw no form. You saw no similitude." Make sure that you do not try to put God under an image or make a likeness of Him—male or female, animal, creation, anything. God says, do not do that. Now let me show you one of the reasons why. Look in your Bibles to Isaiah 40.

Everyone knows the story about the little boy in Sunday school who was drawing a picture. The teacher asked, "What are you drawing a picture of, son?" The little boy said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." The teacher replied, "No one knows what God looks like." He said, "They will when I get through." That is indeed the basis of idolatry.

Look what God says in Isaiah 40, beginning in verse 18: "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" Do you realize God is unique? There is only one God. There is nothing else like God. "To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"

If you are going to make a comparison, what will you do? "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." Then God asks, "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." Here you are trying to make an image or likeness of God. What is He saying? God created the earth. He is above His creation; He is transcendent. If you try to make an image of Him out of wood, you will run out of wood. If you try to make one out of gold or silver, you will run out of gold and silver. He created everything.

There is nothing that you can liken Him to and nothing that you can compare Him to. In verse 25 of the same chapter He says, "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One."

Since God is unique, since He is the One True and Living God, the Sovereign, the Supreme, the Ultimate, and the Absolute One, there is none like God. What in the world was Jeroboam doing when he made the calves?

Through the representation of the invisible and infinite God under the visible and earthly symbol of the calves, the glory of the One True and Living God was brought down within the limits of the finite. The God of Israel was placed on an equality with the gods of the heathen. What Jeroboam did was to cut God down to size. It was a leveling of God. He took the One True and Living God, who is Sovereign and Supreme, brought Him down, and put Him on the level of all the heathen, pagan gods. Outwardly, Israel was professing to worship the One True and Living God, but in reality and in practice, they were worshiping a Baal. They were worshiping a figment of their own imagination.

Where does most idolatry come from? It is true that idolatry comes from the human heart, but who pushes and introduces idolatry more than any other? It is the civil government. If you will study, you will find that Solomon introduced idolatry into the land. Here we have Jeroboam the son of Nebat introducing idolatry into the land. All throughout the Bible, it is the civil rulers who push idolatry upon the people.

There is a reason for that. Before any civil ruler can push idolatry upon the people of God, he must first deny the supremacy and sovereignty of God. He must bring God down to the level of all the other gods and make Him equal to every other god.

This is the impetus behind the New Age movement and humanism. This is why there are so many laws being passed attacking Christianity and calling us hate-mongers, because we are saying that there is only one true and living God, and that one true and living God is the Sovereign Supreme Being. Before any civil ruler can push idolatry upon the people of God, he must first level God and get out of their minds that they worship the one sovereign supreme God of the universe. He must make the Christian God the same level as the Muslim God, the Jews' God, the Hindus' God, and the Buddhists' God.

You've heard them say, "Well, after all, there's many roads that lead to heaven. After all, they're all working for the same place." What are they doing? They're leveling God. God is unique. There is none like Him. There is nothing that you can compare Him to. Those who deny the absolute supremacy and sovereignty and ultimacy of God in this life, in the next one, shall certainly recognize it. They will understand that there is only one true and living God. So the very first thing Jeroboam did was make these calves. In doing so, he was leveling God and bringing God down to the level of all the other pagan gods.

In 1 Kings 12:28, we see the second thing Jeroboam did: “Whereupon the king took counsel and made two calves of gold and said unto them, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold, thy God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’” “And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.” That is like saying, “It’s too much trouble to drive way across. Just, you know, any of these churches will do. Why, after all, we’re all worshiping the same God, aren’t we?”

Jeroboam was deprecating the true place of worship. He not only made images of the sovereign God and leveled God; he also deprecated the true place of worship. He said, “It’s too much for you to go to Jerusalem. Don’t worry about Jerusalem.” Who ordained Jerusalem? It was God. Who put the tabernacle in Jerusalem? God did. Who put the temple in Jerusalem? God did. Yet Jeroboam, the king, was saying, “My choice is as good as God’s. You don’t have to go to Jerusalem. Dan and Bethel are just as good as Jerusalem. Worship there.”

Have you ever heard the saying, “You don’t have to go to church to worship God”? That’s true and it’s not true. May I worship God in the forest and in the fields? Yes. I may worship Him through the Lord Jesus Christ in His Word by the power of the Spirit wherever I am. But does my outward, external worship depreciate the value of public worship? The answer is no.

If you were in the Old Testament and wanted to worship the one true and living God publicly, where must you go? Jerusalem, to the tabernacle or to the temple. You had to go there. You could not worship Him publicly anywhere else, because the altar was there, His priesthood was there, and the sacrifices were there. Here are two words for temple.

There is the heron and there is the naos. The heron is the temple, generally speaking; it is the whole thing. The naos refers to the holy of holies. In the tabernacle and temple, the people could come into the common court. The priests went into the holy place to minister, but only the high priest went into the most holy place, the naos, once a year, and that not without the shedding of blood.

When you come to 1 Corinthians 3, the Lord God says, “For you are the temple of God,” and the word used is naos. It is not heron, the general term, but the place where God peculiarly and particularly manifests Himself. In the Old Testament, that peculiar and particular manifestation of God was in Jerusalem, in the tabernacle, or later in the temple. In the New Testament, where is God's peculiar and particular manifestation of Himself? It is in the assembly of His public worship, in the assembly of His people. We are the naos of God, assembled together and worshiping God. God gives us a perfect picture here.

May I ignore the public worship of God, where His peculiar and particular manifestation is, by saying, “I’m out fishing today; I can worship just as good out here,” or, “I’m out hunting today; I can worship just as good out here”? No. When you get to the philosophy not only of civil government, but of humanism, it says, “Well, it doesn’t matter where you go to church, just go.”

Haven’t you heard it advertised? “Go to the church of your choice.” No, you better go where God is particularly and peculiarly

manifesting Himself, where He is worshiped publicly, where His Word is preached, and where the true worship of God is. When you say, "It doesn't matter—synagogue, church building, temple, pagoda," that is what the ecumenical movement is all about, and what the World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches are all about: making all places of worship equal. They are not equal. What did Jeroboam do? He leveled the one true and living God by cutting Him down to size, making a physical manifestation of the invisible God. He deprecated the true place of worship.

Thirdly, go back in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 12, verses 28 through 30. We read: "Whereupon the king took counsel and made two calves of gold and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold, thy God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and he put the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan."

Now here is the third thing Jeroboam did. Listen carefully. Jeroboam made it politically, legally, and personally difficult to worship the true God scripturally, and he made it easy and politically expedient to worship his god unscripturally.

Now, I am not going to take time to go there, but if you look in the book of Amos and study the book of Amos, you will remember where he put these two golden calves: one at Dan and one at Bethel. Dan was at the northern border of Israel near Syria, and Bethel was at the southern border near Judah. What he was saying was this: You just go to whichever one is easiest for you to worship. You just go there. Now watch. He made it politically, legally, and personally difficult to worship God scripturally.

How did he do that? It was the king who made these two golden calves. It was the king who chose the places for them to sit. It was the king who ordained the feast. It was the king who ordained the altar. It was the king who made his priests. All authority was concentrated in the king's religious system.

Now, if you want to insult the king, if you want to slap him in the face, you ignore his religion and trek down to Jerusalem. Is that politically correct? Of course not. When you study the book of Amos,

you will find that he even sent soldiers and guarded the way, and when people tried to go down to Jerusalem to worship, they were killed. What was he doing? He was making it politically and personally difficult to worship the One True and the Living God scripturally.

Oh, but you could worship any false god easily because it was sanctioned by the king. I am going to tell you the official position of our judicial system and the official position of our government on freedom of religion. You have freedom of religion in this country, which means you are free to believe whatever you want to believe between these two ears, but do not go out and try to practice anything that you really believe without our approval.

That is exactly what Jeroboam was doing. In the biblical application, when you try to serve God, somewhere along the line a government agent is going to come in and say, "You can't do this. You're not licensed to do this. You don't have our permit."

What Jeroboam did was make everyone politically correct. If you were not politically correct, you were harassed, embarrassed, prosecuted, and persecuted. In 1 Kings 12:31, we read, "And he made a house of high places," meaning that he made his own temple, "and made priests of the lowest of the people which were not of the sons of Levi." The fourth thing Jeroboam did was change the priesthood from a sovereignly selected group to a politically appointed group.

Who chose the Levites? God. Who ordained them? God. Who called them? God. You remember Matthew 3 and verse 13? On the calling of the disciples, the Bible says, "And Jesus Christ went into a mountain, and He called unto Himself whom He would." He sovereignly selected His own twelve disciples. When God ordained, chose, and called the Levites, they were His priests.

They were concerned with His will, His Word, His way, His service, and His worship. They taught His law. Jeroboam expelled all the Levites from Israel and appointed men whom he chose, men whom he called, men who would do his bidding, promote his kingdom, work for his program, and receive their government subsidies from the king.

Again, verse 31 says, "And He made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi." They were not qualified tribally; they were not of Levi. They were not qualified vocationally; God never called them. They were not qualified morally; they were the lowest of the people.

Stop and think about what has happened in our land today. Through political manipulation and political correctness, the church that is the established church is being forced to accept sodomites and lesbians and perverts in the ministry, all in the guise of public policy and a nondiscriminatory policy. If you do not believe that, hire an organist, discover that he is a sodomite, fire him, and see how quickly you get sued.

The sovereignly selected chosen group has now become a hodgepodge of perversion through political influence, control, and manipulation. I hope you are beginning to see why God specifically refers to the sin of Jeroboam fifteen times.

The fifth thing that he did was this: Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah. He offered upon the altar in Bethel, sacrificing the calves that he had made, and placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. Thus Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month that was an imitation of God's appointed Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Tabernacles was in the seventh month, but he made his the eighth month. Leviticus 23:33 says, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of the seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord."

What was the Feast of Tabernacles celebrating? It celebrated when Israel left Egypt. They built booths for seven days and dwelt therein. They were celebrating God's wonderful, bountiful provision while they were wandering in the wilderness. God gave them manna, God gave them water, and God took care of them. The Feast of Tabernacles, then, was a celebration of God, God's sovereign provision, and His graciousness to His people.

But what has Jeroboam done? He has ordained a feast like this in the eighth month, and now there is going to be a celebration of the king. They are going to celebrate his reign, his kingdom, his subsidies, and his provision. When governments play God, they want to be recognized and worshipped as God.

The Political Motivation Behind Idolatry

We have state holidays, state parks, state recreational programs, state welfare, state Medicare, state retirement, and a whole host of other provisions. I have heard people say, "Isn't it wonderful all the things the government gives us?" The government, whether state or federal, cannot give anything without first taking from someone. But now all of a sudden, we think of the wonderful provision of the state—not God's provision, but the government's provision.

Why would Jeroboam do such a thing? Why would he create calves, institute a different religion—a pagan, idolatrous religion—and force it upon the people? Why would he do such a thing? Let us expand the question: Why would any civil ruler do such a thing? Let me show you why.

Remember Jeroboam the king. In 1 Kings 12:26, we read, “And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David. If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their Lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.”

Why would he do such a thing? Because he knew that God gave the kingdom to David and his descendants.

Jeroboam did not want a reuniting of the kingdoms. He wanted to keep that gulf as wide as possible for his own personal advantage. He wished to retain his position, prestige, power, throne, kingdom, and program. Jeroboam was interested only in himself. Therefore, he purposefully molded his new religion, his state religion, after his own caprice. Now, I want you to see what he did.

You remember what I pointed out in verse 28: “Whereupon the king took counsel.” He did this purposefully, deliberately, and premeditatedly. Why? Because, in doing so, the worship of the

people became a political institution. Thus, the kingdom of God became the kingdom of the king, and the sanctuary of God became the sanctuary of the king. Let me show you that in the Bible.

Look in your Bibles to Amos chapter 7. Hosea and Amos were contemporaries. They both preached against the house of Israel and denounced Jeroboam II, Jeroboam the son of Joash. Amos was preaching in Israel, and this is what he said: “For thus Amos said, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.” Amos was saying, “Jeroboam, you are going to be killed, and Israel is going to be taken captive.”

Then we read: “Also Amaziah,” the king’s priest, “said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away from the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there.”

This is a veiled threat: If you want to live, get out of town. If you want to live to eat again, go back home. Nobody called you up here. Have you ever heard politicians say, “You preachers just take care of the churches. We’ll take care of the nations. Don’t interfere with us. Go back home. We’ll put you in jail”? You follow me?

That is exactly what Amaziah is saying. He continues, “But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the king’s court.” This is our government’s religion. You cannot be against our governmental religion without being against our government. Therefore, he says, you had better get yourself home, or we will kill you.

You're not going to destroy the king's religion without destroying the king's kingdom. Out of all the kings of Israel, no king was willing to destroy Jeroboam's religion. None. Not one even attempted to. Why was there not one king of Israel willing to destroy Jeroboam's religion? The answer is very simple: to destroy Jeroboam's religion meant the destruction of the kingdom. It meant that they would have to go back and acknowledge that David and his descendants were the true rightful heirs to the throne, and that they were rebels, tyrants, wicked, and ungodly; that everything they were doing was wrong. There was no king of Israel willing to cut his own throat and destroy his own kingdom. Hence, he had to maintain this paganistic Baal worship.

Application to Modern America

Now, why must America remain a democracy? For the same reason, folks. Do you realize that for our civil leaders to go back to the Constitution, the Republic, the Founding Fathers, and biblical principles is for them to say, "Look, we've been wrong all these years. We've been wicked. We've been tyrants. We've been ungodly"? All of a sudden, they're going to lose all of their humanistic, socialistic, welfaristic control, and the people will enjoy freedom. They'll lose all of their power and positions. Do you think, humanly speaking, any politician, Republican or Democrat, is going to do that? Not humanly speaking.

One last passage: 2 Chronicles 13. I want you to look at the challenge that Abijah gave to Jeroboam. "Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah. And he reigned three years in Jerusalem and his mother's name was Michaiah, the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men." So Judah had 400,000 men. "Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valor." Judah then was outnumbered two to one. "And Abijah stood up upon Mount Zemaraim, which is Mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me thou, Jeroboam, and all Israel. Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?"

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 13:1-18 (KJV)

The Challenge of Abijah and the Inevitability of Judgment

> "Yet Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon, the son of David, is risen up and hath rebelled against his Lord. And there gathered in him vain men, the children of Belial, have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them. And now you think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David? And you be a great multitude, and there are with you golden calves

which Jeroboam made you for gods. Have you not cast out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands, so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods? And as for us, the Lord is our God, we have not forsaken Him. The priests which minister unto the Lord are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business, and they burn unto the Lord every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense.

The showbread also they set up in order upon the pure table, and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof to burn every evening, for we keep the charge of the Lord our God, but you have forsaken Him. And behold, God Himself is with us for our captains, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you, O children of Israel, fight you not against the Lord God of your fathers, for you shall not prosper.

But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them, so they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them. And when Judah looked back, and behold, the battle was before and behind, they cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded the trumpets. Then the men of Judah gave a shout, and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hand. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter, so that there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men.

Now here's the point. Israel went so far. There was no turning back. The only thing left, the only way now to stop the idolatry and the wickedness was the destruction of the nation. That's exactly what God did. God destroyed them. God sent the Assyrians and killed thousands, carried the rest into captivity. Do you see the point I'm trying to make, folks? We as a nation, if we do not repent, it may be that we have gone too far and the only way to stop us from our idolatry is the same destruction of our nation.

Hope for the Remnant

Let me encourage you: I don't know what God's going to do or what He's not going to do. I know what He has done in time past because of what the Bible teaches. When God destroyed the nation, He spared a remnant, and that remnant rebuilt. God always has His elect; God always has His remnant.

We are like that proverbial phoenix rising out of the ashes of destruction and rebuilding according to God's Word, God's law, for God's honor and glory. The more wicked, unrighteous, and tyrannical the times, the more you had better stick as closely as you can to the Word of God and the truth of God. The truth is this: if God does not sovereignly intervene in our nation, we're sunk. It takes an act of the sovereign God of heaven and earth.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us. Enable us not only to worship Thee, but to stand true, resist all forms, kinds, and colors of idolatry, and worship the only one true and living God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. We acknowledge that Thou art our Sovereign, our Ultimate, our Absolute, and our only help and hope. We cry to Thee: give us repentance as a nation, have mercy upon us, and bring our hearts back to Thee, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen and Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Deja Vu

Introduction: Déjà Vu and the Ten Commandments Ruling

In 1 Samuel, chapter 8, notice the first ten verses:

"And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel." Now, the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abiah. They were judges in Beersheba, and his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel to Ramah, and said unto him, "Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways."

"Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

"According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.

Déjà Vu

When I first read an article that I am going to share with you, I immediately said to myself, "déjà vu." Most of you probably know that the term is French and literally means "already seen." Déjà vu describes an experience in which you are exceedingly familiar with something with which you really should not be familiar. Suppose, for instance, that you and I were in England touring a castle. All of a sudden, everything around us seems exceedingly familiar, as though we had been there before or had seen it before. In reality, however, we know that we have not been there before. There have also been times when I have been discussing certain topics with friends, and suddenly it dawns on me: "Did I not discuss this same topic with these same friends a little earlier?" It seems so real and familiar, although it is not necessarily true. We have not necessarily been there, nor have we necessarily discussed the same topic.

So déjà vu means, "We have been here before, and here we are going through this same thing again." I was sent an article written by the American Family Association, which some of you probably have read. The article dealt with the Ten Commandments issue in Alabama. I do not know the author. I assume it is Mr. Wildman, but I am not sure.

The issue is not a granite stone with the Ten Commandments inscribed on it. Never has been. The issue is much more diverse and important than a piece of stone. It was best stated by none other than Federal Judge Myron Thompson, who said that the display of the stone containing the Ten Commandments, which also contains a host of other historical documents, is illegal. Thompson said, "The central, most important issue was this."

The Issue: Rejection of God's Sovereignty

“Can the state acknowledge God?” After asking the question, he went on to answer it: “No.” That is the issue. Lest we fail to understand what has occurred here, let me explain. A single lower-court federal judge has bluntly told every American that America is now officially an atheist nation. In one swift stroke of the pen, Judge Thompson tossed out over 225 years of American history and law. In one swift stroke of the pen, he has instituted a new form of law based upon what he wants it to be. Rex has become Lex.

Rex is the Latin word for king. Lex is the Latin word for law. So when he says, "Rex has become Lex," he is saying the king has become law. In other words, the king is no longer subject to the law. The king is above the law, and the king is the one who makes the law. He wears a black robe, and he says he is the law.

Go back and read the First Amendment—the one Judge Thompson destroyed in the name of preserving it. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion," the First Amendment says. Congress has passed no law establishing religion, but what Congress refused to do—indeed, because Congress refused to do it—Judge Thompson did. He instituted as the law of the land the religion of atheism, which says there is no God. Not only did Judge Thompson usurp the power of Congress, he also took away the rights of every individual and state. The second half of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment reads, "or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This is precisely what one lower federal judge has done. He told Americans who disagree with his official state religion of atheism that he can and will prohibit the free exercise of their religion—unless, of course, that religion is atheism. He stripped both Congress and the people of their rights. He set himself above the law because he considers himself to be the law. From this day forward, our entire judicial system must be based on the religion of atheism.

Following that to its logical conclusion, in the future there will be no frame of reference from which to decide law. Law will become what any person wearing a black robe and sitting in court desires it to be. The First Amendment has been ripped apart in the name of upholding it. Orwell's 1984 has arrived. No, you will not notice any

drastic changes immediately. There is still a remnant left in the hearts and minds of the current citizenry. But when that remnant dies out, those who come after us will see a big difference. The state will become intolerant of any religion other than atheism. That, of course, will come into conflict with people of conscience whose religion differs from that of the state.

That is when the persecution—quite legal, I might add—will start. It was the atheist Santayana who said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, wrote, "The Constitution is a mere thing of wax in the hands of the judiciary, which they may twist and shape in any form they please." Indeed, Santayana and Jefferson were right.

That is the end of the article. What the author is saying is this: based upon Judge Thompson's ruling, if that ruling is allowed to stand—if it is not challenged or overthrown—then that one ruling would basically make us an atheistic nation.

One federal judge, commenting upon—and deriding—Judge Roy Moore's actions, stated rather bluntly that, had he been in Judge Roy Moore's position, "he would resign before he did what Moore did, because the rule of law must be upheld." I concur one hundred percent: the rule of law must be upheld. But as Robert just asked, "Whose law? God's law or man's law?" According to the federal judiciary, it is man's law that must take precedent over God's law. It is man's law that must be upheld at all costs.

Alice and I just left Salt Lake City, Utah. As we watched the news the night before we left, here in the middle of Mormon country, we saw that there is a beautiful stone with the Ten Commandments inscribed on it. The news was that they were now going after that Ten Commandments display in the state of Utah.

What is really painful about this is that it is not merely judges who are absolutely ignorant, as well as rebellious. One of the most painful truths to discover is that there are a myriad of pastors who agree with the federal judges. One such pastor in Texas was vehemently upset and preached against Judge Roy Moore because Judge Roy

Moore was not obeying Romans 13 and submitting to the government.

Help me to understand this. Judge Moore, with all of his faults and sins notwithstanding, was at least endeavoring to honor God, uphold His law, and obey God. Why was the pastor not upset with the government that was defying, disobeying, and rebelling against the sovereign God of the universe? I cannot put that together. How can you be against someone who, though not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, was at least saying that we need to honor God and uphold God's law? Yet you say that man does not obey the government, while that same government is defiling the law of God and dishonoring God. The problem is that someone really does not know who God is. Someone does not understand that there can only be one sovereign, one supreme being, and one absolute. I can assure you today that that one sovereign, that one supreme, that one absolute is not the federal government.

It is the one true and living God. Since government is the institution of God, understand that God created only three institutions: the family, which is a ministry of education; the church, which is a ministry of grace; and the state or government, which is a ministry of justice. The state or government, as a ministry of justice, is just as duty-bound, accountable, and responsible to obey God as are the family and the church, because each is His creation and His institution.

Déjà vu? What is happening not only in Alabama but throughout the rest of this country is exactly what happened in 1 Samuel chapter 8. The same principles are being repeated. Before going into 1 Samuel chapter 8, remember this: a king rules by his law.

A King Rules by His Law

It does not matter whether you are talking about a man or God, whether it is human or divine. A king rules by his law because the law is the expression of the king’s will. Thus, a denial of the king’s law is a denial of the king. If a king rules by his law, and law expresses the king’s will, then when you deny the king’s law, in essence you have denied the king.

Judge Thompson's ruling was not only unethical, immoral, unconstitutional, unhistorical, and unbiblical; it was a flat-out denial of God's sovereignty, God's kingship, and God's supremacy. Let us work through this question: If God is not supreme, if God is not sovereign, if God is not absolute, who is? You actually have two choices: man or government, which is instituted by man.

Without clogging up your minds with philosophy, if you have done any reading on philosophy, inevitably you will encounter the terms nominalism and realism. These philosophies are important, not because they are necessarily biblical, but because they emphasize certain truths. They help identify what happens when God is denied and the question of supremacy and sovereignty must be answered.

Whenever you deny God, you have to ask who is supreme and who is sovereign. It is either man or government. Once you say man or government, you have entered the realm of philosophical nominalism or philosophical realism, the age-old question of "the one and the many," or particulars and universals. Which would you say is more important, the one or the many?

Let me explain that a little further. Which would you say is more important, generals or particulars? When I say generals, I am not talking about army officers. I am talking about generals—a multitude of individuals—or particulars. You may say, "Wait a minute, Pastor; you are losing me by talking about philosophy." But when you deny God's sovereignty, you come either to nominalism or realism: the one and the many, or the particular and the generals.

You also come to anarchy or tyranny. What is anarchy? Anarchy is the many; it is everyone doing his own thing. What is the one? It is collectivism: society as a whole, government.

Which is more important? Do we sacrifice government so that everyone may have their individual, quote-unquote, rights and do their own things? Or do we sacrifice rights, liberties, and freedoms so that we may have a stable society and a stable government? When you deny God and deny God's law, the only two things left are anarchy or tyranny. There is no in-between. If we say that individuals are more important—our rights, what we want, our thing—then we descend into what you had in the book of Judges.

You remember the theme of the book of Judges? It is found in Judges 17, I think, in verse 6, and Judges 21 in verse 25.

"There was no king in Israel in those days. Everyone did that which was right in his own eyes." Let me ask you a question. How would you like to live in this country when everyone did that which is right in his own eyes? I mean, I might think it's right to kill every one of you. You might think it's right to steal from me. You might think it's right to do whatever you want to do.

You understand what I'm saying? You have nothing but pure anarchy. So on the one hand, when you deny God's sovereignty, you can descend into pure anarchy.

On the other hand, if you say, "Well, we cannot have anarchy, we cannot have people exercising what they think, and therefore we must have the whole, we must have the collective, we must have the government," therefore, you will end up with tyranny because now you're sacrificing individual rights for the whole, for the one. You're sacrificing the many for the one.

Now, in a nutshell, I want you to see where we are in this country. This is exactly what you have been hearing our United States Attorney General John Ashcroft say: "We must be safe. We must protect our people." So what do we do? In light of wanting to be safe and wanting to be protected, we throw away all the individual rights, all the individual liberties. That's exactly what he's saying.

So the federal government's position is the many has to be sacrificed for the one. When you deny God, you can either have anarchy, or you can have tyranny, one or the other.

God is the answer to this problem. Why? Because He is one. God is one. The burden of the Old Testament is Deuteronomy 6 and verse 5: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." God is one. Yet that one God has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Only in God do we have order. Only in God do we have the whole. Only in God do we have the collective. And only in God do we have the individual, where the rights and the liberties and the freedoms are expressed. So God Himself is the answer to the one and the many.

Without God and without God's law, men must descend either into anarchy or tyranny. There are no other options. You can have one or the other, but there are no other options. You will either descend into anarchy or tyranny.

1 Samuel 8: Israel's Rejection of God as King

I read 1 Samuel chapter 8, the first ten verses. The only way to understand 1 Samuel chapter 8 is to see it as a transition from one law structure to another. What happened in 1 Samuel chapter 8? The people came to Samuel demanding a king. Look in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 12 and verse 12. Note what is specifically stated. Samuel was still rebuking the people for their desire and choice of a king, of a man. He says, “And when you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said unto me, ‘Nay; but a king shall reign over us,’” when “the Lord your God was your king.” So, up until 1 Samuel chapter 8, who was the king over Israel? God Himself.

What in the world were the people doing? They were saying, “We no longer want God to rule over us. We no longer want God to reign over us. We no longer want God as our king. What we want is a man to rule over us.” When you change kings, you change law, because the king rules by his law. When you reject God and institute man, you have swapped God’s law for man’s law. When Israel came demanding a man-king, God not only viewed it as, but understood it as, a rejection of His kingship, His sovereignty, and His law.

Look in verse 7 of 1 Samuel chapter 8. In fact, let us read verse 6: “But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, ‘Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.’” So here is what Israel was doing in 1 Samuel chapter 8: she was trading God for a man and God’s law for man’s law.

Why did Israel want a man to be their king when God was their king? Why did Israel want a man to rule over them when God ruled over them? Let us begin there with verse 1 and look, first of all, at

what I am going to call a lame excuse: “And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.”

The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abiah. They were judges in Beersheba, and his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, took bribes, and perverted judgment. Here is the first reason the people gave for coming to Samuel. “Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, ‘Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways.’”

Why would I say that this was a lame excuse? That certainly does not excuse Samuel’s two sons for their sins, perversions, wickedness, and failures. But the people were recognizing two things: “Samuel, you are too old. You cannot function, and you cannot do anything about your sons. Your sons are wicked and wrong.”

Those may have been facts. But when God raised up Samuel, was there not a corrupt priest or prophet? Yes, by the name of Eli. Did he not have two corrupt sons who were priests, Hophni and Phinehas? God killed both those boys in one day. They were so wicked and ungodly.

The point is this: If God sovereignly raised up a godly Samuel to be a prophet, to teach His people and give them His law and His Word in the midst of a corrupt priesthood, could He not likewise have raised up another prophet when Samuel’s sons were perverse and corrupt? The answer is yes. But no one asked God what to do. No one asked what His will was. They simply came to Samuel and said, “Look, Samuel, we have to have a king over us. You are too old, and your sons are corrupt.”

Verse 5 gives another reason, though it was not the main reason: “And he said unto them, ‘Behold, I am old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.’” Why did they want a king? They wanted to be just like every other nation.

Was not Israel supposed to be different from all the other nations? That is what I read in my Bible. In Deuteronomy chapter 4, Moses tells the people, “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.”

"Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of all the nations, which shall hear all these statutes"—that is God's law—"and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all the things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I have set before you this day?"

Israel was supposed to be different because they had God as their king and God's law as their wisdom and understanding. The other nations would envy Israel as Israel obeyed God. So when they said, "Make us a king, we shall be like other nations," they were trying to conform to the world instead of remaining separate, as God had commanded.

But the real reason Israel wanted a human king is found in verse 20. Samuel had told them everything that was going to come upon them. "Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel," refusing to listen to God's man. "And they said, 'Nay; but we will have a king over us.'" Here is why they wanted one: "that we may also be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

They were unwilling to fulfill their responsibilities. They wanted someone else to study for them, judge for them, defend them, and fight for them. They were unwilling to assume and fulfill personal responsibility. Whenever an individual refuses to assume personal responsibility for himself, someone else will always be willing to assume it for a price—and many times that price will be our own personal freedom.

Before I get through with 1 Samuel, chapter 8, you will see the real cost involved in rejecting God and refusing to fulfill personal responsibilities.

When people rejected God and His law, they had only two choices: anarchy and tyranny. The book of Judges reveals and explains how the denial of God leads to anarchy. The book of 1 Samuel reveals and explains how the denial of God leads to tyranny. Once God is denied, once His law is denied, we must descend into

one of the two: anarchy or tyranny. There are no other alternatives. There is no in-between.

Before going down this chapter, look at verse 11 and notice what God says: "And he said, 'This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you.'" In 1 Samuel 8:11, "This shall be the manner." In verse 9, God says, "Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." The word "manner" is found in both verses, and everyone understands what that means.

The Consequences of Rejecting God and His Law

As I read this passage, I wondered whether it meant what I thought it meant. I looked up the Hebrew word and was very surprised. If I say concerning God, "Well, that's just His manner," everyone understands that as His way of doing things. But "manner" does not simply refer to the way the king would act. The Hebrew word is mishpat, one of the words for justice in the Bible, literally meaning a verdict or a judicial pronouncement. God is saying, "If you want a king, I'm going to give you a king. But in doing so, this will be his manner." In other words, this will be My judicial pronouncement against that king and against you. When God speaks of the manner of the king, He is issuing a verdict, a judicial pronouncement. In giving them what they wanted, God pronounced sentence upon them.

There are five consequences in this chapter for rejecting God and His law. First, read through verses 11 through 17, and underline one little word that will be emphasized several times. Verse 11 says, "And he said, 'This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you.'"

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 8:11-17 (KJV)

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

> will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodly young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. And he will take the tenth of your sheep: and you shall be his servants.

What word occurs over and over in these passages? The word "take." You know what God as King has always done? Give. Give. Give. That is all God has ever done. Now God says, "You want a man? Okay. But I want you to understand, he will take everything that you have." God is a giver; man is a taker. What, then, are the consequences for rejecting God and God's law?

First of all, in verse 11, you will have an unbiblical military conscription: "And he said, 'This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.'"

Without re-preaching a message I have given in the past on the biblical doctrine of war, I showed from the Bible that what was scriptural and biblical was the local militia. There was not a standing army per se until David sinned against God; after that, there came to be a standing army. Before that, everything was the local militia. In other words, if the people did not see that there was a just cause to fight, the king could have no war, for he had no standing army. But once you get a king, at least you will have a standing army.

He will defend his power and his position; therefore, he will take your sons. It really does not matter, in one sense, whether you agree with George Bush in Afghanistan or Iraq or wherever. If your son is in the armed forces and he is told to go over there and defend oil wells, that is where he goes. If you are in the service and refuse, you are court-martialed and imprisoned.

My position is this: if Rockefeller and those men want their oil wells protected, or if they want more oil, let them hire mercenaries to do their fighting. You do not have to take our sons and our daughters. We ought to have a say-so. That is what the Bible says, all

through the Bible, because the militia was there. But once you deny God, there is no longer a local militia. It is no longer the people doing the fighting; it is the king. He has his standing army and says, "I will draft your boys. I will draft your daughters. I will take them. And you can't stop me." So the very first thing you have is an unbiblical military conscription.

Lest anybody misunderstand what I am saying, I am certainly for defending our country. I would fight to the death to defend my country and my nation, especially if my country and my nation happened to be invaded. But, dear friend, there is a big difference between fighting to defend my country and going over there to defend somebody's oil wells, or because some military elite decides that we want to expand our empire.

I know I told you what Jay Leno said, and I am going to repeat it because I thought it was so appropriate. I do not endorse Jay Leno at all. I do not even listen to him. I just saw this quote and thought it was very apropos. He said, "Did you hear that our government is trying to spend millions of dollars writing a constitution now for Iraq?" He continued, "We do not need to spend that money. Let's just give them ours. Number one, ours was written by the smartest men in the world. And number two, we are not using it." Even Jay Leno recognized that fact.

Here is an unbiblical military conscription: "And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers." These are compulsory labor battalions for the state.

By the way, do you realize how many people now work for the federal government? If you were to add up the number of people who work for the federal government and the state governments, it is an astounding figure. I forget what it was. It is something like 39 or 40 percent of the population. When the Bible and the Constitution say that our government is to be a limited government, it has now become an unlimited government. What was it that George Washington said? "Government is like fire. In its proper place, it is a good servant, but when it gets out of the fireplace, it is a fearful

master." That certainly is true. The very first thing you would have is an unbiblical military conscription.

A second consequence is compulsory labor battalions for state service. Ultimately, everything will be for the benefit of the state—not for the family, not for the individual, not for God's honor and glory, and not for the church. Everything will be for the benefit of the state.

Here is the third consequence for rejecting God, in verse 14: "And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants." The state will expropriate—that is, take, even steal—the property of the people.

Has anybody ever heard of eminent domain? If the state wants your property, all it has to do is come by and condemn it. It does not matter whether it has been in your family for four hundred years or one hundred years. If the state wants it, it can condemn it and take it. Yes, it will pay you something. The Word of God condemns eminent domain in the book of Ezekiel.

Another way the state can take your property is through taxation. Property taxes are among the most unbiblical taxes that exist. It is said that probably 99 percent of all the castles in England are owned by the government, not by the people who live in them. Those residents have an agreement with the government; they stay there and make the castles available for tours.

When they say, "Our family has been in this castle for four hundred years," that does not matter. They do not own the castle; England owns it. How did the government get it? It taxed the property until the people could not pay the taxes, and the taxes went to the state. Now the people who did own those castles live in them, but they are actually servants of the state.

All government has to do to expropriate your property is either use eminent domain or tax it to the point that you cannot pay for it; then it will get it. God said that is exactly what is going to happen: "You want a king? I'll give him to you. He's going to take your property. He's going to take your goods. You can have him, but he will take, take, take."

Not only do you have an unbiblical military conscription, compulsory labor battalions for state service, and the expropriation of property, but the state or government that plays God will demand to tithe in taxes as God. Verses 15 and 16 say: "And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodly young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. And he will take the tenth of your sheep."

God says that when government plays God, it will demand a tithe by God. However, in our country, most of us would be so happy, so elated, if only our government demanded 10 percent. Add up all the taxes you pay in this country, and it is nearly 60 percent of what you make. Usually they have a tax-free day sometime in July, which was well over 50 percent. You work that long just to have enough money to pay taxes. The rest of the year, the money would be yours. But God says, when you reject Me, you are going to have someone who will demand a tithe—and a tithe, and a tithe, and a tithe, continuously.

Here is the fifth consequence of rejecting God and His law: all will ultimately be enslaved and serve only government. Thus, you have complete tyranny. Verse 17 says, "He will take the tenth of your sheep: and you shall be his servants." Look up the word "servants" in your concordance. You will find that the Hebrew word is "ebed," which is translated in our Bibles most often as "bondservant" or "slave." "And you shall be his slaves." The people who reject God and His law will always suffer the consequences of that rejection.

Look at verse 18: "And you shall cry out in that day because of your king which you shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day." God says, "You want a man? I'm going to let you have him. In fact, you're going to have him so much that you will wish to God a million times you never had him. And when you cry out, I'm just not going to listen to you. I'm going to let you stew in your own predicament for a while. I'll let you settle down in your own oppression, in your own tyranny, and see what it's like to have a man reign over you instead of God."

Let me make a couple of applications to tie this together. Look in your Bibles to Psalm 119, verse 53. Hold Psalm 119, because we will look at another verse there in a moment. David says, "Horror hath

taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law." Why could David say, "Horror hath taken hold upon me"?

We need to learn the simple truth that I have repeated numerous times in this message: When you reject God and His law, you will descend either into anarchy or tyranny. There is no in-between. David knew the consequences of rejecting God and His law. He was absolutely horrified at those who rejected the law of God because they would end up in anarchy or tyranny.

Now look at Psalm 119, verse 126. David said, "It is time for the Lord to work: for they have made void thy law." Isn't that interesting? "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law."

Making Void the Law of God

Let me deal with the second aspect of this verse first: "For they have made void thy law." Have you ever asked yourself this question: How do men make void the law of God? I could preach an entire sermon just on that question. Let me very quickly give you five ways and the corresponding Scriptures. Here is how men make void the law of God.

Number one: by legislation. Look at Psalm 94, verse 20. You do not have to turn there. He said, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" That makes sin legal. Look in your Bibles when you get home at 2 Kings 17, verses 7 and 8, where the kings of Israel adopted the laws and statutes of the heathen king. You can make void the law of God by legislation. That is what we have done in this country. As I told you before, it is legal in this country to murder as long as the baby is not yet born.

By the way, I saw—and some of you probably saw as well—I think it was either on the Drudge Report or World Net Daily, how they had come out with a new scope. I forget what it was called, some type of scan. They can not only see the baby in the mother's womb, but they can now see the baby laughing, crying, and experiencing emotions. They had a picture of one baby in the womb smiling from ear to ear. Unbelievable. And yet, by legislation, that is no longer a baby.

It's just a glob of fetal tissue. And if you want to kill it, go ahead. You can make void God's law by legislation. Everybody knows this one: what's the Word of God say? “If any will not work, neither should he eat.” Yet a multitude in this country refuse to work and are supported by welfare, including food stamps. Thus, legislation can make void the law of God.

You can also make void God's law by judicial precedent. That's what Judge Myron Thompson was doing. Read Psalm 82, a psalm against the judges. God said they had literally turned the world upside down by their wicked judicial precedents. So the law of God may be made void by legislation, judicial precedent, or tradition.

You remember what our Lord said in Matthew 15 to those Pharisees? "Why with your tradition have you made void the law of God?" People would rather have tradition than truth.

Fourthly, you can make void the law of God by ignorance. John 8:32 says, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." If you do not know the truth, you are not free. In Hosea 4, He says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." We ignorantly violate God's law and suffer for it; we make it void through our own ignorance.

Then we make it void by rebellion. You remember Psalm 2? "The kings of the earth have gathered together and said, 'Let us cast His cords from us, and let us break His bands asunder.'" In other words, "We don't care what God says. We don't care who He is or what He wants. We're going to do our thing." Thus, there are five ways that you can make void the law of God. That does not mean the law of God has been done away with. It means, practically speaking, that you have acted as if the Word of God is of none effect in your life.

There is a difference between a theoretical atheist and a practical atheist. A theoretical atheist—and there are very few of them—would say, "Well, I don't believe there is a God," explaining that position from an intellectual point of view. But there are many practical atheists. A practical atheist may claim to believe in God while acting as if God has not spoken, going ahead and doing his own thing. Practically, he disobeys God while claiming to believe God.

Now he says, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law." What does God do when men make void His law? God may work in one of two ways, or both, as He chooses. First, He may work by way of demonstration. In Psalm 9, God, when He arises, will demonstrate who He is and what man really is. I would hate to be the one trying to ban God or His law. The second way God usually moves is in condemnation—not demonstration, but condemnation.

If you read through the book of Ezekiel, there is a phrase that occurs there seventy-three times: “And they shall know that I am the Lord.” Every time it occurs, it is in the context of judgment. In judgment and condemnation, God reveals Himself against His enemies in such a way that they know they are but men and God is God.

The Choice: Serve God or Serve Enemies

God will most often work in judgment. However, that judgment sometimes reveals itself in greater oppression, servitude, and tyranny. Turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 28. If we as a people do not repent, you ain’t seen nothing yet, because when you reject God and His law, you only descend into either anarchy or tyranny.

Deuteronomy 28 contains the blessings and the curses, and the portion we are reading is the curse for disobeying God’s law. Beginning with verse 45: “Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee.” God says, “So if you don’t obey me, you’re going to be cursed. And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever.”

“Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore thou shalt serve thine enemies.” God says you have two choices. You may either serve Me, or you may serve your enemies, but you will serve. We can thank God, worship Him, and serve Him for the abundance of all things that He has given us. We can obey Him by His grace and by His power, be His people, and be blessed by Him.

But God says, “When you disobey Me and My curses come upon you, you shall serve your enemies.”

When a nation forgets God, as the Scripture says in Psalm 9, “The nation that forgets God shall be turned into hell.” But when a nation forgets God, when a nation denies God and God’s law,

Unless God sovereignly, miraculously, and powerfully intervenes, our nation will plunge into a deeper, steeper, and faster ride into total tyranny. It’s the price we’ll pay for rejecting God and His law. Déjà vu? Israel went through it in 1 Samuel chapter 8. And here we are in this country going through the same thing. Anarchy or tyranny? When you reject God and His law, you have no other alternatives.

Conclusion: Call to Obedience

Neither of those are appealing. I prefer to worship and honor and obey the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ the Messiah. Father, we ask that You would speak to our hearts, that You would help us, enable us to see the principles of Your Word. Enable us to understand that there are dire consequences for rejecting Thee and Thy law. Give us grace to be obedient. Give us grace to serve. Help us to worship Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Going Back Into Egypt

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 42:1-6 (KJV)

Introduction and Scripture Reading

"Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even to the greatest, came near and said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant; for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us: that the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you. Behold, I will pray unto the Lord your God according to your words.

"And it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it unto you. I will keep nothing back from you. Then they said to Jeremiah, The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well

with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God. And it came to pass, after ten days, that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest, and said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto whom you sent me to present your supplication before him."

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 42:7-22 (KJV)

"If you will still abide in this land, then I will build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the Lord: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand. And I will show mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land. But if you say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the Lord your God, saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: and now therefore hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; If you wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; then it shall come to pass, that the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof you were afraid..."

"...shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there you shall die. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them. For thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel; As mine anger and my fury have been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when you shall enter into Egypt: and you shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse..."

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 42:18–43:7 (KJV)

and a reproach; and you shall see this place no more. The Lord hath said concerning you, O remnant of Judah; Go you not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day. For you dissembled in your hearts, when you sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according to all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it. And now I have this day declared it to you; but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you. Now therefore know certainly that you shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither you desire to go and to sojourn. And it came to pass, that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the Lord their God, for which the Lord their God had sent him to them, even all these words, then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there: but Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon. So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the Lord, to dwell in the land of Judah. But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations, whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; even men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah. So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord.

Going Back Into Egypt

Historical Background

"Thus came they even to Tahpanhes." To understand Jeremiah 42 and 43, we must understand Jeremiah chapters 40 and 41 particularly. In fact, it would be well to understand the preceding five chapters.

God sent Nebuchadnezzar against Judah and Jerusalem to destroy them. He sent a message to Judah and Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar was His servant and that He had given him that land and all the surrounding nations as well. Therefore, Judah and Jerusalem were not to fight against Nebuchadnezzar. If they wanted to live, they were to submit to him, go out to him, take their punishment, go over into Babylon, and live there. All would be well, but they were not to fight against him.

The king of Judah decided that he knew far better than God, so they all fought against Nebuchadnezzar. Thousands upon thousands of people were slaughtered, and Nebuchadnezzar defeated them anyhow. He took the majority of the people away into captivity in Babylon, but left the poorest of the land there in Judah.

Before he left, Nebuchadnezzar sent a man named Gedaliah as governor of that territory. Gedaliah was a good man. Gedaliah said to the people, as recorded in Jeremiah 40:9, "And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you."

"As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken."

Gedaliah said, in effect, Nebuchadnezzar had made him governor. In light of what had happened, the best thing to do was exactly what God had said before: serve the king of Babylon and get on with their lives. They had been defeated; they were now tribute people. They should simply make the most of it.

Jeremiah had been put in prison by the king of Judah because he had told the king that he would be defeated and taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. In fact, this was when Jeremiah was put down in the dungeon and sank in the mire, in the mud, up to his chest. Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian, took a rope and cast clouts, pulled him up out of there, and saved his life. Then the king allowed him to stay in the palace court, but he was still basically a prisoner. So when Nebuchadnezzar took the city, he told Nebuchadnezzar—who was his captain—"Look, you let Jeremiah go. If he wants to come into Babylon, fine. If he wants to stay here, let him stay here. Let him dwell wherever he wants to dwell." Jeremiah decided that he would stay with Gedaliah and the people there in the land of Judah. Gedaliah was the governor over all this people, as few as they might be, but at least he was there.

There was a king, King Baalis of the Ammonites, who had sent a man named Ishmael to murder Gedaliah. In chapter 40, beginning in verse 13, Gedaliah was warned: "Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, and said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not. Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael."

Johanan said, "Look, the man's coming to kill you. The wise thing to do is just let me go kill him. It's not only going to spare your life, but it's going to save the lives of a lot of people over here in Judah." Gedaliah would not listen. If you read chapter 41, you will find that Ishmael did indeed bring ten men and come over, and he murdered Gedaliah and all the people who were with him.

As Ishmael was leaving, he met eighty more men and murdered seventy of them. He spared the other ten only because they said they had treasures in the field, which they would give to Ishmael. Thus

Ishmael murdered Gedaliah and all those with him, murdered seventy others, took the remnant of the people, forced everyone to go with him, and departed. When Johanan the son of Kareah and the other captains of the forces heard what had happened, they chased after Ishmael.

The Proposition: Seeking God's Will

They finally caught him, and all the people rejoiced. The people were spared, though Ishmael escaped. They brought everybody back. When we come to chapter 42, this is where they came to Jeremiah.

"Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even to the greatest, came near, and said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant; for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us: that the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. And Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you. Behold, I will pray unto the Lord your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you."

Notice this proposition. The people came to Jeremiah, from the least to the greatest, and asked him to pray for them. They wanted to know God's will and were willing to walk in God's will. They wanted to obey Him and wanted what was right for them.

Here is a proposition that would thrill the heart of any pastor: to have someone come and say, "I really want to do God's will. I want to obey Him. I want to honor Him above everything." But note their request in verse 2: "Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant."

"For we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us." There was seemingly a realization of their own helplessness. They recognized that they were powerless and but a few. Nebuchadnezzar had killed and mutilated thousands, carried others away captive, and

then Ishmael and others had been killed. Thus, they were but a few. They said, “We need direction. We need to know what God would have us to do. We need to know where to go.”

Jeremiah said, “I will pray for you just as you have asked.” In verse 4, he says, “And it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you.” Jeremiah said, “You want the whole Word of God? I am going to give it to you. I will keep back nothing.”

The passage that came to my mind was what Paul told those Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20: “I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God unto you, I've kept back nothing that was profitable.” Paul kept back nothing that was profitable. What does that mean? It means he preached the totality of the Word of God, because all of the Word of God is profitable.

Jeremiah said, “You want to know what God’s will is? I am going to tell you. You want to know which direction to go? I am going to tell you. I promise you, I will give you the whole counsel of God.” The proposition was simple: “You pray to God for us, tell us what God wants us to do, and we are willing to do it.” Now, in verses 5 and 6, here is their promise—not just a proposition, but a promise.

The Promise: A Vow to Obey

"Then they said to Jeremiah, The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God."

Talk about an encouragement to the heart of a pastor. They said, The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us. God is our witness. We will do whatever he says. Whether it is good or bad, whether we like it or not, we will obey God. How seldom do you find an individual like that, much less a group of people like that, who would give their word, make a vow, and say before God, The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us? They were calling God, the sovereign God of heaven and earth, to be a witness that they were

making a vow to do whatever God said, whether they liked it or not and whether they agreed with it or not.

So the proposition is very simple: Jeremiah, you pray for us. Find out what God's will is. Tell it to us. Here is the promise: we will obey it, whether it is good or bad.

The Period: Ten Days of Seeking God

Now, look, if you would, thirdly, at the period. I find this interesting, verse 7 and 8: "And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah. Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest." Jeremiah spent ten days seeking the Lord in this matter.

The thing I am trying to point out is this: it costs the man of God tears, heartache, prayer, and time. Many times, we do indeed have to wait upon the will of God. God is not at our disposal; we are to be at His disposal.

Consider what Jeremiah actually did. He could have said immediately, “I do not have to pray about this thing. I can already tell you what the will of God is,” because God had already told the people not to fight against Nebuchadnezzar. He had given Nebuchadnezzar that land, and if they obeyed him, they could stay in that land and simply be servants to Nebuchadnezzar. God had sent Nebuchadnezzar to punish them for their sins, wickedness, and rebellion against God. Instead, Jeremiah said, “I want to make sure that you have a fresh word from God.”

The Pronouncement: Blessings and Warnings

Jeremiah spent ten days seeking the will of God for these people. Now look, fourthly, at the pronouncement. God gives some promises, but that is not all; He also gives some warnings. Look at the promises beginning with verse 9: “And said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto whom you sent me to present your supplication before him.” In other words, here is the Word of God; here is the will of God. Verse 10 says, “If you will still abide in this land, then I will build you, and not pull you down.”

"And I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you."

God says, "Just stay here." If they stayed in the land, He promised to build them and not destroy, chasten, or punish them anymore. He would build them, plant them, make them prosper, and make them grow.

In verse 11, He addresses one of their great fears: "Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the Lord: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand." Undoubtedly, Nebuchadnezzar had made a huge impression upon these people because of his viciousness and ferocity. They were afraid of him; they had already seen what he had done.

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 42:12-19 (KJV)

He tore down the temple, he tore down the city, he beat down the wall, he burned houses, he killed, he ravaged. So God said, I tell you what, you just don't be afraid of him. I will deliver you out of his hand. No reason to fear him, as long as you obey me. Now watch verse 12. God said, "And I will show mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land."

Now, here is the promise. You remember what the Bible says in Proverbs 21, verse 1. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

God said, if you'll just obey me, I promise you, I'll take Nebuchadnezzar's heart and I'll turn it back to you. And he won't bother you anymore. Just obey Me. So there's the promise.

Now look at the warning beginning in verse 13. "But if you say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the Lord your God, saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: and now therefore hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; If you wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; then it shall

> come to pass, that the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof you were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there you shall die."
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> That sounds absolutely plain to me. God said you stay in the land, I'm going to bless you. You go into Egypt, you're going to die. You're going to run into the very thing that you're trying to run away from. Watch verse 17, still the warnings. "So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there; they shall die..."
>
> "...by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; As mine anger and my fury have been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when you shall enter into Egypt: and you shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and you shall see this place no more. The Lord hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt."

"Know certainly that I have admonished you this day." God says, in effect, Here is My promise: if you will stay in the land and obey Me, I will bless you, protect you, build you, and plant you. I will make sure Nebuchadnezzar does not harm you. But if you go into Egypt, contrary to My will and My word, you are going to die. The very things that you are afraid of, you are going to encounter in Egypt. You will not run from them; you will run to them.

I heard an old story years ago about a man who was over in what I will call Tehran. He was walking down the street when he saw death face to face. The man was absolutely frightened, so he got on his camel and started running toward Baghdad. Someone asked Death, "Why did you look so shocked when you saw that man?" Death replied, "I was shocked to see him here in Tehran. I have an appointment with him very soon in Baghdad."

You see the point? These people thought they were going to get away from something, but they were running right to it.

This should be the heartbreak for each of us. Jeremiah knew this. He said, "For you dissembled in your hearts, when you sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according to all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it."

What does it mean to dissemble? It means to play the hypocrite, to say something you do not really mean. Jeremiah said, I knew when you came to me and asked me to pray for you, promising—and calling God as a witness—that you would obey, you were lying. I knew you were hypocrites. I knew it was not real and genuine. But he says, "And now I have this day declared it to you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you." Instead of obedience, all you have done is disobedience.

Now let me show you, fifthly, the presumption. This is what really blows my mind. Let us begin reading in chapter 43, verse 1.

The Presumption: Rejecting God's Word

Remember, this is a very simple scenario. They come to Jeremiah with this proposition: Pray for us, give us the will of God, and we will do it. He spent ten days discerning the mind of God, making sure he had fresh material. Then he pronounced for them the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience.

Now look at this presumption. “And it came to pass, that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the Lord their God, for which the Lord their God had sent him to them, even all these words, then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there: but Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon.”

“So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the Lord, to dwell in the land of Judah.” Notice several things here. The very first thing they

did was presume to know the will and the Word of God apart from divine revelation. Jeremiah had spent ten days seeking God, and God told him exactly what to say. Here was divine prophetic revelation; yet when he delivered it, they declared that God had not said it.

Do you realize that today there are innumerable people who profess to know the will of God apart from divine revelation? They trust in visions, feelings, and newspaper predictions. You know, what did we hear the other day?

They were trying to know the will of God and the Word of God based upon what was being reported in the newspapers. But whenever you and I get to the attitude that we can simply think and feel without ever going to the Word of God to see what God actually says, we are doing just like these people. They were presuming to know the will and the Word of God apart from divine revelation.

In doing so, they were calling the prophet of God an absolute liar. Notice, if you would, what they said in verse 2: "And all the proud men spake, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely." They were saying, "You're lying, Jeremiah. You're a liar. God did not say that."

You are talking about people today. Some of you have seen it on the Internet. Read World Net Daily. It has been on there the last several days, where one of Bush's men has said that George Bush was placed where he is by God and that he is God's man leading the war against terrorists. By the way, I hope everybody knows that terrorism is a tactic. He is leading a war against tactics, I suppose.

How in the world can you presume to know the will of God and the Word of God when you are acting absolutely contrary to that will and to that Word that has been divinely revealed? Here are these presumptuous men, presuming to know the will and the Word of God apart from God's divine revelation. Secondly, they presume to know better than God's man.

Jeremiah had given his life to the ministry. May I remind you that Jeremiah was called of God even before he was born? Read Jeremiah chapter 1. Jeremiah knew exactly what God had in store for him. Here was a man who had spent his entire life in the ministry, his entire life in the Word of God. And now these people, many of them

warriors, presumed to know more than the preacher about the things of God.

Their attitude was, “He can't be right; our minds are made up.” I'm not going to say there is no one smarter than I am in the Bible. I know there are far more brilliant men than myself, and people who know the Bible probably far better than I do. But I know the Bible better than anybody in here. I'm not trying to brag. I know that because I've spent my entire life studying it. I'm not saying you don't study it; I know that you do. But my life has been given to it. Consequently, I'm bound to know more about the Bible than you do. And if I don't, you should be up here teaching me. That doesn't mean I know everything.

When it comes to carpentry, I won't have to ask Roy. I don't know. When it comes to pipe fitting, I'll have to ask Harry. There are areas that everyone in here knows far more than I do. I don't know that much about medicine, so if I have a question about medicine, I'll have to defer to those who have given their lives to studying it.

And so here were people whose lives had not been in the ministry or in the Word of God, looking at Jeremiah, whose entire life was given to the ministry, and saying, “God didn't say that. We know better than you do.” Can you imagine? That's just like a child telling his parents, “No, I know better.” They presume to know more.

There's a lot of things I don't know. But one thing I do know is preachers and the ministry. Alice and I have done this innumerable times. I was in Tennessee visiting when a good friend invited us to church on a Wednesday night. He said, “We've got this new pastor, Doctor So-and-so.”

He said, “Oh, he’s so great. I want you to come hear him.” I said I would be glad to go. The man was an eloquent speaker, but all he did was read his text. I took out my pen, wrote down four points, and handed the paper to Alice. She looked at me and said, “That’s what he’s going to preach.” Ask her how many points I got right: every one of them. You know how I knew? Because I had heard the same type of preaching, the same passage, and the same thing over and over. That had been my life.

The point I am trying to make is this: here was Jeremiah, whose whole life was in the ministry, and yet they said, “You don’t know what you are talking about. God would never say that, and God would never do that.” In their presumption—and God specifically calls it that—look at verse 2: “then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men.” They presumed to know the will and Word of God apart from divine revelation. They presumed to know more than the man of God.

In that presumption, they attributed base motives to Jeremiah. Look at verse 3: “But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us.” In other words, Baruch had told him stories, had lied, and had egged him on; Jeremiah was supposedly saying this merely to irritate them. Can you imagine that? It is like saying that all a preacher has to do is preach something to make a certain individual mad or upset someone.

In actuality, they were saying Jeremiah was stupid: if he had a discerning mind and any insight, he would know Baruch was merely stirring him up. But in their presumption, they brought the curse of God upon themselves and others. Look at chapter 43, verse 4: “So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the Lord, to dwell in the land of Judah.” Skip down to verse 7: “So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord. Thus came they even to Tahpanhes.”

They kidnapped Jeremiah and Baruch, stole all the other people, and carried them into Egypt. They forced them. Jeremiah 43:5 says, “But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations, whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; even men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah.” They stole them, kidnapped them, and brought them into the land of Egypt.

The Punishment: Nebuchadnezzar's Conquest of Egypt

They were not merely interested in bringing the curse of God upon themselves; they forced others into Egypt as well. Here is the punishment mentioned in chapter 43, beginning with verse 8:

"Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brickkiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. He shall break also the images of Beth-shemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire."

God said that if they stayed in the land, the punishment was over. If they went where He told them not to go, the punishment would follow them. They were afraid of Nebuchadnezzar, so they ran to Egypt. Guess who conquered Egypt? They were afraid of famine, so they went to Egypt. Guess what was in Egypt? They were afraid of the pestilence. That was in Egypt.

Application: America Going Back to Egypt

The reason I'm preaching this message today is so that you can see a parallel in this country. Israel was in Egypt. God sovereignly and powerfully brought them out of Egypt and gave them the good land. He gave them liberty, freedom, and His law. The only reason Nebuchadnezzar attacked and destroyed them was their sin, rebellion, disobedience, and despisement of God's law. That's the only reason.

Here they were—whipped, chastised, broken, and helpless—but just as defiant as ever: We will not have God telling us what to do. We will not have His law. We will not listen to Him. We will do what we think best and what we believe. Here is the first application: see, supposedly, an emancipated, illuminated people going back to bondage after hundreds of years of freedom.

What did they have in Egypt? Bondage, slavery, and suffering! And now they want to go back? They no longer wished to obey God. They wanted to go back into Egypt because they were afraid of Nebuchadnezzar and of suffering. They wanted security and safety. They were willing to give up their liberty and freedom so that they could go back and be safe and secure. But their safety was a carnal safety, and their security was a carnal security.

It seems to me there is a verse in the Bible that says, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Psalm 127, verse 1. Can you see what has happened? They were leaving the land of promise, the God of the land, and the law of God, going back to false gods and a false law for safety's sake and security's sake.

That is exactly the push in America today: not just to do away with the Ten Commandments, but to do away with God and all reference to God. Do you realize how much safer we are going to be as a nation if we eradicate God from our land? I cannot comprehend the fact that we have had 200 plus years of liberty and freedom in this country, basically speaking.

All of a sudden, we know more than the founding fathers and more than the God of the Bible. We are going to destroy two hundred years of history just to be safe and secure in our carnal humanism, our practical atheism. Going back into Egypt—we are headed that way.

What these people wanted was human manipulation of events rather than divine sovereign providence. God said, “If you stay in the land, I’ll work it out.” They said, “No, we’re going to go into Egypt and we’ll work it out.” Do you know the mentality in this country today? The government can do anything, or we can do anything as a

people and as a nation. We can work it out. I've got news for you, folks: we can't work it out.

Whenever we depend upon human manipulation—by the way, everybody believes in predestination. Everybody. They simply disagree about who does the predestinating, whether it is God or man. I would much rather have God's predestination than man's predestination, I can assure you.

Faith as Obedience and Final Exhortation

Secondly, I want you to see from this text that faith is obedience. Look in verse 7 of chapter 43. The Bible says, "So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord." Had they had faith, what would they have done? They would have obeyed; they would have stayed in the land. God said they had no faith, so they did not obey the Lord. Faith is obedience. That is why James said, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." As I obey God, it demonstrates faith.

Disobedience is synonymous with unbelief, destruction, and rebellion. Here is another application: many hypocritically seek the Lord. In their pride, presumption, and arrogance, what they really want is God's blessing upon what they have already determined to do.

I could give illustration after illustration of people I have counseled who did not want counsel; they wanted my blessing upon what they had already decided. That is what we do to God. We determine what we want and ask for God's blessing upon it. If God refuses to bless what we want, we do it anyway and take His cursing.

I want you to understand something: the word of the Lord stands sure, whether you obey it or not, whether you believe it or not, and whether you like it or not. God said, "Now I'm going to tell you, you better not go down into Egypt." He told them why: they were afraid of Nebuchadnezzar, and He was going to send him down there; they were afraid of famine, and He was going to send famine there; they were afraid of suffering, and He was going to send that there. They answered, "No, God, we don't believe You." Then they could go into Egypt and find out. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven."

God's Word is never going to fail. Just because you do not believe or obey it does not mean it is not true.

What these people did in Jeremiah 42 and 43 is exactly what we are doing in this country. We are trading the blessing of God for the curse of God, the law of God for the law of man, and obedience for disobedience. God knows how to raise up Nebuchadnezzars, and He will have one for this country if we do not repent. Wherever we try to flee—physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, or economically—God will always have a Nebuchadnezzar when we are disobedient.

The safest place to be is right smack dab in the middle of God's will, regardless of the situation or circumstances, because there God will protect and feed us. You remember what God told Elijah? "Elijah, get thee down by the brook Cherith, for there I have commanded the ravens to feed thee." Elijah could have gone to the Jordan River.

But he would not have gotten fed, would he? God said, "It's there. I've commanded the ravens to feed you." If we want to be fed, sustained, blessed, protected, and provided for, we need to learn to obey regardless of the situation or circumstances and trust God. Stay in the spiritual land that is in this Book, and go not down into Egypt—our carnal reasoning and thoughts. Do not trade God for carnal security.

Let us pray. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us and undertake for us. May we not be like Johanan and all those mighty men, dissembling in our hearts. May we always seek Thy will and Thy Word, obey it, and rejoice in it, whether we like it or not. Thou art our God, and we owe Thee honor, worship, adoration, and service. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Washington's Klan

Introduction and Scripture Reading

We are meeting today at historic Fort Jackson, Robert E. Lee's first duty station. I want you to open your Bibles, if you would, to Exodus chapter 23. I am going to deal, basically, with one or two verses and give a history lesson. This is a very simple passage. In fact, let us read the first three verses. Verse 2 is the verse I really want to address. Exodus chapter 23, verse 1.

"Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment: Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause."

Now look closely at verse 2: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." I want to deal with a subject today which I am sure that most people here have never, ever heard spoken of before. The subject is entitled, "Washington's Klan, The Loyal League." This is the subject I especially want to deal with from this passage.

The Original Klan vs. the Loyal League

Certainly, the message that I am going to be giving today is not a vindication of the modern-day Ku Klux Klan. I am certainly going to mention the Ku Klux Klan, but you have got to remember that the original Ku Klux Klan began in 1865. It was disbanded by General Forrest in 1869. He himself had his office expire in 1870, and by 1871 the original Klan, of course, had been disbanded.

Now, when everyone hears of the KKK, at the mere mention of the words, or at least the mere sight of those representative letters, usually what everyone thinks of is racism, and especially Southern racism. Well, Confederate and United States Congressman J. Best Curry said this: "No conquered people have ever written the accepted history of the conquest." And certainly that is true. It may surprise you to know that the original Klan that murdered blacks as well as whites was an agency of the federal government. Now, does that surprise you?

It was the Union Klan, known as the Loyal League. The original KKK gained its notoriety in opposition to the Loyal League and its many and varied activities. The Loyal League originated in the North, worked for the ideas and policies of the North, and was sponsored by the government of Washington, D.C. The Union League, also known as the Loyal Union League, the Union Loyal League, or the Loyal League, was a secret organization begun in Ohio in 1862. Now some say 1863. It may have begun in 1862, but was originally chartered then in January of 1863. The reason the Loyal League was formed was to bolster Northern morale and support the policies of Abraham Lincoln. Ohio Republicans established the first Union League in America in 1862.

Origins and Purpose of the Loyal League

They were doing so to counteract groups such as the Copperheads, people who lived in the North and were extremely sympathetic to Southern views and the Southern idea of limited government and a constitutional republic. Democrats in the North were also winning some victories, and the North was experiencing great defeat on the battlefield. In an attempt to arouse enthusiasm for the war effort and infuse new vitality into the Republican Party, the League quickly

spread throughout the North, serving not only as a social force but as a political force as well. Within one year, the League had spread to eighteen northern states and to many among the Unionists of the South.

The Loyal League raised troops, paid their expenses, sent supplies to the field, and distributed political literature. At the close of the war, it worked for the radical reconstruction of the Southern states, the punishment of Southern leaders, the confiscation of Southern property, and Negro suffrage.

The League's Role in Reconstruction

As I was doing some research on this, I found that the original power behind the League was Dr. Henry Whitney Bellows, a minister at the All Souls Unitarian Church in New York. Dr. Bellows began what is known as the Sanitary Commission, which was not only the forerunner of the Loyal League but also of the American Red Cross. Dr. Bellows had heard Secretary of State William Seward make a speech. In that speech, the Secretary of State said, “It is time that loyal men had to put the country ahead of the Constitution because a nation on fire made any debate on the sanctity of law out of order.” That was the Secretary of State saying it was time that loyal men put the country ahead of the Constitution. In other words, it really didn’t matter what the Constitution said.

They were going to do what they were going to do regardless. After the Freedmen's Bureau's agents and other Northern whites obtained command of the League in the South, it became a machine to control the votes of the blacks. The League ceased to be important in the North, although it was headquartered in New York City.

Each southern state had a grand council, and each county had one or more councils. The Loyal League had a constitution and an elaborate ritual, making it an oath-bound secret society whose members were sworn to support one another on all occasions and, in elections, to vote only for Negroes or Northern men in order to overthrow what they called the Southern white oligarchy. No ex-Confederates were allowed in the Loyal League, and very few Southern Unionists were permitted to join either.

At each Southern League meeting, members were taught from a catechism prepared by the radical Republicans of Congress that they must beware of their white neighbors as their worst enemies. They were taught that the Democratic Party, to which Southern whites had belonged, had opposed emancipation and was still opposed to any rights for Negroes. To prevent the moral control of Negroes by their former masters, the Loyal League issued what was known as an Exodus Order. This meant that any Negroes still living with their former masters must leave them and find different housing because they could not stay there at all.

In these meetings, Negroes were taught not only the equality of men, but also the right of the Negro to his master's property and to any other property they desired. The votes of blacks during Reconstruction were controlled by a few white Republican leaders; no black man could break away and vote independently. Negroes who voted with the mass of Southern whites were persecuted and beaten, and in a few instances they were also killed.

The Freedmen's Bureau as Shadow Government

The Loyal League died out about 1870, but not before it had succeeded and literally become incorporated with the Freedmen's Bureau and other forces permanently trying to array blacks against whites and opposing political parties. The Freedmen's Bureau had a rather large title. We normally think of it as a bureau that existed for the benefit of black folks. Its full title was The Bureau of Freedom, or the Bureau of Freedmen, Abandoned Lands and Refugees.

The extent of the Freedmen's Bureau's power also shows its jurisdiction. The Freedmen's Bureau, Abandoned Lands and Refugees, controlled 4 million ex-slaves and millions of whites, that is, the refugees who were displaced by the war, and tens of millions of acres of property that were confiscated from the traitors, that is, Southerners and Southern Confederates. So the Freedmen's Bureau not only controlled the 4 million ex-slaves; it also controlled all the whites who had their property confiscated, who were now counted as refugees, and, of course, it then had control over all the land that had been confiscated as well. The commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau was General Oliver Otis Howard.

General Howard's right arm had been blown off at the Battle of Seven Pines. This severe wound embittered him intensely against the South. Howard himself describes his agency's power: "The law establishing the Bureau committed it to the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen from the rebel states. And this almost unlimited authority gave me scope and liberty of action. Legislative, judicial, and executive powers were combined in my commission. I controlled all abandoned land solely for the purpose of assigning, leasing, and selling them to refugees and freedmen."

Goals of Reconstruction: Re-education and Centralization

In other words, General Howard was saying that, basically, he was a dictator. He was also telling us that, basically, the Freedmen's Bureau was a shadow government for the North in the South, and it was backed up by armed forces.

The goal of Reconstruction was broad and demands further explanation. The South, as the Radical Republicans in Congress determined, had to be ruled with an iron hand and forced into Reconstruction. The Loyal League and the Freedmen's Bureau were led by the Radical Republicans who were in control of Congress. In fact, most of the Loyal League officers were federal employees. The breadth of this arrangement is absolutely amazing and explains why the goal of Reconstruction requires further consideration.

Judge James Edmunds was National Union League President from 1863 to 1869. Simultaneously, he was also the Republican Commissioner of the General Lands Office in Washington. It was through his efforts that the National Council of the League joined forces with Republican leaders to combine their resources for a Southern organizing campaign, bringing loyalty and nationalized patriotism to the traitorous South. The process then fused the League with the Republican Party. The Loyal League was therefore an extension of the Congressional Republican Party.

The South, as it existed according to Reconstruction, embracing the concepts that it embraced—that is, the concept of a limited government, a constitutional republic, states' rights, and the right of self-defense—could not be allowed to continue. It must be

reconstructed. Thus, the League then was operating in concert with what you and I would know as the Republican Party, and it was an instrument in reconstructing the South.

Republican Thaddeus Stevens, who was a wicked, wicked man, was also a congressman. Here is a letter written to him by Gilly F. Watson, who was the lead chairman in Virginia. This letter was written December the 5th, 1865.

Here is why Southerners could not be allowed to vote. They were disenfranchised by the Reconstructionists; that is, they could not vote. Gilly F. Watson wrote this letter on December 5, 1865, to Congressman Thaddeus Stevens:

"Honorable Thaddeus Stevens, honored sir, having been appointed as a committee of correspondence by our loyal league, we take pleasure in addressing you as one of the leading men of the nation, and in calling your attention to a few facts, which we think clearly show that Virginia is not yet prepared for restoration of civil rights. Your attention has doubtless been called to the elections in this city and state since the surrender of Lee's army, and you could not have overlooked the animus exhibited in those elections.

"...in every instance avowed rebels have been chosen over union candidates. And in one instance, the president had the election set aside, that is, the one of mayor, because the choice of the people was a rebel officer. This spirit is rampant with the people today as ever, and is being exhibited in the General Assembly now in session. On the organization of that body yesterday, Colonel James B. Baldwin was elected speaker over a conservative gentleman, and we believe for the reason that he was a member of the Confederate Convention in Congress, the aid of Governor Letcher to muster the Virginia militia into the Confederate service, and afterwards a Confederate colonel. Mr. Baldwin is a man of ability, an old-line Whig, and opposed to secession before the war commenced. But when Virginia entered into the arena of strife, he pitched headlong into the fight, and no man then surpassed him in violence."

Colonel John B. Baldwin, before the war actually broke out, approached President Abraham Lincoln and told him, “If you will just simply undo these unjust and ungodly tariffs, the South will

come back. We're not going to put up with these tariffs of 40 and 50 and 60 percent." Baldwin was trying to persuade Lincoln to head off the war. Yet this gentleman says that Colonel Baldwin was the man that no one surpassed in violence.

He continues: "In the Senate, Captain Harrison was elected sergeant at arms over Mr. Thompson, the old incumbent, his great recommendation being that he fought against the United States government. Clerks, doorkeepers, all were chosen for their rebellious proclivities over men of Union sentiments, thus showing the old Adams still living, and that the general government will have other troubles with this people as soon as the military power is removed. We represent the loyal people of this section, many of whom have fought and bled and lost their all in defense of the stars and stripes."

What about all those southern men who had lost all they had in defense of their state? But he says, "We represent the loyal people of this section, many of whom have fought and bled and lost all their all in defense of the stars and stripes. Are these men to be turned over to an excited and infuriated mob by the United States representatives? Or are the rebels to be held in check till their passions have subsided and they've had their constitutions and laws amended to conform to the requirements of Congress? Is it not the imperative duty of Congress to see that the amended laws of Virginia before admitting her representatives to seats? Are the loyal citizens, the freedmen, the national debt, the Confederate debt, all to be left open questions, to be acted upon as the rebels may feel inclined? Are the leaders of the rebels to become leaders in Reconstruction? These are questions that hold at bay the vitality of the Union and should be settled satisfactorily before any national privileges, we have forfeit all, are granted."

"Virginia is no more fit for Union legislation now than she was in 1863. Six of the seven presses in the city are rebel organs and the leading ones are living on the rebellious reputations of the past. What are the friends of the Union to gain by hurriedly taking into fellowship these disorganized hordes? Nothing. Better it would be for Congress to say to these people, 'We will manage your political affairs till your passions cool.' You can go to work on your farms and your stores and elsewhere and restore shattered fortunes. And when

you're ready to elect union members of Congress and of the legislature, when you have passed union laws and adopted a union constitution, we will give you union representation. But until then, it shall not be. Let this course be adopted. Let General Butler, better known as Beast Butler, let General Butler be sent here with plenary powers as military governor, and Virginia will become herself again. Any other course, in our opinion, will lead to trouble, anarchy, and confusion."

Very respectfully, yours, Gilly F. Watson, Chairman.

The man said, look, Virginia, in choosing people whom she desires to rule over her, they're just choosing the wrong people. And these wrong people have the wrong ideas. And therefore, we, the radical Republicans in Congress, must say to Virginia and to the other states, "We will manage your political affairs until you are able to do as we tell you and think the way we tell you to think."

I find it interesting that he closes with this sentence: “Let General Butler be sent here with plenary powers as military governor and Virginia will become herself again.” How can Virginia become herself if she is made into something she is not and was not? Very obviously, the goal of the Loyal League was to reconstruct the South so that the South could think and act like good Unionists. The second goal was re-education. One of the ways the South was to be re-educated was by repopulating the South with loyal Northerners on land confiscated from Southerners. Many Southerners were then shipped to the North in order to transform them into loyal and progressive Unionists.

Now let me tell you, that little escapade was not something just simply thought up. If you study your Bibles, you will find in 2 Kings 17 that when the king of Assyria captured the ten northern tribes, whose capital was in Samaria, he then took them to Assyria and other places and repopulated Samaria with people from all other countries. In the same way, they were taking loyal Unionists and bringing them down South, while taking loyal Southerners and sending them up North in order to change their thinking.

The Freedmen’s Bureau also had a peacetime federal educational mandate. It was not only to teach freedmen so that they could

survive as freemen, but also to transform whites into good citizens. Let me give you a quote. I hope it kind of ruffles your feathers, but J. P. Wickersham, a noted radical Republican, stated: “What can education do for the non-slaveholding whites of the South? The great majority are deplorably ignorant. As long as they’re ignorant, they will remain tools of political demagogues and therefore be incapable of self-government.” As I give you his quote, think of the brilliant men and women we had in the South. Think of R. L. Dabney, Robert E. Lee, Mary Gay, a diarist, Mary Boykin Chesnut, our poet laureate, and all the men who were genuine scholars and literary agents here in the South.

Excuse me? I thought the South had gotten along admirably well until then, but he says: “As long as they’re ignorant, they will remain tools of political demagogues and therefore be incapable of self-government. They must be educated. A Republican form of government cannot last long without providing a system of free schools. Ignorant voters endanger liberty.” Are you listening?

J.P. Wickersham said, "With free schools in the South, there will be no rebellion in the future. When our youth learn to read similar books, similar lessons, we will become one person possessing one organic nationality." What they intended was to re-educate the South and get them to think the way they thought, so they would act the way they acted. Congress enforced federalized education into the South through new state constitutions, which compelled tax-supported schools controlled by Washington. The Freedmen's Bureau put the law into motion, and soon 2,118 schools were placed upon confiscated land under its control.

Atrocities and the Minority Report

Compare this with what Confederate General Patrick Cleburne said in his dire warning concerning the subjugation of the South: "Every man should endeavor to understand the meaning of subjugation before it is too late. We can give but a faint idea when we say it means the loss of all we now hold sacred. Slaves and all other personal property, lands, homesteads, liberty, justice, safety, pride, manhood. It means that the history of this heroic struggle will be written by the enemy; that our youth will be trained by northern

school teachers, will learn from northern school books their version of the war, will be impressed upon all the influences of history and education to regard our gallant dead as traitors, our maimed veterans as fit objects for derision. It means the crushing of southern manhood, the hatred of our former slaves, who will on a spy system be our secret police."

Everything General Patrick Cleburne warned against came to pass. Everything J.P. Wickersham desired came to pass. We have sired an entire generation of people who know nothing of the founding principles of our founding fathers. We have started a generation of people who could care less about their heritage or their history. We now have a generation of people who know nothing of true liberty and true freedom.

Government is now in every area and every avenue of our lives, and we have come to the place where we expect it to be there. We expect it to do literally everything for us. Our attitude has become, "Well, after all, are they not doing this for our good?" The truth is this: unknowingly, most of us have been molded into good little nationalists and good little internationalists.

We're being educated not only to be loyal unionists, but to be global citizens. What was begun as an endeavor to re-educate the South into centralist views has now become an indoctrination for North and South in global views. The Loyal League and the Freedmen's Bureau were interested not only in reconstruction, but also in re-education. The third truth is this: the third goal was redistribution and regulation.

Did you know—and since I began this message talking about the original Ku Klux Klan—that there was a committee of twenty-one who heard the reports, eyewitness accounts, and even hearsay accounts concerning the actions of the Ku Klux Klan before Congress? There is ample evidence to prove that most of the atrocities attributed to the Klan were in fact committed not only by other anti-Reconstructionist organizations and outlaws impersonating the Klan, but also by loyal leaguers themselves, who were black union leaguers disguised as Klansmen. They would attack Negro hamlets in order to instill hatred of white people into the blacks.

You've got to understand the mentality of the Reconstructionist governors. The Reconstructionist governors we had hated the South, hated the Constitutional Republic, and hated everything we had. In the summer of 1865, Governor Brownlow of Tennessee, a Scalawag and Reconstructionist governor, said that “the persecutors of Union men”—that is, ex-Confederates—“have forfeited all rights to protection and life.” Brownlow was also a Methodist preacher; he is sometimes known as Parson Brownlow. I don't know how well he preached.

That same year, one delegate in the Tennessee Constitutional Convention stated that the only right the rebels had was to be hanged. There is ample documentation that the Unionists, seeking revenge for what happened during the war, used their position to jail their enemies on trumped-up charges. On the vaguest rumors and hearsay evidence, cavalry units calmly put the torch to citizens' homes.

Vengeful Unionists formed the Loyal League ostensibly to suppress crime, keep order, and maintain discipline among the Negro population. In fact, the Loyal League acted to intimidate their political opponents and the ex-Confederates, worsening the wartime situation. The infamous carpetbaggers and scalawags sought personal profit and political power by exploiting the plight of both black and white people. The radical Republicans declared that the Southern states would have to be reconstructed before they could ever be readmitted to the Union. Until then, ex-Confederates had no rights of citizenship. Southern whites were completely disenfranchised, with no legal standing: they could not vote, hold public office, or petition for redress of grievances.

The South was divided into five military districts. Throughout the South, freed Negroes formed the black militias under the Union League or the Loyal League, and usually they were given the task of enforcing martial law. Led by corrupt officers and self-serving politicians, the Union League became the most violent and murderous arm of Reconstruction to blacks and whites alike.

Governor Brownlow said: "If I had the power I would arm and uniform in the federal habiliments every wolf and panther and catamount and tiger and bear in the mountains of America, every

crocodile in the swamps of Florida and South Carolina, every Negro in the Southern Confederacy, and every devil in hell, and turn them on the rebels in the South until it exterminated every rebel from the face of God's green earth. Every man, woman, and child south of the Mason-Dixon line I would like to see Richmond and Charleston captured by Negro troops, commanded by Butler the Beast.

We will crowd the rebels into the Gulf of Mexico and drown the entire race as the devil rid the hogs of the Sea of Galilee. I am one of those who believe the war has ended too soon. We have whipped the rebels, but not enough. The second army of invasion will, as they ought to, make the entire South as God found the earth without form and void. They will not and ought not to leave one rebel fence rail, outhouse, one dwelling in the eleven seceded states. As for the rebel population, let them be exterminated. When the second war is wound up, which should be done with swift destruction, let the land be surveyed and sold out to pay expenses. Let the first army then be the largest division and do the killing. The second—let the second division be armed with pine torches and spirits of turpentine and let them do the burning. Let the third and last division be armed with surveyors' compasses and chains that will survey the land and settle it with loyal people."

“Burn and kill, burn and kill until the whole rebel race is exterminated.” Those are the words of one Reconstructionist governor. That was the attitude our forefathers faced. Joe Crew, a Union League militia captain in Lawrence, South Carolina, is quoted as telling his men that if they wanted provisions and could not afford them, they should go into the fields and take what they wanted. If whites did not settle them the way they thought was right, they should burn them out of house and home because matches are cheap. In North Carolina, one company of the militia was commanded by Colonel George Kirk. He was known as Bloody Kirk or Cutthroat Kirk during the war between the states because he led pro-union guerrillas in East Tennessee and committed many atrocities there.

His crimes were denounced as a disgrace to the nineteenth century. Colonel Kirk arrested fifty to sixty men alleged to have some connection with the Klan. When some obtained a writ of habeas

corpus, Kirk defied the state Supreme Court, saying, "These things have played out now." He then placed a noose around the men's necks and hanged them temporarily—not killing them, but trying to force them to confess that they were Klansmen. They were not Klansmen and were not about to confess that they were.

It was discovered that the order for this torture came from Governor Holden, the governor of North Carolina. When news reached some northern senators, it upset them. Senator Bayard of Delaware spoke before Congress about Colonel Kirk's crimes: "Here are the facts. 50 or 60 unarmed men were taken without writ, without color of law of any kind, dragged from their homes, kept by Kirk, threatened with death instantly should an attempt be made for their rescue. Not only were they to be murdered as helpless prisoners, but the women and children of the town were to be put to fire and sword. And such conduct as this, Senators, is absolutely justified on the floor of the United States Senate."

What was he saying? He was saying, "We're the ones who've loosed these men. We're the ones who are responsible." Property was stolen, lives were destroyed, homes burned, and rape, robbery, and pillage occurred, all in the direction of the federal government. Albion Tourgée, the famous carpetbagger Supreme Court judge in North Carolina, wrote that the Ku Klux Klan had broken into 4,000 to 5,000 homes, burned 14, and murdered 13 in one county.

Later, he said he was misquoted: "I wrote 4 arsons instead of 14. Between 4 to 500 broken into instead of four and five thousand. I said that thirteen murders were committed in the state, not in the district." Still later, it was found that all the house burnings had been perpetrated by Governor Holden's Union League to provoke the Klan into action. Thus, of all that Tourgée said the Klan did, they actually did none of it. The Loyal League was doing all of it.

The corruption and tyranny of Reconstruction are well documented. In North Carolina, the carpetbag Republican legislatures of 1868 and 1869 illegally authorized $28 million in railroad bonds, which New York carpetbagger Milton Littlefield used to buy boats. The military government suspended the rights of habeas corpus. In Gaston County alone, Loyal League members torched 28 barns belonging to whites in one week. All these actions

were intended to create ill will between the black and the whites for political gain.

The purpose of Reconstruction was to destroy the decentralized republic established by our founding fathers. Once political and military power was centralized in Washington, D.C., the pretense of protecting the former slaves was abandoned. Each slave was promised 40 acres and a mule, and they are still waiting on the 40 acres and the mule.

Things, understandably, were not going well. The original Ku Klux Klan was organized in 1865 and disbanded by order of General Forrest in 1869. No one succeeded him after 1870; by 1871, all of the original Klan was gone. Still, Congress held hearings on the supposed atrocities committed by the Klan, accepting hearsay and rumors as well.

The testimony fills 13 volumes. Twenty-one members of the committee heard all the testimony concerning the Klan. Thirteen condemned the Klan; the rest produced a minority report exonerating it. I want to close with the minority report's statement concerning the activities of the Ku Klux Klan from 1865 to 1869: “Had there been no wanton oppression in the South, there would have been no Ku Kluxism.”

Had there been no rule of the tyrannical, corrupt, carpetbagger, scalawag rule, there would have been no secret organizations. From the oppression and corruption of the one sprang the vice and the outrage of the other.

When the testimony before us is analyzed, the carpetbaggers, the Freedmen’s Bureau agents, and the Loyal Leaguers, the Union Leaguers, who went into these states took as the theme of their harangues the wrongs the blacks had suffered and the right they had to take whatever they pleased of the property they had labored to acquire for their masters. When, in secret sworn organizations—that is, the Loyal League—hatred of a white race was instilled in the minds of these ignorant people by every art and while that bad men could devise.

When the blacks were formed into military organizations and the white people of these states were denied the use of arms, when

arson, rape, robbery, and murder were things of daily occurrence, when the great masses of the most intelligent whites were disenfranchised and the ballot was put into the hands of the blacks by the government at Washington, when every promise made and every law enacted was broken and disregarded by the federal authorities whenever it suited their purposes to do so, when even the courts were closed and the federal officers, who were by Congress absolute rulers and dispensers of what they called justice, ignored, insulted, and trampled upon the rights of the ostracized and disenfranchised white men, while the officials pandered to the enfranchised blacks on whose vote they relied—in short, when the people saw that they had no rights which were respected, no protection from insults, no security even for their wives and little children, and that what little they had saved from the ravages of war was being confiscated by taxation and rendered valueless by the debts for which men who owned nothing had pledged it, and saw that all their complaints and remonstrances, however honestly and humbly presented to Congress, were either wholly disregarded as evidence of rebellious and unsubdued spirit, many of them took the law into their own hands and did deeds of violence which we neither justify nor excuse.

But all history shows that bad government will make bad citizens. And when the corruption, extortion, and villainy of the governments which Congress has set up and maintained over Southern states are thoroughly understood and made known, as we trust they will be someday, the world will be amazed at the long-suffering and the endurance of the Southern people. Isn't that amazing? Here the minority report said, look, if Congress had left the South alone and not treated her as a conquered territory and not tried to force her

Application: Do Not Follow a Multitude to Do Evil

In the reconstruction, things would have been entirely different. As I said in the beginning, the original plan was disbanded in 1869. Most of the atrocities committed were done by the Loyal League. Many of those atrocities supposedly committed by the Klan were done by Loyal Leaguers dressed as Klansmen to produce hatred between blacks and whites.

While we deplore unbiblical, unconstitutional, and unnecessary violence, we must remember that such violence is wicked and wrong not just when one person does it, but just as wicked and wrong when a multitude does it, even when the civil government does it. When God says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil," it applies to civil governments as well as to individuals. Wrong is wrong.

Might does not make right. Just because you have a number, a majority, or a multitude does not mean that what that majority has voted for or wants is right by any stretch of the imagination. Right is determined by God, and wrong is determined by God. God tells us individually, familially, ecclesiastically, civilly, and nationally, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." We must learn to do what is right and stand on our own, even if everyone else does wrong.

I would encourage you to go home, get on your computers, and check out the Loyal League and the Union League. You will find it was the original Klan, Washington's Klan, for the destruction of the South.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ today that You would help us to do that which is right and holy. May we always follow Thee and Thy Word and stand for Thy truth, regardless of what others do or what multitudes do. May we honor Thee in every area of our lives. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

A Society of Death

Introduction: The Avoidance and Pervasiveness of Death

Proverbs 8:32-36 says, “Therefore, hearken unto me, O ye children, for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the post of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.”

Look again at verse 36: “But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All that hate me love death.” Death is a subject that most people wish to avoid. In fact, the subject of death is usually avoided even when people attend a funeral. I have heard many pastors, and I have used the verse myself at a funeral, quoting Hebrews 9:27: “And as it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment.” Yet even with the quoting of Scripture on the subject, when you attend a funeral, there are very few discussions about death. The amazing thing is this: while we avoid the subject of death on one hand, even in the most personal

relationship, when a loved one dies, on the other hand we are surrounded by a society of death and do not even recognize it.

I have been absolutely amazed recently. When you look at a movie guide or a TV guide, there is a definite rise in what is known as vampire films, horror flicks, and films that feature murder and violence. There are axe murders, chainsaw murders, and murder of every kind and caliber available. I remember hearing the title, though I never saw it, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre. Who can even dream up these things? Who can even think of them? As you look at television and movies, it is abounding on every hand.

But not only that, look around our own country and you will find abortion clinics in every major city today and also in many rural towns. We do not wish to think of the thousands of babies murdered on a daily basis. But understand that our society has made it simple and easy for a woman to murder her own child and remain unstigmatized.

It happens so frequently now that most people never give it a second thought. Abortion is now government-sanctioned; that is, it is legal to murder an unborn child. Medical assistance in this act of legalized murder is readily available. Think about euthanasia. Euthanasia is on the rise as never before. The word euthanasia is interesting: it literally means “good death.” Thanatos is the Greek word for death, and eu means good or well. Thus, euthanasia simply means a good death, or a death that is done well.

Euthanasia has been practiced for many decades, and indeed many millennia. The Eskimos were known for taking their elderly out onto the ice floe and leaving them either to starve to death, freeze to death, or become food for a polar bear. That is how they got rid of their elderly and sickly, and those who could not produce.

Years ago, a vast shudder went through the halls of academia, which had been talking about the noble savage, until Colin Turnbull’s book, The Mountain People, was published. He described a tribe in Africa known only as the Ik, who were just as notorious, and possibly a great deal worse, than the Eskimos. They refused to waste food and water on the elderly, the sickly, or the dying. They

were so perverse that they would steal food from these people in order to hasten their death.

Turnbull even gave illustrations of how, when they saw a neighbor chewing a morsel of food—especially someone weaker than themselves—they would hit the person, break his jaw, take the food from his mouth, and eat it themselves. A people absolutely, totally perverse. But do we live in a civilized society that would never do anything like the Eskimos or the Ik? Have you ever heard of the Hemlock Society? It promotes euthanasia and suicide, and was based upon, I believe, the philosopher Socrates, who killed himself by drinking poisoned hemlock. The Hemlock Society advocates the right to die. That is why California and other states have voter-registration and petition drives for the right to die—not merely the right to kill themselves, but medical and governmental assistance so that they may, quote unquote, "die with dignity."

But I hope you understand that, in light of this, there are also groups that advocate hastening the death of elderly people or the sickly because they are past their productive years and are now merely consumers, not producers. To use the words of one of those advocates, "It's their duty to die and get out of the way." We are not as civilized as we think we are. In fact, I just saw this article.

It was on World Net Daily recently, and I copied it off. The headline was, "Israelis to be allowed euthanasia by machine," by Tim Boucher in Jerusalem. I want to quote the first two paragraphs: "Machines will perform euthanasia on the terminally ill patients in Israel under legislation devised not to offend Jewish law which forbids people taking human life. A special timer will be fitted to a patient's respirator which will sound an alarm 12 hours before turning it off."

Judaism is not Christianity; they teach totally differently. Yet Orthodox Jews, to get around turning on their lights on the Sabbath, will put an automatic switch there so that the lights turn on and off by themselves. Therefore, they can have light, yet they have not done it.

Let me ask you a question: A country that legalizes a timer, and the people who invent and install the timers—is someone still not

killing someone? Whether you do it by a timer or not, it is still there. I am simply showing you how widespread this is.

When we think of death, we normally think of physical death, because that is the most apparent form of death. However, I want you to turn in your Bibles—hold Proverbs 8; we are coming back there—to Genesis chapter 2 and verse 17. Look what God told Adam and Eve. Genesis 2:17.

God said, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." He said, "Adam, the day that you partake of this tree, which I forbid you, you shall surely die." You know the story in Genesis chapter 3: Eve took the fruit, gave it to her husband Adam, and both of them did eat. When God pronounced the death penalty upon Adam, He literally said, "in dying thou shalt die."

When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, did they die immediately, instantly? They did not die immediately or instantly, physically, because Adam lived 930 years. They did die ultimately. They died physically, but there are different kinds of death: spiritual death, covenantal death, economic death, and all kinds of deaths. Adam then died for 930 years, but there was more to his dying than simply the loss of his life.

Adam lost his culture, his society, his family, and even creation. We still have God's creation around us, and as beautiful as it is under the curse of sin, what must it have been like without sin? In Romans chapter 8, beginning with verse 18, the Apostle Paul writes, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." The glory that we are going to have in Christ, in heaven, is far better than that which we have right now.

"For the earnest expectation of the creature or creation waited for the manifestation of the sons of God." Why is the creation waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God? "For the creature or the creation was made subject to vanity, that is, it was placed under the curse, Genesis 3, not willingly, but by reason of him who had subjected the same in hope, because the creation itself also shall be

delivered from the bondage of corruption and to the glorious liberty of the children of God."

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." When man sinned, even creation was placed under the curse and the judgment of God. Creation groans, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Why? Because when we are set at liberty—when our Lord returns and gives us full, gracious, and glorious liberty in and of Himself—creation itself will be freed from the curse of sin.

It is man, his sin, and his rebellion against God and against God's law that has produced a society of death. What I want to demonstrate is this: all man can do apart from Jesus Christ and apart from the Word of God is produce a society of death. Think very seriously about that. What did our Lord say? He said in Proverbs chapter 8, "But whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death."

You can take humanism, secularism, Satanism, Marxism, communism, and all the other isms that promise life and happiness, put them together, and all they deliver is death. You know why? Life is in the hands of God alone. Every ism that you can think about—Marxism, communism, secularism, all of them—promises life and happiness; they promise a utopia. A utopia is usually presented as an ideal place of life, peace, equity, happiness, and prosperity.

But remember where we get our English word utopia. It comes from the Greek and is made up of two Greek words, ou topos. Ou is a negative, meaning no, and topos is a noun meaning place. Thus, utopia means "no place." It does not actually exist; it is not reality. The only utopia that exists is in the figment of the deceived minds and brains of rebellious men and women who want to fight against Jesus Christ. Reality is what God says it is, and not what man says it is.

Communism, Marxism, secularism, and humanism can never produce anything but death. Now look closely at Proverbs 8:35–36: "For whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Lord.

But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death." Our text tells us that there is a constant battle between life and favor, and judgment and death. We may have life and favor, or we may have judgment and death.

The Biblical Foundation: Wisdom Personified in Christ

Proverbs 8 deals with wisdom. But from verse 22 through verse 36, wisdom is personified; that is, wisdom is presented as a real, living person. Verse 22, of course, speaks of Jesus Christ and His mediatorship: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way before his works of old. I was set up"—that is, the mediatorship of Jesus Christ—"I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning wherever the earth was. When there was no depths, I was brought forth. When there was no fountains, abounding water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth. While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the earth."

Before the world began, Jesus Christ was. He not only was as God, but He was also set up to be the God-man, the mediator, the go-between between God the Father and you and I.

When He says in verse 26, "while as yet He had not made the earth nor the fields nor the highest part of the dust of the earth," what is the highest part of the dust of the earth? Do not say Mount Everest. It is you and I. God made us of dust. For we were ever made Jesus Christ was up. Remember, the Bible said He was a Lamb slain when before the foundation of the earth.

Notice verse 27: "When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth, when he established the clouds above, when he strengthened the fountains of the deep, when he gave to the sea his decree, that the water should not pass his commandment, when he appointed the foundation of the earth; then I was by him, as one brought up with him. I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." So here is a perfect picture of Jesus Christ.

In Proverbs chapter 8, Jesus Christ was wisdom personified. Now, therefore, hearken unto me: we have Christ personified, His wisdom speaking. “Now, therefore, hearken unto me,” He says, “you children, for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. Why? For whosoever findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.”

But the opposite is this: “He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.”

In 1 Corinthians 1:30, the Bible says, “But of him,” that is, God the Father, “are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom. He is wisdom incarnate. Colossians 2:3 says, “In whom,” speaking of Jesus Christ, “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Once again, Jesus Christ is wisdom personified.

In Him is wisdom. In Him is life. Outside of Christ, everything is death. Now, I said that the title of this message was "A Society of Death." Our society today is a society of death. Why? Let me explain it. Because it is a society that hates, ostracizes, and rejects the Lordship and the Kingship of Jesus Christ. All societies that refuse and reject Christ are societies of death.

History teaches this, but the Bible teaches it very clearly. Let me show you three areas, and I could multiply these areas, in which our society has died. First of all, there is a cultural death. There is a cultural death.

Cultural Death: The Loss of a Godly Culture

Now, I want you to stop and think about this. Consider the fact that Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden. They had a perfect environment, a perfect life, and a perfect culture. However, when they sinned against God and violated His law, they brought death upon themselves and upon their posterity. Listen to what he said in Romans 5, verse 12: "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin.

And so death passed upon all men, why? For all have sinned." When did all sin? Well, we all sinned in Adam.

And what happened was this. After Adam and Eve sinned, you look in Genesis 3 and verse 24 and read these words: "So He, God, drove out the man, and placed in the east of the garden of Eden cherubims with a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." What did God do to Adam? He drove him out of the garden.

I want you to understand something. Adam lost more than his life. He lost an entire culture. He lost a way of life. Originally, everything was holy, righteous, godly, and good. Now everything has become evil, sinful, wicked, and full of rebellion. Adam didn't just lose his life; he lost an entire culture.

Cornelius Van Til, who was a noted author, theologian, and teacher, made this statement: culture is religion externalized. Now think about that. Culture is religion externalized. Truer words could not have been spoken. You know what your culture is? Your culture is nothing less than the outworking of your religion. If the Christian religion is your religion, then ultimately you're going to have a Christian culture. If the Christian religion is not your true religion, then you're going to have a paganistic, heathenistic culture. Why has our culture changed in America?

The answer is because we have turned from Christ and His Word. We once had a culture of life, and now we have ended up with a culture of death. Why? We have left Christ and His Word. Think, first of all, of the Christian Southern culture that we had before the War of Northern Aggression.

Why have we lost our history, our heritage, our respect, our manners, our way of life, and our culture? The answer comes back because we have rejected Christ and His Word. He said, “All they that hate me love death.” Listen carefully: cultures die exactly the way people die, and for the same reason—they lose their life. Since life can only be found in Christ and His Word, when we turn from Him, we die culturally.

Think of America when it began. Think of our founding fathers, the faith these men exhibited and evidenced, and how Christ was

consistently and constantly honored. Yet today, even the President of the United States will not use the words Jesus Christ. He says, “We're thankful that Santa is coming.” Why is it? Even in our Congress, people are ashamed of Jesus Christ and ashamed of the Word of God. Why is the average professing Christian ashamed?

The truth is, we have lost our culture. Let me put it to you bluntly: the train has left the station. The only way we can get it back is to reroute the tracks and bring it back. The only way to have a change in culture is, first and foremost, to have a change in theology. A change in theology always precedes a change in culture. The reason our culture has changed is that our theology has changed. We will never have the culture that we had in early America, nor the culture that we had in Antebellum style, until we come back to the very foundation on which that culture was built and based. That foundation is nothing less than the Word of God.

We live in a society of death. Why? Our culture has died, and the reason it died is because it has rejected and refused Jesus Christ. As He said, “All they that hate me love death.” There is not only a cultural death; secondly, there is a theological death. Where are the great expositors of the Word of God today? Where are the Christians who are masters of the Word of God?

Theological Death: The Neglect of God's Word

Why is the Bible so neglected? Why are we so ignorant? Why do we have so many versions of the Bible and so many extra-biblical books claiming prominence over and beyond the Word of God? Why do we play around with cults, false religions, and idolatry? Why are there so many different faiths in America? How did America become a multicultural, multireligious, and tolerant society? Do you realize that, in this day and age, America can tolerate any religion, cult, or faith except biblical Christianity?

I could ask it like this: Why are there Muslim mosques in America? Why are there Hindu temples in America? Come on, let’s be honest. Would those countries allow us to go over there and build Christian churches? What’s the answer? You know: no. Why, then, do we have all these false religions and their temples and mosques in

this country? I'm going to tell you why: because we've died theologically.

Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to Exodus 34. We'll look at a couple of passages. I want you to see how tolerant God is of false religions. In Exodus 34, notice verse 1. In fact, we'll read this: "And the Lord said unto Moses"—so we know the Lord is speaking—then skip down to verse 12: "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 thou shalt 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 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"

SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 7:1-6; Deuteronomy 12:1-3; Judges 2:1-2 (KJV)

a-whoring after their gods. What did God say? Tear down their altars. Throw down everything.

"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, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou," and I might point out all of them are pagan. "And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt quite smite them, and utterly destroy them. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy on them, neither shalt thou make marriages with them. Thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take in my 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 shalt thou deal with them, you shall destroy their altars and break down their images and cut down their groves and burn their graven images with fire. Why? For thou art a holy people of the Lord thy God. The Lord thy God hath chosen

> thee to be a special people unto himself above all the people that are upon the face of the earth."
>
> "These are the statutes and judgments which ye shall observe to do in the land which the Lord thy God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it all the days that ye live upon the earth. Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess serve their gods upon the high mountains, upon the hills, and under every green tree. And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire. And ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place."
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> Of course, the children of Israel disobeyed, and they were judged. "...And the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt and have brought you into the land which I swear unto your fathers. And I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And you shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land. You shall throw down their altars, but you have not obeyed my voice. Why have you done this?"

Is the sovereign God of heaven and earth tolerant of false gods and false religions? What is the answer? Absolutely no. If you read of the great revivals in the Bible under Hezekiah, Josiah, and all those godly men, you'll find that when the people turned back to God, the first thing they did was break down the altars of Baal and the house of Baal. In other words, they took care of the false religions in the land. If God is not tolerant of false religions and idols, why are we? The answer is that we've died theologically. We no longer want to stand for what God stands for. We no longer want to stand for the truth of his word, nor the sovereignty of his positions.

Look at the most prominent religious leaders of our day. Now, here are several questions. Are they men of the word? Do they uphold the law of God? Do they lift up their voices and cry out against wickedness in high places and even in government? No, they don't. Why? The answer is because they're dead theologically. Can you imagine Elijah or Samuel being asked to have a prayer at the inauguration of one of our modern day presidents? Can you imagine what Paul would do if he was asked to preach at the White House?

Now you just stop and think. They would chew them up and spit them out. There's a passage, I don't know if I can find it right quickly. I can tell you about it. It's when the king... Yeah, here it is. Look in 2 Kings 3. Three kings have gotten together to go to war against the Edomites. There's the Moabite, the Moabitish king, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, and then, of course, the king of Israel. Look, if you would, 2 Kings chapter 3 in verse 10. I want you to see Elisha's attitude. The king of Israel said, “Alas, the Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them to the hand of Moab.” I had it wrong there. It was Jehoram the son of Ahab who was king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, and then, I think, the king of Edom going to war against the Moabites. Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not here a prophet of the Lord that we may inquire of the Lord by him?” One of the king of Israel's servants answered, “Here is Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah.” Jehoshaphat said, “The word of the Lord is with him.” So the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom went down to him. Elisha said to the king of Israel, “What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father and the prophets of thy mother.” The king of Israel said, “Nay, for the Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.” Elisha said, “As the Lord of hosts liveth before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.”

Let me spell that out to you in good Georgia lingo. He told the king of Israel, “If it wasn't for Jehoshaphat, I wouldn't spit on you if you were on fire.” He said, “I wouldn't look toward you nor even see you. You go back to your false prophets. I have nothing to do with you.” I can assure you, if you were to get Elijah back today, hides would be tanned very thoroughly.

Why? Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 15 and see what our Lord said. Our Lord rebuked the Pharisees because they were concerned about their traditions. The Pharisees came to Him and said, “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.” But He answered, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” These scribes and Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day. They asked Christ why His disciples transgressed their tradition, and

Christ asked why, with their tradition, they transgressed the Word of God.

Then He gave them several illustrations. He called the multitudes and said, “Hear and understand, not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man.” His disciples said, “Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?” They had upset the religious leaders of the day.

Let me show you our Lord's attitude: “Every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone. They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” Now, what is going to happen when the blind lead the blind?

They will all be destroyed. You can't lead someone back to where you have never been. How in the world can religious leaders of today call people back to the Word of God when they don't even know what the Word of God says themselves? The Pharisees, the theological leaders of our Lord's day, were dead. They were blind. The only leadership they could offer was a leadership of death—not life. Death.

In our day and age, we have so neglected the Word of God and so left biblical truth that, if the Holy Spirit were taken out of the world tomorrow, most churches would go right on as usual. They have their programs.

Most of our churches are dead. Ichabod has been written over the door. The glory has departed. You know what our Lord told the church of Sardis? In Revelation 3:1, He said, “And unto the angel of the church of Sardis write, These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars. I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, but thou art dead.” Our Lord said, “You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” They died theologically. You have to remember our Lord’s words.

Governmental Death: Tyranny and Misplaced Priorities

“But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.” There is a cultural death. There is a theological death. I am giving you something that you probably never thought of, but thirdly, there is a governmental death. Governments, just like societies and people, die. They die when they refuse and reject the Son of God.

Psalm 2 is a psalm written to civil rulers. When you get to verse 12, the Word of God says to the civil rulers, “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry with thee, and ye perish in the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.” He is talking to governmental leaders, to the kings and rulers of this earth, and admonishing them to kiss the Son. That is, they had better make up to Him, lest they perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little. The opening of Psalm 2 declares the defiance, rebellion, and revolt of civil rulers against Jesus Christ.

What happens when governments rebel against Christ and His law? The answer is the same as when cultures rebel against Christ and His law, and when people rebel against Christ and His law: they die. It becomes a culture of death, a government, or an instrument of death.

Some of you will remember George Orwell’s book, “1984.” He foresaw the results of man’s rebellion against God. He said, “If you want a vision of the future, imagine a boot stamping in a human face forever.” What did George Orwell see? He saw that when societies, cultures, and governments reject Christ and His Word, they become an instrument of death. I could name them all, but I could name some: Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung, Hitler, Ben-Gurion, Pinochet, and Idi Amin. They said Stalin killed a minimum of 22 million of his own people in the forests in Russia. Twenty-two million. You remember Idi Amin was of Uganda.

I never will forget seeing a political cartoon years ago. By the way, Idi Amin's dead. He died of horrible disease, venereal disease is how he died, basically. He was a wicked, wicked reprobate. But they had a political cartoon that showed him on his Jeep with a .50 caliber machine gun, and Ugandans were laying dead everywhere. The

cartoon showed him on the phone and said, "Yes," he said, "I want to report traffic accident, one jeep and 50,000 Ugandans."

Well, he probably killed that many or more. You think of all these governmental leaders who were going to introduce their utopian society, and all they introduced was death. I do not care if you talk about Stalin; it does not matter. It is all a society of death. The Bible taught this way before these men were ever born. If you look back in your Bibles to 1 Kings 18, you remember it was during the time of Elijah that Ahab and Jezebel were on the throne.

Because of their extreme wickedness to judge that nation, God sent a three-and-a-half-year drought. People died left and right: three and a half years without rain or dew. The physical drought was just a picture of the spiritual reality. God had withdrawn Himself from the land. The people were being judged. But look at it; let me show you how governments die: 1 Kings chapter 18.

Notice, if you would please, verse 5. Look what King Ahab said. He was giving word to Obadiah. In 1 Kings 18, verse 5, "And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land and all the fountains of water and all the brooks, for adventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts." What is it that mighty sweet of Ahab?

I want you to note something. Ahab was concerned for the life of his beasts, but he was not concerned for the life of Naboth and his family. He murdered them so he could steal their property. If you will look in 1 Kings 17 and verse 12, this shows again that he was not concerned about how his sins affected anybody. Here is the widow woman. She said, "As the Lord liveth, as the Lord thy God liveth," talking to Elijah, "I have not a cake, but a handful of meal, and a barrel, and a little oil, and a cruse. Behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat and die." Ahab and Jezebel were their false prophets and false religion and false utopia.

They were going to bring in this great time of peace and prosperity. And all they were, were instruments of death. When governments die, it is made evident by their misplaced priorities. When governments die, programs matter; people do not. When

governments die, they care more for the animals than the people, and more for their own perpetuity than for the rights, liberties, and freedom of the people. When governments die, they become an instrument of death.

Look at legalized abortion. Look at legalized sodomy. May I ask you what entity made it absolutely sure, humanly speaking, that Terri Schiavo would die? The courts, the judicial system. Why? Because when governments die, they become an instrument of death.

The Root of Governmental Tyranny: Rejecting God's Boundaries

Ask yourself this question: Why do governments trod the road to tyranny? Why do they go down that path? I want you to turn in your Bibles, first of all, to Hosea, and then to Psalm 2. Right after Daniel, you have Hosea. Turn to Hosea, chapter 5 and verse 10, and then we are going back to Psalm 2. Here is why governments go down the road of tyranny. Hosea 5, verse 10: “The princes of Judah,” so we are talking about civil rulers, “were like them that removed the bound. Therefore,” says God, “I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.”

What does it mean when it says the princes of Judah were like them that removed the bound? They were like them that removed the boundaries. In other words, they did not like the limitations that God placed upon them. God said, “Hitherto shalt thou go in no further.” But they said, “God, we do not like that. We want to do what we want to do. We are smarter than you. Our word means more to us than your word. We will violate your limitations. We will violate your boundaries. We will do what we want.”

Look back in your Bibles to Psalm 2. This is a psalm against civil rulers. Here it is in Psalm 2, verse 1. God asks, “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” The word vain means useless, foolish.

Now look: “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord's saying, against His anointed saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords

from us." In other words, we do not like to be limited by God. We do not like all these limitations that are placed upon government. In order to be our own god, we must throw off the shackles He has placed upon us.

No government can be tyrannical when it bows to Jesus Christ and obeys His Word. But every government that refuses Jesus Christ and refuses to submit to His Word will become tyrannical and an instrument of death. That is why, if you will skip down to verse 12, the admonition is—look in verse 11, in fact, verse 10: "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth."

"Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those that put their trust in him." No government can become tyrannical as long as it obeys Jesus Christ. But every government that refuses and rejects Jesus Christ will inevitably become tyrannical.

Look in your Bibles to Psalm 94 and verse 20. Here is exactly what I mean. We are supposed to have a Christian president and a lot of Christians in Congress. But isn't it amazing that all of our laws are anti-Christian, anti-Bible, and anti-God? Look at this question: "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee which frameth mischief by law?" The throne refers to government; we are talking about civil government. So the question is this: Shall the throne of iniquity, meaning a wicked civil government, have fellowship with God when that wicked civil government frames mischief by law? You have to understand that mischief in the Bible is another word for sin. Shall a wicked civil government have fellowship with God when that wicked civil government makes sin legal? We have already talked about legal murder.

It is legal to be a sodomite. It is even legal to steal, as long as you are a congressman or some government official. One of my friends had a bumper sticker on his van that said, "Please don't steal. The government doesn't like the competition." Stop and think about this. Think of how our government has made sin legal.

Now, can that kind of wicked civil government have fellowship with God? The answer is no. Why can it not have fellowship with

God? Because it has rejected Christ, rejected His Word, become the enemy of Christ, and now become an instrument of death. Remember what our Lord said: “He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul, all they that hate me love death.” Many politicians, many civil rulers and magistrates, and those in positions of power think that somehow they will escape the death sentence and the judgment of God.

The Certainty of Judgment for Rejecting Christ

God says in Isaiah 28:15, “Because you have said, we have made a covenant with death and with hell are we at agreement. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us. For we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.” Those leaders thought, “We shall escape because we made lies our refuge.”

But when the judgment of God falls, they will understand: “He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.” There is a cultural death, a theological death, a governmental death, and an economic death. All they that hate Christ love death.

Those who reject and refuse Jesus Christ have committed a terrible and great sin. They sin against light, wisdom, God's law, and Christ. In their folly, they think that contempt of God and His law, and rejection of His Son, somehow offer liberty, freedom, and life. In reality, all they bring is death. Their punishment in rejecting Christ will be just.

Conclusion: Life and Favor Only in Obedience to Christ

God told Israel in Hosea 13:9, after Israel had rejected Him and built the two golden calves, Dan and Bethel: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.” Those that offend Christ do wrong to themselves and to their own souls. They wound their own consciences and put blots and stains upon their souls, which renders them odious in the sight of God. Isn't it absolutely foolish to wrong and hurt yourself? Why would you deliberately take a hammer and say, “Let me just see how hard I can hit that thumbnail?” Why would you do something so

stupid and foolish? Why do we think, as a people, a country, and a nation, that we can sin against Christ and His Word and escape punishment?

Life and favor are always found in obedience. Judgment and death are always found in disobedience. In loving and serving and obeying Christ, we find life and favor. In refusing to bow to Him, we find judgment and death. For our Lord said, "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death." When you refuse and reject Jesus Christ and His Word, the only thing that you can ever have is death—a society of death. Our society, our culture, and our government are in their death throes, and we do not even know it. No one can escape the judgment of God who refuses to bow to His Son.

"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry with thee, and you perish in the way, and his wrath is kindled but a little."

Father, we are so thankful today for Jesus Christ. First of all, Lord, we are thankful that we have life and favor in Him. We are thankful, Lord, that our hope is in Him. As we turn back to Him and His Word and bring our lives into conformity to His Word, there is redemption and restoration, not only for ourselves, but for our society, our culture, our economy, and our government. But Lord, it is only as we return to Thee. For outside of Thee, everything is dead. Lord, I pray that you would speak our hearts, make us holy, make us godly, make us obedient, and may we honor Thee in all that we say and do. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

The Black Robed Regiment

SCRIPTURE READING - Hebrews 11:32-38 (KJV)

Introduction and Hebrews 11

"And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of the lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and in caves of the earth."

> We refer to Hebrews 11 as the hall of fame for the heroes of faith. But the truth is there are a lot of heroes of faith that are not mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11. There have also been a great number of heroes of faith that have appeared throughout history after the canon of scripture has been closed. We can read Hebrews 11 and rejoice in these men. But there are some things we need to really learn from reading Hebrews chapter 11.
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> The first one is this: God is pleased to use men. That's very obvious. Secondly, we need to learn this, that God is pleased to use these men, not for the glory of the men, but for the glory of God himself, and that we would praise him through these men and their exploits and their feats. And then, of course, I believe as we read Hebrews chapter 11, there is a call for each of us to be strong in our Lord and to stand and to quit ourselves like men, because these men always stood in faith.

The Black Robed Regiment

Years ago, I saw a little poster showing a hayseed of a fellow, a country hick, with grass seed sticking out of his mouth. Everything was misspelled, and the sticker said, “Six months ago, I couldn’t even spell postman. Now I are one.” When I think about that, I think about the pastors we have in America today. I can certainly talk about pastors because I have been one for forty-two years. Even in my lifetime, I can tell that a great change has taken place in the ministry.

The Black Robed Regiment Defined

We used to have pastors and preachers. Today, we have administrators, entertainers, and successful program runners. The Black Robed Regiment was the name the British gave to pastors during the American Revolution. It refers to those pastors and ministers who prayed for, fought in, and advanced the war for independence. During those days, all the pastors wore long, flowing black robes as a symbol of their office.

I have been threatening for years to preach a message on the stealing of the robes. I have mentioned this in one or two other messages, but stop and think how the robes have progressed.

Originally, it was with the family—the patriarchal—and that is why Joseph got that multicolored robe. I am not going to get into what all that meant, but then it went from the family to the church, from the church to the colleges and universities—notice graduation, the long, flowing black robes—and from the universities to the Supreme Court, or to the judges. There has been a stealing of the robes because the robes always spoke of the office of authority. When you hear about the Black Robed Regiment, remember that these pastors sparked the war for independence. These pastors were despised.

Pastors as Leaders in the Revolution

They were hated and eagerly sought after by the British. Prices were placed upon their heads, and when they were captured, they were ill-treated and very readily and quickly murdered. One such man was Pastor Moses Allen of Georgia. He was so cursed and hated by the Tories that they said he was more obnoxious than the military leaders of the Patriots. His enemies called him a "rebel parson" and said he did more injury to the cause of the king than a dozen military colonels. Therefore, when Savannah, Georgia, fell, they made certain that the church and home of Pastor Moses Allen were burned to the ground.

During the battle, he was captured and placed in a prison ship with many other patriots in Georgia. Starvation, disease, and a multitude of other ill treatments were inflicted upon those men by the Tories. Pastor Allen continued to minister to them until he found an opportunity to escape.

When he saw his opportunity, he jumped overboard and began swimming to shore. His escape was successful, but because of the ill treatment and basic starvation, he did not have sufficient strength to reach the shore, and he drowned. When the other prisoners saw this, they began to clamor, saying, "Look, this was a pastor. This was a man of God, and he needs to be buried."

To show their contempt, the British soldiers replied, "You want him buried? We'll bury him." They took a little boat, rowed out to where he was, picked him up, carried him to shore, stomped him into the mud, and left his arms and head sticking out for the

buzzards to eat. Here was a man so hated and despised simply because he was a pastor who stood for independence and freedom.

It was pastors like Moses Allen who nursed the flame of piety and the love of civil liberty. These men prayed, preached, and fought for liberty. Many went into the army as chaplains. Others stirred the people at home with patriotic sermons and swelled the ranks of the colonial army. Still others showered the enemy with sermons, tracts, and pamphlets, while some joined in thought with their fellow patriots with temple arms. These pastors taught their people to reject with utmost abhorrence what was known as the divine right of kings. They taught them to resist the teaching of passive obedience and non-resistance.

They inculcated these doctrines into their hearers so that the people understood and identified with them. Basically, the people were at one with them. Therefore, it was pastor and congregation who stood for freedom and liberty. They taught and preached and told the people that civil government was ordained by God to be a ministry of justice, to establish God's law, and to carry out His orderly way.

If you will study the pastors in the American Revolution, you will find them huddled at Valley Forge, facing the storm and the wintering blast at Trenton, covered with smoke at the conflict of Bennington, and standing under the enemy's fire at Yorktown. At Lexington, three pastors fought along with the men there. Thaxter of Westford was one, and Pastor Foster was another. As you study history, you will find pastors attached to every expedition, no matter how hazardous or exhausting. It was the pastors during the American Revolution who were the leaders, shakers, and movers in that war. These men led the people in preaching, praying, and fighting. Now let me give you one illustration.

Gad Hitchcock's Bold Sermon

One election sermon preached by Gad Hitchcock from Proverbs 29 and verse 2 took place on May 25, 1774. Let me just read to you Proverbs 29 and verse 2. Here the Word of God says: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Now listen: when the wicked

beareth rule, the people mourn. Gad Hitchcock was a pastor who had been asked to preach this election sermon because the governor had now been elected, and he consented well in advance to preach it.

When he arrived, he found that the new governor was not the governor he had expected. The new governor happened to be General Gage himself, sent over by King George III to put down the rebellion. There sat General Gage, now the appointed governor, with his soldiers. Gad Hitchcock preached. Here is one excerpt of his sermon. He was facing General Gage, the new governor, backed up with his soldiers. He said: "If I am mistaken in supposing plans are formed and executing, subversive of our natural and chartered rights and privileges, and incompatible with every idea of liberty, all America is mistaken with me. Our continued complaints, our repeated humble but fruitless, unregarded petitions and remonstrances, and if I may be allowed a sacred illusion, our groanings, which cannot be uttered, are at once indications of our sufferings and the feelings since we have of them."

“Let the governor in his chair of state hear it. We not only mourn, but with groanings that cannot be uttered, and all because the wicked bear rule. The castle cannot shelter him from the scorching thunderbolt. Families are divided, brother is arrayed against brother, friend against friend, society is cut loose from her moorings, and hate and consternation reign on every side, and all because the wicked bear rule. King George may say that the evils that produce this state of things are imaginary, but I tell you,” says Gad Hitchcock, “and I’ll tell the tyrant to his face, it’s because the wicked bear rule.”

Can you imagine having a pastor like that? Facing General Gage with all of his soldiers, he said, “And I’ll tell the tyrant to his face. Here’s the problem. It’s because the wicked bear rule.”

As you can readily see, the pastors who preached liberty were bold, brave, courageous, and extremely influential. The British understood this, and they hated the fact that the tremendous authority and influence these pastors wielded in the colonies was on the side of independence.

Influence and Persecution of Pastors

They called it, of course, the rebellion. They said, “Here all these pastors are on the side of rebellion.” In 1774, the same British governor of Massachusetts refused the request of the Massachusetts General Assembly to appoint a day of fasting. All the Massachusetts General Assembly wanted was a day of fasting, and the governor refused. He said he was refusing the request because it was only to give an opportunity for sedition to flow from the pulpit.

Note what the tyrant says: truth and liberty are sedition. He is calling a refusal to submit to slavery and tyranny rebellion. Learn one thing tonight: official governmental proclamations, sanctions, and indictments do not change truth, righteousness, and justice. They may deny it, denounce it, and denigrate it, but they cannot destroy it. Truth is still truth, and righteousness is still righteousness.

Dr. Timothy Dwight, an author, theologian, chaplain, and president of Yale University, as well as the son-in-law of Jonathan Edwards, urged that a Declaration of Independence from England be publicly stated long before it was done. Dr. Dwight said, “I urged in conversation with several gentlemen of great respectability, firm Whigs, and my intimate friends, the importance and even the necessity of a Declaration of Independence on the part of the colonies.

Key Figures: Mayhew, Dwight, and Others

“For myself, I regarded the die is cast, and the hope of reconciliation vanished, and believed that the colonists would never be able to defend themselves unless they renounced their dependence upon Great Britain.”

Here is the pastor, the author, the theologian, and the president of Yale University saying that we need a Declaration of Independence. Some of you have heard of Dr. Jonathan Mayhew. I will tell you right now that Dr. Mayhew is the originator of the Confederation, or a more perfect union. Robert Treat Paine called Dr. Mayhew the father of civil and religious freedom in Massachusetts and in America. John Adams called Dr. Mayhew the morning gun of the Revolution.

On August 25, 1765, Dr. Mayhew preached a sermon against the Stamp Act from Galatians 5, verses 12 and 13. His sermon was full of divine truth, and Dr. Mayhew was very well loved by the people. But George Bancroft—and if you can ever find his, I believe, five-volume set, maybe six-volume set, on the history of America, you need to buy it—

But Dr. Bancroft said this concerning Dr. Mayhew: "Whoever repeats the story of the revolution will rehearse the fame of Jonathan Mayhew. He spent whole nights in prayer for the dangers of his country. Light dawned on his mind on Sunday morning, July 1766, in which he wrote to Otis saying, 'You have heard of the communion of the churches. While I was thinking of this in my bed, the great use and importance of the communion of the colonies appeared to me in striking light.'

"Would it not be decorous in our assembly to send circulars to all the rest expressing a desire to cement a union among ourselves? A good foundation has been laid by the Congress of New York. It may be the only means of perpetuating our liberty."

This suggestion of a more perfect union for the common defense originated with Jonathan Mayhew on Sunday morning as he lay in bed praying and thinking about the communion of the churches. July 1766 was the forerunner of the Articles of Confederation, which then came down to the Constitution in 1787. Pastors were the leaders and shakers in the movement for liberty, freedom, and independence.

Stories of Courageous Pastors

Pastor John Woodhull, of the Freehold Presbyterian Church of New Jersey, was singular in his devotion to truth and in fighting for liberty and freedom. He was one of the most active patriots of his day. He taught his church the duties of civil government based upon the Bible and their responsibility to civil government. On one occasion, when fighting had to be done, every man in his church followed Dr. Woodhull into battle except one feeble old man who had only enough strength to bid him Godspeed. The entire congregation followed their pastor to fight the British.

There was also Dr. David Ely of Huntington, Connecticut. Although he was surrounded by Tories, and preached liberty and freedom fiercely, defiantly, and courageously, the Tories around there said that when the rebellion was put down, they would hang him from the oak tree nearest his church.

Joseph Fish of Duxbury, Massachusetts, was seventy-six years of age when General Washington invited him to address a number of men and encourage them to join the colonial army. After giving a stirring sermon, the seventy-six-year-old man concluded: “Were it not that my nerves are unstrung, and my limbs enfeebled with age, on such a call as you have, I think I should willingly quit the desk, put off my priestly garments, buckle on the harness, and with trumpet in hand, hasten to battle.” Seventy-six years of age, and he wanted to go out and fight.

Jonah Stearns of New Hampshire not only preached independence but sacrificed most of his worldly wealth to sustain it. Coming home from a meeting in Exeter, he told his sons, “Boys, if this call succeeds, it will be a great blessing to our country. But if it should fail, your father’s head will soon be a button for a halter.” He then bade those boys fight for independence and sent them off to join the army.

John Mills of Delaware, although a nervous and timid man, was certainly not lacking in courage. He preached from 1 Kings 12:16, where the ten northern tribes separated from Judah because of Rehoboam’s taxation. Taking the words, “What portion have we in David?” and “To your tents, O Israel!”, he declared, “What portion do we have in Great Britain? Separate from them. Let’s leave. Let’s get out of there because of the corruption and the wickedness in the King of England.” He did so very successfully. David Caldwell, another pastor of Pennsylvania, had his house and library, furniture, and all his belongings burned to the ground. He was then hunted like a felon throughout the land simply because he preached liberty and freedom.

Dr. Thomas Reed of the same state, in 1776, shouldered his musket and marched with forty or fifty others to help fight the British. He also helped save General George Washington at Elk Ferry because he knew the countryside and led them to victory through

that knowledge. David Robert Davidson of Maryland addressed the colonies, the people, and the assembled troops from 1 Chronicles 5:22: “For there fell down many slain, because the war was of God,” encouraging the men to fight against the British.

Pastor William Graham of Paxton, near Harrisonburg, saw the backwardness of his young men in joining the militia, so he enrolled his own name and shamed them into joining as well. John Steele, another pastor of Cumberland, Pennsylvania, not only served as a captain in the army; he led 900 men and always preached with his gun by his side.

Pastor Ezell Rowe was head of the militia in his little area. The militia was backward because they were untrained and did not really want to fight. Rowe stood out and exposed himself to the enemy's fire, with balls whistling all around him. His men begged him to step down. He said, "No, I will not step down until you promise me that if I fight, you will fight." They finally promised, and he led them in the fight.

Charles McKnight of Shrewsbury, on account of his devotion to liberty and the gallant work of his sons on the battlefield, was not only hunted down, but thrown into prison, brutally beaten, and treated like a savage. Here he was, a pastor. These men lost everything. Dr. Samuel McClintock sent four sons into the army; only one returned home. Dr. Hezekiah Ripley had his home, church, and library burned. He lost everything.

John Martin, another pastor, after praying with the soldiers at Bunker Hill, seized a rifle and fought gallantly to the close of battle that day. Then he preached to them from Nehemiah chapter 4 and verse 14: "And I said to the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not afraid of them." Pastor Nathaniel Bartlett of Reading, also chaplain to General Putnam, always made his parochial visits with his musket on his shoulder because the Tories had threatened to murder him and hang him as quickly as they found him.

There were a few pastors who were reticent. One of those men was Payson of Chelsea. Dr. Headley, in his book on chaplains in the American Revolution, writes concerning Pastor Payson:

"There too was the amiable and learned Payson of Chelsea. He was so adverse to bloodshed and all the horrors of war that he had felt it his duty to preach patience and even submission. His bolder and more resolute brethren took umbrage at this, and they refused to let him preach in their pulpits. They wanted no conciliatory doctrines taught to their people.

"The brutal outrage of Lexington transformed this peaceful scholar and pastor into a fiery, intrepid soldier, and, seizing a musket, he put himself at the head of a party and led them forward to the attack. The gentle voice that had so long spoken only words of peace suddenly rung out like that of a prophet of old. A body of British soldiers advancing along the road, he and his men poured into them such a destructive volley that the entire group were either slain or taken prisoner."

He was a man of peace and conciliation, Dr. Headley says, until blood was spilled. Then he became a man of war.

Thomas Allen at the Battle of White Plains

I could go on and on, but tonight I have chosen about five men that I want to develop, to let you know what happened in their lives, and to give you a taste of what it used to be like to sit under a real preacher and a real pastor. The first man I want to tell you about is Thomas Allen. You remember I began telling you about Moses Allen, the pastor who was stomped down in the mud by the British? Thomas Allen happened to be his brother. When the British soldiers converged upon and covered the hills at the Battle of White Plains, the colonists there were outnumbered, and I might add, they were outgunned. Pastor Allen was there, knew they were facing great odds, and wanted to encourage all the colonial soldiers to fight.

“Valiant soldiers, yonder,” pointing to the British that lay in sight, “yonder are the enemies of your country who have come to lay waste and destroy and spread havoc and devastation through this pleasant land. They are enemies hired to do the work of death and have no motive to animate them in their undertaking. You have every consideration to induce you to play the man and the active part of the valiant soldiers. Your country looks up to you for its defense.

"You are contending for your wives, whether you or they shall enjoy them. You are fighting for your children, whether they shall be yours or theirs, your homes and lands, for your flocks and herds, for your freedom and for future generations. For everything that is great and noble, on account of which only life itself is worth a fig. You must, you will abide the day of trial. You cannot give back while animated by these considerations.

"Suffer me on this occasion to recommend to you without delay to break off your sins by righteousness and your iniquity by turning unto the Lord. Turn ye, turn you, you ungodly sinners, for why would you die? Repent, lest the Lord come and smite you with a curse. Our camp is filled with blasphemers and resounds with the language of the infernal regions. Oh, that officers and men might fear to take the holy and tremendous name of God in vain. Oh, that you would now return to the Lord, lest destruction come upon you, lest vengeance overtake you. Oh, that you were wise and that you would understand your latter end. I recommend to you the strictest attention to your duty and the most punctual obedience to your officers.

"Discipline, order, and regularity are the strength of an army. Valiant soldiers, should our enemy attack us, I exhort you and conjure you to play the man. Let no danger appear too great. Let no suffering appear too severe for you to encounter for your bleeding country. God's grace assisting me, I am determined to fight and to die by your side rather than flee before our enemies or resign myself to them. Prefer death to captivity."

Ever remember your unhappy brethren, made prisoners at Fort Washington, whose blood now cried to heaven for vengeance and shakes the pillars of the world, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not charge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rather than quit this ground with infamy and disgrace, I should prefer leaving this body of mine, a corpse on the spot. I must finally recommend it to you and urge on you again and again, in time of action, to keep silence. Let all be hushed and calm, serene and tranquil, that the word of command may be distinctly heard and resolutely obeyed. May the God of heaven take us all under his

protection, cover our heads in the day of battle, and grant us his salvation.

God's grace assisting me, I am determined to fight and die by your side rather than flee from our enemies or resign myself to them. Rather than quit this ground with infamy and disgrace, I should prefer leaving this body of mine, a corpse, on the spot.

Thomas Allen, of course, was not in charge of the military. The military leaders knew that they were outnumbered and outgunned, and they decided that the safest and wisest course of action would be to retreat. They did so without a battle or a fight. Pastor Thomas Allen took his men, the Berkshire militia, and went home. A little later, he received word from General Stark to bring his men because there was going to be a battle.

It was the sixteenth of August. He and his men left a little before daylight. Before they arrived, thunder and lightning came, and rain was literally pouring down. This brave pastor wanted to make dead sure that what happened this time was not like what had happened previously. Although it was pouring rain and late at night when they arrived, he went immediately to General Stark's tent and said, "General Stark, the Berkshire militia have often been summoned to the field without being allowed to fight. Now, if you don't give us a chance to fight this time, we'll never turn out again."

Stark, who was a hero himself and loved to hear the true metal of courage, was not offended. Rather, he was amused at the young pastor. He smiled and said, "Do you wish to march right now while it's dark and rainy?" Pastor Allen replied, "No, not at this moment." "Well," said General Stark, "if the Lord gives us sunshine tomorrow, I promise you I will give you your share of fighting, or I'll never call you out again."

The next morning, when the sun rose bright and beautiful, Pastor Allen and the Berkshire militia began to form in line. One of his men said, "Pastor Allen, we'll have to do our own fighting today." "Yes," said Pastor Allen, "we'll have a good time with the enemy, but we're not quite ready just yet." He called all his men around and led them in prayer, praying that God would give them the victory. Pastor Allen had no intention of simply praying and letting his men do the

fighting. He determined to fight himself, and his example would encourage his men; there would be no cowards that day in the Berkshire militia.

When the Hessians approached and came in sight, Pastor Thomas Allen, in his long, flowing black robe, walked out in front of his men and stood on a stump. In a loud, clear voice, he called to the Hessians to surrender and save this infusion of blood. He promised them generous treatment if they would surrender. About that time, bullets started whizzing by Pastor Allen.

In fact, one shot went through his hat. He went back with his men, and the battle was on. He fought with them all day long. Noticing that one brother was not shooting well, Pastor Allen realized he was a much better shot. He looked at his brother and said, "Joe, you load and I'll fire." When the battle ended, Pastor Allen was first over the hill, leading the Berkshire militia, and the victory was theirs.

While many other men were rummaging around and picking up whatever they could, Pastor Allen caught a mule that had veneers of wine and some medical equipment on him. He began going to the weak and wounded and ministering to them—not only his own men, but the enemy as well. After ministering to everyone he could, and after the battle was over, he took his men home because he had to preach on Sunday.

His church heard about the battle and that he had fought in it. One parishioner asked, "Pastor, is it true that you fought in the battle like a common soldier?" "Yes," said Pastor Allen. "It was a very hot and close battle, and it became every patriot to do his duty." The parishioner asked, "Pastor, did you kill anybody?" Pastor Allen replied, "I don't know that I killed anybody, but I happened to notice a frequent flash from behind a certain bush, and every time I saw that flash, one of our men failed. I took aim at that bush and fired. I don't know that I killed anybody, but I put out that flash."

Do you realize that men like these gave us our independence? Pastor Allen lived until 1810, when he died of natural causes at the age of sixty-eight. Have you ever heard the name of Naphtali Daggett? He was a pastor and president of Yale College, West Haven, Connecticut. He instructed his students in the biblical doctrine of

civil government, showing them why God ordained government and what its purpose was. He taught them everything.

Naphtali Daggett's Stand

In 1779, General Tryon, a British general, landed five miles from West Haven with 2,500 soldiers. The little college and little town were hurriedly broken up, and 100 young clergymen were chosen to face the British and fight a delaying action while the rest of the students and townspeople escaped.

Confusion reigned in the streets for a while as people ran hither and yon, with horses going every which way. Finally, everything got in order, and the young men with their fife and drum marched off to face twenty-five hundred British soldiers. There were only a hundred of them. They had not gone far down the road when they heard the hoofbeats of a horse. Looking behind them, they saw old Dr. Daggett in his long, flowing black robe on that horse.

He carried in his arm a long fowling piece, one of those old muskets, and rode right through them. They parted and cheered him as he went by, while he headed straight for the British soldiers. Dr. Daggett found a hill with some cover, rode his old mare up there, tied her, got down, and began to survey the situation.

From the hill he saw the hundred young men meet the advance of the British army, and those hundred young men whipped the living daylights out of it. They defeated the advance so quickly and chased it so far that, before they realized it, they were face to face with the rest of the twenty-five hundred British soldiers. Knowing they had to get out or be consumed, those young divinity students turned and began to flee.

Of course, they happened to look up on that hill and see the reflection of the old fowling piece. All of a sudden came the retort of that long musket. The British ignored it until a soldier fell, and a few minutes later another fell. Finally, it could not be ignored. General Tryon said to some of his men, "Go up on top of that hill and stop whoever's up there shooting our men." When they reached the top, there was old Dr. Daggett. He could have run.

Dr. Daggett's mare was right there. He saw them coming, but he was reloading his old fowling piece so he could get another shot. When the British soldier reached him and saw this old man in long, flowing black robes, he knew he was a preacher. Rather than angry, he was amused. "What are you doing there, you old fool, firing on His Majesty's troops?"

Dr. Daggett never looked up. He kept reloading and said, "Exercising the right of war, young man, exercising the right of war." "Well," said the soldier, "if I let you go this time, you old rascal, will you ever fire on His Majesty's troops again?" "Oh," Dr. Daggett replied, "nothing more likely, son, nothing more likely." The soldier was forced to take the old man prisoner. They put Dr. Daggett in front of the British soldiers and force-marched him back to West Haven, where the old man was beaten and ill-treated. Although he recovered, he died sixteen months later because of the beating and wounds he sustained.

Here was Dr. Daggett, a man willing to face 2,500 soldiers alone. When he had the opportunity to leave, he would not leave.

John Witherspoon and the Declaration

John Witherspoon was a Presbyterian pastor, a patriot, a congressman, and president of Princeton University. He and Roger Sherman were responsible for the hard-money clause in the Constitution: no state shall make anything but silver and gold legal tender, and Congress shall have power to coin money and regulate its value. Witherspoon, as a congressman, was present while the Declaration of Independence was discussed and debated.

Some congressmen were timid. After the discussion, John Witherspoon stood and addressed the president of Congress: "Mr. President, that noble instrument on your table, which ensures immortality to its author, should be subscribed this very morning by every pen in the house. He who will not respond to its accents and strain every nerve to carry into effect its provisions is unworthy of the name Freeman."

Although these gray hairs must descend into the grave, I would infinitely rather they should descend thither by the hand of the

executioner than desert my country in this time of crisis. What was John Witherspoon saying? I would rather be executed as a criminal, as a traitor against George III, than desert my country at this time. One timid congressman rose and said meekly that he did not think the country was ripe for such a declaration of independence. Pastor John Witherspoon stood and said, “In my judgment, sir, we're not only ripe, we're rotten.” And the Declaration of Independence was signed. Why? Because there was a pastor who stood and said, “I'd rather be executed as a traitor than desert my country in this time of crisis.”

Where are our pastors today like that? I have a message entitled “Comest Thou Peaceably?” In 1 Samuel 16, when little Samuel went to Bethlehem, the elders, the Bible says, were trembling. They said to Samuel, “Comest thou peaceably?” That is a strange question to ask a preacher. Why would they ask Samuel, the prophet, the man of God, whether he was coming peaceably? You must remember that in 1 Samuel 15, this meek, quiet Samuel took a sword and hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord. No wonder they wanted to know whether he was coming peacefully. Can you imagine that today?

Can you imagine Pastor Omar, Pastor Temple, or Tingle going up to the county meeting, and before they could get in, some of the councilmen came out and said, “Now, are you fellows coming peacefully?” Why? Because these men had authority. They knew they had authority, and they knew how to use that authority under God and as unto God.

Jonas Clark and the Battle of Lexington

Everyone in this room knows about the Battle of Lexington and Concord, the shot heard ’round the world. My wife and I have been there, and some of you have been there. But what most people do not know is that the battle took place on the Church House Green. The pastor was Jonas Clark. Jonas Clark had taught and trained his people. Samuel Adams and John Hancock had often found asylum in Jonas Clark’s home. He was such a scholar, pastor, and teacher that his people, to a man, agreed with him and received his teaching.

His teaching was so clear that those teachings, even today, are embodied in instructions to their delegate to the provincial

legislature as an expression of their determination and wishes. They remain engrossed in the town records as a standing memorial, not only to the men but to Jonas Clark as well.

Between twelve and one in the morning, Warren received intelligence that the British were coming after the stores at Lexington. Adams, Hancock, and Pastor Jonas Clark held a quick conference. The church bells pealed, and 150 men came out and answered roll call, name by name. There stood the pastor and 150 of his men under the stars, around two o'clock in the morning.

Adams and Hancock had one question for Pastor Clark: "Will the men fight?" Pastor Clark said, "Will they fight? It is for this hour that I taught them and I trained them." These men were farmers and mechanics, not professional soldiers. But Pastor Clark knew that they would fight. They had their weapons, and they were standing on the green.

When the British soldiers came up and began to bark out their orders—"Throw down your weapons, surrender, throw down your arms and disperse, throw them down now"—Pastor Clark knew what was going to happen. All of a sudden, a shot rang out, and then a volley of shots rang out.

The smoke was so thick that no one could see what was happening. A few minutes later, when it disappeared, Pastor Clark looked out on the church-house green. Seven of his stalwart men lay stretched stiff in death, and many more were wounded. One of those killed was Jonas Parker, the strongest man and the best wrestler in the county. He had said that morning that he would die on the spot before he ran, that he would not flee. And there he lay.

Not only shot, but bayoneted as well. There too lay old Caleb Morgan, his gray hairs daubed in blood. And there lay Caleb Harrington, fallen dead on the church house steps. Do you know why he was on the church house steps? Because he was running into the church building to get more powder for the men. They kept the powder and ammunition in the church building.

Pastor Clark gazed long and hard on these men. He wept. But although there were tears of sympathy, there were no tears of regret. Those lifeless forms of his men that lay on that ground had given

themselves, he knew, upon the altar of their country. Pastor Jonas Clark said that he had no misgivings for what he had taught his people and how he trained them. He said, “For from this day, will be dated the liberty of the world.” The shot heard around the world began in a churchyard at the teaching and training of a pastor.

Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg's Call to Arms

Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg was the pastor of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Dunmore County, Virginia. He preached that Sunday morning and then told his people that he was going to preach a special sermon that afternoon at 3 p.m. on the duty that men owed their God and their country. At 3 p.m., the church house was packed. Men and women were standing around outside. He opened his Bible to Ecclesiastes chapter three and read from the text, “There's a time to war, a time of peace. Time to live and time to die.” When he finished reading the text, he closed his Bible and preached one of the firest sermons that any of us probably have ever heard in our lives.

When Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg finished preaching, he reached up, grabbed that long, flowing black robe, and jerked it off. There he stood in full military uniform. He pointed to a young boy whom he had already prepared and asked him to begin drumming for recruits. That afternoon, 300 men volunteered. It was Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg, their pastor, who led them to help George Washington defeat Cornwallis at Yorktown.

In defending his course of action for leaving the pulpit and joining the army, here's what he said: “I am a clergyman, it is true. But I'm also a member of society, as well as the poorest layman, and my liberty is as dear to me as any man. Shall I sit still and enjoy myself at home while the best blood in the continent is spilling? Heaven forbid it.”

“Do you think if America should be conquered, that I should be safe? Far from it. And would you not rather fight like a man than die like a dog? The cause is just and noble. Were I a bishop, even a Lutheran one, I should obey without hesitation. And so far from thinking that I am wrong, I am convinced it is my duty to do so, a duty I owe to my God and my country.”

Most people think, somehow, that we are never going to face the judgment of God, that America is going to escape. Let me tell you what I believe the real problem is in this country: our preachers. It is our pastors.

In the 1700s and 1800s, we had men who were leaders, scholars, and knowledgeable. Not only did they have knowledge and understanding, they had courage and conviction. They were willing to stand and face the enemy head-on. Today we have sired a generation of sweet, sickly, effeminate, sentimental, emotional preachers who are afraid of anyone and everyone and want everyone to think well of them.

It does not work like that. Study the prophet Jeremiah, how he was hated—the weeping prophet—preaching the truth, arrested, and thrown in the dungeon. Study Isaiah, Noah, Amos, and Hosea. Any man who has ever preached the truth and stood for the truth has had people despise, hate, misuse, and abuse him. But he still stood.

We will not get our country back until we get our preachers back, until we have men with backbone, intestinal fortitude—and, down in South Georgia, that is just plain old guts—who will stand and say, "This is what God says, and we are not backing down." I was grieved when I heard that General Pace apologized for his remarks. Why apologize for truth? Sodomy is immoral. It is not only immoral; it is sin. It is wickedness.

What he should have done instead of apologizing was name a whole lot more that was wrong. If the preachers who claim to represent Jesus Christ, and who claim to have the Word of God, the whole counsel of God, will not declare it, who will? If we will not tell the truth, who will? If we will not stand for righteousness, who will?

If we will not teach and lead our own people, who will? We live in a day when the media manipulates, controls, propagandizes, and bamboozles the average American. If you want to make sure that you are not propagandized or brainwashed, you had better know the Word of God very thoroughly and stand on it. If you know the truth, you will see through error; but if you do not know the truth, you will believe error. I need, I want, and I pray for God to raise up some men

in this country, especially some preachers, who will say, "God, help me. What's right is right and what's wrong is wrong."

As a pastor and preacher, we need to come to the place where we say, "If we lose our building, we're going to stand for truth. If we lose the people in the congregation, we'll stand for truth. If everybody hates us, we'll still stand for truth." The reason the average preacher will not stand is because he is in debt up to his eyeballs. He has the 501c3 tax-exempt status, and he is afraid to preach the truth because, if somebody leaves, there will not be enough money for the sinking fund payment.

I would rather have the whole world hate me, despise me, and malign me, and have God smile upon me, than have the whole world smile upon me and God despise me. He said, "But Brother Weaver, you stick your neck out." If God cannot protect you, you are not going to be protected anyhow. We are immortal, folks, until God is through with us.

As Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, "Plagues and death around me fly, till he please, I cannot die. Not a single shaft can hit until the God of love sees fit." Since that is the truth, we may as well stand. As the Apostle Paul says, "Stand, and having done all, what? Stand." May God give us men and preachers who are willing to lead and teach the truth, irrespective of what the world thinks and says. You may not have a big congregation, but the ones you have will be worth a hundred of the others.

One of my pastor friends, now deceased, was one of the best preachers that ever lived. I asked him one day, “How many do you have on Sunday morning?” “Thirty.” “How many do you have Sunday night?” “Thirty.” “How many do you have Wednesday night?” “Thirty.” “How many times?” “Thirty.” He may have had only thirty, but he had thirty real, genuine Christians. And let me tell you something, folks: I had rather preach to five people who really, truly want the Word of God than to a thousand who could care less.

People ask me all the time, “Do you preach like this to your own people?” I tell everybody, “Hey, I try it out on them first.” May God give us men. May God give us preachers. Look at what we did have, and look at what we now have. I know there are a few exceptions,

and I am thankful for that. I believe this church is one of those exceptions. But, generally speaking, we do not have any real preachers in this country. We need to pray that God would give us real, genuine men who are not afraid to stand.

Let us pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your grace and Your mercy. Father, raise up men. Give us, Lord, godly men, holy men, righteous men, courageous men who will lead and guide Thy people. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen and Amen.

CHAPTER 7

Capital Sins

SCRIPTURE READING - Micah 1:1–9 (KJV)

Introduction to Micah and the Book's Importance

The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Moreshite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, all ye people, hearken, O earth, and all that therein is, and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple. For behold, the Lord cometh forth out of His place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem? Therefore I will make Samaria as a heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire,

> and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate. For she gathered it of the hire of a harlot, and they shall return to the hire of a harlot. Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked, I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls. For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.

The Importance of Micah

Micah deals with imminent judgment and ultimate blessings. It calls to repentance and gives comfort and instruction to God's people. The God who judges sin and iniquity also gives repentance and forgiveness.

Micah's name means "who is like unto Jehovah" or "who is like Jehovah." There is probably a play on his name in Micah 7:18, where he asks, "Who is a God like unto thee?" Little is known about the prophet except that he came from Moresheth, near Judah and close to the Philistine line.

Because Moresheth was close to Philistine territory, it is sometimes called Moresheth Gath. Micah 1:14 says, "Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth Gath." It was in Judah, near the Philistine line.

The book teaches God's absolute sovereignty over all nations, especially in His providential judgments. It unmasks false and wicked rulers and unveils the true ruler. It also summarizes true religion. Micah 6:8 says, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

That is the essence of true Christianity: to do justly, or righteously; to love mercy; and to walk humbly with our God.

Fourthly, the book of Micah is important because it teaches and prophesies the birthplace of Jesus Christ. In Micah 5:2, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." This verse is quoted in Matthew 2:4-6 in direct relation to the birth of Jesus Christ. So here is a book that tells us specifically

where the Messiah was to be born. Fifthly, this book is important because it helped to save the life of Jeremiah the prophet. In Micah 3:12, Micah prophesies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem: "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest." He is now prophesying that Jerusalem is going to be destroyed. Micah was also prophesying during the time of King Hezekiah, who was indeed a good king. And when Micah prophesied of the destruction of Jerusalem, Hezekiah the king did nothing to him.

Hezekiah received the prophecy. Jeremiah later prophesied Jerusalem's destruction, and Jeremiah 26:8–19 records what happened.

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 26:8–19 (KJV)

> Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the Lord, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

> Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Moreshite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

The elders pointed out that Micah had prophesied the same thing as Jeremiah. Hezekiah had not put him to death. They followed biblical precedent, and Jeremiah was allowed to escape because they chose to act accordingly.

Capitol Sins

The Timeliness of Micah's Message

As I read Micah 1:1–9, I was amazed at how applicable and timely Scripture is to our circumstances. Change a couple of names and places and it would read like a modern newspaper or journal. Micah's time resembled ours: corruption, humanism, idolatry, and wickedness abounded, and from the same sorts of geographical locations.

Defining 'Capital Sins'

I call this message "Capital Sins," but the spelling I intend is C-A-P-I-T-O-L. I am not speaking of capitalism or making money. Nor is the message primarily about the death penalty, although sins deserving capital punishment form an integral thought in it.

When you hear the word capital, I am referring to the head of a state, the seat of a government, or supposedly the origin of law and justice. Micah 1:1 immediately tells us what his vision entails: "The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Moreshite in the days of

Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." There were twelve tribes. They had separated. The ten northern tribes had a capital, Samaria. The two southern tribes had a capital, Jerusalem. So he tells you at the very beginning that this prophecy is dealing with Samaria and with Jerusalem. Samaria is mentioned first because it was the head of the greatest body of people and also the first in transgression. Therefore, it is also going to be the first in punishment. He is dealing with the capitals of Israel and Judah.

God as Witness and Judge

In verse 2 Micah calls the people and the earth to witness against these capitals: "Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple." The people can testify, the earth can testify, but there is a greater witness against these capitals—God Himself. God will testify from His holy temple. He is the sovereign, the lawgiver, the judge, and the epitome of holiness, and He will declare the sins of these capitals and of the people, and He will judge them accordingly.

In verse 1, he tells what his prophecy is about. In verse 2, he tells that God is the supreme judge and will work His judgment. Then he explains in verses 3 and 4: "For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place." We know how wax melts before the fire—it disintegrates and runs everywhere. Likewise, water runs down a steep place freely, openly, easily, and readily. This is what God is going to do: arise, come out of His place, and judge these capitals and nations, basically destroying them.

Verse 5 pinpoints the transgressions for which God will judge: "For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?" He identifies Samaria and Jerusalem.

In biblical times, as today, people commonly deny their sins when confronted: "What? We didn't do that. We wouldn't do that. Surely that's not descriptive of us."

This runs throughout Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi 1:6 says, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?"

Whenever God confronts them, they ask the stupid question, "How did we do that?" "Well, we could never do that. We wouldn't do that."

Consider John Calvin's comment on Micah 1:5, where God identifies Samaria as Jacob's transgression and Jerusalem as Judah's high places.

Calvin says, "Oh, what sort of thing is this sin? Why? Thou assumest here a false principle, that we are wicked men, ungodly and perfidious. Thou dost do us a grievous wrong. It is much then," he says, "as hypocrites thought themselves pure, having wiped as it were their mouths, whenever they eluded reproofs by their sophistries. The prophet borrows a question, as it were, from their own lips."

"Of what kind is this wickedness? Of what sort is this transgression? As though he said, I know what you are wont to do. When any one of the prophets severely reproves you, you instantly contend with him and are ready with your objections. But what do you gain? If you wish to know what your wickedness is, it is Samaria. And if you wish to know where your high places are, they're at Jerusalem."

God anticipates the people's objections in verse 5 and declares what their condition really is. Capitol sins do deserve capital punishment. Micah 1:6–7 says, "Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the

fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot." God describes the destruction of these capitals for their multitudinous transgressions.

The epitome of sin and transgression was found in the royal or capital cities. The people of the land were wicked, but God identifies their leaders as the main culprits in leading the nations astray. He asks, "What is the transgression of Jacob?" and answers, "Is it not Samaria?" He asks, "What are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?" He singles out their capitals.

We could likewise ask: What is America's transgression? Is it not Washington, D.C.? What is the transgression of the states? Is it not each state's capital? Washington is a hotbed of corruption, humanism, idolatry, wickedness, and murder. The District of Columbia has the highest murder rate of any state in the union, excluding the so-called wars, police actions, and political feuds originating there.

Each state capital is likewise a leader in humanism, idolatry, and wickedness. If I wanted to find Georgia's most corrupt city, with its highest crime rate, I would go to Atlanta. In Florida I would probably go to Tallahassee.

Idolatry

Miami may be a close second, for a particular reason. Why is each state's capital usually a hotbed of corruption and crime? Let us examine Micah and Scripture generally for the sins for which God destroys a people and nation.

The First Capital Sin: Idolatry

The first and most obvious is idolatry. Micah 1:5 asks, "For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?"

The high places refer to idolatry. God was to be worshipped in His temple, but they made altars under every green tree and oak tree because the shade was good. They wanted comfort in their idolatry.

Verse 7 says, "And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate." God is dealing particularly with idolatry.

Samaria was Israel's capital. Its principal idolatry began under Jeroboam I. First Kings 12:25–33 describes the beginning of Israel's calf worship.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Kings 12:25–33 (KJV)

> Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

Jeroboam deliberately introduced a new religion to control the people and secure his kingdom, position, and authority. Verse 27 gives his reasoning: "If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn

again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah."

He wanted to save his kingdom and advance his family. He cared nothing for God's true worship or honor, although he knew the Lord's temple was in Jerusalem. Allowing the people to go there would turn them back to Rehoboam.

This was planned and premeditated, not accidental. Verse 28 says, "Whereupon the king took counsel." "The king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel."

Jeroboam knew what every tyrant has discovered: you cannot enslave a knowledgeable, obedient people. First you must turn them from God's Word and obedience, and thus from God Himself. Once they lose that knowledge and obedience, a ruler can use power, money, prestige, and authority to turn them wherever he desires.

In two earlier messages on civil rulers and idolatry, I showed from the Bible that most idolatry—in fact all of it there—was introduced by civil rulers to further their position and power. Rulers have the influence, power, and money to attack Christianity and impose false, idolatrous religion. They take their money from the people, ride roughshod over them, and demand submission on pain of property confiscation, imprisonment, or death.

Romans 13 teaches that God ordained government as His minister of justice: His deacon, servant, exacter of righteousness, and public worship. We fail to remember that government can become idolatrous like anything else. Think of Psalm 94:20 in light of Micah 1:5 and the question, "What is the sin of Israel? Is it not Samaria? Where are the high places of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?" These are the capitals, where law supposedly originates.

Psalm 94:20 asks, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?"

A throne signifies royal power or government. God calls this a throne of iniquity—a wicked civil government. Can it have fellowship with God? The phrase "which frameth mischief by a law" makes the question sharper. Mischief is a word for sin, meaning to make sin

legal. Can government have fellowship with God while legalizing sin? Absolutely not: it acts contrary to Him and His Word.

Idolatry turns men from the true God, His Word, and His law. It may turn them theologically, to another religion; economically; legally or judicially; morally; or practically. In any area where we are turned from God and His Word, to that extent we are guilty of idolatry.

How do governments become idolatrous? By disestablishing God's law and establishing humanistic, or man's, law. They turn men legally from God's law to man's law.

Second Kings 17:7 says, "For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods." God identifies their sin as fearing other gods instead of Him. What is the evidence? Verse 8 answers, "And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made."

They followed statutes made by Israel's kings. If I claimed to be Christian but obeyed Muslim law, would you not say, "He's not really a Christian. He's a Muslim." I would be obeying Sharia instead of biblical law.

The people feared other gods by obeying heathen laws. Israel's kings absorbed heathen law, made it their own, and turned the people from God's law. That is idolatry.

Greed and Oppression

Here's why God had it against Jerusalem as well: "Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made." Samaria, King Ahab, Omri, Jeroboam, all those wicked kings, passed humanistic laws and made them the law of the land. Judah said, we don't want God's law; we'll take the law of Samaria and make it our law. And they turned away from God.

Micah 6:16 makes this exceedingly plain: "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in

their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people." Why was God destroying Judah and Israel? Because they obeyed the law of man rather than the law of God, which is idolatry. God said, I'll make you a hissing; I'll make you desolate. The essence of idolatry is a denial of God and His word. How do civil rulers and capitals deny God and His word? By disregarding, despising, deposing and denying God's law and establishing their own law in its place. The original sin of capitals that merited capital punishment was the sin of humanism, establishing man's law over God's law. The abounding political correctness, humanism, tolerance for crime, sin, false religion, support of sodomy, socialism, statism is nothing less than bald-faced idolatry. It originates from our capital in Washington, D.C., and our state capitals as well. It's a capital sin. That's what God is crying out against in Micah 1.

The Second Capital Sin: Oppression and Theft

Secondly, in Micah chapter 2, God says, "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil."

Washington's corruption, with state capitals a close second, brings us to Micah 2:1–3. God's curse rests upon those who oppress through greed and corruption. "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds!" They lie awake planning how to oppress, defraud, and steal. "when the morning is light, they practise it." Why? "because it is in the power of their hand to do it."

Authority and power differ. Authority is the right to do something; possessing power does not give that right. I could say to Brother Ernie, "Give me all your money." He would answer, "I'm not going to do it. You don't have the authority to take my money." I could reply, "I may not have," pull out a .357 Magnum and put it

between his eyes, "but I've got the power." "Now hand it to me or else."

These rulers had the power to do wrong without the authority. Verse 2 specifies their wrong: "And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage." Homes and heritage mean nothing to idolatrous rulers.

The federal government is America's biggest landowner. It owns over ninety percent of Nevada; I do not know how much of Colorado and other states. I recently read of plans to take still more homes, ranches, and protected properties, some existing for hundreds of years.

Homes and heritage mean nothing to them. It is unbiblical for civil rulers to confiscate land. Ezekiel 46:16–18 speaks to this. The Bible has never stopped picking on idolatrous civil rulers, but this remains a principle of biblical law. "Thus saith the Lord God; If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons'; it shall be their possession by inheritance." That is common sense: even a prince may give his son something of his own. Verse 17: "But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them. Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession." God said if the government wants to give something, let it give what it has. If it does not have it, it cannot take it from someone else and give it away. God also forbids oppressive taxation. Ezekiel 45:8 says: "In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; and the rest of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes. Thus saith the Lord God; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord God." Property tax is one of the most unbiblical, ungodly taxes of them all.

"Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath." Why did I say that property tax is the most onerous and the most unbiblical of all taxes? Because when the state taxes property, it assumes ownership over all the property that it taxes. It claims to be the sovereign. Scripture states otherwise: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1), and "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (1 Corinthians 10:26). When you have a tax on property, you are saying that we, the state, own all the land, and therefore we have the right to tax it. Not biblically. Another illustration of humanistic idolatry follows. Senate Resolution number 43, passed in April 1933, reads: "The ultimate ownership of all property is in the state. Individual so-called ownership is only by virtue of government, in other words, law, amounting to mere user, and that use must be in accordance with law and subordinate to the necessities of the state." So our federal government says all property is owned by the state, and that what you say you own—no, you are a mere user, and your using that property must be in accordance with the law and always subordinate to the necessities of the state. If the state wants to come along and by eminent domain confiscate your property, it can do it according to humanism. Property tax is offensive, oppressive, a means of stealing, and an assumption of usurped authority and ownership over God's creation. God declares in Micah 2:3, concerning all those that plan and scheme to steal a man's property, his home, his heritage: "Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks." God said I will nail you for this, mark it down.

Economic Dishonesty

The Third Capital Sin: Economic Dishonesty

Here is capital punishment for a capital sin. The third obvious sin of capitals is economic dishonesty in trade, money and toil. Micah 3:1 says: "And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?" the word judgment or justice and the word righteousness are synonymous. They're one and the same. "Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their

bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron."

God is saying that the civil rulers are doing this to the people. It is for the heads, or the civil rulers, to know judgment or justice—that is, they're supposed to know right and wrong. Yet, according to verse 2, they hate the good, and they love the evil. God describes their oppression: they pluck off the skin from His people, take the flesh from their bones, eat the flesh of the people, flay their skin, break their bones, and chop them in pieces for the pot as flesh within the caldron. I wonder if this is where we get our saying, "I'll skin you and eat you alive." That's exactly what God is condemning these civil rulers for: they are so wicked they will literally skin a man alive, chop him into pieces, and boil him and eat him.

Micah 3:9 continues: "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward."

"The priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest." God was destroying Jerusalem because of the perversion and wickedness of the civil rulers. They were indeed destroying the people. God hates false balances, fraud, deceit, and dishonesty, and over and over throughout the Bible, God testifies against this. In Leviticus 19:36, God says, "Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt." In Ezekiel 45:10, "Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath." These commands were given directly to civil rulers. And the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," equally applies to government as it does individuals. And yet, what do we have in this country? We have no money. We have a fraudulent federal reserve system which is neither federal nor reserve, in spite of the fact that the Constitution demands silver and gold as money and that each state can only make silver and gold a

tender for payment of debts. What we have done is developed a system to rob the people by use of paper money. Paper money is easy to steal. Inflation is nothing more than a hidden tax, and you can steal without the people realizing it. Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution: "Congress shall have the power to coin money, and regulate the value thereof, and of foreign coin, and fix the standard of weights and measures." What does Congress have the power to do? To coin money, and to fix the standard of weights and measures. Article 1, Section 10: "No state shall enter into any treaty, alliance, or confederation; grant letters of marque and reprisal; coin money; emit bills of credit; make any thing but gold and silver coin a tender in payment of debts." That's our Constitution. Why then do we not have gold and silver? Because of fraudulent, oppressive government, which is nothing more than a means of stealing.

I often do this when paying for gasoline, and enjoy seeing people's faces. I hand the lady a $20 bill. She marks it with a pen to see whether it is genuine, and I say, "All of it is counterfeit. No reason to mark it." "I don't care if the government does print it. It's not money." It is not really a dollar; it is a twenty-dollar Federal Reserve note.

She gives me four ones. "You know, something is wrong." "What is it?" "You know, I now have four times as much money as I had before I paid for my gas." If paper is money, I now have four pieces instead of one—four times what I had before. "Oh, but the one you gave me had a 20 on it." I answer, "Oh, it's the ink pen that makes it valuable, not the paper. Is that it?"

You know it is not money. The Constitution demands gold and silver. Most civil governments, including ours, have become what Hosea 12:7 describes: "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress."

We have been stripped of silver and gold, homes and property, and are rapidly being stripped of our remaining freedom.

Micah 6:10–12 asks, "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?" God condemns false measures. "For the rich

men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth."

"Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine."

The Righteous Ruler

Why is God's judgment falling? Because of wicked, vile, humanistic laws. Micah 6:16 declares, "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people." Wicked, ungodly laws are designed for theft. It is the sin for which God will visit and destroy nations. God told Jerusalem that she shall be plowed as a field and mark her down. The same judgment will be to all those who despise God and His laws.

Good News: Judgment of the Wicked and Christ's Righteous Rule

Let me make another application. I have good news, and I have even better news. There is no bad news today. The first good news is that the wicked shall be destroyed. God will overthrow them. Listen to what God said in Job 24:24: "They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn." God said, I'll take care of them. Just like the psalmist said in Psalm 37:10, "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." God will not at all acquit the wicked. He will deal with them, judge them, and destroy them. So that's good news.

But there's even better news. We shall have a righteous, holy, godly, pure, and gracious sovereign ruler shortly. One who will rectify all wrongs, correct all errors, make everything right, and rule

with a scepter of holiness. The Bible says in Hebrews 10:37, "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

Micah 5:2–4 describes the ruler: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."

Micah 4:1 begins, "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains."

That is our Lord's kingdom. "And it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks. Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it."

Jesus Christ, the sovereign ruler, will return, complete His kingdom, eradicate everything that offends, and establish His law, righteousness, and people. We shall sit, every man under his own vine and fig tree, glorying in and worshipping the one true and righteous ruler, Jesus Christ alone.

Closing Prayer

Father, we bow to Thee this day and we're so thankful that the book of Micah not only exposes wicked rulers, it reveals the one righteous ruler. And we pray with the Apostle John, even so, come Lord Jesus.

We pray as Thou hast taught us to pray, our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And Lord, we pray that You would give us grace and mercy to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Help us, Lord, to live for Thee and to be holy and godly and bring our lives in conformity to Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 8

So, You Say You Want Justice?

Introduction and Scripture Reading

“Now the men of Kirjath-Jearim came and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-Jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray for you unto the LORD. And they gathered together to Mizpah, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah.”

"And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abiah: and they were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

I want to talk briefly today about judges, and I want you to understand that judges did indeed play a unique role in the Bible. They were men that were specifically ordained of God and designated by God so that they may bring forth true justice. Now, in order to understand the true role and worth of judges, one must understand the true meaning of justice. The Hebrew word for justice is the word tzedakah.

The Biblical Meaning of Justice

It is translated in our Bibles 128 times as righteousness, nine times as right, and three times as righteous acts. The other times it is simply translated as justice. Justice refers to righteousness in government, in law, and in personal and ethical situations.

If something is righteous, it is just; if something is just, it is righteous. Justice and righteousness are one and the same thing. Justice is simply doing what is right, and doing what is right is doing that which is just.

When you talk about justice, you have to ask, "Justice—by whose standard?" Or, "Justice by what standard?" You could equally ask, "Righteousness by whose standard?" Obviously, there must be a standard, and someone must have the authority to institute that standard.

One author pointed out rightly that if some men are to have authority over others, the source of authority must come from somewhere. It must come from somewhere where the seat of authority over all men lies. It must transcend mankind if it is not to

be simply some men, even a majority, imposing their will upon others.

The only reasonable source of that kind of authority is God Himself, and the only reasonable definition of how that authority is defined is by God's own revelation in Scripture. The only reasonable, logical source of authority is God, and the only reasonable and logical standard is God's revelation in Scripture.

So we ask then, who sets the standard? Who defines justice? Who defines righteousness? The answer is God, the sovereign God of heaven and earth.

Abraham recognized this principle in Genesis 18:25 when he was interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah: “That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee.” Then he said, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Certainly God is going to do right. Abraham could have said equally, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justice?”

God as the Source of Authority and Law

Scripture points out in James 4:12, “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.” In Isaiah 33:22, we read, “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.” Who is the judge? Who is the lawgiver? Who is the king? The answer is God. God is the sovereign. He is the lawgiver, and He is the Judge of judges. When God instituted the office of judge, He did so that men would be judged by His law and that true justice would issue forth from the judges, from the men who held that office. God is in charge. His word is final. God has revealed Himself for us in the Bible.

As Christians, we must affirm that our all-wise God has revealed Himself in His completed revelation of Himself in the 66 books of the Old and New Testament. Everything in the Bible is adequate in content and in clarity that we may know what salvation is, what sanctification is, and everything that we need to live holy and godly lives.

One of the cries of the Reformation was Sola Scriptura. Sola Scriptura literally means the Scriptures alone. The phrase refers to the fact that the Bible is the comprehensive and completed revelation of the will of God for us, and it is by that book that we are thoroughly equipped for every good work. The Bible is complete, perfect, all-embracing, and all-sufficient. It is given to us by God.

It does not need amendment, correction, or supplementation. It is complete in and of itself. The Westminster Confession of Faith says concerning sola scriptura, “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations or traditions of men.” Everything that we need is expressly set down in Scripture or may be deduced from the principles of Scripture.

What then was the purpose for judges in the Bible? The answer is so that men may be judged by God's authoritative and perfect standard, that is, His law. It is from His law, from His word, that justice and righteousness issue forth.

The Purpose and Prerequisites of Judges

Now, let me ask that you hold 1 Samuel please, but I want you to look in your Bibles to two passages. The first one is Deuteronomy chapter 16, and look if you would please at verse 18. Deuteronomy 16:18. And then we're going to 2 Chronicles chapter 19. Deuteronomy chapter 16 and look in verse 18. Look what God says. Deuteronomy 16:18, "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment." God says you're to institute judges and officers, why? That they may judge according to just judgment. Then if you'll look in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 19, let's begin reading there with verse 5. 2 Chronicles 19:5. Notice what the Bible says. 2 Chronicles 19:5, "And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city." Now look, "And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.

Notice what judges are to do. They are to represent God. They are to judge according to God's law, and they are not to judge for man, they are to judge for God.

Now, the interesting thing is, the Hebrew word for judge is the word shafat, which is translated as judge 119 times in our Bible. The Hebrew word judge or shafat literally means to rule, to govern, to plead, to execute judgment. And the same exact Hebrew word is used in Ezra 7:25. And I want you to look at that passage please. Turn to the book of Ezra. Ezra and Nehemiah. Notice if you would please, Ezra chapter 7 and verse 25, right after 2 Chronicles, you have Ezra, and then Nehemiah. Notice Ezra 7:25. I want you to note a prerequisite for judgeship. Here it is. Ezra 7:25, "And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river." Now look at the prerequisite. "...all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not." Now he says the prerequisite is they must know the law of God.

If you institute any judge, Ezra, that doesn't know the law of God, you must teach him the law of God before he can be the judge. Why? Because God wanted true judgment to issue forth. How in the world can one execute true justice or true righteousness if he does not know the law of God? What was the responsibility of judges? Deuteronomy 25:1 tells us what God requires of them: "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked." Wow, isn't that simple? God said, I have instituted judges so that they may justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.

Samuel's Judgeship and Israel's Idolatry

Well, let me ask you a question. Who defines what righteousness is? And who defines what wickedness is? Who determines that? And the answer comes back, of course, it is God Himself.

Let me tell you why I read 1 Samuel chapter 7 to begin with. The reason I read it beginning with verse 1 is because in this chapter Samuel is judging Israel. If you read the preceding chapters, you would find out that Israel has had a war with the Philistines and has

been defeated. The Ark of God was taken. Finally, God smote the Philistines. They sent the Ark back, and now it is at Kirjath-Jearim. You remember, of course, what happened to the lords of the Philistines. God smote them with emerods, the Bible says, and they were very anxious to get the ark back. So it comes back here, and it rests in Kirjath-Jearim for 20 years. During that time, Israel falls into idolatry.

Israel began worshiping Baalim and Ashtaroth. Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

Samuel was about to judge Israel. How would he judge them? He would judge them by their disobedience to or obedience to the law of God—whether their lives were in contrast to the law of God or in conformity to it. Their lives were obviously not in conformity to God's law because they were following Ashtaroth and all these other gods. If they wanted to return to God, they had to repent of their sins and turn from those false gods. When they met at Mizpah, they gathered themselves together.

The Philistines said, "Now's a good time to wipe them out." Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray for you unto the LORD." They gathered at Mizpah, drew water, poured it out before the LORD, fasted, and said, "We have sinned against the LORD." Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah. When the Philistines heard that Israel had gathered there, their lords went up against Israel. The Israelites were afraid and cried unto the LORD.

What did God do? He heard the voice of Samuel and the voice of the people after they repented and turned from their sins. Samuel offered the sacrifice and interceded, and God gave a miraculous deliverance from their enemies. The Bible says, "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places."

Samuel returned to Ramah, for there was his house; and there he judged Israel, and there he built an altar unto the LORD. God had

graciously delivered the children of Israel from the Philistines. He destroyed them by a mighty and miraculous act. Samuel continued to judge Israel.

Israel's Demand for a King

When Samuel was old, he made his two sons judges over Israel. We read about this in 1 Samuel chapter 8. Unlike Samuel, these two boys were unethical. They were greedy for filthy lucre. They took bribes. They perverted judgment.

The firstborn was Joel, and the name of the second was Abiah; they were judges in Beersheba. His sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. Notice what the people of Israel did in light of that. All the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel unto Ramah, saying, "Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways."

The people did not come to Samuel and say, "Samuel, your sons are wicked. Rectify the situation. Give us better judges or give us judges in their place." They did not say, "Samuel, we do not know what to do, but you are the prophet of God. You are the one that is God-ordained to be the judge. Now, Samuel, this is your problem. You cry and intercede to God and find out what God would have you to do."

No, they did not do any of those things. They said, "Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." The thing displeased Samuel, when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. They wanted a king that they might be like other nations. The children of Israel were sinful and wicked and in rebellion to God when they asked for a king.

Why? Because God was their king. In 1 Samuel 12:12, Samuel points this out: “And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king.” God was the king of Israel. Yet the children of Israel said, “We want a king to rule over us like other nations. We want a man to be our king.”

First Samuel 8:7–8 spells it out plainly: “And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.” God said, “Samuel, they haven't rejected you, they rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”

We read in 1 Samuel 12:12 that God was their king. Then, in verse 19, the people confess that asking for a king was sin and rebellion: “And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.” They acknowledged that they had sinned in asking for a king.

Why did Israel want a king? What were their motivations? First Samuel 8:5 says, “And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways.”

The Consequences of Rejecting God's Rule

“Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” They wanted a king, number one, to judge them; number two, to fight their battles; and number three, that they might be like other nations. I suppose you could call this latter national peer pressure. They wanted to be like all the other people in the countries surrounding them.

Hold 1 Samuel 8, but turn back to Deuteronomy chapter 4. Israel was not to be like all of the other nations; Israel was to be exceedingly different. That is why they did not have a king like all the other nations, because God was their King. Deuteronomy 4:4 says, “But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day.”

“Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is

a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them?" He was their King. "...as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

Israel was to be totally and completely different, and yet they said, "We don't want to be different. We want to be like all of the other nations."

Consider the implications of their desire to have a king. They said, "Make us a king that he may judge us." How had Israel previously been judged? Israel had previously been judged by judges that God raised up—judges who would defend and deliver Israel and execute judgment according to His law. How long did those judges rule over Israel? The Bible says they ruled for 300 years. In Judges 11:26, the Bible tells us that they ruled 300 years.

Israel no more wanted the judges that God had raised up and given. They wanted a king, so that they might be like other nations; the king would fight their battles and judge them. You know what the Bible says in Hosea 13:11? God says, "I gave them a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath."

Sometimes God gives us what we want, and when we get it, we find out we really did not want it to begin with. Psalm 78 gives us an illustration. God sovereignly and miraculously provided manna for the children of Israel. That manna was a perfect food, but they got tired of eating it and decided they wanted meat, particularly quail. Psalm 78:23 says, "Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full."

"He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; They were not estranged from their lust. But while their 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."

They were sick and tired of everything God was providing and wanted meat. God gave it to them, and while it was in their mouths, God killed them and judged them. I think I would have tended to want more manna. I would say, "You know, I like that bowl of cornflakes, Lord; just give me some more of that." Israel wanted a king, and God said, "Fine, I will give you a king."

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 8:9-18 (KJV)

But if you go back to 1 Samuel chapter 8, He tells Samuel to warn the children of Israel and to show them the manner of the king that they will have. As I read this, I want to emphasize one word: take.

1 Samuel chapter 8, verse 9: “Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.”

What is their king going to do? He is going to take, take, take, take. The word take occurs six times in this brief passage. If it

were counted with every item, it would be far more than six times that he is going to take.

Let me sum up what God is telling us will happen when men reject Him. According to verse 11, there will be unbiblical military conscriptions—a draft. You will simply be taken. Verses 12 through 16 describe compulsory labor battalions for state service. You will end up working for the government whether you like it or not. In verse 14, the state will expropriate your property and livestock through eminent domain: "We want it. We'll take it." Whether you like it or not, the state will consider giving you what it calls a fair price, not necessarily what the property is worth, but you will lose your property. Government will demand tithes and taxes in every area, according to verse 15. Why? It is playing God. It wants to be tithed to as God. Fifthly, there will be a loss of liberty in a multitude of areas, according to verse 17.

I want you to notice verse 17. He says, "He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants." There is an interesting word there for servants. It is the Hebrew word ebed. Guess what ebed literally means: servant, bondman, slave. "You shall be his slave."

A few words can sum up 1 Samuel chapter 8: tyranny, totalitarianism, and despotism.

Transition from God's Law to Man's Law

Why would a king do such a thing? What is so devastating about human government? Let me ask the question another way: How could such a thing happen in a Christian nation? Remember that Israel was God's covenant people. They were to be a special nation and a people dedicated to Him. How could such a thing happen in a covenant nation? How could such a thing happen in a Christian nation?

The only way to understand 1 Samuel chapter 8 is to view it as a transition from one law structure to another—from God as king to man as king. You must also remember that a king rules by his law. Therefore, it is not simply a transition from God as king to man as king; it is a transition from God's law system to an alien, or

humanistic, law system. When you reject God, you reject His law. When you receive man, you receive his law.

Under God's law, you have liberty and freedom, limited civil government, private property, the right of self-defense, and the right of self-government. Under man's law, man endeavors to rule over, regulate, and dictate every area of life. Why? If the king is God, if the president is God, if the state is God, or believes it is God, it believes it must be sovereign over every aspect of life. Therefore, it believes it has the right to tell you what to do from the womb to the tomb or from the

Man's government extends from the cradle to the grave. It is just that simple. Man's government always becomes an idolatrous government and an alien law system. In Hosea 7:7, speaking of the kings of Israel, God said, "They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me." Why should they call upon God? They think they are God. That is what has happened.

In 1 Samuel chapter 8, we see the transition from God as king to man as king, and from God's law system to man's law system. That is why Psalm 2:2-3 says, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." We do not want God's law; we want our law.

Civil rulers may give lip service to Christ, the Bible, and Christianity, even today, but none will implement or apply the law of God. Like King Saul, they talk a big talk, but they do not walk the walk. God said of Saul in 1 Samuel 15:11, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments." Saul turned back from God because he did not keep God's commandments or obey God.

America's Apostasy and Injustice

I never cease to be amazed at how gullible—and I will go ahead and use another word—how stupid professing Christians can really be when it comes to politics. All a man has to do is say, “I’m a born again Christian,” and people go crazy. They never examine his life,

his legislative acts, or what he does; they listen only to what he says. Obama claims to be a Christian.

I read an article in which he said that it is absolutely impossible and ridiculous to think about applying biblical law in America today because we are such a diverse society. This is what I am saying: it does not matter what people say. We never examine their voting records or what they do. We simply listen to what they say.

You know what the Bible says in Isaiah 8:20? "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." If a man does not speak according to God's law and God's Word, he has no light. If you took all our congressmen, our president, and our judges who claim to be Christian, and examined their voting records, rulings, and executive orders, how many would square with biblical law? Zilch. None. Now, let me point out that God gave us judges.

So they might execute justice according to his law. Let me show you what happened in Israel. I'm going to show you it also happened in America.

Look in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 17, verses 7 and 8. This is what happened in Israel, and this is what has happened in America. "For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods." Now, wait a minute. Underline that; mark it down: they feared other gods.

How do we know they feared other gods? How do we know they turned to idolatry? Watch verse 8: "And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made." How do we know they turned to other gods? Because they turned to alien law systems. They were walking according to the laws, the statutes of the heathen and the statutes of the kings of Israel, which they made, which were contrary to God's law. Remember, I told you that when a man turns from God, he also turns from God's law, because a king rules by his law.

Now, unhappily, the same thing happened in Judah. Look, if you would, at 2 Kings 17:19. Here it is: “Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.”

Here is what Israel did: Israel rejected God’s law, took the laws of the heathen, and made them its law. So Judah, in her stupidity and rebellion, rejected God’s commandments and God’s law and adopted the laws of Israel. The laws of Israel were totally heathenistic. What was Israel doing? Following an alien law system. What was Judah doing? Following an alien law system.

Let me spell it out for you. Those who refuse to be ruled by God’s law will inevitably be ruled by tyrants. There is really no other alternative. You are either ruled by God or by man. It is fascinating that people criticize God’s laws, which are so limited and so few, and then turn around and embrace man’s laws, which are so endless and countless.

All of the bureaucracies and all the regulations make it unbelievable. There is not an American living today—I do not care if he has been in politics all his life—who knows all the laws of this land. There is not an American living today who has obeyed all the laws of this land. When you reject God and His law, you condemn yourself to be ruled by man and by tyrant.

Think about this: Did Israel all of a sudden say, “Well, I'm going to turn my back against God and I'm going to follow this idol over here”? Is that what happened? No. What they did was a synthesis. They began by saying, “You know, I like what that nation does over there, and I like what they said. We ought to make that part of our law. We'll begin incorporating it in with God's law here.” And you keep incorporating and keep incorporating until, all of a sudden, God's law is pushed out. All you have now is simply the law of man. They may have taken the attitude, “We'll keep the law of God, but we'll just add to it.”

The truth of the matter is this: The more you add to it, the less it is the law of God. It becomes the law of something else.

Now, look in 2 Kings 17. This is so clear. I don't know how we miss it. Look at 2 Kings 17, beginning there, verse 33. In fact, let's read verse 32. 2 Kings 17:32:

"So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places." That is idolatry. "They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence."

Here is what they said: "We're God's people. But we're worshipping Baal over here and Ashtaroth over there. Still, we're God's people. We're a Christian, covenant nation. We're God's people, but I don't see anything wrong with abortion, do you? I don't see anything wrong with sodomy. I don't see anything wrong with socialism. But now we're God's people."

They said they feared the LORD, but they were worshipping other gods. Verse 34 gives the climax and fulfillment: "Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel." They said they feared the LORD, but God said they did not fear Him. The evidence was that they did not obey His commandments. Israel had completely and totally apostatized from the Lord and His word.

There was no judgment, justice, truth, or equity in the land. Isaiah 59:14 says, "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." In Isaiah 59:4, God declares, "None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth:

"They trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity." What did Israel do? What did Judah do? They apostatized. They forsook God and His law. And we have done exactly the same thing. Some try to say that America was never a Christian nation. That is not true. The truth is that the beginning of this country was founded upon the word of God, specifically the law of God.

Historical Christian Foundations of America

The Connecticut towns of Hartford, Wethersfield, and Windsor adopted this Constitution on January the 14th, 1639. The Articles of Constitution of Connecticut stated: "...that the Scriptures hold forth a perfect rule for the direction and government of all men in all duties which they are to perform to God and men, as well in families and commonwealths"—that is, civil governments—"as in matters of the church."

Article 2 stated: "...that as in matters which concern the gathering and ordering of a church, so likewise in all public offices which concern civil order, as the choice of magistrates and officers, making and repealing laws, dividing allotments of inheritance, and all things of like nature, they would all be governed by those rules which the Scriptures held forth to them." They further declared that, "considering with ourselves the holy will of God and our own necessity that we should not live without wholesome laws and civil government among us," they did, "in the name of Christ and in the sight of God," combine themselves together to erect and

The commonwealths said they would begin their government based upon the Word and the will of God. The New Haven Colony Charter of April 3, 1644, stated it bluntly: "...the judicial laws of God as they were delivered by Moses are to be a rule to all the courts in this jurisdiction." The judges were to rule according to the Bible.

Here is the charter of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. Roger Williams left Massachusetts because he wanted religious freedom, and he founded Providence Plantation. The first Baptist church was established there in 1639. The Royal Charter and Patent declared:

"We submit our persons, lives, and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and to all those perfect and most holy, absolute laws that he has given us in his holy word... that they, pursuing with peaceable and loyal minds, sober, serious, and religious intentions of godly edifying themselves and one another, in the holy Christian faith and worship, together with the gaining over and conversion of the poor ignorant Indian natives, a

most flourishing civil state may stand, and best be maintained, grounded upon gospel principles."

It could not be clearer. On February 29, 1892, in Church of the Holy Trinity v. the United States, Justice Josiah Brewer rendered the United States Supreme Court's decision.

He said this, "Our laws and our institutions must necessarily be based upon and embody the teachings of the Redeemer of mankind. It is impossible that it should be otherwise. And in this sense, and to this extent, our civilization and our institutions are emphatically Christian." Wow.

Call to Repentance and Action

Now I could multiply illustrations. I could go back and quote the charters and the constitutions of all of the original states, all of them required their civil rulers to be Christians and profess a belief in the inspiration of the Bible and a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. But let's ask, what has happened in our country? What has happened in America? Why are men and women imprisoned for non-crimes?

Why do murderers walk free or get to live out their natural lives at taxpayer expense? Why do rapists and pedophiles and sexual deviants and perverts have the protection of the law? And if you touch one of them or insult one of them, you're the criminal. And you're thrown in prison. How is it that when one of those perverts is arrested, usually shortly he's released and able to continue his perversion and his ungodliness? Why is it that if you stand for truth and righteousness in this country and you're sent to prison, you spend a much longer time in prison for standing for truth and righteousness than if you'd robbed a bank? Why? What in the world has happened in this country?

It looks like we have gone stark raving mad. There is no common sense, justice, or righteousness. What in the world is wrong? Here is what is wrong: We have apostatized. We have left God and His law; we have forsaken God, truth, and righteousness. If we are genuinely tired and sick of error, falsehood, injustice, and humanism, we need to repent, turn to the Lord, seek Him, and ask Him to bring our lives into conformity with His Word. We must ask several questions.

Who is in charge? Who gets to define right and wrong, justice and injustice, righteousness and unrighteousness? Is it God or is it man? Whose law system will we follow? So you say you want justice? You cannot have justice without God and His laws.

What can we do? It should be obvious that we cannot control Congress, the courts, or the Oval Office. We cannot even vote and have our vote counted in this country. It may be counted, but not necessarily for the one we voted for.

First, we must learn to pray those imprecatory prayers in the Bible. We must learn to pray like David: "Lord, break their teeth, break their arm, cast them out." We must pray against the wicked, their wicked schemes, and their wicked plans. We must also learn to pray as David did in Psalm 119:126: "It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law." Dear Lord God, it is time for You to do something; they have made void Your law.

The word void is the Hebrew word parar, which means to make void, to make ineffectual, to frustrate, to violate, or to dissolve. What has man's law done in this country? It has frustrated and dissolved the law of God. Consequently, you cannot have righteousness or justice. We need to be concerned more about God's honor and God's glory. God is far more interested in justice than you and I are, and He is far more interested in righteousness than we are.

Pray with David, "It is time for thee, O LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law." God overthrew them. On the other hand, you can pray, "And establish thy kingdom and establish thy righteousness." Did He not teach us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? Establish Thy people, establish Thy righteousness, establish Thy Son.

Secondly, we must understand that how we act is significant. It does mean something whether we obey or disobey God. The Bible says in Proverbs 28:4, "They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them." Now God says, if you forsake His law, you are praising the wicked. If you keep the law, you are contending with them. The word contend in the Hebrew is garah, which literally means to strive with, to fight against, to wage war.

Did you realize that our personal obedience is actually waging a war against the disobedient and the rebellious?

We are fighting against them by being personally obedient. You say, "Well, my personal obedience doesn't mean too much." Well, I tell you what, it would have meant something if you had been in Sodom and Gomorrah just looking for ten righteous people, wouldn't it? If God would have spared Sodom and Gomorrah if He found ten righteous, there are more than ten in this room. Yes, it does matter how we act. It does matter how we live. It does matter whether or not we are obedient or disobedient.

So we need to learn to pray the imprecatory prayers. We need to learn to be holy and godly ourselves. We need to keep God's law if nobody else does.

Thirdly, we must hold on to the reality that God is merciful toward His people and that if we repent, He will bless us again. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them." We do not have a pure economic system. Almost sounds like America, doesn't it?

Now watch: he is talking about a nation, a people who have totally apostatized, rejected him, and rejected his law. Verse 24: "Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness."

God says, look, if you repent, I will judge the wicked and take care of the problem. I will give you judges and counselors as at the

beginning, and restore my law, because I will be your king. We need to learn to pray those imprecatory prayers, to be obedient, and to trust in God's abundant mercy. If we repent, seek him, and turn from our wicked ways, he will hear from heaven, forgive our sins, and heal our land.

If you say you want justice, you must apply God's law to every area of your life and every area over which you have control.

Let us pray. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that you would speak to us, help us, and teach us; build us up in the most holy faith, and make us the people we should be by your grace. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

It's Crying Time Again

Mark chapter 10, beginning there with verse 46: “And they came to Jericho, and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace. But he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth for thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.”

Introduction: The Call to Cry Out

I want to bring a message today which I have entitled, “It’s Crying Time Again.” I preached on this passage numerous years ago, dealing with the subject of salvation. However, as I was reading

through the book of Mark, I read about Bartimaeus again, and another thought entered my mind.

Some of you are probably familiar with an old country song by that same title. I do not know the song or its author, but I believe it was about some man's girlfriend or wife leaving him; thus, it was crying time again because she had left him. The message has nothing to do with anyone's love life, but it certainly has a lot to do with life.

There is a vast contrast between that song, "It's Crying Time Again," and the Stoic position, where Stoicism teaches that real men do not cry. In fact, we get a lot of our modern-day expressions from the Greek philosophy of Stoicism. For instance, when we tell someone, "Keep a stiff upper lip," or "Do not be overcome by your emotions," or say, "Real men do not cry," that is simply the philosophy of Stoicism.

Certainly, the Bible disagrees with Stoicism. In fact, the shortest verse in the Bible is John 11, verse 35: "Jesus wept." Our Lord wept over Lazarus. He not only wept over Lazarus; He wept over Jerusalem. I can assure you that Jesus Christ was a far better man than all of us put together. He endured far more than you and I could ever think of enduring, and yet the Bible says that Jesus wept.

Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet. Of course, you know how he wept as he saw Jerusalem destroyed. In 2 Kings chapter 8 and verse 11, the Bible tells us that Elisha set his countenance steadfastly until he was ashamed, and then the man of God wept. He knew what Hazael, the king of Syria, was going to do to the women and children of Israel. You will find all through the Bible that many prophets, many real men, wept.

Have you ever asked yourself, What does it really take to make someone cry, or at least cry out? If you think for a moment, I am sure you can outline a number of reasons that would cause people to cry or cry out: pain, torment, desperation, realization, financial ruin, and a host of other reasons. In fact, you find in the Bible that men cried and cried out over their sins, their families, and the loss of their fortunes. They cried and wept over nations, rulers, their burdens, and many things.

But when you read the Bible and compare or contrast what real men did in those days, have you noticed that in our modern day hardly anyone is disturbed over the condition of our country, our sins as a nation, our immorality, our lack of faith, our wickedness, and the corruption that prevails not only in this country but in government in general? Where in the world is the human cry against Marxism, Communism, and socialism? Where are voices being lifted against our unconstitutional acts and laws passed by Congress? What about the absurd, insane, and absolutely stupid rulings issued by our judicial system?

Have you ever asked what it is going to take to make us cry or cry out to the Lord? It seems as if we have gone along for so long that absolutely nothing affects us anymore. What did it take to make Bartimaeus cry out? What did it take to make him cry and beg the Lord for help?

A Realization of Desperation

I. A Realization of Desperation

First of all, notice that there was a realization of desperation. When you study Bartimaeus, you find that there was indeed such a realization. Mark 10:46 says, "And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging." When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, saying, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon me."

What made Bartimaeus cry out for help? Here is the answer: He was desperate. No one was able to help him. He was blind and a beggar. For all practical purposes in his day, he was useless. It may have been that even his family could not help him.

Matthew Henry gives an interesting comment on verse 46. He states that Bartimaeus, the blind beggar who is much talked about here, was the son of Timaeus, which signifies, as Matthew Henry and some other scholars think, that not only was Bartimaeus blind, but Timaeus, his father, was blind. That would make Bartimaeus the son, the blind son, of a blind father. The word Bartimaeus means

literally the son of Timaeus, which could refer to the son of a blind man or certainly the son of an unclean man.

You see, Bartimaeus was not only helpless, but basically hopeless. He could not help himself, and no one in his family could help him either. In fact, no one in the circle of his friends could help him. If he was the blind son of a blind father, he was indeed in a desperate case. If Bartimaeus was to receive help, it had to come from someone outside his circle. His family could not help him; his friends could not help him. He was desperate.

Our Lord underscores this desperate condition in Matthew 9:12. Speaking to the Pharisees, He said, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” This passage is so applicable. He also said, “But go ye and learn what that meaneth.” They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

No one goes to a physician until he realizes he cannot help himself. His home remedies do not work, and his neighbor's home remedies do not work. No one visits a doctor merely to say, “Doc, I understand you need a payment on your new Mercedes, and I just want to come by and give you some money.” Nobody does that. Our Lord says, “They that be whole need not a physician.” In other words, you have to be desperate to go to the doctor. You cannot heal yourself; nothing you do helps. You are desperate.

Have you ever thought about Peter? In Matthew chapter 14, Jesus was walking on the water, and Peter said, “Lord, if it be thee, bid me come unto thee.” When Peter stepped out of that boat and began to walk on the water, did he immediately cry out to Jesus Christ for help? No. Walking on the water was a wonderful experience while it lasted. He did not need any help. But when he took his eyes off the Lord, saw the wind boisterous and the waves, and began to sink, what did he do? He cried, “Lord, save me.”

All of a sudden, he got desperate. And when he got desperate, he cried out. Listen to me carefully: desperate people not only need help, but desperate people won't help. Have you ever tried to help someone who was not desperate? I have. They will laugh at you, ridicule you, and mock you. They will say, “Not me.”

I remember speaking to a young man and observing how he spoke to and treated his wife. Before I left, I said, “Son, I want to tell you something. The way you talk to your wife and treat your wife, one of these days she is going to get fed up and leave you.” He said, “Not me. She won't leave me.” About six months later, I got a phone call. The young man was crying: “Preacher, my wife left me. What can I do?” He did not want to listen when he could have listened, but after she left, he was desperate and willing to listen. Many people are like the wicked in Psalm 10:6: “The wicked saith in his heart, I shall not be moved, for I shall never be in adversity.”

Somehow we think that nothing will ever happen to us. Many Americans, and unhappily many professing Christians, think that we in this country shall never be in a state of desperation. Even with our economic crisis looming over our heads, conservative and liberal economists alike are saying that what we are going through in the next few years will be worse than the Great Depression era. One reason it will be worse is that we do not have the character people used to have back then.

We have been turned into a nation of parasites, where everyone wants to live off someone else and have everything handed to them on a silver platter. No one wants to work, be responsible, or be accountable. We think that somehow we will never be in a state of desperation. Our national sins do not concern us. We have come to think that sodomy, sexual perversions, socialism, Marxism, welfareism, big-government tyranny, and the loss of our rights are somehow normal. We also think that fires, droughts, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes are merely freaks of nature. They are not really the hand of a righteous God judging us.

Does God really judge nations? Remember this: nations are not like individuals. Nations do not have souls, in that sense of the word. In other words, nations must be judged in time and history. Let me show you the truth of the Bible. Turn in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 5. There are three passages we need to examine to answer the question, Does God judge nations? Begin with verse 7. I will show you what God says about a nation that had fallen into idolatry and adultery.

Our politicians tell us that our private lives are our own and that what we do is no concern of the people of this country. That is a bunch of hogwash. Whenever individual citizens take the same attitude, that is still a bunch of hogwash. Watch this. Jeremiah chapter 5, beginning with verse 7. Look what God says to His people: "How shall I pardon thee for this?"

"Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods"; that is idolatry. "When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery," physical and spiritual, "and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning, and everyone neighed after his neighbor's wife." Watch what God says: "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Idolatry and adultery—and God asks, "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" I'm not judge a nation like this.

Look and see what God says about corruption, fraud, and wicked civil rulers: "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have been withholding good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men. They lay wait, as he that setteth snares, they set a trap, they catch men."

"As a cage is full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit. Therefore they become great and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine, yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked. They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper, and the right of the needy do they not judge? Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

You are talking about corruption, fraud, wicked civil rulers, and look what God says: "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Turn to Jeremiah chapter 9 and notice what God says about treachery, deceit, injustice, fraud, lying, and planned and premeditated destruction. Beginning with verse 2, Jeremiah says, "O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them." Why did Jeremiah want to get away? "For they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous

men, and they bend their tongues like their bow for lies, and they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth."

"For they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord. Take ye heed every one of his neighbor, and trust ye not in any brother. For every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slanders." In other words, you cannot trust any of them. They are all wicked. "They will deceive everyone his neighbor, and will not speak the truth. They have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity."

"Their habitation is in the midst of deceit. Through deceit they refuse to know Me, saith the Lord. Therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them, for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? Their tongue is as an arrow shot out, it speaketh deceit. One speaketh peacefully to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he layeth wait. Shall I not visit them for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Take note that everything for which God destroyed the nation Israel, and everything for which He destroyed Judah and Jerusalem, is prevalent, prominent, and abundant in our country. Here is my question: Do you think God will judge other nations and let us slip by? We could ask it another way: Is God just? If God is just, God is going to judge the wicked.

Do you realize the most horrible thing is to be in a state of desperation and not realize how desperate you are? I have known people who thought they were perfectly healthy and were dead in two weeks from cancer. I've known people who thought that nothing would ever happen to them and they'd be dead in several days in an automobile wreck.

You know what this nation is like. We are like a family in a car that has left the road and we're going over the cliff. We check the engine, and it's still running. The lights still work. The transmission is still in drive. The radio still plays. Besides that, we think we're making excellent time. We don't even see the canyon floor below into which we're plunging. We're in a desperate state, and we don't even

realize it. You will never be saved, and you will never be delivered until you realize the desperate case that you're in.

You know what made Bartimaeus cry out? He realized he was desperate. He couldn't be helped; he couldn't help himself. His family couldn't help him, and his friends couldn't help him. If Christ did not help him, he would not be helped. So when he heard that Christ was coming along, he began to cry out, “Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.”

II. A Renewal of Determination

Secondly, what made Bartimaeus cry out even more was not only a recognition of his desperation, but also a renewal of determination. In verses 47 and 48, when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, “he began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.” Then, “many charged him that he should hold his peace. But he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.”

When he hears Jesus Christ is walking by, he cries, “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Everyone tells him to be quiet: He doesn't want to hear you; he doesn't want to have time for you. No one can help you. Shut up. But the more they tried to silence him, the louder he cried, “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.”

A Renewal of Determination

We not only need in this country a recognition of our desperation, but, secondly, a renewal of determination. Do you realize there are many who have warned us, who have cried for years, telling us where we are headed? Some have cried for so long and so loudly that they do not even want to cry anymore. Their attitude is, “What is the use of crying? No one is listening.”

Thankfully, that was not the attitude of Noah, Daniel, Moses, and the other prophets. We cry, and we cry out, because we are commanded to cry out. We do not give out, give in, or give up. We do not quit or despair. Even if no one is listening, we still keep crying. If

no one hears, we still keep crying. Why? We have been commanded to cry.

Do I want people converted? Of course I want people converted. Do I want people to obey the Bible? Yes. Do I want people to honor Jesus Christ and live holy lives? The answer is yes. However, I do not cry out merely to get people to trust Christ and live holy lives. I cry out because God has commanded me to cry out. That is a vision in and of itself.

Look in your Bibles to Isaiah 58:1. Here God commands, and He says, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." Notice what He said: "Cry aloud, spare not. Lift up thy voice like a trumpet." That is loud. God says, "I have commanded you to cry."

There is a passage in Isaiah 40 that is quoted in the New Testament a couple of times, primarily concerning John the Baptist. In Isaiah 40:6, the voice said, "Cry." And he said, "What shall I cry?" Here is the message.

"All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." What does that mean? When he says, "Cry," and then says, "All flesh is grass," he means that you are mortal, temporary, and going to die. Pick the most beautiful flower in the field or in your flower garden, put it in a vase on your table, and see how long it lasts. It will turn brown, and the petals will fall off. It is grass; it is a flower. It fades and dies.

If you realize how desperate you are, you will be determined to keep crying until you are heard. Bartimaeus cried to the Lord. In Mark chapter 10, verse 48, the Bible says, "And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal." The word literally means that he cried out with a loud voice. He really wanted to be heard because he really wanted to be helped.

Others charged and commanded him to be quiet and hold his peace, yet he cried out the more, "a great deal." The more he was discouraged by others, the more he encouraged himself. How did he encourage himself? By keeping on with his crying. He cried, "Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me." Misery is the object of mercy. He wanted mercy because he was in a miserable, desperate state. He

could not help himself, and his family could not help him. When others said, “Just shut up and be quiet,” he cried out even more.

Now, let me ask you: How determined are we? The fact of the matter is that most of us are not really determined. Most of us are easily discouraged. We give in, give up, and quit. All it takes for the average Christian to give up is for someone to talk about him and for him to find out. Then he develops a poor-me attitude: “Well, if that’s the way they feel, I’ll just quit.”

All it takes for some is for the government to put a little pressure on them or a little persecution, and they cave in. Those folks in Hebrews 11 were not like that. All those Christians that you read about in Fox's Book of Martyrs were not like that. They were determined to do right and believe right even if it cost them their life. It is true that most Christians go around in a state of despair and desperation simply because of a lack of faith and obedience in their own life. The truth of the matter is that we know nothing of perseverance. We know nothing of determination. Here is a blind man who was determined to be heard. It is time that you and I renewed our determination.

What we need is a good dose of biblical backbone. We need to become reinvigorated with holy intestinal fortitude. For some of you South Georgia folks, that is just plain guts. That is what we need. We need some real holy guts just to stand our ground and say, “Here it is. I am not giving up another inch. I have drawn my line in the sand.” We have to learn determination and perseverance.

Let me give you two illustrations. First, Luke chapter 18. You are familiar with this story. It is about the widow woman who appealed to the unjust judge. Our Lord is teaching this parable that men ought always to pray and not to faint. There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. Notice that he feared not God, neither regarded man. Those two things go together. If you do not fear God, you will not regard man. That is why these tyrants can kill millions of their own people: they have no regard for man, no regard for life, and they do not fear God. If you have no fear of God, you will have no regard for man; you do not care what happens to man. The only reason there is what you and I would call humanitarian aid, and the only reason we know anything about

compassion, hospitality, gentleness, and civility, is because we fear God.

But here is a judge who feared not God, nor regarded man. Watch verse 3: “And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.” She had been wronged. He would not for a while, but afterward said within himself, “Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.”

Here is this widow woman. She comes to the judge and says, “Avenge me of mine adversary.” He refuses: “I’m not going to do it. I don’t care anything about you or what happened. Get out of here.” The next day she is back: “Avenge me of mine adversary.” He tells her to leave, but she returns again. Finally, the unjust judge says, “I don’t fear God and I don’t regard man, but I tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to give this widow woman what she wants just to get her off my back. I’m tired of seeing her and listening to her. I’ll do it just to get rid of her.”

Now watch the application that our Lord made Himself. Look at verse 6: “And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.” Did you hear Him? Now verse 7: “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.”

Here is what our Lord is saying: Do you think God is like that unjust judge? Is God uninterested in justice, righteousness, mercy, or compassion? No. The trouble is not with God; the trouble is with us. We are not crying day and night. God will avenge His own, and He will avenge them speedily. Here was a widow woman unafraid to appeal to an unjust, heathen judge, while we, as God’s people, cannot be determined to cry to the holy, righteous Judge of all the earth, knowing that He is our Father.

We cannot even determine to cry consistently. Why did this widow woman get what she wanted, even from an unjust judge? She was determined. Our Lord says, “Hear what that unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.” God is not like that unjust judge. He is willing to avenge His own.

The truth is that God is far more interested in righting wrongs than we are in having them righted. God is far more interested in giving justice than we are in crying for justice. God is far more interested in turning this world right than we are in having it turned right. The problem is not with God; the problem is with us. We do not cry. We are not determined, saying, "God, do what needs to be done."

We want to give up, give in, and quit. We want to say, "I have been crying for twenty years, and He has not done it yet." I have news for you: God does not work on your timetable, but He does work. Your responsibility is not to tell God when to do something. Your responsibility is to obey God, and God is going to do it in His time, I can assure you.

Consider another illustration in Luke chapter 11, beginning with verse 5. We not only need a recognition of our desperation; we need a renewal of our determination. A word used in this passage is importunity. It is a little different from determination, but it means the same thing: "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?"

Here is the story: a man has company come in on him, perhaps unexpectedly, and has nothing to feed his friends. So he goes to his good friend and says, "Look, I need some bread. I need to borrow some groceries. Lend me three loaves. I have nothing."

The man within answers, "Trouble me not. The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give to thee." Words do not bother him; he is in bed and can be called in the morning. But our Lord says, "Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." The man in bed might as well get up and give him the three loaves because he keeps on knocking. He is not going to give them because the man is his friend, but to get him out of his hair so he can go back to bed.

Our Lord makes His own application: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Whoever asks receives; whoever seeks finds; whoever knocks, it is opened. If a son asks bread of a father, will he give him a stone? If he asks a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? If he asks an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? Of course not.

In this passage, the words ask, seek, and knock are present active participles. That means he keeps on asking, keeps on knocking, and keeps on finding. He asks, seeks, and knocks—not one time, but constantly and continually until he gets what he wants. That is determination; that is importunity.

Here is a man in bed who will not get up and give to his friend merely because he is his friend. But if that friend keeps on knocking, he will give him what he needs. There has to be a determination. Determination is an attitude that will not be denied, deterred, or discouraged. It is an attitude that will ask, seek, and knock until it receives.

Bartimaeus was crying, and everybody said, "Hush up, shut up, don't bother the master. Be quiet." When they tried to discourage him, the more he cried out, the more he encouraged himself. Did his determination pay off? Look in verse 49: "And Jesus stood still." Isn't that an amazing statement? Here was one man crying for mercy, and it stopped the Son of God.

Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. They called the blind man, saying unto him, "Be of good comfort, he calleth for thee." I'll say it paid off. Christ stopped. Christ heard. Christ called for Bartimaeus.

After they told him to be of good comfort, and that Christ called him, he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus. Bartimaeus was getting to Christ as quickly as he could. He was getting rid of anything that might impede him, hinder him, or thwart him. That robe would slow him down, so he cast it off. He got rid of it because he wanted to get to the Son of God. He was determined that nothing would stop him.

III. A Recognition of Dependency

What do we need? We need recognition of our desperation. We need a renewal of determination. Then, in verses 51 and 52, there is also a recognition of dependency. Jesus answered and said to him, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” The blind man said unto him, “Lord, that I might receive my sight.” Jesus said unto him, “Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.” And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Here was a man crying. The Lord stopped, called him, and asked, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” Bartimaeus had learned an important truth: he was helpless and hopeless, but Jesus was the Son of God, had all power, and could do anything. Therefore, he learned dependence—solely, completely, totally, and absolutely upon the mercy and grace of the Son of God. “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.” If the Lord did not help him, he could not be helped; if the Lord did not have mercy, he would receive no mercy; and if the Lord did not give grace, he would receive no grace. He was totally and absolutely dependent upon Him.

We need to come to that position in this country, not just as individuals, but as a nation. As much as I might admire, respect, and love the Constitution of the United States, I have to confess, folks, the Constitution is not going to save us. In fact, for all practical purposes, it is null and void. They are even now calling for a new constitutional convention which would destroy what little rights we have left. And I got news for you: there certainly is not any politician going to save us. Politicians are not interested in people; they are interested in themselves. The only one who is going to save us is Christ. Have we ever reached this position? Have we ever come to this truth?

If God does not help us, we are not helped. Our help is only the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. In Psalm 121, verses 1 and 2, David said, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” My help, he says, is in the sovereign God.

Psalm 46, verse 1—the very passage that Martin Luther used to write the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, a bulwark never failing"—says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." In Psalm 108, verse 12, the psalmist said, "Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man." Psalm 115, verse 11, says, "Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord: he is their help and their shield."

I do not know if you are familiar with this story, but in 2 Kings chapter 6, the Syrians had surrounded Samaria. The people inside were starving to death. If they went outside, the Syrians killed them; if they stayed inside, they starved. The famine was so great that they were eating dove's dung and rotted grape peels. Finally, one came to the king and appealed for help. The king of Israel said, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?"

Out of the barn floor or out of the winepress? The king of Israel said, "All I can give you is dung and rotted grape pits and peels. If God didn't help you, I can't give you any help."

Folks, we have to reach the point in our individual lives, our family lives, our church lives, and our national lives where we understand that if God doesn't help us, we are not helped. Man cannot help us. Man can try, plan, and do all kinds of things, but it does not, will not, and cannot save us. All man can do is make us more desolate, more desperate, and more destitute.

The truth is, just like Bartimaeus, we need Jesus Christ, and we need Him now. We simply do not realize how badly we need Him. But when our car hits that canyon floor, we will realize that we are in a desperate case. It may be too late, but we will realize how desperate we are.

Conclusion: It's Crying Time Again

Let me make a couple of applications. First, desperation becomes those who wish to be saved. The Bible says that praise is comely for the upright. As praise is comely for the upright, desperation is comely for those who want to be delivered. We will never desire deliverance until we become desperate.

Our Lord speaks in Matthew 11:12 of heaven being taken by force. Have you ever stopped to think about this? Desperate men are forceful men. If there were no water, and I had the last bottle in my hand while everyone in this room was perishing, and I was unwilling to share, do you think there would be a fight? Do you think somebody would attack me, trying to take that bottle away? Desperate men are forceful men. They are ready to do whatever is necessary because they realize their desperate state. It is our desperation that enables us to have determination, which will result in our dependence upon the Lord.

The question you have to ask is this: Would you cry out as Bartimaeus? Have you realized the desperate situation in which you are, our families are, our children are, and our grandchildren are? We sit around and talk about how the world and America have changed since I was a boy. Think how much they have changed since Granny Doris was a little girl—and she is only twenty-one.

Can you believe the change that has been in our lifetime? My grandchildren do not even know what real freedom is. We think we are free today. We are not free. I believe Alice and I were the last generation to experience a little bit of freedom back in the 50s.

But we don't realize the desperateness of our situation, and most Christians are at ease in Zion. They're comfortable until the car hits the canyon floor.

So it's crying time again. It's time we got what Bartimaeus had: a realization of our desperation, renewal of our determination, and recognition of our dependence upon the only one who can help us. It's time we learn to cry, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me and my family and my church and my state and my nation.” What did our Lord say? “Hear ye what the unjust judge said, and shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry unto him day and night? Yea, I tell you, he will avenge them speedily.” It's time to cry for mercy. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for your grace, your help, and your mercy. We thank you.

For Your Word, truth, and promises. We ask, Father, that You would open our eyes to see, open our ears to hear, and give us wisdom in this day and time to know what to do, where to turn, and

how to prepare. Give us grace and determination. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

When is it Time?

Introduction: The Question of Timing

Judges 6:12–16: “And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him, and said unto him, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.”

I have often been asked: When is it time? My answer: The Lord will reveal when it is time. The question concerns a revolution such as that of 1776. In one sense, the correct answer would be to ascertain exactly what ignited the war for independence.

Yes, there were taxes and lots of them. There were also persecutions and prosecutions. Colonists had been murdered in cold blood by the British. I am sure these and other reasons together would have weighed heavily upon those colonists. However, I believe the straw that broke the camel's back was when they came for the guns and ammunition.

Older people know about the battles of Lexington and Concord. Unhappily, the younger generation is deficient in historical knowledge. But when they came for the ammunition and guns in Concord especially, that is when war really and truly broke out.

Historical Context: Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms

Our forefathers did not leave us in ignorance as to why they fought, nor as to what instituted that war. There is an official document known as the Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms. Issued by the Second Continental Congress on July 6, 1775, it explained why the thirteen colonies took up arms against the British government. The final draft was written by John Dickinson, who incorporated language from an earlier draft written by Thomas Jefferson. Here is a portion of that declaration, put out by the Second Continental Congress, giving a general sense of what was happening in the colonies in 1774 and 1775:

"Soon after the intelligence of these proceedings arrived on this continent, General Gage, who in the course of the last year had taken possession of the town of Boston in the province of Massachusetts Bay, and still occupied it as a garrison, on the 19th day of April, sent out from that place a large detachment of his army who made an unprovoked assault on the inhabitants of the said province in the town of Lexington, as appears by the affidavits of a great number of persons, some of whom were officers and soldiers of that detachment, murdered eight of the inhabitants and wounded many others. From thence the troops proceeded in warlike array to the town of Concord, where they set upon another party of the inhabitants of the same province, killing several and wounding more, until compelled to retreat by the country people suddenly assembled to repel this cruel aggression."

"Hostilities thus commenced by the British troops have been since prosecuted by them without regard to faith and reputation. The inhabitants of Boston being confined within that town by the general, their governor, and having, in order to procure their dismission, entered into a treaty with him, it was stipulated that the said inhabitants, having deposited their arms with their own magistrate, should have liberty to depart, taking with them their other effects. They accordingly delivered up their arms, but in open violation of honor, in defiance of the obligation of treaties which even savage nations esteem sacred, the governor ordered their arms deposited, as aforesaid, that they might be preserved for their owners, to be seized by a body of his soldiers, detain the greater part of the inhabitants in the town, and compel the few who were permitted to retire to leave most of their valuable effects behind."

By this perfidy, wives were separated from their husbands, children from their parents, the aged and the sick from their relations and friends who wish to attend and comfort them, and those who have been used to live in plenty and even in elegance are reduced to deplorable distress. The General, further emulating his ministerial masters, by a proclamation bearing date of the twelfth day of June, after venting the grossest falsehoods and calumnies against the good people of these colonies, proceeds to declare them all, either by name or description, to be rebels and traitors, to supersede by the course of common law, and instead thereof to publish and order the use and exercise of martial law.

His troops have butchered our countrymen, have wantonly burned Charlestown, besides a considerable number of houses and other places. Our ships and vessels are seized, the necessary supplies of provisions are intercepted, and he is exerting his utmost power to spread destruction and devastation around him. We have received certain intelligence that General Carleton, the Governor of Canada, is instigating the people of that province and the Indians to fall upon us, and we have but too much reason to apprehend that schemes have been formed to excite domestic enemies against us.

A part of these colonies now feel, and all of them are sure feeling, as far as the vengeance of administration can inflict them, the complicated calamities of fire, sword, and famine. We are reduced to

the alternative of choosing an unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers or resistance by force. The latter is our choice. We have counted the cost of this contest, and find nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery.

Honor, justice, and humanity forbid us tamely to surrender that freedom which we have received from our gallant ancestors and which our innocent posterity have a right to receive from us. We cannot endure the infamy and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to that wretchedness which inevitably awaits them if we basely entail hereditary bondage upon them. Our cause is just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great, and if necessary, foreign assistance is undoubtedly available.

We gratefully acknowledge, as signal instances of the divine favor toward us, that His providence would not permit us to be called into this severe controversy until we were grown up to our present strength, had been previously exercised in warlike operation, and possessed the means of defending ourselves. With hearts fortified with these animating reflections, we most solemnly, before God and the world, declare that exerting the utmost energy of those powers which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us, the arms we have been compelled by our enemies to assume, we will, in defiance of every hazard, with unabating firmness and perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties, being with one mind resolved to die free men rather than to live slaves.

"In our own native land, in defense of the freedom that is our birthright and which we have ever enjoyed until the late violation of it, for the protection of our property acquired solely by the honest industry of our forefathers and ourselves against violence actually offered, we have taken up arms. We shall lay them down when hostilities cease on the part of the aggressors, and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed, and not before." Thus our forefathers made it exceedingly clear that they were not the aggressors. They did not want the fight or start the fight. However, they were planning on finishing the fight.

The Problem of Drawing Lines in the Sand

In the Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms, our forefathers were not left a choice. It was either fight or become slaves, and so they chose to fight. We must also understand that they were telling us the time of fighting had been brought upon them by the providence of God. They said, "We gratefully acknowledge, as signal instances of the divine favor toward us, that His providence would not permit us to be called into this severe controversy until we had grown up to our present strength, had been previously exercised in warlike operations, and possessed the means of defending ourselves."

They were saying that, in the providence of God, God prepared them physically, mentally, spiritually, militarily—in every way—so that they could fight this war. They chose to fight because they were basically not left a choice.

Jefferson said it very succinctly in the Declaration of Independence: all mankind are more willing to suffer while evils are sufferable than to right themselves in abolishing those customs to which they are used. However, Jefferson was also pointing out that there comes a time when evils are insufferable. That is exactly what our Founding Fathers gave us in this Declaration of the Necessity of Taking Up Arms: they were telling us that evils had become insufferable.

Many have chosen to fight over the years for different reasons. But every time they fought, they believed it was indeed time to fight. When we talk about fighting, we talk about drawing a line in the sand. When someone says, "I've drawn my line in the sand," he is saying, "This is the last place I'm willing to suffer while evils are sufferable. This is the last point at which I'm willing to give in and give up." Let me tell you very quickly the background for drawing the line in the sand.

Supposedly this came from Colonel William Barrett Travis, who did exactly that for the men of the Alamo. Colonel Travis was a young man, only twenty-six. He was not a professional soldier; he was a lawyer. But he knew enough about history to know this: in a

siege, the army on the outside usually prevailed over the army on the inside. And so these men were inside the Alamo.

It was in March of 1836 when Colonel Travis addressed his men with these words: "We must die. Our business is not to make a fruitless effort to save our lives, but to choose the manner of our death." Travis considered that there were three possibilities. They could either surrender and be annihilated by the Mexican armies, try to fight their way out and be butchered by the Mexican lancers, or stay in the fort, resist every assault, and sell their lives as dearly as possible.

After making those statements, he took his sword, drew a line in the sand, and said, basically, "I want every man who's determined to stay here and die with me to step over this line." Needless to say, there was probably not a stampede to get over that line, because everyone knew that when they crossed it, they were going to die. We are told that young Tapley Holland was the first, and very quickly ran over the line. As he did so, he said that he was ready to die for his country.

Eventually, every man in the Alamo stepped over that line except two. One was co-commander Jim Bowie, who was sick in bed; but he ordered men to take his bed and carry it over the line, and they did so. The other was a French soldier of fortune named Louis Moses Rose, who escaped that night and supposedly made it successfully through the Mexican line to the state of Louisiana.

So it was Colonel William Travis who drew that line in the sand and said, "Here it is, all of you who are willing to die, step over here." But what worked for Colonel Travis will not necessarily work that easily for you and me today, because the line in the sand keeps moving. We draw a line here and say, "Don't you step over this line."

The enemy steps over the line, and what do we do? We draw another line: “Well, we’ll let you go over that one, but don’t you come over this one.” Then he steps over that line, and we draw a third. The line keeps shifting; it keeps moving.

There is another problem with drawing the line in the sand: different men draw their lines in different places. What really angers and upsets you may not anger and upset me, and what really jerks

my line may not jerk your line. Understand, as our forefathers said in the Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms, it requires divine providence for you and I all to have the same line in the sand. God has to work that out.

When Is It Time to Fight?

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 31:1-3; 1 Samuel 15:1-3 (KJV)

Now, I have been asked this question innumerable times: When is it time to fight? I want you to stop and think with me about that answer. As you read through Scripture, there are different answers to that question. I am going to show you from the Bible three answers, and then I am going to show you in Judges chapter 6 how God worked in the life of Gideon.

Biblical Answers: When God Commands War

First of all, when you ask, "When is it time to fight?" you must realize that there were times when God specifically told His leaders that it was time to fight. He commanded and ordered them to make war. In Numbers chapter 31, beginning with verse 1, notice what is said: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying," So the Lord initiated this conversation and this command: "and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites."

"Afterwards thou shalt be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian." And then he tells them exactly what to do. Notice that it was the Lord who initiated this war. It was an offensive war. The Midianites were not attacking the Israelites. It is true that this war was initiated in response to what happened there in the book of Numbers chapter 23, I think it is, where the Midianites seduced the Israelites into fornication and idolatry.

But there was no battle. Consequently, God here commands Moses to avenge Israel of the Midianites. This was an offensive war begun and initiated by God, and God commanded the civil

> ruler, Moses. He was king in Jerusalem. The Scripture says that God commanded him to start this war.
>
> In 1 Samuel chapter 15, you will see this again. Beginning with verse 1: “Samuel said also unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel.” “Now therefore, hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember all that Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up out of Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”

It was God who came to King Saul and said, "You start this war." It was an offensive war. God said He remembered what the Amalekites did to Israel when they came out of Egypt 400 years earlier. The period of the judges was 480 years. Here is another offensive war when God came to the civil ruler and said, "You begin this war."

In Joshua chapter 10, after Deuteronomy, Joshua, and then Judges, Joshua 10:40 shows what the Scripture says in relationship to the wars that Joshua began: "So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings. He left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded."

So God commanded all of those wars. You can ask this simple question: "Well, how many wars did God command?" The answer is, I do not know—a lot of them, because Numbers 21:14 says, "Wherefore, it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord, what he did in the Red Sea and in the brooks of Arnon."

"Wherefore, it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord." Doubt it, if you would. Evidently there were a multitude of wars, for there is an entire book concerning the wars of the Lord.

Since you are in Numbers, turn back to the book of Joshua, chapter 5. Everyone is familiar with this passage, and if you are not, you should be. Joshua 5:13 records: "And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with a sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou

for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?"

"And the captain of the Lord's host," which was a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearing of Jesus Christ, "and the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

Now, I want you to note verse 14. He says, "But as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." And then if you'll skip down to verse 15, "And the captain of the Lord's host." The word "host" is the word for "armies." "As captain of the Lord's armies am I now come." So God has His armies. And therefore He is a man of war, the Bible tells us. And there is a book concerning the book of the wars of the Lord.

So, let me try to put this where you can grasp this right now. When is it time to fight? The answer is, first of all, when God tells His leaders, "Now is the time. Do it." That is exactly what He did in these passages that I've just read. There's a second answer, and that is that sometimes His leaders sought Him for direction and whether or not to initiate a battle or a war.

Biblical Answers: Leaders Seeking God's Direction

I suppose that David is one of the greatest examples of this, so I want you to begin by looking in 1 Samuel chapter 23. Many times David sought God's directives as to whether or not he was to pursue or to attack. And I might point out that God had already chosen David to be king. In fact, David was already anointed king. But if you look in 1 Samuel 23 and verse 1, "Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing floors. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said unto David, Go and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah." Now I want you to note, God did not necessarily initiate this conversation, but David did. So he asked the Lord, "What is your will?"

"Shall I go and do this? Is it your will for me to fight this time?" And the answer is yes. Turn right over to 1 Samuel chapter 30. 1 Samuel chapter 30, and look, if you would please, at verse 8. 1 Samuel 30 and verse 8: "And David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." Note, if you would, again, David was asking the Lord's will concerning pursuing this troop. Turn to 2 Samuel chapter 5 and look at verse 19. 2 Samuel chapter 5 verse 19: Again, we read this, "And David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? Wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the Lord said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand." Notice if you would now, three times David asked the Lord, "Shall I fight? Shall I attack?" And three times God says, "Yes, you may."

In David's instance, undoubtedly, he consulted what was known as the Urim and the Thummim, where the high priest discerned the Lord's will. You and I do not have the Urim and the Thummim. We have something far greater: the completed, full, final, inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. Everything that we do is to be directed and determined by the Word of God, because it is God's Word that is His revealed will for us today.

Biblical Answers: The People United as One

So, when is it time to fight? On some occasions, God told His leaders, "Do it." On other occasions, the leaders sought Him for wisdom and direction, and He either said yea or nay.

Thirdly, there were times in the Bible when God did not speak directly to the ruler, and the ruler did not necessarily seek the Lord's will concerning the matter. But there were also times when everyone just knew it was time to fight. Look at Judges chapter 20. I am not going into the background of this, but am pointing out one truth. Judges 20:1 says, "Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the Lord in Mizpeh. And the chief of all the people, even all the tribes of Israel, presented

themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword."

Notice that they "gathered themselves together as one man. From Dan even to Beersheba." Verse 11 says, "So all the men of Israel were gathered together against the city, knit together as one man." Everyone knew it was time to fight.

Consider also 2 Chronicles 32. The king of Assyria was attacking and planning to attack. Verse 4 says, "So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?" Everybody knew they had to do something. They were going to make sure that the kings of Assyria did not find water to sustain themselves and their armies.

In Judges 6:16, God promises Gideon victory over the Midianites in the war against them: “And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.” This was part of the promise God gave to Gideon. In other words, what God was saying was that all the hearts of the people would be melted together as one man. Everybody would know it was time to fight.

At times, God may use either one of these three ways, or He may use a combination of them. In 1 Samuel 11:6–7, God not only stirred up the civil ruler; He also stirred up the people. The Bible says, “And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was greatly kindled. And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.”

So God not only stirred up the king in this instance; He also stirred up the people, and all the people came together with one consent.

So when is it time to fight? The biblical answer is: number one, when God tells the civil ruler it is time; or when a ruler asks God, “Shall I?” and God says yes; or when God places it in the hearts of all His people with one consent. Then we know it is time.

Gideon's Call and Preparation

I want to take this and go back to the book of Judges, chapter 6, and show you what transpired when Gideon began his war. The oppression, persecution, fraud, and corruption during Gideon's time were exceedingly severe, just as in the Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms. Judges 6:1-5 records: “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox,”

"nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it." Notice the oppression and fraud. They came with one intent: to destroy the land. They were leaving nothing for the people or their animals.

It seems as if folks have to hit rock-solid bottom before they look up to the Lord. Have you ever noticed that? We are so perverse that we do not heed instruction easily, nor do we take correction readily. Therefore, it takes the proverbial two-by-four upside the head to get our attention and wake us up. I am sure that a few people living in the land of Israel may not have been affected by the Midianite invasion, but by and large, as a whole, everyone was.

Remember, in those days the economy was agricultural, and society was agricultural. Without the fruit and the crops, you did not live. No one lived. No animals lived. Nothing. All you have to do is listen to the news, and I know that it is controlled news media. But if you usually believe the opposite of what you are told, or extrapolate about a thousand percent out of what you are told, you will find that conditions are far worse than they really are.

Look at the corruption and fraud in our own government. Look at our congressmen, our judicial system, and the executive branch. My question is this: Why do we have to get so low before we look up?

I will be absolutely honest with you. I suppose one of the greatest things that could happen to this country is if it got 100 times worse. Maybe then people would say, "You know, there is something wrong." Maybe we would begin to open our eyes and wake up. I am showing you the background for God choosing a deliverer, for God choosing a man to start a war and a fight. First, you have to consider the oppression, persecution, fraud, and corruption. We read all about that in the Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms.

Secondly, note that generally speaking, the people as a whole in Judges chapter 6 were crying for help, relief, and aid. They understood that their society, economy, and country were destroyed. Look at verses 6 and 7: “And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites.” Here they are crying. Why are they crying? Because of all the oppression, corruption, and destruction. When these people cried to the Lord, most of them were already hiding in the mountains and caves. They had lost everything.

Have you ever asked yourself: Why did Israel wait so long before crying to the Lord? Why did they have to get so low? Go back to verse 1: “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.” They had to get so low because they were sinful, wicked, disobedient, and lacking in understanding. Sinners do not want to repent or change; they love their sin. That was Israel’s problem. The reason they were in trouble to begin with was their sin. Had they not been idolaters and rebellious, they never would have been delivered into the hands of the Midianites.

But now they are beginning to cry and scream, realizing, “We’re done for. We are gone as a country, economy, society, and nation if God does not do something.” That was the point they had to come to.

Thirdly, there was also a rebuke for their sins and disobedience. Look at verses 8 through 10. They are crying in verses 6 and 7: “Then the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; and I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.” You know what God said?

"I told you, and you wouldn't listen. I gave you a command and you wouldn't obey." It is strange that we cannot put two and two together and make it equal four. We wish to blame our problems on everyone and everything else. We do not want to confess, acknowledge, or forsake our sins. There are many things wrong in America today, and many things wrong with America today. But the most pressing problem is that we have sinned against our God.

The Bible tells us in Numbers 32 and verse 23, "Be sure your sins will find you out." The truth of the matter is that our sins have found us out. We have been caught up with, and still desire to blame our problems on, everyone and everything else. It seems that we do not want to listen to God's rebuke or heed His voice. We will never prosper until we do. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 28 and verse 13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Yet we are willing to say that our problems are anything but spiritual.

Fourthly, God sovereignly and providentially selects and chooses the man to deliver His people. He chose the judges, David, and a host of others. Therefore, it should not surprise us that God chose Gideon. Look in verse 11: "And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring

us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"

I find it extremely interesting that the angel appears to Gideon and says, “Hail, thou mighty man of valor.” What was Gideon doing? He was hiding, threshing wheat by the winepress to keep the Midianites from finding him. Yet God calls him a mighty man of valor because God knew his character and courage.

When the angel says, “The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor,” look at verse 13. Gideon said, “O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” Then the Lord said, “Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: Have not I sent thee?” Isn’t it interesting that God never answered his questions in verse 13?

Of course, we already know the answer. It was because of their sin, wickedness, and idolatry. “Why has all this befallen us?” Everyone wants to ask, “Why? Why? Why?” But why something happened is not important. What is important is what happened and what must be done to make it right. Our Lord simply ignored his questions. In fact, He had already given the answer. Go back to verse 10: “I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.” They had fallen into idolatry. So God sovereignly and providentially selected Gideon.

Gideon was not seeking the job of deliverer. He did not want it, and, looking at him, you would say he was not even qualified. Gideon did not seek the Lord; the Lord sought Gideon. God sovereignly and providentially selected the man who would deliver His people. Fifthly, God prepared Gideon in every way for the work to which he was chosen. He said in verse 14, “And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might,”

"And thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" Those whom God calls, He qualifies. I've had men tell me that God had called them to a certain work, yet they were totally unprepared and unqualified for it. My estimation is that God never called them to that work. For whom God calls, He qualifies.

If God calls a man to preach, He's going to give him the gift of teaching. It's just that simple. If God calls a man to lead, He's going to give him the gift of leadership. If God calls a man to serve, He's going to give him a servant's heart. If God calls a man to fight, He's going to give him the gift of warfare.

He did this for David in Psalm 144 and verse 1, where David said, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." Did God give David the gift of warfare? Yes, He did. Where did David learn from God?

If God is going to use Gideon, He's going to qualify him. Note how God qualified him. In verse 11: "There came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites."

Number one, Gideon was already a worker. Number two, he was already using his noggin for something besides a hat rack. He knew that if he was going to preserve himself and his family, he had to put something away that could not be stolen by the invaders. So God selects him. In verse 16: "And the Lord said, Surely I will be with thee." God is going to be with him. In verse 23: "And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." God proclaims peace to him and tells him not to be afraid.

Then, in verses 25 and 26: "And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: and build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down." Note what God does in verses 25 and 26.

He tells Gideon how to start the war, and he starts it with a spiritual act. Why did Gideon have to throw down Baal's altar and cut down the groves, which was Asherah, the worship of Asherah? Why were they the subjects of Midian to begin with? Because God said in verse 10, "Ye have not obeyed my voice." They were idolaters. Here was their idolatry, the cause of their problem, the root cause. Therefore God told Gideon, "You begin this war by tearing down this altar of Baal. And you establish My altar. You set it up where they will know that if they want liberty and freedom, they must come back to God."

What have we forgotten in this land? We have forgotten that our problems are first and foremost spiritual problems. It is true that we have economic, political, governmental, societal, and military problems. We have all kinds of problems, but behind every one is a spiritual root. We would not have those problems if we were biblical.

So God qualifies Gideon. God brought Gideon's family to understand and support him, to stand and work with him. Now Gideon tore down that altar of Baal.

In verse 28, we read: "And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar."

Notice what God did. God took Gideon's father and turned his heart to support Gideon and the war. Remember, it was his father's altar that Gideon tore down. It is important that a man's family be with him in his work and in his ministry, whatever that ministry is. I do not care if it is being a warrior, preaching, serving, or exhorting.

In 1 Samuel 22, when David had to flee to the cave of Adullam because of Saul, his father, mother, and brethren went to him. They were solidly behind David.

Wives, listen: if God calls your husband to a ministry, you have to be with him in that ministry. It is important that children, sons, brothers, and daughters be with you in the ministry. God gave Gideon a work, and his family supported it.

Notice seventhly: God empowered Gideon for the work to which he had been chosen. In verse 34: "But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him." You will find this truth throughout the Bible: those whom God chooses to lead His people in fighting, inevitably and invariably, He always endows with His power. God has said in Zechariah 4 and verse 6, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord."

It is important that you understand this. If it comes to fighting, if it comes to warfare, we do not fight out of anger, retaliation, bitterness, or resentment. We fight because it is right to fight. There is a biblical basis and scriptural principles. We do it in faith, according to the Word of God and by the power of God upon us. We do not fight simply because folks make us mad or are not doing right.

Othniel, who was a judge, is described in Judges 3:10: "And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war." We read of Samson in Judges 14:19: "And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men, and took their spoil." We read in 1 Samuel 11:6: "And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was greatly kindled." And Judges 11:29 says: "And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon." And he went to war.

In other words, every time God calls a man to fight, the Spirit and the power of God come upon him. Those whom God chooses, He qualifies and empowers.

Eighthly, in Judges 7:1-7, God selected the army, or fighting men, that Gideon was to use. He cut them down to three hundred: “So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.”

God had already sent home everyone who was afraid. Then He separated them further. One man would pick up water with his hands and lap like a dog. God said, "Those are the three hundred that I'm going to use." They could look around and remain aware of their surroundings while they lapped. But if they bowed down and put their mouths in the water, they could not see what was going on. So God chose these three hundred. David had his six hundred; Gideon had his three hundred.

This is important for us to learn. When God is in charge, His will is to be obeyed in every area. When God is in charge and His will is obeyed, it does not take a vast army to win. God is majority in and of Himself. I had rather fight by myself with God on my side than with twenty thousand men with me and God against me.

I hope you know that it was a minority that prevailed in the American War for Independence. I read in one passage that Washington never had more than three thousand men at one time. He had more men than that, but not any more than that at one time. Samuel Adams said, "It does not require a majority to prevail, but rather an irate, tireless minority keen to set brush fires in people's minds." And that is a fact.

Jonathan, Saul's son, revealed this truth to his armor bearer. He said, in 1 Samuel 14:6, "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armor, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." You know what Jonathan said? "We don't need the army if God's on our side."

Jonathan and his armor bearer went out and showed themselves. The Philistines said, "Come down here and we'll show you something." Jonathan said, "Fine," and killed about twenty or thirty of them before they could blink their eyes. It is nothing with God to save by many or by few. Lastly, note that the proof God had chosen Gideon and blessed him was the mission's absolute success and the victorious outcome of the war.

Proof of God's Calling: Victory and Protection

Look in Judges chapter 8 and verse 28: “Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.” The proof that God was in the war was the victory. When God is involved, the outcome is guaranteed, victory is assured, and there is no failure. God used Gideon to subdue the Midianites so that they lifted up their head no more. God spared Gideon throughout the entire war. He had called him to fight and to victory, not to defeat and death. Those whom God calls, He qualifies.

Consider a similar remarkable act of divine providence in the life of George Washington during the French and Indian War in July of 1755. Washington was with the British. There were 1,459 British soldiers fighting in the open, while the French and Indians hid behind trees. Of those soldiers, 1,000 had already been killed. The Indians were deliberately taking aim at and destroying the officers one by one.

Finally, only one officer remained. The old Indian chief said, “Quick, fire, let your aim be certain, kill them all.” Round after round was fired at George Washington—10, 12, 13 rounds. Twice his horse was hit and killed. Each time he disentangled himself, found another horse, and got on it. Finally, the chief commanded his men to stop firing: “Stop firing. This one is under the special protection of the Great Spirit.” One Indian brave said, “I had 17 clear shots at the man and after all, I could not bring him to the ground. This man was not born to be killed by a bullet.” When the firing ceased, Lieutenant Colonel George Washington led the remaining men in an orderly retreat. In the safety of buildings, while the wounded were being treated, he noticed a hole in his sleeve. It was a bullet hole.

He pulled his coat off, and there were three or four other bullet holes in it. But the bullets did not penetrate his skin; they stopped inside the coat. Fifteen years later, in 1770, the old Indian chief heard that George Washington was back in the area and made it a point to meet him. With other men around, the old chief pointed to Washington and said, "The Great Spirit protects this man and guides his destinies. He will become the chief of nations. And a people yet unborn will hail him as the founder of a mighty empire. I am come to pay homage to the man who is the particular favorite of heaven and who can never die in battle."

When God calls a man to a ministry, He is going to assure his success and spare his life. Those whom God chooses, He qualifies and protects. It does not matter whether it is a Gideon, a Washington, or anyone else.

Let me make some applications and tie this together. First: Divine providence always arranges the time for fighting. God is called the God of war, and there is a book of the wars of the Lord. Fighting and war are not to be taken lightly or undertaken in the heat of passion. They are not to be begun out of sin, rebellion, bitterness, or resentment. War is serious business. It is to be carried on and begun at the command and instigation of divine providence.

Applications: Waiting on God's Timing

Second: We must be aware of the principles of Scripture concerning leadership and war in order to discern those whom God chooses to lead His people. God's choice of a leader during a time of war does not necessarily have to be a military man. Sometimes God chose men who had military training and power, but more often than not, they had none. God taught them and used them.

One of the greatest generals during the War of Northern Aggression was Nathan Bedford Forrest. He had never been trained in the art of war and had never been to West Point or anywhere else, yet he out-fought and defeated, over and over, many men who had been trained in war. When God chooses a man to lead His people, he does not necessarily have to be a military man, even though God may choose him to lead in battle or militarily. God uses whom He pleases to use.

Thirdly, the hardest and most difficult part in all of this

We must wait upon God's time. Our God is far more patient, far more gracious, and far more kind than we are. I have often said that I am thankful I am not God, for if I were, I'd have killed me and a whole lot of other people a long time ago. We must also consider this: If we really got what we deserved, it would be far much worse than it is today. Isn't that right?

Lamentations 3:39–40 says: “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.” Why do you go to complain about getting what you deserve? And then Lamentations 3:22–27 says: “It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed,

"because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." The hardest part is waiting upon the Lord.

The best counsel that I can give to anyone is this: Wait upon the Lord. Do not run ahead of Him. Do not run behind Him. Run with Him. And our God will always deliver His people. He did so from Egypt. He did so from Canaan land so many times. And He will continue to do so if we will repent of our sins and cry to Him for mercy and grace and truth. When it is time, God will move.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee and we ask for Your grace and Your mercy. Father, we do ask for understanding. Teach us Thy Word and give us, Lord, an understanding heart. Help us, Lord, to be prepared and yet, Lord, submissive vessels unto Thee to be used of Thee in the manner in which Thou dost please. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 11

The Rebel's Prayer

Introduction: The Lord's Prayer and the Kingdom Petition

Matthew 6:10 says, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Luke 11:2 says, "And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

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

He not only teaches them in thoughts, but in words as well. For instance, in Matthew 6:9, He states, "After this manner therefore pray ye." In Luke 11:2, He says, "And he said unto them, When ye pray, say..." Obviously, He is giving us words that we are to say. You must understand that words have meanings, and it is the meanings of the words that are most important. You may repeat these words

without understanding their meaning and receive little encouragement, little help, and little understanding. However, when you understand the meaning and implications of the words, then there is a vast, great benefit derived therefrom. There are major implications in each of these petitions and adorations.

I am not going to deal with all of these petitions, but I am going to single out one: the petition, "Thy kingdom come." To single out that petition, I must make some cursory remarks concerning the petitions and adorations surrounding it. Notice in Luke 11:2: "And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." He begins by saying that when we begin to pray, we are to address the one true living God as our Father.

Addressing God as 'Our Father'

The term “Father” emphasizes not only a relationship, but also our devotion to Him. It reveals an intimate, loving, gracious fellowship that we enjoy as we pray and worship before Him. Arthur W. Pink wrote concerning the phrase “Our Father”: “These words, ‘Our Father,’ not only signify the office that God sustains to us by virtue of the everlasting covenant, but they also clearly imply our obligation. They teach us both how we ought to dispose ourselves toward God when we pray to Him, and the conduct that is becoming to us by virtue of this relationship.”

“As His children, we must honor Him even more than our human parents, be in subjection to Him, delight in Him, and strive in all things to please Him. Again, the phrase ‘Our Father’ not only teaches us our personal interest in God Himself, who by grace is our Father, but it also instructs us as to our interest in our fellow Christians, who in Christ are our brethren. It is not merely ‘my Father’ to whom we pray, but ‘our Father.’ We must express our love to our brethren by praying for them.”

We are to be as much concerned about their needs as we are over our own. How much is included in these two words, “Our Father”? If He is my Father, there are other children as well, and we should remember their needs. He is our Father by election, by regeneration, by conversion, and by faith.

Moreover, He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 20:17, Jesus Christ said to Mary, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” Thus God the Father is also known as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

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

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

The Majesty of 'Which Art in Heaven'

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

When Solomon dedicated the temple, he said in 1 Kings 8:27, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" God is omnipresent. When He says, "Our Father which art in heaven," we are speaking of the greatness, majesty, and superiority of God. Saying those words indicates that heaven is the place where His majesty and glory are preeminently manifested. Isaiah 66:1 says, "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." If heaven is His throne, that is where His majesty and glory are particularly and peculiarly manifested.

The realization of this truth should fill us with the deepest awe and reverence, because our Father who is in heaven is sovereign.

He is in absolute and total control of everything. Psalm 115 and verse 3 says, “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” He is not only the sovereign God of heaven and earth; He is also our Father. Can you imagine the implications of knowing and understanding a relationship with a divine being who not only happens to be your Father, but also has absolute and total control over everything?

That surely ought to encourage you to pray and to carry every problem and burden to Him, because He is divinely sovereign. So He said, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” When we say, “Hallowed be thy name,” we are asking that God, who is most holy and glorious, might enable us not only to acknowledge His holiness and honor, but also to be in a position to continue to hallow and honor His name.

Hallowed Be Thy Name: A Solemn Obligation

Thomas Manton, an old Puritan, said, “In this petition, the glory of God is both desired and promised on our part. For every prayer is both an expression of a desire and also an implicit vow or solemn obligation that we take upon ourselves to prosecute what we ask.” Thus, if we say, “Hallowed be thy name,” we express not only a desire for God to be honored and glorified, but also a solemn obligation to honor and glorify His name. Manton goes on: “Prayer is a preaching to ourselves in God's hearing. We speak to God to warn ourselves, not for His information, but for our edification.”

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

The Kingdom Has Come, Is Here, and Is Coming

The message today is not dealing with the Lord's Prayer in general, but specifically with this petition: "Thy kingdom come." When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," there are several very obvious implications. The first is simple: God does have a kingdom. The second obvious implication is that we want that kingdom to come in its fullness. I am not going into a detailed exposition of the kingdom of God, but let me tell you three things about the kingdom of God.

First of all, we can say it like this: The kingdom has come. The kingdom is here. And the kingdom is coming. How can we say the kingdom has come? We can say it because the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, has come. What did our Lord say in Matthew 12? It is in verse 28. He said to the scribes and the Pharisees, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." So the kingdom of God was here when Christ was here. He said, "The kingdom of God is come unto you."

Look in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Colossians, chapter 1, to show you not only that the kingdom of God has come, but that it is here. Look at verses 12 and 13: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us" into the kingdom of his dear Son. So the kingdom has come because Christ has come. The kingdom is here because we are now in the kingdom, and the kingdom is still coming. That is, it is going to come in its fullness and fruition. The Bible tells us in Revelation 11, verse 15, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." When we are talking about the kingdom, we know that the kingdom has come, the kingdom is here, and the kingdom is coming. We are looking particularly at this one simple petition: "Thy kingdom come."

A Personal Petition: Desiring Christ's Reign in Us

In Luke chapter 11, verse 2, Jesus teaches us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." "Thy kingdom come." Have you ever really, genuinely thought of the implications of this petition, "Thy kingdom come"? I want to give

you four things very quickly. The first three are very interconnected. Actually, all four are interconnected, but you may not see the impact of the fourth one until I get to it.

First of all, let me point out that it is a personal petition. It is a personal petition. Our Lord is teaching us to pray. In Luke 11, verse 2, after He teaches us to say, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name,” He gives us this petition: “Thy kingdom come.” So it is a personal petition. It is personal in the sense that you are asking for the kingdom of God to come in its fullness.

At the same time, you are asking that you yourself might be submissive and obedient in that kingdom. Why in the world would you seek for the kingdom of God to come if you did not want to be a part of it and participate in it? You are asking, in this petition, Christ to reign everywhere, and that would certainly include your heart, your soul, and your life. When you say, “Thy kingdom come,” you are acknowledging that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods, and that He deserves to be honored and worshipped. So very obviously, this petition, “Thy kingdom come,” is a personal petition.

Look in your Bibles at 1 Chronicles 29:11. I want you to see what King David said. This is a summation of the kingdom of God. Look at what he said.

"Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all." When we say, "Thy kingdom come," that is exactly what we're saying. We're saying that God is the greatest—His power, His majesty, His glory, His victory—that He is King of all of the earth. So, "Thy kingdom come" is a personal petition, and what you're asking is that Jesus Christ would be exalted in your life in every area and every sphere. You're acknowledging Him as your King, your Sovereign, your Head, your Guide, and your Lord. No one would pray this petition if they did not personally desire the kingdom of God on earth.

Now, I want to show you that what David said in 1 Chronicles 29, what our Lord taught us to pray in Matthew 6 and in Luke 11, is the

same as what the prophets prophesied. For instance, turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 11, and look if you would please at verse 9. Isaiah 11 and verse 9. We're talking about praying, "Thy kingdom come." It's a personal petition. In Isaiah 11 in verse 9, look what God says. Here is what we're referring to. God says, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." As the waters cover the sea. How much of the sea is covered by water? All of it. So when we pray "Thy kingdom come," what are we asking? We're asking for God's kingdom to extend totally and completely and absolutely in every area, every corner, and every sphere of life. If you would look in your Bibles to the little book of Habakkuk, Habakkuk chapter 2 and verse 14.

One of the minor prophets. Habakkuk chapter 2, at verse 14, right before the little book of Zephaniah, right after the little book of Nahum, you will find Habakkuk. Habakkuk chapter 2 and look in verse 14. For he says it like this: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." So when we are taught to pray, "Thy kingdom come," it's a personal petition.

We are personally seeking God's glory, grace, majesty, superiority, and sovereignty over every area and sphere of our lives, the lives of others, and the world. We are asking for the appointed time when the fullness of the Lord's kingdom will arrive. Thus, it is not only a personal petition; it is also a practical petition. Remember Luke 11:2: "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." We are practically petitioning the Father not only to prepare our hearts, but the hearts of others as well. We are asking Jesus Christ to go forth as conqueror.

A Practical Petition: Conquering Sin and Confusion

John Calvin said it like this: "He is said to reign among men when they voluntarily devote and submit themselves to be governed by him, placing their flesh under the yoke and renouncing their desires. Such is the corruption of the nature that all of our affections are so many soldiers of Satan who oppose the justice of God and consequently obstruct or disturb his reign. By this prayer we ask that

he may remove all hindrances and bring all men under his dominion and may lead them to meditate on the heavenly life."

This is done partly by the preaching of the Word of God and partly by the secret power of the Holy Spirit. It is God's will to govern men by His Word, by His voice, but the Holy Spirit must make that Word effectual. If the Holy Spirit does not apply the Word of God, then no one really hears. Augustine said it like this: "I heard the gospel all of my life. And then one day I heard it." If God does not make it effectual, that is the way it is.

Years ago, a preacher came to our church in Jessup and preached all week on the doctrine of election. It was a wonderful week. One of our faithful men came to me and said, "Pastor, this is so great. This is so wonderful. But I have one question: Why haven't you been preaching this?" I said, "Brother, I have one question for you. Why have you not been listening?" I had been preaching it; he simply had not heard it. But that week he heard it.

The kingdom of God is opposed to all disorder and confusion. Do you not remember that God is not the author of confusion? How much confusion exists in this world, in civil government, in the churches, in homes and families, and in our own individual lives?

You think of all the vain thoughts, wrong desires, impure motives, bad attitudes, wicked dispositions, pride, arrogance, unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, and disobedience that remain in each one of us—that creates nothing but confusion in our lives. Do we want those sins conquered? Do we want those sins defeated? Do we want our sins controlled? Do we want the totality of our lives to be brought in conformity to the Word of God and in submission to Jesus Christ?

We need to learn to pray this prayer because it is a very practical petition: “Thy kingdom come.” Your kingdom come in my life. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Let me put it to you very plainly: Where confusion exists, so does sin, strife, and wickedness. James 3:16 says, “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

You can knock her down, folks. Wherever there is envying, wherever there is strife, wherever there is confusion, there is every evil work. So when we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” we are asking that Christ conquer us, reign over us, subdue us, submit us, surrender us, and control us in every aspect of our lives.

I believe the Apostle Paul understood this, and I think this is exactly partly what he had in mind when he prayed this prayer. I do not suppose any of us could ever come close to the depth of knowledge and spirituality of the Apostle Paul. We always hold him up on a pedestal. Yet he says very clearly in Philippians 3:12, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Paul said, “I hadn't arrived. I'm not perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” What did the Apostle Paul say? “Forgetting those things which are behind.”

How many of us can go back and undo things that we did in our previous years? Not one. We cannot. But by God's grace, we can repent and then go forward. We cannot do anything else. That is what the Apostle Paul says. He cannot go back and unlive what he lived or undo what he did. But he can repent and go forward, and that is exactly what he is saying.

So when we pray this petition, "Thy kingdom come," it is not only a personal petition; it is a very practical petition, because Paul desired to have his life totally conquered by Jesus Christ. He said, "Therefore, I press toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

A Providential Petition: Praying for the Elect and Gospel Success

Thirdly, this petition, "Thy kingdom come," is a providential petition. By this, we understand that the kingdom is brought into fullness and fruition by God's grace, power, and mercy, and in His time. We may long for it, want it, work for it, pray for it, seek it, and

desire it. But the truth is, it will come in its fullness only in the time that He ordained.

In this petition, we are praying for the success of the gospel, "Thy kingdom come." We are praying for the conversion of God's elect. We are praying that Christ would indeed save His people.

Matthew Henry said it like this: "Let my kingdom come. Let the gospel be preached to all and embraced by all. Let it be brought to subscribe to the record God has given in his word concerning his Son and to embrace him as their Saviour and Sovereign. Let the bounds of the gospel church be enlarged, the kingdom of the world be made Christ's kingdom, and all men become subjects to it and live as becomes their character."

Have you ever thought about all the things that the Apostle Paul went through and suffered, and why he went through and suffered them? You remember he gives, there in 2 Corinthians, how that he was beaten with rods and received 40 lashes a number of times.

Paul suffered and endured all things for the elect's sakes, that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (2 Timothy 2:10). Paul understood that our Lord has a people, and he said, "I'm going to do all of these things. I will keep going, that I may reach them." So this petition, "Thy kingdom come," teaches us to pray for, witness to, seek, and reach all those for whom our Lord is a sacrifice and a substitute.

We know that Christ has His sheep. He said in John 10:14, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." In John 10:27, He says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." You cannot deny the fact that God does indeed have His sheep, wherever they are and whoever they are. When I preach and teach, I know not everyone will be saved, but I know some will. I know that not everybody will be blessed, but I know that some will, because He has His sheep, and they hear His voice and follow Him.

When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we are asking Christ to gather His sheep from all the nations, wherever they are scattered, and bring them safely into His fold. In John 11:52, the high priest prophesied that Christ should die, not for that nation only, but also

that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Moreover, God the Father has declared that the gathering together of all things in Christ is an aspect of His eternal purpose. Ephesians 1:10 says, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."

In God's ordained time, everything will work perfectly according to God's eternal purpose. All of His sheep, all of His people, will be gathered in. I do not know when that will be. I would love to see it in my time; I may not. I have no idea, but I know it is going to come to pass.

So I have to keep praying, “Thy kingdom come.” It is a personal petition, a practical petition, a providential petition, and lastly, a political petition. How can I say that the petition, “Thy kingdom come,” is political? You have been taught all your life that politics and religion do not mix. But who said they do not mix? When people say that politics and religion cannot be mixed, they do not understand the concept of the kingdom of God, nor do they understand the concept of politics.

A Political Petition: Christ's Rule Over All Authorities

First, let me point out that all government is religious. It may be the Christian religion, or it may be a pagan religion, but it is still religious. All law is religious. It may be Christian law, or it may be pagan law, but it is still religious, because behind every law is a determination of good and evil, right and wrong. Someone’s religion determines good and evil, right and wrong. Each of these concepts is guided by an understanding of religion.

It is impossible to have government without religion. It is impossible to have law without religion. The question is not whether you will have government or law without religion. The question is, whose religion will it be? Will it be God’s religion, or will it be man’s religion?

You have got to understand that even if someone says, “I’m an atheist. Therefore, my law is not religious,” that is hogwash. Theism means God. Put an “A” on it: atheism, no God. When you say, “My

religion is atheism," or, "I don't have religion; I'm an atheist," what you are saying is, "I am a secularist humanist with a religious secularist humanist worldview." It is still religious. Because you do not believe in the living God, you have established yourself as God. It is man's religion. It is autonomy. You cannot have government, and you cannot have law, without religion, period.

Secondly, consider the word "politics." It comes from the Greek word which literally means "of a citizen." What does that have to do with "Thy kingdom come"? Look in your Bibles at Acts 21:39. The Apostle Paul was going to address the people who were trying to kill him. Speaking to the centurion who had rescued him, before giving his testimony in chapter 22, Paul said, "But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people." Paul said, "I'm a citizen of no mean city"—in other words, a citizen of a very great city. The word "citizen" is politēs.

Now look at Philippians 3:20: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." The word "conversation" is the Greek word politeuma, related to politikos. It refers to the administration of civil affairs of a commonwealth; the constitution of a commonwealth; a form of government and laws by which it is administered; a state; a commonwealth; a commonwealth of citizens. Paul could literally have said, "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." We have a citizenship. We have a political view, a worldview—a Christian view that is biblical and scriptural.

Yes, politics and religion do mix. Because if you are a citizen of heaven, you have a political view, a political understanding, a biblical law of a Christian worldview, and you express it. So when I pray, "Thy kingdom come," it is a political petition.

I am a Southerner and a citizen of the state of Georgia. Those who know me understand this: I do not care one thing for any game that has a ball in it. I do not care for football or baseball. But although I care nothing for a game with a ball in it, if I hear that Georgia is playing Kentucky, I automatically want Georgia to win. Why? I am a citizen of Georgia. I do not want Auburn to win.

If I hear Kentucky is playing New York, I want Kentucky to win. I am a Southerner. If I hear America is playing Russia, I want America to win. Why? I am an American. Do you see what I am trying to say? If I want Georgia to win, although I do not care anything about ball; if I want the South to win, although I do not care anything about ball; if I want America to win, although I do not care anything about ball—do you not understand that, as a Christian, I automatically want King Jesus to win? I want His kingdom. I want His will. I want His Word.

In other words, the kingdoms of sin, Satan, and man are all opposed and contrary to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those other kingdoms are darkness, disorder, confusion, and consternation. Jesus Christ has the kingdom of life and truth. So when I pray, "Thy kingdom come," it is a political petition, a political prayer that the kingdom of Jesus Christ would be advanced, that the kingdom of sin, Satan, and man would be destroyed, and that Jesus Christ would rule and reign supreme.

The Rebel's Prayer: Resisting Tyranny and Longing for Victory

The Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it like this: "In the second petition we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it and kept in it, and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened." When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we are asking, "Lord, hasten the day that You defeat Satan and his host and let them be completely and totally vanquished. Let Thy people be done with sinning forever."

"Let Christ see the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and let King Jesus triumph over everything." It is a political petition, expressing a prayer that God may reign everywhere, that His laws may be obeyed, and especially that the gospel of Christ would be advanced everywhere, till the world shall be filled with the glory and fullness of God as the waters cover the sea. "Thy kingdom come" is a prayer for the defeat of Christ's enemies—the overthrow, defeat, and spoil of all who oppose Him and hate Him.

David recorded a conversation between the Father and His Son in Psalm 110:1: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." That verse is repeated several times in the New Testament. Matthew 22:44 says, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." Hebrews 10:13 says that Christ sat down on the right hand of God, "from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." In other words, our Lord shall subdue all His enemies. Philippians 2:10–11 says that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

He will conquer, and His enemies will fall. In Psalm 2:7, God the Father says to God the Son, "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." In other words, He has established Him and set up His kingdom. Then verse 8 says, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." God also says to the kings of the earth, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth."

"Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." When we pray this petition, "Thy kingdom come," we're asking that the earth may become obedient to the will of God and be in subjection to Jesus Christ. We're asking that God the Father will subdue all the wicked, all the reprobate, and all the ungodly. He would bring down those that oppose King Jesus. When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we're declaring and acknowledging that we hate and regret whatever we perceive to be contrary to the will of God, and we long for its utter destruction.

Not only do we ask that He may rule all of our affections, but that we may yield ourselves to Him without reserve, with all cheerfulness and gladness. We learn to pray with David in Psalm 7 and verse 9:

"Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just."

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."

"The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." What will God the Father do? He will establish His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the increase of His government, there shall be no end.

Now, I titled this message "The Rebel's Prayer" for a reason. The truth of the matter is this: As God's people, we are not rebels. In reality, the rebels are those who oppose our Lord Jesus Christ and His kingdom. However, down through history, all of those who have ever resisted tyranny and despotism through the ages have been labeled rebels. George Washington was a rebel. Thomas Jefferson was a rebel. Even in the War of Northern Aggression, the Southern people were called Rebs or rebels.

It was not the South who was in rebellion to the law. It was the North that was in rebellion to the law. If you resist the New World Order or fight against tyranny, you are not only called a rebel, you are now labeled a terrorist. Isn't it amazing that only those who seek to stand for what is right and true and biblical and constitutional are now called rebels and terrorists? We must remember that rebellion can only be against lawful authority. Are you listening? If there is no lawful authority, there is no rebellion. It is only resistance.

If I came by and said, "I just passed a law that everyone has to turn in their weapons by tomorrow at two o'clock, and if you don't do it, you're rebellious," and you did not turn them in, would you be a rebel? No, because I have no authority to ask you to turn in your weapons. Neither does the federal government. Neither does the state government. If you resisted, you would not be rebellious. You would just be resisting evil and tyranny and wickedness. Rebellion

can only be to lawful authority. So if there is no lawful authority, there is no rebellion.

The truth of the matter is this, folks: the true rebels are those who are in rebellion to Jesus Christ and His law. Those who want to be submissive to Christ are not rebels, although they're listed as rebels. The impetus of this message came from a friend of mine, Dr. Brooke Stockton. I don't know if what Dr. Stockton wrote was original with him or if he just sent it around, but since it came from him, I'm going to give him credit. Here is the one brief paragraph that really got me to thinking about this message.

Our precious Lord taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” It is part of the Lord’s Prayer, a.k.a. the Disciples’ Prayer. Positively, it is a plea that all men and all man’s institutions would surrender to be ruled by God’s law. Negatively, it is the coup d’état against ungodly authorities and de facto officials. This is the rebel’s prayer, a revolutionary’s cry against the immorality of this age and the promotion of wickedness by men in rebellion against their Creator.

The prayer is God’s permission to resist evil, to take the high road and swim against the stream. It allows men to shout, “No king but King Jesus.” It is permission to adopt the motto, “One nation under God and one absolute law.” It is a prayer against the belief that man is God, that government is God, and that man’s laws or constitutions are absolute. It is against the status quo in which ambitious men seek to advance the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; against abortion, oppression, homosexuality, pornography, and greed; and against secularism, atheism, humanism, socialism, Marxism, and every other “ism” wherein secularists seek to build a city where man is the measure of all things.

It is a prayer against rulers in rebellion against the Lord and His anointed, governments that seek to enslave and control men through coercion, intimidation, and fear, and governments hostile to the maxim that the Bible is the source of all law or that break their own laws. It is against unjust laws and legislators who do mischief through law, creating man-made statutes and codes that enslave their citizenry, seeking to create a new world order through law,

promoting alien laws, and undermining the Ten Commandments and the virtues they advance: faithfulness, justice, and mercy.

It is a prayer against those who defraud others, rulers who steal from their people through the color of law, unlawful taxation, and the transfer of power from the family to the state. If you are angry at the godless politicians, this prayer and petition is for you.

Conclusion: The Ultimate Triumph of Christ's Kingdom

"Thy kingdom come." Because when His kingdom comes, all of that will vanish.

If you are really, genuinely, and truly tired of the corruption, fraud, tyranny, despotism, abuse of authority, then you need to learn to pray daily, yea, even hourly, this petition: "Thy kingdom come." You say, what good will that do? Well, let me just show you. Turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, beginning with verse 7.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

One day, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Every enemy of the kingdom shall be cast out, and God shall reign supremely, sovereignly, and absolutely, and by His grace and by His mercy, we will be subjects in that eternal kingdom.

He is on the throne. And our Lord taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." And when it comes, all of man's kingdoms will vanish and disappear. And Jesus Christ alone will be magnified in that day.

Father, in Thy name we bow to Thee. We ask You for Your mercy, for Your grace, for Your strength. And we ask You, Lord, to teach us

to understand the implications of "Thy kingdom come." Help us to seek it, to pray for it, to long for it, to desire it, and, Lord, to live as we are in it now in obedience to Thee in every area of our life. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

The Power of Faith

Hebrews 11:32–34 says:

"And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Introduction: The Question of Faith

Today I am dealing with this one little phrase found in verse 33: "subdued kingdoms." As I read through this passage again, it floored me. In light of what he said, I would really like to preach a message on each one of these little points.

So let me begin by asking some questions. Where is your faith? Where is your faith when you need it? Where is the evidence that you have faith and that you are living by faith?

Do you realize that we have been told three times in the New Testament that the just shall live by faith? For instance, in Romans 1:17, Paul said, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Then in Galatians 3:11, the scripture says, “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.”

Then in Hebrews 10 and verse 38, he says, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." And the Old Testament is equally as plain. For in the book of Habakkuk, chapter 2 and verse 4, we read this: "But the just shall live by his faith." So it doesn't matter if you look in the Old Testament, doesn't matter if you look in the New Testament, the scripture tells us that the just always live by faith. Now, I want you to hold Hebrews chapter 12, but I want you to look first of all in Matthew chapter 17, and then we're going to be turning to the book of Luke. Look in Matthew chapter 17 and verse 20. Matthew 17 and verse 20, then we'll go to the book of Luke. So watch Matthew 17 and verse 20. The Scripture says it like this: Matthew 17, verse 20, our Lord is speaking, and Jesus said unto them, "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and

The Power of Mustard Seed Faith

nothing shall be impossible unto you." Now, look at that again. Our Lord said, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Now, look in Luke chapter 17, if you would please, and verse 6, an interesting passage as well. Luke 17 and verse 6. And the Lord said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Now, I begin by asking, where's your faith? You may respond and you may say, "But I have saving faith and I'm saved by the grace of God." And my response would be, I'm thankful for salvation by grace through faith, and I'm thankful

that you were saved. But my question is, where's your conquering faith? Where's the faith that removes mountains? Where's the faith that removes trees and kingdoms and men? Now, twice our Lord said, "If you had the faith the size of a grain of a mustard seed, you should say to this mountain or you should say to this tree, 'Be thou removed,' and it would obey you." Most of us have probably never seen a mustard seed.

But they are about half the size of a poppy seed or about the size of the head of a straight pin. Now, if faith the size of the top of the head of a straight pin can move mountains and trees, what could faith the size of a peanut do? Just stop and think.

Hebrews 11 details many great and glorious deeds done by faith, in faith, and through faith. As you read Hebrews chapter 11, of all these mighty, wonderful acts and accomplishments performed by men and women, you will find that their great accomplishments are always preceded by two words: "by faith."

Hebrews 11: Faith in Action

Hebrews 11:32 says, "And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and the prophets."

The author of Hebrews intimates that he had said enough to prove the definition of faith given in Hebrews 11 and verse 1, and that by it, that is, by faith, the elders obtained a good report. Yet he had not said everything that he could say. He had much more to say, but he did not have the time to list all of the great acts and accomplishments performed by faith. Therefore, he says, "And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of." In other words, there was not simply enough time left to tell of all these wonderful accomplishments done in and through and by faith.

Have you ever pondered upon or meditated upon the power of faith? Have you ever wondered what exactly could be accomplished by faith, or what could be accomplished by your faith? Have you ever wondered why we do not exercise faith, yet read all of these great and wonderful things?

We know already, from reading the Scriptures, that the just shall live by faith. We also know by Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must first believe that he is, and secondly, that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him."

This is what struck me: “And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, and of Samson, of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” When I read these verses the other day, I was struck anew and afresh with the thundering truth that these men actually lived out their faith. Their faith was applied action. The men mentioned in verse 32 actually subdued kingdoms. They actually wrought righteousness. They actually obtained the fulfillment of promises. They literally stopped the mouths of lions and did everything else mentioned here. But the part that really struck me was this: they subdued kingdoms. Stop and ponder that for a moment. Entire kingdoms were subdued by faith.

Civil Rulers as Enemies of God

Do you know a kingdom that needs to be subdued? How about America? One objection says, “Wait a minute, I know enough about the Bible to know that the kingdoms Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, and David subdued were enemy kingdoms. They were enemies to God and enemies to God’s people.” So what is the difference? America has become the enemy of God and the enemy of God’s people. What we have forgotten is this: civil rulers and civil governments can become the enemy of God just like anyone or anything else can.

Now, hold Hebrews 11, but turn back in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 15. I want to show you the evidence of how a civil ruler can become the enemy of God and the enemy of God’s people. King Saul was king; he had been anointed king. Notice 1 Samuel 15, beginning in verse 10: “Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It

repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me." How do we know that Saul turned back from following God? Here it is: "He hath not performed my commandments." It grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night. How do we know that King Saul turned back? How do we know that King Saul became the enemy of God and the enemy of God's people? The answer is because he had not performed the law of God. He had not obeyed God's law.

Now, the interesting thing is this: if God classifies this civil ruler as his enemy for disobeying his law, where does that put the other civil rulers? In verses 26 through 29, I want you to see what God says about King Saul, beginning in verse 26. Saul had asked Samuel to turn again and worship with him, and Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." As Samuel turned about to go away, Saul laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. Samuel said unto him, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent." In other words, Saul, you've just done it. You've lost the kingdom. It is rent out of your hands.

And you remember when Saul disobeyed God, he caused the people to sin and to disobey God as well. So he became not only the enemy of God, he became the enemy of God's people.

Now look in 2 Kings chapter 21, verse 9. Manasseh was the most wicked king in the southern kingdom. In fact, let us read verse 8, just so you can see the context. God had promised and God had said, "Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them." Now watch what happened. "But they hearkened not." Hearkened not to what? To God's law. To God's commandment. "But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel."

So here is the civil ruler. Here is the civil government seducing the nation into idolatry. If you read what Manasseh did, he not only legitimized sodomy, he even placed sodomites in the temple of the Lord. He put a grove there. He did all kind of wicked, vile things, much like the United States is doing today. Turn to the book of Hosea, right after the book of Daniel. Look in chapter 8. Hosea, chapter 8.

I want you to notice what God says in Hosea, chapter 8. Begin there in verse 3; in fact, let us read verse 2. Here is how wicked Israel was: "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee." Oh, do you really? Then he says, "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him." Why?

"They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off." Now, when the Bible says—and God is speaking here—that they have set up kings, but not by Him, and made princes, and He knew it not, this does not mean that God was ignorant of it. No, what He means is that they set up kings and princes contrary to His law. They violated His word, and in doing so they also set up their idols. They fell into idolatry.

In other words, a wicked civil ruler, as we have seen in every one of these instances, always leads the people in idolatry. Look in your Bibles to the book of Micah, right after Jonah and right before Nahum. Turn to Micah, chapter 6, and begin reading with verse 16. Watch this carefully. What does God say?

"For the statutes of Omri are kept." Remember, Omri was the father of Ahab. "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people."

What is God complaining about? They are walking in the statutes of Omri and the statutes of Ahab. In other words, they are following man's law and not God's law.

Why did God send the children of Israel into captivity? Here it is in black and white, and it is also why He sent Judah into captivity. "For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord

their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods." They feared other gods. How do we know they feared other gods? God just told us, but there has to be evidence.

"And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made." What did they do? They swapped God's law for man's law. They obeyed the laws of man and refused to obey the law of God. God says this is why He sent them into captivity.

"Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only." Here it is in black and white: "Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they had made." They were not without law; they were just without God's law. God counted it as idolatry—spiritual adultery. And I know you know this verse, but look in your Bibles to Psalm 94.

We must see this again in light of all of this. Psalm 94 is very plain. Beginning with verse 20, God asks, “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?” A throne speaks of government, and a throne of iniquity speaks of a wicked civil government. Here is the question: Shall a wicked civil government have fellowship with God when that wicked civil government frames, or makes, mischief or sin by law—when it makes sin legal? The next verse says, “They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.” So the question God asks is this: Can a wicked civil government have fellowship with God when it makes sin legal?

The answer is absolutely not. No; the civil ruler and civil governments can very easily and very quickly become the enemies of God. This is what happens when civil government frames mischief by law and gathers itself against the soul of the righteous and condemns innocent blood.

Now go back in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 11 and look again at verse 32: “And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of

David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms." They were overthrowing wicked civil governments. The men mentioned in this verse are from the times of the judges, with the exception of David. The judges were those men whom God raised up to govern His people and to deliver His people. Four judges are mentioned specifically: Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah. Samuel was also counted as a judge, but he was more than a judge; he was a judge and a prophet.

The apostle does not present these men in chronological order. Barak lived before Gideon, Jephthah before Samson, and Samuel before David. He is not presenting facts in their chronological order. Rather, he is giving us instances of God's grace and God's power manifested through these men by faith and through faith. Each one of these men subdued kingdoms. Now I want to take these four men and show you how, by faith, they subdued kingdoms. Notice Gideon first.

Gideon: Faith Overcomes Fear and Idolatry

Turn in your Bibles to Judges chapter 6. If you read that chapter, you will find the call of Gideon. The first thing we remember about Gideon is Gideon and his 300 men attacking the enemy with lamps and trumpets. Originally, however, Gideon had far more than 300 men—about 32,000 to begin with.

If you were going into battle, humanly speaking, would you be more comfortable with 32,000 men beside you or with 300? Humanly speaking, we want 32,000. Now look in Judges chapter 7, beginning at verse 2, and see how God went in and out.

"And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me."

"Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead." And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand. Over two thirds were fearful and afraid and left.

"And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go." So he brought down the people unto the water. The Lord said unto Gideon, "Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink."

"And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place."

Stop and think. Gideon began with 32,000 men. Now he is cut down to 300 men.

What about the opposing force, the enemy? Judges 6:3 says, "And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord."

They were like grasshoppers. Judges 7:12 says, "And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude." We have never seen anything like this, but in those times and places, grasshoppers, or locusts, could black out the sun. Here were their camels as the sand by the sea.

Humanly speaking, what man in his right mind would attack such a large host with only 300 men? We would probably follow the old adage, “Discretion is the better part of valor.” It is like Bushwhacker Johnston, the Confederate major. He said that when sometimes they were outnumbered 10 or 15 to one, they had to lead the Yankees. You would think there would be time to lead these many knights. But stop and think about this: the 300 men could not even wield their swords. They could not hold their swords in their hands.

Judges 7:20 records: “And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.” Thus, they had a lamp in one hand and a trumpet in the other.

Stop and think with me of the faith required to attack such a large host with only 300 men. You could not even hold your weapon in your hand, being ready, because you had a lantern in one hand and a trumpet in the other. Your tactic was to scare and confuse a very large army. After you had broken your pitcher and blown your trumpet, you had to stand absolutely still.

Judges 7:21 says, “And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.” Not only did you have to stand still; if your tactic did not work, you died. So my question is, where is your faith? Would you have fought with Gideon, or would you have been one of those who returned home and said, “I’ll let someone else do it”?

We normally think about the great victory that Gideon won by faith, and certainly it was a great victory. But what we fail to discern is that this great victory was preceded by a simple act of obedience, which required a lot of courage. Go back in your Bibles to Judges chapter 6, beginning at verse 25. Here is what God required Gideon to do prior to any battle with the Midianites:

“And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: and build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the

second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down. Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night. And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built."

"And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it."

The first thing Gideon had to do was get rid of the idolatry in his own life and home. Evidently, Joash was quite wealthy. Every time you read the word "grove" in the Bible, except when Abraham planted a grove, it refers to an Asherah, a female sexual goddess. Here was Baal and here was the Asherah. They cut down the Asherah, toppled Baal, and used the wooden Asherah to burn the sacrifice.

Since the men of the city evidently worshiped there as well, they were ready to kill Gideon. The point is this: you and I will never be used of God in great battles and victories until we learn obedience in the smaller battles, in the little things. We will never be used of God in great battles until we conquer our fears in ourselves in the smaller battles.

Jeremiah 12:5 sums up what I am trying to say: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" If you cannot take it running with footmen, how can you run against horses? If you cannot take it in the land of peace, where there are hardly any problems, what will you do when the Jordan overflows and floods, and you have problems everywhere? In other words, if you cannot function in the smaller battles, how will you ever function in the greater battles? If you cannot exercise faith in

that which is least, how can you exercise faith in that which is greatest? Gideon subdued kingdoms.

Barak: Faith Against Overwhelming Odds

Secondly, there is Barak, whom you will find in Judges 4. Barak overthrew Jabin, king of Canaan, and delivered Israel from servitude. Judges 4:3 says, “And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.” Jabin, king of Canaan, had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

Barak was far inferior, militarily speaking, to his enemies, and he was guided only by the counsel of a woman, Deborah. Tradition says—I cannot prove this, and you cannot disprove it—that Deborah was Barak’s wife. A few have suggested that she might have been his mother.

She is called in Judges 4 “the wife of Lapidoth.” But that phrase may also be translated “a woman of Lapidoth,” identifying a place rather than her husband. Others have translated “Lapidoth” as “torches,” meaning that she was a woman of a fiery spirit, or a woman with a torch-like spirit. The word “Barak” means “lightning.” Thus, some would say that “Lapidoth” is not necessarily a place, but identifies Deborah’s personality.

Gideon was outnumbered, but Barak was not only outnumbered, he was outgunned. He had to face 900 chariots of iron. Moreover, Jabin had 20 years of experience in tyrannizing and oppressing the children of Israel. And yet Barak believed that God would deliver Jabin, Sisera, and those people into his hands.

Judges 4:14 says, “And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.” Then, “And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet.”

Barak had insisted that Deborah go with him. She agreed, but said that God would deliver the man he wanted into the hand of a woman. Sisera ran away and reached the tent of Jael. He asked for water, and she gave him milk and butter in a lordly dish, the Bible says. He told her that if any man came by the tent door asking for him, she should say he was not there.

Sisera lay down to rest, exhausted, and Jael covered him. When he went to sleep, she took a hammer and a tent peg and helped him to sleep permanently. She put it right in the temple and drove his head to the ground. Barak came along, and she stepped outside and said, "Come inside and I'll show you the man whom you seek."

The point is this: although God delivered Sisera into the hand of a woman, God delivered the whole kingdom into the hand of Barak. Judges 4:23 says, "So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan." Here is Barak, who subdued a kingdom by faith, with far fewer men and far fewer weapons.

Samson: Faith to Fight Alone

Or shall I say, with inferior weaponry. Thirdly, here is Samson, whose life you will find in Judges chapters 13 through 16. Samson was a mere countryman, and he had never really used any type of arms except husbandry implements for working in the fields. What in the world could a simple country farmer do against such proven conquerors? The Philistines had conquered the entire nation of Israel, and Samson was appointed by God to deliver Israel from their oppressive yoke. God used him and gave him extraordinary assistance, and Samson discomfited his enemies on many occasions.

Gideon had 300; he was outnumbered. Barak had 10,000, but he was still outnumbered and outgunned. At least he had some help. When you come to Samson, it was one man against an entire nation. The unique thing about Samson is that he fought alone. I will tell you something else that is mind-boggling: his own people fought against him.

It seems as if, oftentimes, the ones you really try to help are the ones who will plunge the knife in your back. It is just like when David delivered Keilah. When Saul found out that David was in Keilah, he said, “God has delivered him into my hands because he is gotten up into a city with walls.” David then inquired of Abiathar the priest, “Will Saul most certainly come?” “Yes,” he said, “he’ll come.” Then David asked, “Will the people of Keilah deliver me into his hands?” God said, “They will deliver thee.” David had just delivered the people of Keilah; he had saved their skins. Now they were willing to turn David over to Saul to save their own skin. Some people never change.

Samson had been working on the Philistines. He said unto them, “Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.” He smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter, then went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam. The Philistines went up, pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. And the men of Judah said, “Why are ye come up against us?” Not the Philistines, but the men of Judah—the Judahites—said this.

"And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us. Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves. And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock."

Can you imagine the sissyhood, the cowardness, when they looked at Samson and said, "What have you done to us? Don't you know the Philistines are our rulers? You've gotten us in trouble. They're going to take it out on us. They'll hurt us. We'll lose our crops. We'll lose our homes. What have you done? Don't you know they are rulers?"

They knew nothing about justice. They could care less about justice. They were willing to bind the only man who was fighting for

them and deliver him into the hands of their enemies, knowing that they wanted to kill Samson.

When Samson came down from that rock, the Spirit of God came upon him, and he burst those bonds, picked up the jawbone of an ass, and killed 1,000 Philistines. Samson was one man against an entire nation. He fought, and he fought alone.

It is one thing when you have your friends, your family, and your neighbors with you, willing to help you and stand with you. That is quite an encouragement. But when your own family and friends are against you, and you have to stand and fight—even for those who hate you, despise you, and would destroy you—and fight for them, that is different. Samson subdued the Philistines. You know the story: he killed more in his death than he did in his life. I do not know how many he killed in his life, but he killed 1,000 at one time right here. He had to fight, and he had to fight alone. In spite of all his faults and failings, God used him.

He smote the Philistines until he had subdued a kingdom. Number four, Jephthah. You will find Jephthah in Judges 11 and 12, beginning in Judges 11. Jephthah is probably one of the lesser-known judges. He had been cast out from his people because he was the son of a strange woman—that is, the son of a prostitute. The Bible says that he would not inherit with them because he was the son of a strange woman.

Jephthah: Faith in God's Promises

They kicked him out, and Jephthah rightly believed that he was hated and despised even by his own family. But when the Ammonites made war against the Israelites, and the Israelites were losing, they came to Jephthah for help. Here is another truth: many who would not usually even give you the time of day will hurry to you when they are in need or in danger. Jephthah agreed to fight and help deliver a people already engaged in, and losing, a war. He embraced what you and I would call a hopeless cause.

In Judges 11, beginning with verse 5, we read: “And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob: and they said

unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?" They told him they would make him their captain, and Jephthah agreed. His faith was revealed in his belief in the promises and providence of God. The children of Ammon were trying to take land they had never owned, land that had been given to the children of Israel.

In Judges 11, verse 12, Jephthah sent messengers to the king of Ammon: "And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?" The king answered: "Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan:"

SCRIPTURE READING - Judges 11:13-19 (KJV)

> Now therefore restore those lands again peaceably. And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon, and said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon: but when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness unto the Red sea, and came to Kadesh; then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken thereto. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab: but he would not consent: and Israel abode in Kadesh. Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab. And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land into my place.

"But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. And the Lord God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel

possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country. And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.

"So now the Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess." Jephthah continued, "And now art thou any thing better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them, while Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that be along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? Why therefore did ye not recover them within that time? Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the Lord the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon." Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

Jephthah was saying, "God gave us that land, and we have had it in possession for 300 years. Now you are going to make claim on it. If the land was yours, why did you not make claim before 300 years was up? It was never yours. God gave it to us." Jephthah was believing the promise that God gave to Abraham. God used Jephthah to defeat the Ammonites. Judges 11:32-33 says, "So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands. And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel."

Summary of Their Faith

The faith of Gideon consisted in throwing down the altar of Baal and cutting down the grove in obedience to the command of God, and then following God's word to the letter as God ordered the battle. The faith of Barak consisted in believing the revelation made to Deborah and the command to go against Jabin's numerous army. Samson's faith consisted in obedience to the impulses that the Spirit

of God placed upon him in his life as he fought against God's enemies. Jephthah's faith consisted particularly in believing the promise that God gave to Abraham that they would possess that land, and he fought.

As this is said of David, it can also be said of Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah. David said, "I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me. They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me."

Of course, David's victories foreshadowed the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. These four men, along with David, subdued kingdoms through faith.

Applications: Faith Does Not Look at Circumstances

Faith does not look at circumstances. Where would Gideon be if he looked at the multitudes that were before him without faith? Faith does not look at weaponry. Where would Barak be if he only looked at the great arsenal of Sisera? Faith does not look at others. Faith looks at God alone. Where would Samson be if he looked to his brethren for help? Faith does not look at the world. It looks only at the promises of God.

Where would Jephthah be if he listened to the news as published by the king of Ammon? Where would Jephthah be if he read only the history books as published by the Ammonites? Faith looks at God and His word. Faith does not need or heed the advice, counsel, word, or comfort of man. It respects God and God alone.

Applications: Faith Requires Fighting

These men subdued kingdoms, and they did it by faith. Faith does not preclude fighting. Each of these heroes of faith fought. They fought according to God's word and followed Him explicitly, but they did fight.

One of our problems today is this: we want victory without faith and without fighting. Neither one is possible. We must fight to win, and we must fight by faith. Our forefathers said something like this: "Trust in God and keep your powder dry." The phrase is actually attributed to Oliver Cromwell. He said it like this: "Put your trust in God, my boys, and keep your powder dry." We have to fight. We may have to fight physically, but we always have to fight spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. If we expect to conquer any of our fears and any of our enemies without fighting, we are mistaken.

Conclusion: Subduing Kingdoms by Faith

If faith the size of a mustard seed is able to move mountains and remove trees, surely such a faith is able to subdue kingdoms and bring them in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thankfully, one day we will hear with our own ears the seventh angel as he says, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

"And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." All through faith. We need to exercise the faith that God has given us.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray for your direction. We pray for your help. We pray, Heavenly Father, that we would honor thee. And Lord, we want to present our bodies unto thee a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto thee, which is our reasonable service. May we not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. And Lord, I pray that you would stir

us up and help us, Lord, to desire to subdue a kingdom for the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray, Amen.

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CHAPTER 13

Biblical Philosophy of History

A Biblical Philosophy of History

The Lord has been gracious to me in the last couple of weeks. I have more messages than I can shake a stick at, and I am thankful. I do want you to pray that the Lord will help me. Someone called me a week or so ago in dire straits about some answers. I gave him the answers and got to thinking that the matter really needed to be taught, so I worked on it and got it finished. Then something else came up, and I worked on that and got it finished as well. There are so many messages that I am eager to preach.

I want you to listen carefully and really grasp what I am dealing with today. I will quote a lot of Scripture; some passages I will ask you to turn to, and you may write them down.

Introduction: The Command to Remember History

The message is entitled “A Biblical Philosophy of History,” with two subtitles: “Is History Relevant?” and “Why Should We Study

History?" Open your Bibles to Deuteronomy 32. Beginning with verse 7, notice what God commands: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations, ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

History as the Outworking of God's Eternal Decree

"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."

There is indeed a biblical philosophy of history. History is not only necessary and relevant; it is absolutely necessary to understanding the eternal decree of God. We are told in Ephesians 3:11 that God has an eternal purpose, singular, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. We refer to that as the eternal decree of God.

His decree encompassed all things. There is absolutely nothing outside the eternal decree of God. If anything can come to pass without God or without His divine decree, then God is not God. Whatever is beyond God and beyond His control would itself be God. Therefore, as Christians, we are forced to confess and acknowledge that absolutely nothing is beyond God and His decree. Since His decree was before the foundation of the world, it is indeed an eternal decree.

You may pick up any theology book, especially systematic theology, and you will always find a section on the decrees of God. We speak of the decrees of God because we can only think in succession, one thought after another. God is not like that. To God, it is just one thought, and that one thought encompasses and entails everything that has ever come to pass, that is present, and that will ever come to pass. God has decreed everything that comes to pass in time and history. Therefore, He is able to think one thought; it is that one decree of God that encompasses absolutely everything.

History is also linear, like a straight line. It has a beginning and an ending. Whenever you hear someone talk about history repeating itself, history is not cyclical. It is not circular; it does not go round and round. The reason we keep repeating ourselves is not because history is cyclical, but because we do not listen and do not learn. We

keep committing the same sins and making the same errors; therefore, we still reap the same judgments. History is linear: it has a definite beginning, at creation, and a definite ending, at the end of the world. History is only applicable to us.

There is no past or future with God. With God, everything is one eternal present. We are concerned with the past, the present, and the future, but God knows the end from the beginning because He has decreed both of them; therefore, they are both one eternal present with God. Isaiah 46:10 says, "Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Listen to what the Bible says: "Declaring the end from the beginning." In Acts 15:18, we read, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Everything God decreed in eternity comes to pass in time. We are indeed concerned with the past, the present, and the future, but we must know our past in order to obey our Heavenly Father and to understand that it is His eternal decree that comes to pass in time.

Once it comes to pass in time, it becomes known as history. Look at verse 7 in Deuteronomy 32: “Remember the days of old. Consider the years of many generations. Ask thy father, and he will show thee. Thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.”

God commands us to remember. We must remember, consider, ask, and be taught. God did something in time when He divided the nations and their inheritance. Why did He do that? What does it mean? How does it apply to us? What are we to learn? What does it mean that God set the bounds of the people? The answer to all these questions can only be learned by studying history.

The Bible is a history book. Yes, there are twelve books of history in the Bible. But in reality, the entire Bible is a history book, because it speaks either about that which has come to pass or that which is going to come to pass in time. Once it comes to pass, it will be history. Since the entirety of the Bible will be fulfilled in time, it is

one great history book. God tells us that we must know, learn, and teach.

The Necessity of Learning from Past Works of God

Psalm 78, beginning with verse 1: “Give ear, O my people, to my law. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known and our fathers have told us.”

“We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord and his strength and his wonderful works that he has done.” Have all the wonderful works that God has done been recorded in Scripture? Of course not. God has done many wonderful works in Providence that are not recorded here.

“And all of his wonderful works that he had done, for he established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generations to come might know them, even the children which shall be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.” Here, then, is a passage where we are commanded not to hide the things of God from our children, but to continue to teach them and tell them all of the wonderful works of God that he has done.

Many of those wonderful works are recorded in the Bible. Others are recorded in other history books, but we are required to teach them. What is history? The word history is literally from the Greek historia, brought down from the Greek to English letter by letter. It literally means inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation.

Hence, history is the discovery, collection, organization, and presentation of information about past events that enables one to make applications to present situations and circumstances. An understanding of the past demonstrates the work of God in time, which eventually becomes history.

Our Lord says this to the Pharisees: “For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not. But the publicans and

the harlots believed him." "And you, when you had seen it, repented not afterwards that ye might believe."

Christ is holding the Pharisees accountable and responsible to profit from the work of God in the lives of other people. The publicans and the harlots believed John; that is, they repented. But when the Pharisees saw it, they repented not. They knew it was real, genuine, and the work of God, and Christ held them responsible to learn from what happened in the lives of others. History teaches us exactly how God has worked in the lives of men and women in the past.

There is no such thing as a division between secular history and religious history. All history is religious because God is its author, and it comes to pass in time. Nothing comes to pass in time except that which God has ordained. We are not merely to profit from the lives of men and women; we are also to profit from all the works of God in time.

Consider Amos chapter 4, where God chastised Israel by drought, famine, locusts, plagues, war, and supernatural interventions, yet they did not repent. When God brought each judgment upon them in succession, after each one He said, "Yet you have not returned to me, saith the LORD." God brought a judgment in time, which became history, and then said, "You have not returned to me." Was Israel not responsible to profit from what God had done to them in time? Are we not responsible to profit from what God did to Israel, knowing that if we commit the same sins and fail to repent, we will receive the same judgments? Are we responsible to profit from what God brings to pass in nature? He certainly held Israel responsible for that in Amos chapter 4. In Joel chapter 1, God sent plagues of locusts, caterpillars, and palmerworms as His judgments.

The crops were destroyed, devastated, and eaten up. Are we responsible to learn from crop failures, agricultural disasters, and insect plagues? The answer is yes. There is no such thing as luck, chance, fate, or fortune in a world ruled by God. Nothing comes to pass in time except that which God has ordained in eternity. When God brings it to pass in time, it is for a specific reason.

Consider all this weather: droughts, floods, and heat. Look in Job 37, beginning with verse 9. The Scripture says, “Out of the south cometh a whirlwind, and cold out of the north. By the breath of God, frost is given, and the breadth of the waters is straightened. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud, he scattereth his bright cloud, it is turned round about by his counsels, that they may do whatsoever he commanded them upon the face of the world in the earth. He causeth it, drought, frost, hail, whatever. He causeth it to come, whether for correction or for his land or for mercy.”

Let me ask you a question: Are we responsible to learn from meteorological and climatological events? The answer is yes. Nothing happens by chance. God says whatever weather he sends, it is either for a blessing, for chastisement, or for mercy.

By the way, our word meteorology is straight from the Greek as well. Meteoros is the Greek word which means lofty, high, above, or in the sky, and logia is logic or study. So meteorology is simply the logical study of that which comes from above, or that which comes from the sky. Does God control that which comes from the sky? The answer is yes, he does. I just read it to you in Job 37.

But listen to this in Jeremiah 14, verse 22. Jeremiah asked, “Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rains?” The word vanities here means idols. So he is asking, “Are there any among the idols of the Gentiles that can cause rain?”

"Or can the heavens give showers? Art not thou he, O Lord our God? Therefore, we will wait upon thee, for thou hast made all things." What is Jeremiah saying? Only God controls the weather. Only God can give rain and send water from the sky. The study and teaching of history will always be important because it is a compendium of all events and people that have brought us to where we are today.

If we know where we are and where we came from, then we actually know where we are in the present. If we are unaware of the persons and events that have made us into what we are today, then we are ripe for destruction.

The Danger of Erasing History

Milan Kundera said this: "The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history, then have someone write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long, the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was."

General Patrick Cleburne, who was killed at the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee, understood this principle. He said, "Surrender means the history of this heroic struggle will be written by the enemy, that our youth will be trained by Northern school teachers. We will learn from Northern school books their version of the war. Will be impressed by all the influences of history and education to regard our gallant dead as traitors and our maimed veterans as fit subjects for derision."

Has it not come to pass? All you have to do to destroy a people is destroy their history. General Cleburne was right. It has happened to us. We have been completely inundated, and we have totally swallowed the northern view of history. When you erase a people's culture, memory, and history, you destroy people.

Those who have been and are in positions of authority and are in rebellion to God understand this simple truth. Karl Marx said, "People separated from their history are easily persuaded." Joseph Stalin said, "Who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past." Adolf Hitler said, "The big lie is a major untruth uttered frequently by leaders as a means of duping and controlling the constituency."

You say, "Brother Weaver, I don't have too much time for history. I mean, I live in the present, and I've got the future to worry about. History is a study of the past. Given all the demands of time in the present and being concerned about the future, why bother with the past?" The answer is simple. We must study history in order that we may profit from the lives, the wisdom and the mistakes of others. If I can study and learn in a few hours, or even a few days or maybe even a week, what it's taken someone else a lifetime to learn, I'm much better prepared for that which is to come.

Profiting from the Lives of Others

And do you realize that our Lord commanded us to do exactly that? Look in your Bibles to the book of James, chapter 5, verses 10 and 11. James says, "Take my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering, affliction and patience."

"Behold, we count them happy, which endure. You've heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

Now, let me ask you a question. Had you rather read the book of Job and learn the principles, or would you rather go through what Job went through? Had you rather just read the book of Jeremiah and see what Jeremiah suffered, or had you rather go through everything that Jeremiah went through? I could apply that to Robert E. Lee. I could apply that to Oliver Cromwell. I could apply it to any believer in history. I could apply it to any wicked man in history, and you'll see why just momentarily. But look in the book of Hebrews. Turn back a few pages to Hebrews 11. This is what Hebrews 11 is all about. Look, if you would please, beginning there in verse 32. I'm skipping most of this, but beginning with verse 32, "And what shall I more say?"

"For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, and of Samson, of Jephthah, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourging, yea, moreover, bonds of imprisonment. They were stoned. They were sawn asunder. They were tempted. They were slain with a sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and the caves of the earth."

Now, my question is, had you just rather read Fox's Book of Martyrs and learn from that, or do you want to experience it yourself? Would you not rather read a book on the Scottish Covenanters than be thrown in the Tower of London, in a dungeon, and then taken out, drawn and quartered? This is exactly what, "Take my brethren, the prophets," means: learn from them.

Matthew Henry, who died in 1714, said this: "The remains of good and great men like Elijah's mantle ought to be gathered up and preserved by their survivors. That is, their works follow them in the reward of them. They that stay behind may be in their benefit." So we ought to gather up all the good and great works of godly men, that we who stay behind, we who are still alive, may profit.

We could apply those words to Peter, Paul, James, and John, and to a host of others. We could also apply them to Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Robert L. Dabney, and others who lived in the nineteenth century, or in any other century. I love what the historian Macaulay said: "A people which takes no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestry will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered by remote descendants."

Again, we have to study history not only so that we may profit from the lives, mistakes, and wisdom of others, but also so that we may see the handiwork of God in time. R. J. Rushdoony said this about history, and if you do not get anything but the first line, get it.

History as the Conflict Between God and Anti-God

History, therefore, is not the outworking of impersonal forces, but a personal conflict between the forces of God and anti-God, Christ and anti-Christ, with the ultimate victory assured to God and His Christ. The Bible as a whole presents a view of history as conspiracy, with Satan and man determined to assert their right to be gods, determining good and evil for themselves. From beginning to end, this is the perspective of Scripture, and only a willful misreading of it can lead to any other position.

History is not some impersonal force. It is the great and grand conflict between God and Satan, between Christ and Antichrist. Do we wish to avoid the mistakes, sins, and errors of Adam, Noah,

Abraham, Lot, and a multitude of others? If so, we must study their lives. Do we need and do we wish to emulate their virtues, their obedience, and their godliness? If so, we must study their lives. The same would apply, however, to Stalin, Hitler, Mao Zedong, and a host of others of their ilk, if we want to avoid their mentality and their sins. We must understand an unbiblical mindset in order that we may avoid it.

I never will forget when I was in college, when I had a class on philosophy. I despised that class. I thought to myself, "I'm here to study the Bible. What do I need to know what Plato and Socrates and Aristotle said?" I thought this was a bunch of junk. They were ungodly, unsaved. Why should I learn? It took me several years after I was out of university, when I was studying, to really find out that there is a biblical philosophy. I need to know what these other men said and understand their errors so that I can refute those errors from the Word of God. There is indeed a biblical philosophy; we have to understand the unbiblical mindset as well. If we want to understand a biblical mindset, we need to study not only the Scripture, but men like Lee and Jackson and Cleburne, Cromwell, Stewart, Ewell, and a host of others, and discover what made them great, how it was that God used them, and then apply those same principles and precepts to

Is it important for you to know that Kings Ahab, Manasseh, and Jeroboam were wicked, vile, and mass murderers? These men made war upon their own citizens. Do they deserve respect, honor, and recognition? Of course not. Why? There is a biblical answer. Romans 13, verse 7, tells us that we are to give honor where honor is due. If a person is dishonorable, living dishonorably, and doing dishonorable things, we have no right or reason to honor him.

Applying Biblical Principles to Historical Figures

If you want to be honored, you must live an honorable life. Ahab, Manasseh, Jeroboam, and a host of others were very dishonorable wretches. That same truth might apply to William Tecumseh Sherman, Philip Henry Sheridan, and a host of other soldiers, quote unquote, politicians. How would you know whom to honor and whom to disregard if you did not study history? How would you

know who was a mass murderer and who was not if you did not study Scripture? How would you know whether one warred according to the principles of the Word of God, or contrary to the Word of God, if you did not study history as well as the Bible?

Let me tell you why I could not and would not ever try to honor either Sheridan or Sherman. Sherman wrote to General Grant at the end of January 1865: "Our method of warfare is different from that in Europe. We're not fighting against enemy armies, but against an enemy people, both young and old, rich and poor, must feel the iron hand of war in the same way as organized armies."

"In this respect, my march through Georgia was a wonderful success." What did he just say? I didn't fight against an army. I fought against non-combatants—women and children, and old men.

Again, Sherman said, "The government of the United States has in North Alabama any and all rights which they choose to enforce in war. To take their lives, their homes, their lands, their everything because they cannot deny that war does exist there and war is simply power unrestrained by constitution or compact. To the persistent secessionists, why, death is mercy and the quicker he or she is disposed of the better."

What did he just say? Kill the women, kill the men. You don't have to be in the army or the military. To the persistent secessionist—man, woman, boy, or girl—death is mercy, and the quicker he or she is disposed of, the better.

In a July 31st, 1862 letter to his wife, Sherman wrote, "The war will soon assume a turn to extermination, not of soldiers alone. That is the least part of the trouble, but the people. There's a class of people, men, women and children who must be killed or banished before you can hope for peace and order."

Before he started his march through Georgia, he also said, "Until we can repopulate Georgia, it is useless to occupy it. But the utter destructions of its roads, houses and people will cripple their military resources. I can make the march and make Georgia howl."

After the war was over, Sheridan and Sherman went out West to take care of the Indians. General Sherman said, "The more Indians we can kill this year, the fewer we will need to kill the next. Because

the more I see the Indians, the more convinced I become that they must either all be killed or maintained as a species of pauper."

"Their attempt at civilization is ridiculous." Sherman said, "We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux, even to the extermination of men, women and children." When Union soldiers went into Indian camps, they shot down old men, women, and children who were not even armed. Philip Sheridan was just as bad as Sherman, and General Grant, who was over them, was just as bad as either of them.

Grant was a cigar-smoking drunk whose administration was filled with corruption. Yet he gave Sheridan an order to destroy the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. Sheridan systematically looted, burned, and destroyed crops, homes, barns, and everything he could find. Finally, he reported to Grant that even a crow flying over the Shenandoah Valley would have to take his rations with him. There was nothing left.

The old adage, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," was told concerning Sheridan during his campaign against the Indians. Commander-in-Chief Tesawee, or Silverknife, reputedly told Sheridan in 1869, "Me Tesawee, me good Indians." Sheridan is said to have replied, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead." Hence it came down, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian."

Sherman and Sheridan killed civilians, women, and children, not only in the South, but among the Indian tribes after the war was over. Why do I need to know these facts? So that I may know whether they deserve honor and recognition, and whether they thought according to the Bible. When you examine what they did and read Deuteronomy 20:19-20 and 1 Samuel 15:6, you find that these men made war contrary to the Bible. God forbids war against creation and against non-combatants, yet they did exactly that. How can you know whether Sherman and Sheridan were the good guys or the bad guys unless you study history and know the Word of God?

The Timeless Relevance of Historical Principles

Why is the war of northern aggression relevant? Why study something that happened 150 years ago? If the War of 1861 to 1865

is irrelevant because it happened so long ago, why should we study or know about the War of 1776 to 1783? It is even further back in time. Why was the War for American Independence important? What were the causes? What were the issues?

What were the principles involved? Is there a connection between the principles and the issues of 1776 and 1861? Why did our founding fathers resist and fight against George III? Were the same principles of 1776 involved in the War of 1861? Why should we know anything about Jamestown, the Pilgrims, or the Puritan fathers? What has 1607 and 1620 got to do with anything today? Were there causes, issues, and principles involved that are still connected to 1776 and finally again in 1861?

Why did the Mayflower sail from Holland? Who was on board that ship, and why? What is the significance of the Mayflower Compact? Is it relevant today? Very obviously, 1620 is a whole lot further off than 1861. Is it relevant? Who gets to determine whether something is relevant or not relevant? Who sets himself up as the judge of history and determines what should be studied and what should not be studied? Who has the authority to say that something that happened in a certain period of time is irrelevant? Why would something from 1861 to 1865 be irrelevant when something in 1620 would be relevant? So who gets to say?

Who is going to bring God's acts in time and in providence to their own bar of human reasoning and puny understanding? I want you to look in Romans 11, verse 33. The Apostle Paul writes, "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor? Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"

Now watch: “For of him, and through him, and to him are just a few things.” Oh, that’s not what it says, is it? “For of him and through him and to him are just certain subjects of history that someone determines are relevant.” No. “For of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

Verse 36 says it all. “For of him,” that is originally, “and through him,” that is providentially, “and to him,” that is ultimately, “are all things.” Why? The answer is because all things only have meaning in relationship to God. He ordained them all. Nothing comes to pass in time except that which God ordained in eternity. He is the sovereign God.

If you deny God’s absolute sovereignty, if you try to say that of Him and through Him and to Him are not all things, then you may safely decide what has meaning and what does not have meaning. You then may bring God’s sovereign providence to your bar of human reasoning and human understanding, and you can sit in counsel against God.

So I’m just trying to ask the questions and use the same logic. If someone says that the war of 1861 to 1865 is irrelevant, why should we study something over 150 years ago? I just asked. Was it important to know about 1607 and 1620? Was it important to know about 1776? How about this one?

Did the Solemn League and Covenant brought out by the Covenanters have any impact upon America? The timeline from 1638 to 1688 seems like a very, very long time ago. What possible connection could something in the 1630s and 1640s and 50s and 60s and 70s and 80s have anything to do with us today?

You’ve got to remember those Scottish Covenanters were Presbyterians. Those Presbyterians in Scotland were fighting despotism and tyranny, and it was their fight that had a decided effect and result upon America. Those Scots Presbyterians persevered in a biblical framework and a biblical reference in regard to tyranny and despotism. Consequently, many of their descendants settled in the southern states.

I wonder if that had anything to do with 1776. I wonder if it had anything to do with 1861. And the answer is yes. In 1776, Horace Walpole, the Prime Minister of England, said of the colonies, “Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson.” He was talking about John Witherspoon, president of Princeton University and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. In England, the war for independence was known as the Presbyterian Rebellion.

An ardent colonial supporter of George III wrote home: "I fix all the blame for these extraordinary proceedings upon the Presbyterians. They have been the chief and principal instruments in all these flaming measures. They always do and ever will act against government from the restless and turbulent anti-monarchial spirit which has always distinguished them everywhere." The Presbyterians were known for fighting against tyranny. They did not like the monarchy.

I hope some of you know about D'Aubigné. Merle J. H. D'Aubigné was a Frenchman who wrote a history of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. Banner of Truth publishes two volumes on the Reformation in England. Years ago, Alice and I intended to read a little each night before bed, but the books were so riveting that we read both in just a couple of weeks. The old set in my library has something like eight or ten volumes.

D'Aubigné wrote: "Calvin, John Calvin, was the founder of the greatest of republics. The pilgrims who left their country in the region of James I and landing on the barren soil of New England founded populous and mighty colonies were his sons, his direct and legitimate sons." He continued: "And that American nation, which we have seen growing so rapidly, boasts as its father, the humble reformer on the shore of Lake Leman." What did he say? John Calvin was the founder of America through his teaching.

If someone would relegate the War of 1861 to 1865 to irrelevance because it was 150 years ago, would he understand the biblical philosophy of history necessary to grasp the importance of 1492? Would you consider that year relevant? Why study the life of Christopher Columbus? Why did he seek a new world, and why was he willing to risk his life in discovery? Why was an Italian sailing under the auspices of a Spanish king and queen? What was his main desire? Did he wish to conquer for Christ? What were his words?

If 1492 is irrelevant because it happened so long ago, how important is 1215? What has 1215 got to do with us today? Why is it important to learn about King John and Runnymede?

Have you ever heard of the Magna Carta? One of my favorite stories concerns American tourists in England. They were at

Runnymede, where a sign said, "King John signed the Magna Carta here, 1215." One American looked at his watch and said, "You know what, we missed it by 45 minutes." That is about how ignorant we are of history. But how important is that? Here, these nobles wrested the Magna Carta, this great charter of liberties, from King John. Do you realize that from the Magna Carta we have a number of our rights enshrined in our Constitution, and that most of our rights not enshrined there came to us from the Magna Carta through common law? Now, 1215 is important.

If you do not understand what happened in 1215, you will never understand what happened in 1776, and you will never understand what happened in 1861. If you try to say something is irrelevant because it happened 150 or 200 years ago, how would you then explain the birth of Christ 2,000 years ago? Obviously, time does not make principles and truth irrelevant. Principles and truth are timeless. Principles do not die; they do not have funerals. A principle from the war of northern aggression is just as true as a principle from the American War for Independence. A principle from 1215 is just as important as a principle from 1861.

President Jefferson Davis said, "The principle for which we contend is bound to reassert itself, though it may be at another time in a different forum." The very issues that plague America today, causing unrest and division, are exactly the same issues that caused unrest and division in 1776 and in 1861. We have the same problem.

I could ask this facetiously: Was there at least one principle from the War of Independence that would apply to the War of Northern Aggression in 1861? According to Horace Greeley, there was. Greeley was an ardent abolitionist and a founder of the New York Tribune. On December 24, 1860, he said, "If it, the Declaration of Independence, justified the secession from the British Empire of three millions of colonists in 1776, we do not see why it would not justify the secession of five million Southerners from the Federal Union in 1861." Greeley was not a lover of the South, but he said that if the principle from 1776 is true, it will be true in 1861 as well. There are many principles that connect 1776 and 1861; I was being facetious when I asked, "Is there just one?"

The same right of secession is applicable today, although it is hotly debated and hardly understood by most people. Secession was a peaceful solution to political problems in which Lincoln and the northern states were denying and destroying the Constitution. President Jefferson Davis said, "I love the Union and the Constitution, but I'd rather leave the Union with the Constitution than remain in the Union without it."

It is important to see how biblical principles are played out in time and history and to understand the end of those who deny and disregard them. God is not mocked. We must study history to observe the hand of God in time. Remember that God has ordained in eternity that which comes to pass in time and history.

Consider Titus 1:2-3: "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began." Here is an eternal decree in reference to salvation. He promised it before the world began. Verse 3 says, "But hath in due times manifested His word through preaching which is commanded in me according to the commandment of our God and Savior." Notice: "He hath in due time" that which God ordained in eternity came to pass in time.

Someone has observed that history is a waste of time. In fact, a famous man said history is bunk. I have heard people say, “We need to be preaching the gospel.” My question would be, whose interpretation of the gospel are we to preach—your interpretation or that which the Bible proclaims as the gospel? Usually, when someone says, “You just need to be preaching the gospel,” what they are saying is, “You need to preach what I think you need to preach.” Someone states, “The gospel is very simple. It is the good news of Jesus Christ and His salvation.”

The Gospel as All-Encompassing Good News

I certainly agree that this is an aspect of the gospel, and a very vital and pivotal one. However, the word gospel comes from the Greek word euangelion, which literally means good news or good tidings. Is not all of God’s Word good news? Are not all God’s acts of providence in time good news and good tidings? Of course they are.

Many people will take a passage like 1 Corinthians 2:2, where the Apostle Paul said, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” and conclude, “That is what we ought to preach: Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” I understand that. But you need to read the context in which Paul said it. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul is pitting a biblical philosophy against a humanistic, worldly, fleshly philosophy. He is setting biblical wisdom against man’s wisdom. He said, “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

What is he saying? His preaching of Christ and Him crucified is a biblical philosophy, contrary to humanistic philosophy. The phrase “Christ crucified” speaks of a biblical philosophy as opposed to a man-made humanistic philosophy. All you have to do is read Paul’s sermons in Acts 13 and Acts 17, and you will find that they are full of history and philosophy. He does not simply deal with Christ crucified.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3, the Apostle Paul said, “For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scripture, and that he was buried, that he rose again the third day, according to the Scripture.” I have heard people say that 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 is the gospel in a nutshell: Christ died for our sins, according to the Scripture, and Christ was raised from the dead, according to the Scripture.

But was not Christ prophesied according to the Scriptures? Was Christ not born according to the scriptures? Did Christ not live according to the scriptures? Did he not fulfill the law of God according to the scriptures? The answer is yes to all of those things. Why would Paul say, “I’m teaching the death and the resurrection of Christ”? You have to read everything in context. If you read 1 Corinthians 15:12–27, you find that there were some in the Corinthian church who were denying the resurrection of Christ. All Paul is doing in 1 Corinthians 15 is emphasizing that aspect of Christ which the Corinthians were denying.

The gospel is not facts about Christ. Christ is the gospel. You can believe that Jesus Christ lived, died, was buried, and was raised from

the dead and still die and go to hell because those are just facts. Facts do not save. Christ saves. It is not facts about Christ that are the gospel; it is Christ who is the gospel. Anything and everything that pertains to Christ is the gospel.

Do you know what the Bible says in Proverbs 11:31? “Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in this life, much more the wicked in the sinner.” Is it not good news that God is going to bless His people in this life? Is it not good news that God will deal with the wicked in this life as well as in eternity? Of course.

How about Romans 8:28? “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.” Do all things work together for our good in time and in history or just in eternity? Is it not good news that Jesus Christ foils His enemies and makes everything work together for our good? Is it not good news that Haman is hanged on his own gallows? Is it not good news that the wicked fall in the very pit that they have dug? Is it not good news that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church? Is it not good news that God grants His people victory in time and history? Look at Cromwell. Look at Lee. Is it not good news that Christ is on His throne and that He overrules all the desires and all of the plans of the wicked and the ungodly? Is it not good news that Christ is in absolute and total control? Is it not good news that Jesus Christ exercises dominion over everything? Is it not good news that He reigns supreme?

Is it not good news that He is history? Because history is His story. He is the centerpiece of history. All creation, all acts, all events point to Jesus Christ. Is it not good news that Revelation 11:15 says, “...and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.” Yes. Everything about Christ is the gospel, for Christ is the gospel. We need to be encouraged in, by, and through history. When we see what our sovereign God has done in time and in history, it is encouraging. When we get down and discouraged, it is the history of God's providential acts that will encourage us. Let me show you. Psalm 44—notice, beginning with verse 1. I love this passage.

Encouragement from God's Past Acts and Final Applications

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days. In times of old, how thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them? How thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out? For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arms save them, but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favor unto them. Thou art my God, O King. Or, Thou art my King, O God, command deliverances for Jacob." The victory was not gained merely by the people fighting. God gave them the victory. God enabled them and provided for them. Then he said, "Thou art my King, O God, command deliverances for Jacob."

"We've heard everything that you've done. We know it's true. Our fathers have told us." And when you get to verse 4, here is a good South Georgia paraphrase: "Do it again, oh God, do it again. Do it again." The very thing that You have done in time past, do it again.

I am willing and ready for Him to do it again. I want victory in time and in history. I want to see the wicked overthrown. I want to see Babylon fall. I want to see God honored and the Lord Jesus Christ exalted and elevated. I want to see His law. I want to see Him reigning in His righteousness on His throne. Yes, do it again, O Lord. Command deliverances for Thy people.

Just a couple of illustrations or applications. The first one is this: all history is God's history. We see His hand in creation and all of nature, according to Psalm 19 and Romans 1. It is not unbiblical to study geographical or meteorological history, or any history, to discover the acts of God in time.

In fact, one of these days, I am going to bring a message just on this dear brother, Matthew Fontaine Maury. Matthew Fontaine Maury discovered the paths in the sea. Based upon his study of Psalm 8, where God said that there were paths in the sea, this believer said, "Well, if there are paths in the sea, if God said it, they've got to be there."

These ocean currents and travel lanes for ships were brought out and taught by Matthew Fontaine Maury. He was nicknamed the pathfinder of the seas, the father of modern oceanography and naval meteorology, and later the scientist of the seas, due to the publication of his extensive works, especially his book Physical Geography of the Sea in 1855. It was the first complete and comprehensive book on oceanography to be published. Matthew Fontaine Maury was also a Confederate naval officer.

Here was a man who believed the Scripture and applied the Scripture, and he became known as the scientist of the sea. It is not unbiblical to study any war or any period of time, especially if we do it to see the hand of God, His principles and His truths, and how they are applied. It is not unbiblical or ungodly, when studying history in a war, to ascertain who was right and who was wrong, who obeyed God and who did not obey God. If our interest is to ferret out the principles and apply them to our lives, it is right to study history.

It is wrong not to study history. Psalm 111:2 says, "The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." If you believe God has done some great work in time, in history, discover what that work is and apply it.

The second application is this: We must remember that the gospel is good news. That good news is not limited just to soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. It is true that Christ is our only salvation and our only hope, but Christ has done far more than save us. He has given us an inheritance. In the latter portion of 1 Corinthians 3, he says, "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's."

The gospel, dear friend, is anything and everything concerning Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and God of Gods. He rules. He reigns. Any area that we may study and bring into subjection and submission to the Word of God is right, because He is King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and God of Gods. And He rules over how much?

Everything. All. Yes, there is a biblical philosophy of history. And that philosophy is based upon the Word of God.

Father, we ask you in the name of Jesus Christ for your help, for your grace, for your mercy. Make us holy. Make us godly. Make us

studious. Lord, help us to learn. Help us to apply. Help us, Lord, not repeat the same stupid mistakes and sins of our forefathers by not studying their lives. Help us, Lord, to see that God is not mocked, that whatsoever we sow will also reap. Lord, may we sow to the Spirit that we may of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and Godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

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CHAPTER 14

Ungodly Rulers

The Biblical Attitude toward Ungodly Rulers

Introduction: The Need for a Biblical Attitude

I want to begin with the biblical attitude toward ungodly rulers. Principles from Romans 13 and other passages will help us understand it. First Samuel 15 begins with the Lord's command to Saul.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 15:1–11 (KJV)

> Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. And Saul

> said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly. Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night.

An attitude is a disposition, a frame of mind, a way of thinking toward a subject, person, or incident. After meeting someone, we may say, "I don't like his attitude." We all understand what that means.

Most Christian people's attitudes are unbiblical and ungodly. They lead to apathy, indifference, and inaction—or, more bluntly, sin, rebellion, and ungodliness. We must submit our minds to God's Word. He will not condescend to think as we do; we must learn to think as He does.

Isaiah 55:8–9 says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God is above us. Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Romans 12:1–2 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." "And be not conformed to this world"—do not be pressed into its mold—"but be ye transformed" by "the renewing of your mind." Ephesians 4:23 says, "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." First Peter 4:1 calls us to be armed with Christ's mind.

Second Corinthians 10:4 says, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." This is a military illustration. Paul is not condemning rifles, shotguns, or pistols. He is saying that carnal weapons are useless for the warfare he describes.

A stronghold is a place of defense. If someone comes through that door firing a .357 Magnum, I will duck behind this pulpit. You may say it is not much protection, but it is better than what you have. It becomes my stronghold.

Paul identifies man's stronghold in 2 Corinthians 10:4–5: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

How many ungodly, unbiblical thoughts or attitudes may we retain? Not one. We must think biblically on every subject. That requires biblical education: we cannot think scripturally without knowing Scripture.

Second Timothy 2 says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." Second Peter 3:18 says, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We are not really growing in grace unless we grow in knowledge, for that is how we learn and mature.

Scriptural Consequences of Wicked Rulers

Proverbs 29:2 is familiar but appropriate to our times: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Mourn means to groan and sigh. None of the righteous among us rejoice when the wicked control things, although the wicked themselves may rejoice. When righteous men rule, the people rejoice. When wicked men rule, most people, especially the righteous, mourn.

Proverbs 28:12 begins, "When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory."

The Qualifications of Rulers

"But when the wicked rise, a man is hidden." What is he talking about? Do you remember old good and godly Gideon, who was threshing wheat behind the winepress? Why was he threshing wheat behind the winepress? He was hiding it from the wicked so they wouldn't steal it. Why are you so secretive and private in this day and time? Because you don't want people to know what you have, because they will steal it, especially the government. You've seen that sticker that said, "Don't steal; the government hates competition." Well, that's true.

Proverbs 28:28 says: "When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase." That's why David prayed, "Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just." In other words, these verses reveal to us the result or consequence of ungodly rulers. They do not necessarily give us the biblical attitude against or concerning ungodly rulers, but they do tell us about the consequences of it.

God's Requirement for Christian Rulers

God ordained government. He not only ordained self-government and family government and church government, but civil government as well. God has the absolute sovereign right to lay down not only the qualifications for rulers, but also their limits as well. In Deuteronomy chapter 17, verse 15, the Bible says: "Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother." In other words, God required that a civil ruler be a brother, be a Christian, be a believer. He did not want a Muslim. He did not want an atheist. He did not want someone who disbelieved in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said he's got to be someone not only whom I choose—and God's not going to choose a wicked man per se—but he said one from among the brethren. In Exodus chapter 18, verse 21: "Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness."

That eliminates most of our politicians. In 2 Samuel 23:1 David says, "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse

said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,"

Four times he claims direct inspiration for one truth: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me." "And his word was in my tongue." "The God of Israel said," "The Rock of Israel spake to me," and then, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

You cannot be just or rule justly without fearing God. These Scriptures show that God required Christian rulers. Our forefathers understood this and took His Word seriously. Consider statements from the original charters and constitutions of these United States.

The Original Charters and Constitutions

Historical Evidence: America's Founding Charters

East New Jersey's fundamental constitution of 1683, Article 16, says, "Yet it is also hereby provided that no man shall be admitted a member of the great or common council or any other place of public trust who shall not profess faith in Jesus Christ."

Delaware's charter of 1701 says, "And that all persons who also profess to believe in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, shall be capable, notwithstanding other persuasions and practices, to serve this government in any capacity, both legislatively and executively." Notice, "all persons who profess faith in Jesus Christ." They could be rulers, but none other could.

Pennsylvania in 1701 says substantially the same: "And that all persons who also profess to believe in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, shall be capable to serve this government in any capacity, both legislatively and executively."

Delaware's constitution of 1776, Article 22, says, "Every person who shall be chosen a member of either house or appointed to any office or place of trust, before taking a seat or entering upon the execution of his office, shall take the following oath or affirmation: 'I, [blank], do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed forevermore. And I do acknowledge the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.'"

A Delaware ruler had to profess faith in Jesus Christ and in the divine inspiration of both Testaments.

Georgia's constitution of 1777 says, "The representative shall be chosen out of the residents in each county who shall reside at least 12 months in the state, and they shall be of the Protestant religion and of the age of 21 years."

Baptists are not Protestants, but in those days this meant no Catholics, Jews, or atheists: one had to believe in Jesus Christ.

Maryland's constitution of 1776 says, "That every person appointed to any office or profit or trust shall, before he enters into the execution thereof, take the following oath: 'I, [blank], do swear that I do not hold myself bound in allegiance to the king of Great Britain, and that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to the state of Maryland,' and shall also subscribe a declaration of his belief in the Christian religion."

Massachusetts in 1780 says, "Any person chosen governor, lieutenant governor, counselor, senator or representative and accepting the trust shall, before he proceed to execute the duties of his place of office, shall make and subscribe to the following declaration: 'I, [blank], do declare that I believe the Christian religion and have a firm persuasion of its truth, and that I am seized and possessed in my own right of the property required by the Constitution as one qualified for the office or place to which I am elected.'" Notice the declaration: "I believe the Christian religion and have a firm persuasion of its truth."

New Hampshire in 1784 provided, "provided nevertheless that no person shall be capable of being elected a senator who is not of the Protestant religion," and "every member of the House of Representatives shall be chosen by ballot and shall be of the Protestant religion."

North Carolina in 1776 declared, "That no person who shall deny the being of God or the truth of the Protestant religion or the divine authority of either the Old or New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the state, shall be capable of holding any office or place of public trust within this state."

Pennsylvania in 1776 required, "Each member of the house, before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe the following declaration: 'I do believe in one God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked, and I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.'"

Whichever state or colony you went to, everyone demanded Christian rulers. South Carolina in 1778 declared, "That as soon as it may be after the first meeting of the Senate and the House of Representatives, they shall jointly in the House, etc., choose by ballots a lieutenant governor, both to continue for two years, and a privy council, all of the Protestant religion. And that no person shall be eligible to a seat in said Senate unless he be of the Protestant religion. No person shall be eligible to sit in the House of Representatives unless he be of the Protestant religion. That all persons in religious societies who acknowledge there is one God and a future state of rewards and punishments, and that God is publicly to be worshipped, shall be tolerated. The Christian Protestant religion shall be deemed and is hereby constituted and declared to be the established religion of this state."

Vermont in 1777 said, "Each member of the House of Representatives, before he takes his seat, has to say the same thing: 'I do believe in one God, the Creator and the Governor of the universe, the Rewarder of the good and the Punisher of the wicked. And I do acknowledge the scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament to be given by divine inspiration. And I own and profess the Protestant religion.'"

Every one of our colonies demanded Christian rulers.

The Blasphemy Laws

Laws Against Blasphemy in Early America

What has happened? Our founding fathers thoroughly understood Christianity. Initially every colony, and every state in the Union, had laws against blasphemy against the Christian religion, directed at the Bible, Christ, or God.

Massachusetts enacted "An Act Against Atheism and Blasphemy" in 1697. Here is the law as I read it: "That if any person shall presume willfully to blaspheme the holy name of God, Father, Son or Holy Ghost, either by denying, cursing, or reproaching the true God, His creation, or government of the world, or by denying, cursing, and reproaching the Holy Word of God, that is, the canonical Scriptures contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments, Genesis to Revelation, everyone so offending shall be punished by imprisonment, not exceeding six months, and until they find sureties for their good behavior, by setting in the pillory—that's where you have your head and your hands in the holes and you can't move—or by setting in the pillory, by whipping—are you listening?—boring through the tongue with a red-hot iron, or setting upon the gallows with a rope about his neck."

Maryland's General Assembly in 1723 prohibited anyone from "wittingly, maliciously, and advisedly by writing or speaking blaspheme or curse God, or deny our Saviour Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, shall, for the first offense, be bored through the tongue and fined twenty pounds sterling. On a second offense, the offender was to be stigmatized by burning in the forehead with the letter B for blasphemer, and fined 40 pounds sterling. For the third offense, the offender was to suffer death without the benefit of clergy."

Our forefathers were serious. Pennsylvania passed the same act in 1700: "That whosoever shall willfully, premeditatedly, and despitefully blaspheme or speak loosely or profanely of Almighty God, Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the Scriptures of truth, and is legally convicted thereof, shall forfeit and pay the sum of ten pounds for the use of the poor of the county where such offense was committed, or suffer three months' imprisonment and hard labor, as aforesaid, for the use of said poor."

Delaware in 1741 required a person guilty of blasphemy to be branded on the forehead with B and publicly whipped on the bare back with thirty-nine lashes well laid on. Connecticut's General Court in 1750 required the death penalty for anyone guilty of blasphemy.

Our founding fathers took Christianity and God's Word exceedingly seriously. Were they wrong? If they were not, what has

happened to our country? We have apostatized from their foundation and left the biblical attitude toward ungodly rulers.

We tolerate, choose, and elect unprincipled, unconverted, unregenerate, ungodly rulers because we have not maintained that attitude. What should it be? Return to 1 Samuel 15.

Saul's Rejection of God

The Example of Samuel and King Saul

God sent Saul to destroy the Amalekites: "Kill them all, man, woman, infant and suckling, ox, sheep, camel, ass; don't spare anything." He had pronounced the death penalty against them. Saul killed many but spared King Agag and the best oxen and sheep. First Samuel 15:10–11 says, "Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night."

God repented of setting Saul up as king because Saul had turned back from following Him. Saul's disobedience was not just a single act. He was constantly and continually disobeying God. The Hebrew word for "turned back from following me" indicates returning, going back, retreating. Saul was running in the opposite direction from God. He was retreating from Him.

What was the evidence? Verse 11 says, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me"—"and hath not performed my commandments." He did not obey God.

Christians are enamored with the world and compromise, and have a low view of Scripture, regeneration, and conversion. We automatically believe someone who says, "I'm a Christian." Do not believe merely what people say; believe what they do. Our Lord said, "By their fruit ye shall know them."

Except for professed Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus, ask Congress who is Christian and every one will claim it. Yet everything

they do is contrary to God, His law, and the Constitution. We have not had Christian rulers.

What would happen if Pastor Chrisman or Pastor Farrell went to Congress? People have told me, "Brother Weaver, I just wish you could get up there and preach to those people." They would not listen or hear a word. They do not want it.

They are not interested in obeying God, keeping His law, or fulfilling their oath to uphold the Constitution. Saul became an apostate ruler, refusing God's commands. He rejected God, and God rejected him. First Samuel 15:26–28 says, "And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou."

In effect, Saul said, "I'm not following God. I'm going to do what I want to do." Setting your thinking above God's Word is idolatry. Saul intended to substitute his own law for God's.

Saul reigned forty years. I cannot tell you the exact period, but he may have reigned fifteen or twenty years when this happened, and thus another twenty to twenty-five years under God's curse and judgment. God's failure to strike someone down immediately does not mean He approves.

God's paydays are not always on Friday. Sometimes He lets men continue in sin and rebellion until their cup of iniquity is full. How did Obama get elected to a second term? I do not even know that he really was. Computer voting can be controlled from New York. Unless something is in black and white and signed so it can be counted, there is no way to verify it. Read "Vote Scam."

Most of our politicians oppose God, yet people keep returning them to office. I still cannot understand how Barney Frank was elected over and over. God rejected.

Righteous Indignation

What was Samuel's attitude toward this ungodly ruler? First Samuel 15:11 says, "And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night." Samuel, listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:32, had a biblical attitude—the same as God's.

What does "grieved" mean here? We usually think in modern terms: a widow grieving over her dead husband, a widower over his dead wife, or parents over a dead child. We think of someone brokenhearted, disturbed, troubled, almost inconsolable. Some grieve to the point of becoming inactive, unable to function. They cannot think, move, or do anything. They are just grieving.

That has nothing to do with this word. When you think of grieving, do not impose that meaning here. The Bible says Samuel was grieved and cried out to the Lord. Samuel may have felt some sorrow for a man who had initially been his friend, but the Hebrew word is harah. It means to burn or kindle, emphasizing anger kindled like fire. It occurs 139 times and is used of God and man.

Samuel was so ticked off, upset, and angry that he could not contain himself. The passages that follow use the same word, though translated differently.

Joseph was sold into slavery and went to Potiphar's house. The Lord blessed Potiphar because of Joseph, who controlled everything. Potiphar's wife made advances and Joseph rebuffed them. She caught his garment, saying, "Come lie with me." He fled, leaving it behind. She told her husband, "You see how this Hebrew has come in to mock me?" She lied, and Potiphar believed her. Genesis 39:19 says, "And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled."

My wife and I just celebrated our fiftieth anniversary. I am not that old—I got married when I was six! No, we married at eighteen. If you try to mess with my wife, I will not become so sorrowful and grieved that I cannot function. "You mess with my wife, you're dead." If I can get to you, I will not allow it.

That was Potiphar's response: "Uh-uh, uh-uh, brother. You're not messing with my wife. You're going into the deepest prison." He was angry and upset. If I made advances toward any man's wife here, he would be upset too, and should be.

The same word is used of God in Numbers 25, when Israel committed both idolatry and fornication. Verses 2–4 say, "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 Baalpeor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel."

Did fornication and idolatry merely bring God to the point of saying, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I can't function. I don't know what to..."? No, it was His fierce anger. As I put it, "I'll tell you what you do. You hang every one of them. You kill them all."

Jeremiah 25:37–38 uses the same word: "And the peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of the Lord." He has forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

Samuel's anger against Saul was the same as God's. Hosea 7:2–7 speaks about both people and rulers:

"They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face. They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies. They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened. In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners. For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whilst they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me."

Hosea 7:13–16 continues:

"Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me. Though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me. And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me. Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt."

God is angry with them too. Samuel's attitude was God's attitude. Ephesians 4:26 says, "Be ye angry, and sin not." There is a biblical anger.

Samuel's Response

There is a righteous indignation intended to resolve problems. Our anger is often sinful: we explode, or keep it inside until it eats us up. Biblical anger motivates us to resolve the problem.

First Samuel 15:11 shows Samuel's first response: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel." "And he cried unto the Lord all night."

Cried means to shriek, to cry out of anguish or danger. Samuel cried to the only One who could really do something about the situation. Responsibility does not necessarily give us ability. His prayer was, as I express it, "Lord, this thing is so big, I know I anointed him, but Lord, he's in control now. He's got the army. I can't do anything. Lord, You will have to work it out."

Luke 18, in the account of the unjust judge, says, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." Samuel first cried to the Lord.

Second, he confronted Saul. First Samuel 15:12 says, "And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal."

Most of us shirk confrontation, disliking fusses and fights. I do not mean fighting among brethren, but confronting sin, wickedness, rebellion, and ungodliness. That is biblical even in the New Testament. Most of us would have slept in that day. Samuel rose early. As I put his determination, "I've got a duty. I've got a responsibility. I'm going to meet the reprobate right now and I'm going to confront him to his face."

I have preached the message Gad Hitchcock preached when I was asked to present it. Hitchcock was an early founder of our country and a preacher. In those days an election sermon instructed each ruler before he took office, explaining his responsibility and the people's duties to him.

Hitchcock was appointed to preach to the newly elected governor. He found General Gage himself, with his army behind him, come to enforce the English king's demands upon the colonies. He faced the general and preached from Proverbs 29, "When the wicked bear rule, the righteous mourn."

He said, "Some people may say that it's circumstances that are causing all of this trouble." "No, no, no." "I will tell you,"—speaking to Gage—"and I will tell the tyrant to his face, George III, that it's because the wicked bear rule that we're in this position."

That illustrates confrontation; Samuel confronted Saul.

Third, Samuel rebuked Saul. First Samuel 15:17–19 says, "And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?"

As I express his rebuke, "Saul, when you were little, God made you the king. Now that you think you're somebody, you think you can just disobey God." "I'll tell you what your real problem is. You're a covetous individual, and you're a thief. You flew upon the spoil. You wanted what you wanted for yourself. You could care less about God's honor and God's glory. You're a thief."

Verses 22–23 continue, "And Samuel said, 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. For 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."

Samuel rebuked Saul and also rejected him: "That's it."

Saul said, "Now, Samuel, verse 26, come return with me. Honor me before the people." Samuel replied, "No, I will not return. You've rejected the Word of God and God's rejected you."

Samuel would not have prayed at Saul's inauguration, attended the inaugural ball, or joined the parade. Elisha understood the same attitude. In 2 Kings 3, three kings joined together to defeat an enemy.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 3:9–14 (KJV)

Elisha's Rejection of the Wicked King

> "So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them. And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab! But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may enquire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the Lord is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother."

What have I got to do? Why are you coming to me? You have the prophets of Baal; go to them.

The reading continues: "And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And Elisha said, As the Lord of hosts

liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee."

Let me spell it out: I would not spit on you if you were on fire. Samuel rejected Saul as Elisha rejected Israel's king.

Samuel also replaced Saul. First Samuel 16:1 says, "And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons."

The Duty to Replace Wicked Rulers

A biblical attitude moves us to cry to the Lord, confront the wicked, rebuke them, reject them, and finally replace them. You may say, "Now, Brother Weaver, that sounds harsh. We need to pray for those in authority over us." I will not cover that tonight, but we pray for them for our benefit, not theirs. You may still say, "That still sounds harsh."

Application: Righteous Anger and Action Today

I have preached for years on the biblical doctrine of hatred, and recently on praying against the wicked. David says in Psalm 139, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." The next verse says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

There is a biblical doctrine of hatred. We need to get upset, angry, and ticked off, and be motivated to say, "Thus saith the Lord. Here is what God said, and you're changing not only the Constitution, you're not only changing our country, you're even attempting to change our convictions and our beliefs and our Christianity. And we're not going to put up with it. And if you can't rule us the way you're supposed to, we have an absolute right, which I'll show you tonight, to totally disregard and disobey you."

A Call to Act

We must begin with a biblical attitude and understand our imminent danger. Look at the attempts against the Second Amendment. When Justice Scalia said the Constitution was dead, dead, dead, he only had to look at Congress: those politicians consider it dead.

It is time for righteous indignation and righteous anger, to say we will not put up with it any longer. That is what our forefathers finally did in 1861. Jefferson Davis said, "I had rather leave the Union with the Constitution than remain in the Union without the Constitution." Alexander Hamilton Stephens, the Confederacy's vice president, said, "We did not leave the union to forsake the Constitution. We left it in order to preserve the principles in the Constitution."

It is time we got angry.

Closing Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask your blessing and help. Teach us, we pray. Build us up in the most holy faith. In Christ's name we ask it. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

War in the Gates

Introduction: The Text and Its Context

Open your Bibles to Judges chapter 5 and verse 8. I want to bring a message entitled “War in the Gates.” I think you will see the importance of this subject momentarily.

This passage deals with the song of Deborah and Barak. In verse 8, the Word of God says, “They chose new gods. Then was war in the gates. Was there a shield or spear seen among 40,000 in Israel?” As I was reading through the book of Judges recently, this verse caught my attention: “Then was war in the gates.” Many of you probably remember a recent movie titled Enemy at the Gates.

War in the Gates is Personal and Close

It was set during World War II, in the Battle of Stalingrad, when two snipers, a Russian and a German, were locked in a battle of wills and marksmanship, each trying to kill the other. The battle was right in the gates of Stalingrad. Both men were experts, snipers par excellence, so to speak. The movie depicts how war can come literally to the gates.

Our text also demonstrates how war affects individuals and nations on a personal, close-up level. It is one thing to fight an enemy you cannot see; it is another to fight someone up close. I was reading today about a drone operator who had killed something like 1,600 people. When he finally saw one of those he had killed dying, he felt remorse. It is a great difference when you engage in hand-to-hand combat, see someone up close, and witness the results. War in the gates means that everything is close.

There is an interesting tidbit from the War of Northern Aggression. That war actually began in the front yard of a man named Wilmer McLean. He was born on May 3, 1814, and died on June 5, 1882. Wilmer McLean was a wholesale grocer.

He sold sugar and a lot of other commodities to the Confederate armies. He knew very clearly that he was going to be a target of the federal armies. Wanting to make sure that his family was safe, he moved them 120 miles south, since the war had begun in his front yard in Manassas, Virginia. Though 120 miles may not sound far, walking, riding a horse, or driving a buggy would show that it was a considerable distance. Wilmer McLean then settled his family around a little dusty crossroads called Appomattox Courthouse in Appomattox, Virginia. The war that began in Wilmer McLean's front yard ended in his front parlor, where Lee and Grant sat down. It started in his front yard and ended in his parlor. Wilmer McLean experienced war in the gates firsthand.

The Cause: Choosing New Gods

In the context of Judges chapter 5 and verse 8, "war in the gates" actually describes the hostile attacks of the Canaanites upon the Israelites. War in the gates does not happen by accident. There is always a reason. There is always a cause. In fact, the Bible says in Proverbs 26 and verse 2, "The curse causeless shall not come." So there is a reason why there was war in the gates in Judges chapter 5 and verse 8. The Bible says, "They chose new gods. Then was there war in the gates."

Why was there war in the gates? The answer is because they chose new gods. "Was there a shield or spear seen among 40,000 in Israel?" The Israelites not only submitted to idolatry that had been

forced upon them by their tyrannical rulers, but Scripture also tells us that they freely chose new gods. They chose gods that had just come up, new gods in comparison to the Ancient of Days, the everlasting God, the everlasting Father. Consequently, since they left the one true and living God and chose new gods, the Bible says there was war in the gates.

They were hemmed in from every place and every angle, besieged in all the fortified cities. The strongest cities could not stand the onslaught of the enemy. So when Judges 5:8 says, "They chose new gods; then was war in the gates," we must remember that the sovereign God of heaven and earth is a jealous God. Exodus 34:14 says, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." Deuteronomy 4:24 declares, "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."

Now let me tell you exactly how jealous God is. He is so jealous that Isaiah 42:8 records His declaration: "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." He will not share His glory with a false god, nor give His praise to a graven image. When a nation forsakes the one true and living God, who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, it is inviting war in the gates. It is inviting close-up action.

Note again what the Scripture says: "They chose new gods, then was war in the gates." Then comes the question: "Was there a shield or spear seen among 40,000 in Israel?" Scripture teaches that this war in the gates was up close and very personal. It also teaches that these Israelites were defenseless in a time of trouble. They had absolutely no means of resisting their adversaries, for among 40,000 men there was neither spear nor shield to be seen.

This statement is an honest assessment of their martial strength. The Israelite army actually numbered several hundred thousand. Thus, when Scripture says there was not to be seen a shield or spear among 40,000, it means that not one among 40,000 was sufficiently armed for warfare. Can you imagine an enemy attacking you in strength while you have absolutely no means to defend yourself?

Their lack of weapons was either due to negligence and sloth, or their failure to take care of their weaponry in a time of peace. Or it

could have been the result of tyrants. Jabin, who was king of Canaan at this time and had attacked the Israelites over and over, could very easily have deprived them of their weapons so that they would not revolt against him.

Let me show you how deprived they really were. In Judges 3:31 we read: "And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel." Here is Shamgar, who was a judge, and yet all he had as a weapon was an ox goad, a sharp pointed stick.

It is common practice for tyrants to deprive a people of the means of self-defense, as well as their means to overthrow despotic and tyrannical government. Shamgar was reduced to an ox goad. It is like our own corrupt governments trying to deprive the people today of the means to defend themselves.

But in 1 Samuel 13, beginning with verse 19, notice what the Scripture says: "Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears: But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads."

"So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found. And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash."

The only individuals who had swords and spears were the king and his son Jonathan. The rest of the people had been deprived of their weaponry.

So as it was in Judges chapter 5, so it is in 1 Samuel chapter 13. There were no weapons. There were no warriors. There were no individuals who were really able and capable of defending their lives, their families, and their homes. Mark this down in your mind, because this is clearly what the Scripture is teaching us: a weaponless people and a people that lack a warrior spirit is already a defeated and enslaved people. We find that in Judges 5. We find that

in 1 Samuel chapter 13. We must always be willing to fight for our families, our lives, and our people.

We've got to remember Exodus chapter 15 in verse 3. I love this passage. In fact, I have a whole message on it. The Bible says in Exodus 15 verse 3, "The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name." And by the way, if you read Deuteronomy chapter 4, you will find that He delivered Israel out of Egypt through war. So the Bible declares Him as a man of war.

Now, here's the thing that caught my eye in Judges chapter 5 in verse 8, and I want you to go back there because I want you to turn with me just momentarily through the Bible so I can make some applications shortly. We'll look in Judges chapter 5 in verse 8. The Bible says, "They chose new gods; then was war in the gates." I'm not sure that most people understand one simple principle of biblical interpretation, or biblical hermeneutics, and that is this: many words in the Bible which look alike, spell alike, and sound alike are used in different ways. The principle is that the context will determine the interpretation of a word. I'm going to show you how the word gates is used. First and foremost, the word gates in the Bible is used to represent real, literal gates.

Biblical Usage of 'Gates'

I do not have to flood you with scriptures on this. Let me give you one. In Deuteronomy 3 and verse 5, the Scripture says, "All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwalled towns a great many." So I could give you a multitude of passages, which you already know, that sometimes in the Bible the word gates simply means gates. It refers to real, literal, physical gates. But not always. Do you realize sometimes the word gates is used to represent a triumphal entry?

For instance, look in your Bibles to Psalm 24. Notice, first of all, verse seven, and then verse nine: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.”

Here is an allusion to the triumphal entry of a victorious general into the royal city. In this passage, the King of Kings, the King of Israel, enters into His royal temple.

The procession of the Ark of the Covenant had reached Mount Zion. David was saying, literally, "Lift up your head, O ye gates," and "lift up yourself, you everlasting doors," and the King of Glory shall come in. David was not referring to himself; he was referring to Jehovah, the one true and living God. The ark symbolized the presence of God. When it was set in the tabernacle, and later in the temple, David was proclaiming the triumphal entry of God Himself. He wanted the people to understand that God's presence is meant for our resurrection, not necessarily our ruin. It could be for our ruin if we forsake Him, but here God is triumphantly entering the tabernacle and later the temple Himself.

Thus, sometimes "gates" refers to a triumphal entry. Thirdly, in Psalm 100, it refers to entering into the presence of the Lord in fellowship and worship.

Psalm 100 says, "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." When he says, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise," here is the very same word gates, but it is now used as an entrance into fellowship and worship. Obviously, when you see the word gates, you have to understand that the context determines how it is used.

In Psalm 118:19, David says, "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord." Here the word gates means an entrance into fellowship and worship.

Fourthly, sometimes the word gates refers to and represents the blessings and protection of God over His people. Psalm 147:13–14 says, "For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat." Here the word gates represents both the blessings of God and the protection of God.

By now you understand that context determines how a word is used. Even though the word is spelled the same, pronounced the same, and is the same, we do exactly the same thing in our English language. For instance, I could take the little word row, R-O-W. It could be a verb: it is what you do with paddles in a boat—you row. But that little word row can also be a noun, like a row of beans or a row of corn. If it is pronounced row, it can indicate a fight or an argument, which would be a verb again. I could say, “Tevin and Paul got into a row.” That means they got into a fight. It is spelled the same, perhaps pronounced a little differently, but you have to look at it in context. If I said, “He was rowing the boat,” you know what that means. Or, “There are two rows of corn”; obviously, you know what that means.

Gates as Authority, Law, and Dominion

It is the same word. The same is true of the word gates. What I want to do with the rest of my time is show you what I mean and what I believe the Bible means when it says there was a war in the gates. The word gates is used in a totally, completely different way in the Bible as well, other than these ways that I have just shown you. Sometimes the word gates refers to dominion, rulership, authority, justice, and judgment. When it says there was a war in the gates, think about this: when you hear the word gates in this sense, think of positions of authority, law, dominion, and rulership.

For instance, let us go back in our Bibles to Genesis chapter 22. I want to show you several passages where this concept is taught very emphatically. In Genesis 22, verse 17, God is making a promise to Abraham: "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies."

When a king conquered a city, he put his throne in the gate. In Bible times, a king oftentimes would put his throne in the gate even of his own city. The elders sat in the gates, and the judges sat in the gates. It was an open court system in the Bible. The gate was therefore a place of rule, judgment, and authority. This is why the

language of possessing a gate speaks of control over those who are opposed.

When God tells Abram, "thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemy," all he is saying is that his seed is going to be in control, having dominion and rulership over his enemies. In Genesis 24, verse 60, when Rebekah left to become the wife of Isaac, her family blessed her and said, "And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them."

If you are in control of the gates of your enemies, you have dominion over your enemies. You have authority over your enemies. You have jurisdiction over your enemies.

Turn right over to the book of Deuteronomy. Look in chapter 16 and verse 18. Here is what God says: "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment." Where were the judges? In the gates. The judges were to judge for God, according to God's law.

If you would look in Deuteronomy 17, and read the first five verses: "Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the Lord thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that is an abomination unto the Lord thy God. If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant, and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die."

The reason it happened at the gates is that the judges sat there. The gates always speak of authority, law, and jurisdiction. If you would turn in your Bibles to Psalm 127, here is a passage that is the

favorite of many fathers and mothers. I want you to watch this. I am trying to demonstrate what the word gates can actually mean.

Psalm 127:3-5 says, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." What does that mean? It means those children will be controlling the enemies in the gate. In other words, the enemies will be submitting to them. Two other passages: look in Isaiah chapter 13 and verse 2. Isaiah 13:2 says, "Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles." The nobles sat in the gates.

Turn to Jeremiah, chapter 1, to see what happens when God calls an enemy to conquer and chastise His people because of their rebellion. Jeremiah 1:15 says, “For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.” Note what God is going to do. He will call these heathen, pagan kings; they will come, conquer, and set their thrones in the gate.

I could multiply these verses, but you have seen sufficient verses to understand that gates in the Bible oftentimes speak of authority, law, jurisdiction, and dominion. Consider this: when the Bible says, “They chose new gods; then was war in the gates,” do you realize that God does not have to bring an invading army into the city for there to be war in the gates? He does not have to bring an invading army into your state or country for there to be war in the gates.

There is a concept that has been around for centuries. It is in the Bible, yet we have either never been taught it or have totally forgotten, ignored, or overlooked it. That concept, that principle, is real and genuine. What has been going on in our country, in many of our churches, and in our families? There has been a war at any of the gates, and we have not even realized it.

The Transition from God's Law to Man's Law

Now let me set the stage. Turn to 1 Samuel 8. I want to read this passage to show you one principal truth: a king rules by his law. I do not care whether we are speaking of the King of kings, who is our God and Savior, or an earthly king. A king always rules by his law. Whatever king occupies the gate gets to determine the law. Look in 1 Samuel 8. Let us begin with verse 4 and read through verse 20. Watch and follow this carefully. “Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways:

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 8:5-17 (KJV)

> “Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” They did not say, “Samuel, maybe the Lord needs to send us another judge like you.” Or maybe you need to ask God what He would have us do. No, they did not say that. They said, “What we want is a king. We want to be just like all the other nations.”
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> “But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.”
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> Here is the distinction between God's law and man's law, between God as king and man as king. “And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground,

> and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.
>
> And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants."

"And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

You cannot understand 1 Samuel chapter 8 unless you see it as a transition from one law structure to another. Israel is refusing God as king and choosing a man as king. In refusing God as king, they are refusing God's law. Now they will institute a man, that man will institute his law, and the people will have to obey it. For instance, look at 1 Samuel 12:12. It cannot be made any clearer than this.

In 1 Samuel 12:12, Samuel says, "And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king." So what did they do in 1 Samuel chapter 8? They traded God for a man, and they traded God's law for man's law. When the new king comes to the gates, when he begins to exercise his authority and his jurisdiction, he does so by declaring his law.

If you understand this concept, you are going to see exactly what is happening in our nation and what has happened. Everybody knows that this country was set up as a Christian nation. It was. No two ways about that. I can show you document after document, even the Fundamental Orders of Massachusetts and Connecticut, where

they said, “The laws of this colony shall be the laws of God given by Moses.” Black and white.

Now look at 2 Kings 17:7–12. Understand this concept of war in the gates. “For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God.

And they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger: for they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.”

Why were these Israelites doing everything completely contrary to God and to His law? I may deal with this subject later in the week, because we must ask why men forsake God. Why did they walk in the statutes of the heathen? Why were they willing first to worship other gods secretly, and later to worship them openly and publicly? How could they do that?

Second Kings 17:7 says, “For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods.” The Scripture says they feared other gods. If they feared other gods, that means they did not fear the one true and living God. They left His fear and feared other gods.

As I told you in 1 Samuel chapter 8, you cannot understand that passage unless you see the transition from one law structure to another: from God’s law structure to man’s law structure. What was the consequence of fearing other gods? Verse 8 says, “And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.” When they changed gods, they changed laws. If you fear the one true

and living God, you will obey His law; if you fear a false god, you will obey its law. What they did in 2 Kings 17 was exactly what they did in Judges chapter 5: they chose new gods.

Then was war in the gates. Second Kings 17:19 shows that Judah did the same thing: “Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they had made.” Israel had apostatized, feared false gods, and made laws according to the kings’ own will and their false gods. Judah then turned from God and His law and followed the same gods and laws as Israel. This is remarkable, because Judah was the southern kingdom, the tribe that had the Levites, and the kingdom associated with the tabernacle and the temple. Yet they chose new gods.

Christ vs. Caesar: The Ongoing War

Turn to Micah, chapter 6, and begin with verse 13. “Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.” The Lord is not pulling any punches. He is saying that they will suffer. Verse 14 continues: “Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.”

Why is the curse of God upon these people? Why is there war upon these people? Here is why: “For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.”

What is war in the gates all about? It is when you choose new gods. It is when you forsake the one true and living God. It is when you forsake His law and choose man's law over God's law.

Now turn to Psalm 69. This is a Messianic Psalm. Some Psalms are specifically Messianic; that is, they speak particularly of Jesus Christ. In verse 4, it says, “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head.” In John 15, that verse is spoken directly of Jesus Christ, who was hated without a cause. Verse 9 says,

“For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.” In the New Testament, this is referred specifically to Jesus Christ. We are still talking about the Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Verse 11 says, “I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them.” You will surely say to me, this proverb, “Physician, heal thyself.” But notice what he says: “They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards.”

Why is the federal government against Christianity, against Christ, and against the Bible? Why are many state governments against Christ and the Bible? Because they have chosen new gods. They claim to be God themselves. They want their own law, not God's law. Therefore, they speak against Christ, His law, His Word, and His people. As our Lord said, they that sit in the gates speak against Me.

What did they say in Psalm 2? "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." They do not like the limitations God has placed upon them. They will be their own gods, do what they want to do, and rule the way they want to rule. Jesus Christ warned us of this in John chapter 15. These familiar verses should take on a new light.

When Jesus Christ said, "they that sit in the gate speak against me, and I was a song of drunkards," it meant that they mocked and ridiculed Christ. John 15:18 says, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

The Bible says they chose new gods, and then war was in the gates. Do you realize the struggle we are in as Christians? It is an age-old struggle—indeed, an endless, constant, and continual struggle. We are in a war. Those who proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord are at war with those who say some other god is Lord, and those who say some other god is Lord are at war with those who

proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord. There is a war in the gates, a war over authority, dominion, and jurisdiction. It is a war over who has the right to speak and who has the right to give law. As Christians, we are fighting for the crown rights of Jesus Christ. Those who are not Christians are fighting for the crown rights of Caesar.

It is either Christ or Caesar. It is either Christ or despotism, tyranny, and totalitarianism. It is either Christ or humanism. There is no other choice. There is a war in the gates, and this war is not only a biblical war and not only a theological war; it is also a cultural war. We have been consistently losing our Christian culture year after year after year after year. It is also a political war.

Do not try to tell me that politics and Christianity do not mix. Do you know what the word politics means? It is from the Greek word politikos, which literally means "of or from the people." Are we not people? There is indeed a Christian culture and a Christian politic—a Christian body politic. I tell people that I am not against government. Government is taught in the Bible. I am against corruption in government and wicked, tyrannical, totalitarian government. You cannot live without government, but you can live without wickedness, tyranny, and ungodliness. So it is indeed a war, and it is a war over jurisdiction and authority.

I have already quoted Isaiah 42:8, where God said, "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." If you believe the Bible, you already know who wins the war. We already know who the victor is. It is the God of gods and King of kings and Lord of lords who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Great I Am.

He is the Ancient of Days. He is the Eternal. He is the Almighty, the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Immutable, Infinite God of Heaven and Earth. None can overthrow Him. He is the one who will win the war in the gates.

Applications for Believers

We who serve the Lord Jesus Christ should never be downtrodden, dejected, or discouraged. We should never be looking at circumstances or situations. I have sometimes asked people, "How

are you doing?" They answer, "I'm doing well under the circumstances." My normal response is, "Well, you shouldn't be under the circumstances; you should be above the circumstances." The reason we should not be discouraged is that Jesus Christ is absolute Victor, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is even now in the process of subduing His enemies to Himself. You say, "Well, it doesn't look like that."

We walk by faith and not by sight. God's timetable is not our timetable. I've often said, I am so thankful that I'm not God. Because if I was God, I'd have killed me and a whole lot of others a lot sooner than we'd die, I can assure you. God is so absolutely long-suffering. It is amazing. But here's what the Scripture says: 1 Corinthians 15, verses 25 and 26: "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Do you know what our Lord is doing? He is reigning right now. He is subduing His enemies and putting them under His feet according to His timetable, not ours, and according to His way, not ours. The wicked have met their match in the Lord Jesus Christ, and He shall triumph over them totally and completely.

Having that knowledge, we should never be discouraged, defeated, or downtrodden. The second application is this: We should recognize the war in which we are engaged and stand definitively and distinctly for the crown rights of Jesus Christ. It does not matter whether we confront individuals, our families, our churches, our politicians, our state, or our nation. We must remember that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

You know what He said in Matthew 28:18? "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The word power means jurisdiction, authority. All authority, all jurisdiction, is given to Jesus Christ. Therefore, when a new king or a new god raises his ugly head, we should say, like our forefathers, "We have no king but King Jesus." He is our King, and we stand for His crown rights. It does not matter whether people like it or agree; we have to stand for what is right.

I usually describe it like this. Suppose we are in the Vietnam War. Whether you agree with it or not is immaterial; I am using it only as an illustration. We have an AR-15 in our laps, and enemy soldiers gather around us, mocking it and saying it is the sorriest weapon ever made. They say it will jam, that we can push it in the mud, and that it will blow up. We are not going to defend the weapon by insisting that it is made of the finest metal. When they start mocking, all we are going to do is point it at them and pull the trigger. They will find out soon enough whether or not it works.

When someone wants to challenge you or challenge Jesus Christ, point the Scripture at them and pull the trigger. They will find out soon enough whether it is the Word of God and whether it works. The Scripture that will not convert them will condemn them. It will work one way or the other. Therefore, we have to make sure that we stand for the crown rights of Jesus Christ.

If we do not want war in our gates, in our laps, in our front rooms, towns, cities, state, and nation, we must not forsake God and His law. We must not forsake Him and His Word. The safest place for a child of God is right in the middle of the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ. Proverbs 18:10 says, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” And I might add, only the righteous will run into it. But that is the place to be.

We are living in dangerous and desperate times. Now is not the time to forsake Scripture or Christ. You better be running as close to Him and getting as close to Him as you can possibly get.

What it all boils down to is this: it is Christ or Caesar; Christ or a false god; Christ or humanism.

Everyone knows that Christians were put to death in the Roman Empire. What most people do not know is that Christians were not put to death there simply for being Christians. In the Roman Empire, you could believe whatever you wanted. If you wanted to worship Zeus, have at it. If you wanted to worship Aphrodite, go for it. If you wanted to worship Jesus Christ, who cares? The Roman Empire could care less whom you worshiped. You only had to swear once a year by the genius of Caesar and say, “Caesar is Lord.” Caesar gave you the right to believe what you wanted to believe. Christians

refused to swear by the genius of Caesar. They refused to say, "Caesar is Lord." Consequently, they were put to death not just because they were Christians, but because they were counted as traitors to the Roman Empire and traitors to the emperor cult.

My question is, who is Lord? Who is Lord in your gates? Who is the authority in your life? Who has jurisdiction in your home, your church, your town, your city, your state, and your nation? What you see going on in our country is what has been going on: there is a war in the gates. It is a struggle for jurisdiction, authority, and dominion. We will either submit to Christ's authority and jurisdiction, or we will end up submitting to man's authority and jurisdiction.

When the early apostles were faced with that, they said in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than men." If you do not want war in your gates, stand fast in the Word of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this night. We thank You for Your Word and truth. Lord, help us understand that there is indeed a war: a war for our minds, bodies, allegiance, homes, families, and children. We must not allow a new god or false god to usurp the jurisdiction and authority of Jesus Christ. This great people who once worshiped Thee openly now mock Thee, refuse Thee, and forsake Thee. But Thou dost have a remnant and an elect. Stir us up, and enable us to cry out and stand in the fight for the crown rights of Jesus Christ, in whose name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

War in the Gates

Introduction: The Reality of War in the Gates

In Judges 5, verse 8, the Bible says, “They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?” This is the song of Deborah and Barak. Notice the verse again: “They chose new gods; then was war in the gates.”

It was a wonderful conference, and the truth of the matter is, I not only enjoyed it, but I told Brother Yarbrough that, during my own personal Bible study while I was here, I got three new messages. Maybe this is just a prolific place around here. But look at Judges 5, and consider this very simple verse. The title of the message is “War in the Gates.”

A few years back, there was a movie entitled Enemy at the Gates. It was about a battle in World War Two, the Battle of Stalingrad, where two snipers, a Russian and a German, tried to outmaneuver each other and basically kill each other. It was exciting in one sense because, as the snipers tried to outmaneuver each other, all you saw were bombed-out buildings, burned buildings, and just trash. As you looked at that movie, you got a real understanding of what it meant

to have war in the gates because it depicted very literally how war can come to the gates of a city. Our text in Judges 5:8 demonstrates how war affects individuals and nations on a personal and close-up level.

It is one thing to fight from a distance, when you really cannot see your enemy and your enemy cannot see you. It is totally different to fight up close. When you remember some of those ancient battles, they certainly had bows and spears. The bow, of course, was the long-distance weapon, but short swords, spears, and knives were used up close. All of those battles were up close and personal, literally war in the gates.

There is an interesting tidbit from the War of Northern Aggression, which some people call the Civil War, although it was not civil at all. The war actually began in the front yard of a man named Wilbur McLean. Wilbur McLean was born on May the 3rd, 1814.

He died on June 5, 1882. Wilbur McLean was a wholesale grocer and sugar broker in Virginia. He also supplied the Confederate armies and consequently would have been a target for the Union. Moreover, he desired to protect his family. Since the first battle of Manassas literally began in his front yard, he moved his family 120 miles farther south to escape the fighting. That distance may not seem far, but it is if one is riding a horse or driving a buggy or wagon with furniture in it. He moved them to a little place known as Appomattox County, Virginia, and Appomattox Courthouse. The interesting thing is that the war which began in his front yard ended in his front parlor, where Lee and Grant met and the surrender took place. Wilmer McLean experienced, on the one hand, war in the gates firsthand.

The Cause: Choosing New Gods

When we look at our text in Judges 5:8, however, war in the gates literally describes the hostile attacks of the Canaanites upon the Israelites. War in the gates does not happen by accident; it does not simply occur. Proverbs 26:2 tells us, "the curse causeless shall not come." Judges 5:8 gives the reason for the war in the gates: "They chose new gods." They not only submitted to idolatry forced upon

them through tyranny; they also freely chose new gods—new to them and unknown to their fathers, new in comparison with the one true and everlasting God, the ancient, eternal, immutable, omniscient One, the great I AM. They chose new gods to replace the one true and living God. Then, the Bible says, there was war in the gates.

They were hemmed up literally in every way and besieged in all their fortified cities. The strongest cities could not withstand the onslaught of the enemy. God had not only given them up; He had given them over into the hands of their enemies.

One thing we tend to forget is that God is a jealous God. In fact, Scripture tells us that His name is Jealous. Exodus 34:14 declares, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." Deuteronomy 4:24 says, "For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." The Bible teaches that God is so jealously holy that He is not about to share His honor or glory with a false god. He said in Isaiah 42:8, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

Mark this down in your mind: when a nation forsakes the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, it is inviting war in the gates. If you study this passage, especially Judges 5:8, you will find that when war came to the gates, the Israelites were also defenseless in the time of trouble. They did not have the means to resist their adversaries. The Scripture asks, "Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" This is an open and honest assessment of their martial strength. Remember that the Israelitish men of warrior age numbered literally in the hundreds of thousands; 600,000 of them came out of Egypt. Yet it is said, "Was there a shield or spear seen among the forty thousand in Israel?"

What the Bible is teaching us here is basically this: There were not sufficient spears and shields to equip forty thousand men; perhaps only one out of forty thousand was literally equipped to fight. Why did they not have their weapons? Why did they not have any weapons? It could be that they were negligent and slothful in a time of peace and certainly did not prepare for war. It is almost impossible to prepare for war when war is upon you. You must prepare before war actually breaks out. It could be that, in a time of

peace, they were simply slothful and neglectful, did not have anything, and did not even think that they would need anything. But it could also be that those who had ruled over them were tyrants who had deprived them of their weapons.

In fact, Jabin, king of Canaan, had actually disarmed them previously. Judges 3:31 says, "And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel." Do you know what an ox goad is? It is a long pointed stick, or a long stick with a sharpener. That was it. Shamgar did not have a spear. He did not have a sword. He simply had an ox goad.

It was indeed a common practice for tyrants to deprive their people of the means of self-defense. The reason they did not want their people to have a means of self-defense was that they did not want those weapons used against them. They did not want their tyrannical and despotic rule overthrown. Therefore, even Shamgar, a judge, was reduced to an ox goad.

But 1 Samuel 13:19 says, "Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears: But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads."

So it came to pass in the day of battle, “that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.” Notice that this was a time of battle, and Saul the king and his son Jonathan were the only two who had weapons. The rest had sticks. So obviously, tyrants do not want individuals to have weapons.

As it was in Judges 5, so it was in 1 Samuel 13. There were no weapons or warriors who were able to defend their homes or their land against their foes. Here is another truth that you need to mark down: a weaponless people, and a people that lack a warrior spirit, are already a subjugated and defeated people. We always have to be

willing to fight for our lives, our homes, our family, our liberty, and our land.

In fact, you know what the Bible says in Exodus chapter 15 and verse 3? I want you to listen: “The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.” And when you read Exodus chapter 15, what had the Lord, the man of war, just done? He had destroyed Pharaoh and all of his army in the sea. Here the Israelites are shouting and praising God, saying, “The LORD is indeed a man of war.”

Now, here is what I want to bring from Judges chapter 5 and verse 8. The Bible says, “They chose new gods; then was war in the gates.” When I read that passage a while back, I got to thinking: What in the world does it mean when the Bible says there was war in the gates? Before I share the truth that I want to proclaim from this text, I want to take a moment and show you how the word “gates” is used in the Bible.

Biblical Usage of 'Gates'

Do you realize that the same word “gates” is used in different ways in the Bible? One of the problems we have in reading the Bible is that we see a word and assume it means exactly what we think it means. Or we try to interpret something that happened a thousand or two thousand years ago in light of our understanding. But the word “gates” is used several different ways in the Bible.

First and most obviously, the word “gates” speaks of real, literal gates. No one can deny that. Deuteronomy 3:5 says, “All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars.” There were cities and suburbs in the Bible that did not have fences, walls, or gates, but there were indeed fortified cities that had gates. Oftentimes, when you read a verse like this, you automatically think, “There was war in the gates.” And that is true. It would be when the enemy came and forced his way into that fortified city. So there would literally be war at the gates.

Secondly, the word “gates” sometimes speaks not of real, literal gates per se, but of a triumphal entry. Psalm 24, beginning with verse 7, says, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this

King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Everyone knows that David took the city from the Jebusites. But it is not David who is being spoken of here as having the triumphal entry into the city. David had gotten the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Obed-Edom, and the Levites were probably carrying it. As David came to Jerusalem, he said, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

The picture is obviously of a general who has defeated his enemies, returning in triumph through the city, perhaps even showing his enemies off. But David says, This is not me. Here is the King of kings, the God of Israel, the Prince of peace, the mighty presence of God. "Lift up your gates. Open the doors, and this King of glory shall come in." Recognize that He is the triumphal King, the King who has obtained victory. He is God of gods, King of kings, and Lord of lords. You had better recognize this, lest what is intended for your good become your ruin, because here is the very presence of God.

Thus, the word "gates" may speak not only of a literal gate, but also of a triumphal entry. Thirdly, it may mean an entrance into the presence of God for fellowship and worship.

Sometimes the word "gates" is used in the Bible to speak of an entrance into the presence of God for fellowship and worship. Psalm 100, verses 3 and 4, connects these gates with thanksgiving and the courts with praise, while reminding us that the LORD is God, that He made us, and that we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Psalm 100 says, "Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."

Here you are entering into the gates for fellowship and worship. It is not a real, literal gate per se, but an entrance into the presence of God. David says it again in Psalm 118:19: "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD."

Sometimes, then, the word "gates" refers simply to an entrance into the presence of God for fellowship and worship.

But fourthly, sometimes the word "gates" also represents the blessings and the protection of God upon His people. Psalm 147:13–14 says, "For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat."

When he says, "For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates," all he is saying is that God has blessed you. God has given you protection. God has given you all kinds of blessings.

By now, as I have gone through these verses, you should understand that when you come upon a word like “gates,” the context must determine its usage. We have the same thing in English. Take the little English word “row,” R-O-W. If I simply say “row,” many of you automatically think of it as a verb, as when you put a paddle in the water and row the boat. But that same word can be a noun, as in a row of tomatoes or a row of peas. Again, R-O-W can be a verb pronounced “row,” referring to a fight or an argument. When you see the word R-O-W, you do not know whether it is a verb or a noun until you see it in its context.

When you see certain words in the Bible, you have to understand them in their context. I want to show you predominantly how the word “gates” is used in the Bible. It is not used in many different ways, but this is how it is used predominantly. Go first to Genesis chapter 22 and look at verse 17. I will tell you in advance what the word “gates” stands for.

Gates as Authority and Jurisdiction

Some of you have probably already guessed it, but here it is. In all of these passages, the word “gates” refers to a place of authority, a place of judgment and justice, and a place of jurisdiction. Look, please, in Genesis 22, verse 17. Here is what God says to Abraham: “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.” Now, let me tell you something about the gate. You will see this as we look

through all of these verses: it was the kings and the princes and the judges that sat in the gates.

The Israelitish court system was an open court system. Judgment was at the gates. Whoever controlled the gates got to make the law. Whoever controlled the gates had jurisdiction. God says in verse 17, "And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies."

When Rebecca was being sent away to become the wife of Isaac, she received the blessings from her family. Genesis 24:60 says, "And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them." If your seed is in control of the gate, that means you have the power, the authority, and the jurisdiction.

Deuteronomy 16:18 says, "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment." Where were the judges? In the gates. Where was judgment and justice? In the gates.

Deuteronomy 17, beginning with verse 1, says, "Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God. If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant, and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die."

"At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death." Where were men judged? At the gates. Where were they executed? At the gates.

Usually, when you read the word "gates" in the Bible, it is speaking of authority, jurisdiction, judgment, and justice. Psalm 127 says, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

God says our children are as arrows in the hand of a mighty man. You know what you do with arrows? You shoot them into your enemy. What are these mighty arrows doing? They are speaking with the enemies in the gate. What does that mean? They are conquering their enemies. They are about to dominate their enemies.

It does not matter where you look in the Bible; you will normally find that the word "gates" refers to jurisdiction and authority. Isaiah 13:2 says, "Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles." All the nobles, the princes, and the kings sat in the gates. That is where they were.

Jeremiah is talking about the judgment and the justice of God against Judah and Jerusalem. They are going to be destroyed. Jeremiah 1:14 says, "Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah."

What is God saying? He says, "I'm calling all of these pagan kings, and they're going to come and set their throne in the gates of Jerusalem." That means Judah and Jerusalem are going to be in captivity. They are going to be dominated and destroyed, because now these pagans are in the gates. They are in control. They are in dominion.

I could multiply verses like this, but I think you are beginning to see that all through Scripture, when you hear the word "gates," it usually speaks of authority. Yes, it could mean all of these other things as well. But "gates" does refer to jurisdiction. It does refer to

authority. It does refer to judgment and justice. I said all that just to get you to think about this.

The Bible says, “They chose new gods. Then there was war in the gates.” I want you to consider a concept concerning war in the gates. Please understand that God does not necessarily need to bring an invading army into our cities for there to be war in the gates. He can do that, and He has done that. But obviously, the word “gates” does refer to dominion and authority and jurisdiction.

There is a concept concerning war in the gates that most of us have either been ignorant of, or we have forgotten it, or we have simply ignored it or overlooked it; yet it is real and genuine. In order for you to further grasp this concept, turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 8. I want to share with you this concept of what I believe God is telling us about war in the gates. We will read verses 4 through 20.

Israel's Rejection of God's Rule (1 Samuel 8)

Think on this passage. Let me make a statement before reading it and ask you to look at it. You cannot understand 1 Samuel 8 without understanding it as a transition from one law structure to another. You cannot understand 1 Samuel 8 without seeing a change of jurisdiction, without seeing a change of authority. Beginning with verse 4: “Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways.”

"Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." What did they tell Samuel? He was an old man and would not be with them much longer, and his sons were not like him but were wicked. Therefore, they wanted a king to rule over them like all the other nations. They did not first seek God, nor did they want another prophet like Samuel or a judge. They were not necessarily interested in what God wanted for them or what was right. They wanted a king so that they might be like all the other nations.

"But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they

say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee."

When a people forsake the one true and living God, they also forsake those who represent Him. God said, first and foremost, that they had rejected Him. That was why they were rejecting Samuel.

Now skip down to verse nine: "Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked for a king. Then he said, "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you." Notice what this change in jurisdiction, authority, and law would produce in Israel and for anybody else.

"He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants."

"And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

When Samuel prayed to the LORD, God said, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not

rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

A king rules by his law. I don't care if we're talking about the divine king or a pagan king. You cannot have a king without having the king's law. And so God says, "They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." Therefore, he says, they have rejected you.

If you have followed in the Bible the life of the Israelites, you know that all God had ever done for them was give, give, give, give. Now they are swapping God for a king, and that king is going to take, take, take, take. I have a message entitled “Trading God for a Man,” in which I show the consequences in 1 Samuel 8 of trading God for a man and God's law for man's law.

This passage makes it exceedingly clear that once you reject God, you also reject His law. Once you reject God and His law, you automatically choose man and his law. If that is not clear enough in 1 Samuel 8, look in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 10, beginning in verse 17: “And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh.”

“And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us.”

“Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.” Note what he said: “You have rejected your God who saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations.” In essence, they said, “No, we don't want God. We want a man.”

If that is not clear enough, look in 1 Samuel 12:12: “And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king.” What were they saying? “We don't want God to be our king. We don't want His law. We don't want His rule.”

It was just like those Pharisees and chief priests. When Pilate asked them, “Shall I crucify your King?” they said, “We have no king but Caesar.” We don't want Christ; we refuse Him. We'll take a man. We don't want God to be our king.

Understand that we are talking about jurisdiction, authority, and law. Any time you swap gods, you swap laws. Anytime you change the one true and living God for a false god, you are changing jurisdiction, authority, and law. When you trade God for a man, you are changing jurisdiction, authority, and law.

The Consequences of Changing Laws (2 Kings 17; Micah 6)

Consider 2 Kings chapter 17, beginning with verse 7. I would encourage you, when you get home, to read the entire chapter; it is an important chapter. The Bible says, “For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods.”

It is obvious in this verse that the children of Israel sinned against the Lord. How did they sin against the Lord? They feared other gods. Thus they became guilty of idolatry.

How can you tell which God a man fears? People may say, “I fear the one true, the living God,” or, “I fear the Lord Jesus Christ.” Others could say, “I fear Allah,” or, “I fear Buddha.” How can you tell which God a person fears? Watch verse 7 again: “For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods.”

Here is how you know which god you fear. Verse 8 says, “And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.” They walked in the statutes—that is, in the laws—of the heathen. They feared other gods. What did they do? They left God, they left God’s law, and they began to obey the law of these false gods.

Moreover, verse 8 says plainly that they walked in the statutes of the heathen and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. No king of Israel was a good or godly king. Jeroboam I was the first king in Israel, and he was the man who made the two golden calves.

But one in Dan, one in Bethel. Jehu was a pretty decent man. God gave him ten generations. But the Bible said he turned not from the worship of the calves. So what are Judah and Jerusalem doing? What are the children of Israel doing? They are rejecting God, refusing God's law, and obeying the laws of these false gods and of these wicked rulers who are ruling absolutely contrary to God.

The children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. They set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree. There they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger. They served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways.

And keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God. They rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. They left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

How do we know they did not fear God? Because they did not obey God. They changed His law for the law of their false god or for the law of a wicked humanistic ruler. Here is the sad thing.

God sent Israel, the ten northern tribes, into captivity first for their sin and their rebellion. Judah and Jerusalem did not learn. Second Kings 17:18 says, “Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.” Also, “Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.” Even after God had sent Israel into captivity, Judah and Jerusalem were so ignorant and so depraved that they obeyed the laws of these wicked kings and false gods rather than God’s law until God destroyed them as well. There is something to jurisdiction, authority, and law.

In the little book of Micah, one of the minor prophets, chapter 6, God says, “Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.” Here is part of the curse: “Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.”

Why was the curse of God coming upon these people? Verse 16 gives the reason: “For the statutes of Omri are kept.” Omri was the father of Ahab. He was a murderer, a wicked and ungodly man. God says, “For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.”

Do you know why God sent the children of Israel into captivity? Because they refused Him and His law, His rule, and His reign. Why did He send the children of Judah and Jerusalem into captivity? Because they refused Him, His law, and His reign. Why did God curse them? Because instead of obeying Him, they obeyed the wicked, reprobate laws of wicked men and false gods.

The Bible says, “They chose them new gods. Then there was war in the gates.” Have you ever stopped to think that war takes many varied forms? One of our problems is that whenever we think of war,

we think of blood and guts, shooting and killing. You do not have to have shooting and killing to have a war. Let me show you.

The Nature of the War: Jurisdictional Conflict

Look in your Bibles at Joshua, chapter 24. When God brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, He refused to let them go into the land of Edom or Moab, because He said, “I’m not giving you the land that I gave to Esau,” nor could they enter that land. Now watch carefully what happens. Joshua 24, beginning with verse 8: “And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you: But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.”

Now, I find it interesting that the Bible says in verse 9, “Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel.” I would challenge you to show me in the Bible where Balak and his people physically attacked Israel. He did not. But he did hire Balaam to curse Israel. God turned the curse into a blessing. And Balak said to Balaam, “I brought you over here to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them.” Balaam said, “Come with me, and I will advise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.” Balaam also advised him how to get Israel to sin. Read Numbers 25, and you will find that the children of Israel went to the Moabites. They joined themselves, the Bible says, to Baal Peor, committed fornication, and worshipped false idols. God killed 23,000 of them. How did Balak war against the Israelites? He warred against them, number one, in trying to get Balaam to curse them, which did not happen.

But he warred against them by seducing and enticing them and trying to get them to violate God's law and sin against God, because he knew then God would turn against them and judge them. Do you realize that we are at war? Do you understand that? This world is no friend of God. The world system is against God. Man's laws are against God. Humanism and idolatry are against God. You do not

have to have a physical battle to have a war. War takes many and varied forms. It can also take the form of ridicule, satire, and ostracism, where the new ruler denounces the former ruler—kind of like Obama blaming everything on Bush. They were two puppets on the same hands, but everything was Bush's fault.

Stop and think. Let me ask you this question: Why is Christ so hated and despised today? Why is Christianity so ridiculed and denounced on every side, especially by those in authority and in power? Practically every law that comes out of Washington, D.C., is anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible, and anti-Christianity. The same is true in our state capitals. Have you ever wondered why there is a war against everything that is righteous, holy, and godly?

Here's why: We have chosen a new God, and there is war in the gates. What am I talking about? The war that you and I are talking about is a war over authority. It is over jurisdiction. It is over law. Man's law is fighting against God's law, and God's law is fighting against man's law.

Let me show you about ridicule. Psalm 69 is a Messianic Psalm. Someone once responded when I called Psalm 110 a Messianic Psalm, “Well, aren’t they all?” The truth is, yes, they all are, but some are more specifically Messianic Psalms.

Look at Psalm 69, verse 4: “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty.” “Then I restored that which I took not away.” The first part of that verse is directly applied to Jesus Christ in John 15:25, where our Lord said, “They hated me without a cause.” And, of course, we know it is our Lord who restored that which He took not away. Whatever we lost in Adam, we got far more in Jesus Christ. So that refers to Christ.

Look at verse 9: “For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.” That is said of Christ any number of times in the New Testament as well. Look at verse 21: “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” You know that is applied to Christ as He was suffering on the cross.

But look at verse 12: “They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards.” They that sit in the gate—those who have the authority, jurisdiction, and power, giving their law—are the ones speaking against me. God said they spoke against me so much that I was a song of drunkards: mocked, blasphemed, ridiculed.

Our Lord taught us something in John 15:18–20: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”

"If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." What is our Lord saying? They are going to treat you exactly the way they treat me. What did our God tell Samuel? They rejected me; therefore, they are rejecting you. I want you to understand that there is a war going on. There is a war going on in your mind, in your life, in this church, in our communities, in our states, and in our nation. That war is a war in the gates, and it is God fighting against wickedness, humanism, and anti-Godism.

The Christian's Stand in the War

It is His law versus man's law. Moreover, the war that I am talking about is an age-old war and an age-old struggle. It will be an absolutely endless war as long as we are on this earth. Those of us who proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord are declaring that He is boss, owner, master, and sovereign. When we declare the Lordship of Christ, we are declaring war against those who say that Caesar is Lord. Those who say that Caesar is Lord are proclaiming war against Jesus Christ. There is a war in the gates.

Peter said in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," the name of Jesus Christ. The Lord inspired him to write it, but in 32 or 33 B.C. there was a star that shone brightly in the heavens, and Caesar Augustus, who happened to be on the throne then, took advantage of that to proclaim himself God.

Throughout all the Roman Empire, he said, there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby you must be saved than the name of Caesar Augustus. Peter penned those words in Acts 4:12—or Luke actually penned them; Peter said them—and by those words he was declaring war against Caesar and the Roman Empire. He was saying, Caesar is not Lord. Jesus Christ is Lord.

Caesar does not have the right to issue law. God has the right to issue law. That is why the Bible says in Isaiah 33:22, "For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us." We cannot escape this battle. You will either fight for the Lordship of Jesus Christ or, by your lack of fighting and standing for God and His law, you will be fighting for the enemy.

There's a war in the gates. There's a war over jurisdiction and authority and law. Who has the right to rule? Who has the right to reign? By the way, I hope you know that in the Roman Empire, Christians were not put to death simply because they were Christians. In the Roman Empire, you could believe whatever you wanted to believe. If you wanted to worship Zeus, have at it. If you wanted to worship Aphrodite, go for it. If you wanted to worship Jesus, they could care less.

Just so long as once a year you swore by the genius of Caesar and you said, Caesar is Lord. Which meant then that Caesar gave you the right and the freedom to believe how you wanted to believe. The Christians refused to do that. They would not say, Caesar is Lord. Therefore, they were put to death not just because they were Christians, but because they were considered traitors and treacherous individuals to the emperor cult. They would only say, Jesus Christ is Lord. Your pastor can tell you the earliest baptismal confession was three words: Jesus is Lord. And when you say Lord, you're saying boss, owner, master, sovereign, the one who has all authority, jurisdiction and power and the right to tell me how to live, what to do, where to go, and what to believe.

There's a war in the gates. Who is God? Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. Help us, Lord, to see where the battle actually lies. And help us to stay true to Thee, in Thy word and Thy law, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 17

The Price to Pay For Forsaking God

A Price to Pay for Forsaking God

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 28:1-9 (KJV)

"Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father: For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree."

"Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter. For Pekah the son of

Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God?"

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 28:9-21 (KJV)

Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you. Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war, And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel. So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation.

And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria. At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah,

> and carried away captives. The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there. For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD. And Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.
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> For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me.

But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers. Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel. And Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

Introduction: The Question for the Nation

In light of the new year approaching, here is the question: Where are we, and where will we go as a nation? Shall we continue down the path of destruction, or will we return to our Christian foundations? There has been a glimmer of hope since Trump was elected. However, he continues to fill his cabinet with the very ones who have been leading us down the wrong path for decades. A few good

choices have elicited a small glimmer of hope, but overall it looks like it is going to be the same as always.

Each of us should understand by now that salvation is not in politics or politicians. There is no man who is a Savior except the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to give you a couple of articles in light of what I am going to be teaching from 2 Chronicles chapter 28. The first was written by Susan Duclos of the All News Pipeline, and its title is, "We Are Facing the Most Important Battle of All at the Most Dangerous Moment in History." The article shows what we are up against and cautions against optimism in the magic fix of Trump's victory over Clinton. Here is one paragraph:

"We at ANP are noting a lot of optimism from investors with stock soaring, to economic confidence reaching new highs, to small business owners, to household spending, and even prepping has hit a multi-year low. All the articles I am reading are crediting the election of Donald Trump as reason for all this optimism. But as much as I hate to rain on everyone's parade, now is the most dangerous time in history. Not a time to assume just because one man was elected all the wrongs will be made right. The failing economy will automatically just magically fix itself."

Jeremiah Johnson also wrote this: "The globalists need the illusion of the two-party system to enable a reprieve in the minds of the people with the rise of a Bush or a Trump. But the reprieve is merely an illusion. If these Marxist traitors forced their agenda on the people all at once, there would have been a revolution in its inception. They alternate: destroy the society and the culture to the maximum under a Democrat administration, and then scale back a bit under a Republican administration, while still nipping away at the edges with an act here or a piece of legislation there."

With that understanding, we must also consider that many today in our country are absolutely opposed not merely to Christianity or the Constitution, but basically to truth. They are dead set on overthrowing all of the recent changes. Mike Adams, known as the Health Ranger, wrote an article titled "The Next American Revolution Begins January the 20th." A portion of it states: "The anti-American communist-leaning website DisruptJ20.org—that means disrupt January the twentieth, which is the inauguration

day—is openly organizing a popular uprising against the legitimate new administration of the United States of America. January the 20th, 2017, Inauguration Day, is being targeted as a day for people to block, obstruct, disrupt, and do whatever they can to prevent the onslaught that is going to happen with Donald Trump," said alt-left organizer Michael Moore.

The DisruptJ20 website calls on all people of good conscience to join in disrupting the ceremonies. A DisruptJ20 tweet, relishing in the kind of delusional paranoia that now typifies the mentally ill left in America, says the effort is being waged to confront white supremacy and other forms of oppression. DisruptJ20 is a thinly veiled call for a communist uprising and the overthrow of the Trump administration. The effort is in reality a communist uprising and a coup attempt disguised as a peaceful protest. Yet the website describes it in military terms, characterizing it as a bold mobilization against the inauguration of Donald Trump on January 20th, 2017.

"If you can't make it to Washington, D.C. on January 20th, the organization encourages you to join the communist uprising wherever you might live. If you can't make it to Washington, D.C. on January 20th, take to the streets wherever you are," says the site, clearly inciting mob violence everywhere across America. This is totally against the law, but nothing is being done. So the question is, will the American people sit idly by and allow the Communists to overthrow the Constitution, Christianity, and the states? Will it really take another revolution to awaken the American people? The truth is that we have already forsaken God. If this thing comes down as the left wants it to, we will be driven further from God and further from His law. There is a price to pay in forsaking God. America, like Israel of old, has forsaken our God.

We left the Mayflower Compact and the Constitution. We have mocked and ridiculed the Word of God, turned our backs upon the founding fathers of this country and the principles for which they stood, and rebelled against Biblical Christianity. Anything that resembles a covenant, especially a covenant in relationship to God and His Christ, we have broken willingly and readily.

As Hosea said concerning Israel in Hosea 8 and verse 7, "they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." As the life

and reign of King Ahaz—and, I might add, the politician Ahaz—will show, if Trump turns out to be another demagogue and we allow further deterioration, then we might as well batten down the hatches. Our whirlwind will come in power and strength.

The sins of King Ahaz are outlined specifically in 2 Kings chapter 16. When you come to 2 Chronicles chapter 28, it does not rehash all those sins in detail; it details Ahaz's punishment for his sins. The depiction there is one of holy indignation against Ahaz and the punishment God inflicts upon him and his people because they have forsaken God and His covenant. It is true that Ahaz was humiliated and suffered.

But the sad truth is that his people suffered far more than he did. Matthew Henry, commenting on 2 Chronicles 28, said, “The people suffered by these judgments. Their blood was shed, their country wasted, their families ruined. For when they had a good king, though they did corruptly, yet then his goodness sheltered them. But now that they had a bad one, all the defense has departed from them, and an inundation of judgments broken upon them. Those that knew not their happiness in the foregoing reign were taught to value it by the miseries of this reign.”

When you consider King Ahaz, the opportunity that he had, and what he did with that opportunity, it is absolutely astounding. You may not understand what was bequeathed to King Ahaz. Everything that was bequeathed unto him, he squandered and wasted. So you are going to have to ask, will Trump turn out to be another Ahaz or a Jeroboam? Trump now has the opportunity to drain the swamp and overthrow the money changers. But will he do so?

King Ahaz was the son of King Jotham and the grandson of Uzziah. Uzziah and Jotham were godly kings who built their reigns upon God, obedience to His covenant, and obedience to His law. In 2 Chronicles 27:6, concerning Ahaz’s father, Jotham, we read, “So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.” Uzziah reigned for 52 years, Jotham for 16 years, and Ahaz for 16 years. Thus, in 16 years, Ahaz overthrew and destroyed everything his father and grandfather had built in 68 years. Ahaz had an excellent example to follow, but he turned out to be an idolater, a tyrant, and an imbecile.

And you're going to say, an imbecile? Yes. You can draw your own conclusion as to whether or not he was an imbecile. First of all, Ahaz followed a perverted religion. In the first four verses we read: "Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree."

The Sins of King Ahaz

We start with a negative in verse 1: he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father. He was a transgressor, disobedient, rebellious, and sinful. He violated not only the covenant, but the commandments of God as well.

All men are religious in nature. Every man serves some god. It may not be the one true and living God; it may be the god of money, prosperity, pleasure, or self. All worship a god. When someone turns from the one true and living God, it does not mean that he ceases to be religious; it means that he has turned to another god.

So you begin with a negative, and now come to a positive in verse 2: "For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim." Ahaz was positively an idolater. It is important to understand that God's test of whether or not we are faithful to Him is in relationship to His law. When an individual refuses to obey God's law, he is refusing to obey God. When he turns from God's law, he is turning from God himself.

In 2 Kings 17, verses 7 and 8, the Bible says: "For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods." The Bible says that the children of Israel feared other gods. How do we know that they feared other gods?

What was the evidence? Not just that God said so, which would certainly be sufficient. Verse 8 gives the evidence: “...and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.” God says, Here is the evidence that they were idolaters. They rejected My law, and they walked in the laws of the heathen and in the laws of the kings of Israel. When you look at Ahaz, the God of Israel meant nothing to him. He rejected God, and he rejected God's law.

However, notice that he did worship Baal and Molech. He worshipped all of these false gods. In fact, verse 3 says, “Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.” The same thing is said of him in 2 Kings 16:3-4. Note that he burnt his children in the fire.

There were two ways to do that. One way was that they actually sacrificed the children. There was a huge, hollow, solid brass statue with his arms extended. It was hollow because the priest would go in and build a roaring fire, making the brass red-hot and glowing. They would then take a baby and lay that baby in the palms of his hands. Since the arms were raised, the baby would roll down the arms into the fire and be consumed.

That was a sacrifice to Molech. Molech worship was a state religion. The other way to offer children to Molech was for the priest to build a fire, take the baby in his hands, and pass him over the fire. This was called purification, or dedicating the baby to the service of Molech. Thus King Ahaz took his children and burned them in the fire. The very first thing you find is that Ahaz was perverted in his religion. He followed a perverse religion. Christianity is a true religion; all others are perversions.

If you will not follow God and His Word, then the truth is that you will follow anything or anyone. We reject God and His Word at our peril. In 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12, the Bible says, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." If you will not believe the truth,

obviously you are going to believe a lie. If you will not follow righteousness, then you are going to follow unrighteousness. The rejection of God and His law carries its own punishment. Men who reject God and His law believe a lie, and they are going to be damned.

You have to understand that for a covenant people, there is always a judgment in time and history as well. Remember when Elijah said, "there's not going to be rain these years but according to my word." For three and a half years, God sent a drought upon Israel. When Elijah came back into the country and faced Ahab, Ahab asked, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" In 1 Kings 18:18, Elijah responded, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim." In other words, the troubler of Israel was Ahab, not Elijah. Idolatry troubles a nation and angers God because God is a jealous God. Exodus 34:14 says, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." One of God's names is Jealous.

That is why He said in Isaiah 42:8, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." When a nation denies God, forsakes His law, and turns from His righteous standards, there will be judgment. Deuteronomy 4:24 says, "For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." God judges a people when they forsake Him. There is always a price to pay in forsaking God.

The very first thing you find out about Ahaz in 2 Chronicles 28 is that he followed a perverse religion. Secondly, Ahaz was militarily defeated. You will find that in verses 5 through 15. Verse 5 says, “Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.”

Military Defeat as Judgment

Might does not make right. Military armaments, military preparation, and military skill are absolutely worthless when one

forsakes God and His law. Our true protection and our true defense are in God alone. One of my favorite passages is Proverbs 21:31: “The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.” Psalm 33:17 says, “An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.” You could paraphrase that and say a tank by his great strength is not going to deliver anyone. It is vain to trust in your bombers and anything militarily. Psalm 127:1 says, “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”

What you have in verses 5 through 15 is that Ahaz’s military was defeated. Do you understand that part and parcel of God’s judgment upon not only a civil ruler but also a nation is the fact that they are defeated militarily? Verse 5 says, “Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria.” God purposely and deliberately handed him over to the king of Syria and the king of Israel.

How could the LORD be called his God when Ahaz was an idolater who rejected God? First of all, God was his God by right, in the sense that God still had dominion over him. He was a creature, and God has absolute control over every one of His creatures.

Secondly, the nation was still in a covenant relationship with God, and He was the King of that nation; therefore, God is rightly referred to as his God. Moreover, Ahaz probably confessed God to be his God, although in a hypocritical manner. It was just like when Jeroboam built those two golden calves. They professed to worship God, but only worshiped Him through the calves. That is why He is referred to here as the LORD his God.

Secondly, there were two military defeats: one by Rezin, king of Syria, and one by Pekah, king of Israel. In 2 Kings 16:6, these two kings are named. Rezin recovered Elath from Ahaz during this particular war, and Pekah defeated him dramatically as well. Verse 6 says, "For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men."

It does not surprise us when we hear that 120,000 people were killed by dropping an atomic bomb on them or by a carpet bomb in a

city. But when you think about 120,000 men killed with a sword, archery, and spears, you are talking about something up close and personal: 120,000 in one day. What was it all the time that we were in Vietnam—58,000?

Why were 120,000 killed in one day? Verse 6 says, "For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers." There is a price to pay for forsaking God. Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, said to the king and his princes, "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you."

Ahaz was perverse in his religion, and, secondly, he was defeated militarily. People constantly speak about Russia and China, how powerful they are and how many people they have, and everyone is afraid that Russia or China will attack us. When you forsake God, it does not take a great nation.

Little Cuba could wipe us off the face of the map. In 2 Chronicles 28:17-18, we read, “For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.” “The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.” So, little tiny Edom and the Philistines, who had been defeated many, many times, now simply walked in, conquered, and did whatever they wanted to do.

Individuals, families, churches, men in general, and nations cannot prosper when they forsake God and God's law. His judgment rests against them in every way, including military defeat. In 2 Chronicles 12:5, Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and to the princes of Judah, who were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said, “Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.” We forsake God, God forsakes us, and turns us over to

some country that will militarily defeat us. Second Chronicles 21:10 shows how helpless Judah was: “So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day.”

“The same time also did Libnah revolt from under his hand; because he had forsaken the LORD God of his fathers.” Revolutions and rebellions often arise because we have forsaken God. Look at 2 Chronicles 24:24: “For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash.” The Syrians came with a very small company, but God delivered a very great host into their hands.

Do you know what happened in 2 Chronicles 28? Ahaz lost his son, his counselors, and 200,000 people in one day, not counting the 120,000 men who were killed. These 200,000 were captured and taken captive to Samaria. Stop and think about this: 320,000 people—120,000 dead and 200,000 captured.

Here is my point: it is impossible to stand militarily when you forsake God. I do not care about your technology or what armaments you have. Once you forsake God, you are going to be defeated militarily.

Political Shame and Impotence

The third thing about Ahaz revealed here as part of his punishment is that Ahaz was politically shamed. Look at 2 Chronicles 28:16: “At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.” Why? We just read verses 17 and 18. The Edomites were coming in and smiting them, and the Philistines were walking all over him. Ahaz had no control over his own kingdom. He could not function or even stop the smallest kingdoms from attacking him and taking what they wanted. He was powerless, impotent, and incompetent. No one feared or respected him, much like our modern-day Obama.

Some time ago, Obama halfway threatened Putin. Putin’s response was, “Should I be afraid of such a skinny man? I wrestle bears.” What kind of respect is that? That is Ahaz. No one respected

him, and he was sending for help because all these little countries were walking all over him.

It was God that brought Judah low for their rebellion against Him. Look at verse 19: “For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.”

For a real understanding, read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Those passages contain the blessings and the curses. God promises nations and people that, if we obey, He will make us the head; if we disobey, He will make us the tail. Ahaz and Judah were disobeying, and God was making them the tail. Deuteronomy 29:9 says, "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do." If we want to prosper, we obey God. If we do not want to prosper, we disobey God. There is a price to pay in forsaking God. It is just that simple.

Second Chronicles 7:22 says, "And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them."

Obviously, Ahaz not only followed a perverted religion; he was militarily defeated and politically shamed. Fourthly, he was a failure in foreign diplomacy. In verses 20 and 21, "And Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not." His alliance with the king of Assyria came to absolutely nothing.

Failure in Foreign Diplomacy

He wanted help, but all he got was trouble and heartache. God had forbidden alliances with the heathen and commanded that we make no covenants with them, in Deuteronomy chapter 7 and Exodus chapter 34. The Assyrians were known for their ruthlessness as well as their wickedness. Ahaz believed that he could use them and that

they would help him, but all it did was cost him—and it cost him his kingdom as well.

Tilgath-pilneser came, but he helped him not. In verse 21, "For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not." Interestingly, the very first place from which Ahaz stole was the house of the LORD.

A government that is unafraid to steal from God will have no compunction against stealing from its people. Malachi 3:8 asks, "Will a man rob God?" And God answers, "yea, ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee?" Then God answers, "In tithes and offerings." If God considers it theft and robbery not to give Him His tithes and offerings, how much more is it theft and robbery to take that which has already been given to God and dedicated to Him and steal it? How much worse is it to take that which has already been given to Him and dedicated to Him, steal it, and give it to an ungodly king?

That is exactly what Ahaz did. He stole it and gave it to the king of Assyria. He stole it from the house of God and from the princes. A government that steals from God and His people will face the judgment of God, because such actions are denial of God, His sovereignty, and His right. There is a price to pay for forsaking God. No man and no nation will ever prosper that continually violates the law of God.

Economic Destruction and Further Apostasy

Fifthly, Ahaz was economically destroyed. Look, if you would, in verse 22: "And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God

of his fathers." In the last two verses he dies. Now remember what God said to Joshua and the people in Joshua 1:7.

He said, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest." If we want to prosper, it is through obedience. David encouraged Solomon in 1 Kings 2:3, saying, "And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself."

So what did Ahaz do? Instead of obeying God and His law, he turned from God in his distress. Verse 22 says, "And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD?" Here was a man whose kingdom, family, and everything about him were in trouble. Instead of stopping and thinking, Why am I in trouble? Could it be that I have forsaken God? Could it be that I am not obeying God? he turned more and more to idolatry. He took the vessels of the house of God and cut them in pieces, giving them to Tilgath-pilneser.

Verse 24 says, "And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD." He closed down the temple; nobody could get in. It remained closed until his son Hezekiah took control. Later, there was a great revival under Hezekiah: the doors were opened and all the trash was cleaned out of the temple. Ahaz also made high places in every city of Judah, as verse 25 says, "And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers."

His economic distress drove him to steal even more from the house of God. It is impossible to prosper when you are dishonoring God, when you are doing that which is contrary to God and His Word. This imbecilic king, when he closed the house of God, reserved a room in it for the king of Assyria to stay in.

Now go back to verse 19 and think about what happened, and what is happening now: "For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel."

The Root Cause: Ahaz Made Judah Naked

This verse sums up everything about Ahaz and his kingdom. The people were wicked, but Ahaz was extremely wicked, and God brought Judah low because of Ahaz. What did Ahaz do? “For he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.” God brought Judah low because of her sin and rebellion, yet the leading cause of her demise was King Ahaz.

The phrase “made Judah naked” is important. When one is stripped naked publicly, it is a time of shame, humiliation, contempt, helplessness, and danger. Ahaz made Judah naked. As his sin debased the people, so it also exposed them. It made them naked to their shame, for it exposed them to contempt as a man is unclothed. It made them naked to their danger, for it exposed them to assaults as a man is unarmed.

Why could the people not fight against the Edomites or the Philistines? Because they were made naked. They were ashamed and helpless. Aaron made the people of Israel naked to their shame as well. When he made the golden calf in Exodus 32:25, the Bible said, “And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)”

Sin strips men. It disturbs, degrades, and destroys. It does not matter whether it is done by an individual, a president, a king, or a government; it still does exactly the same thing. What is happening in our country is that we are being made naked and humiliated. Once they try to take our weapons, we will be unarmed and helpless.

Consider 2 Chronicles 29:8: “Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.” God delivered them to the trouble they were in. Now look at 2 Chronicles 34:25. Here is what God says, and here is why the judgment was coming.

"Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched." Do you understand that God is on the throne? He is absolutely sovereign, yet man is responsible. And when our leaders lead us into idolatry, and we follow willingly, we will be judged along with our leaders.

Application: Repent or Perish

If you understand the Bible and history, it boils down to one simple thing: We must either repent or perish. Where are we going? What road are we going to take? Unless we turn back to God, no matter who's in the White House, it's still going downhill. If everybody else does what is wrong and wicked, you ought to determine in your heart that you're going to do what is right and biblical and holy and godly. You won't have to stand, but no one else will stand. And you'll have to do what's right, but no one else will do what's right. Because we will not only be a witness against the enemies of God, we will be a witness to the people of God for that which is right and holy. Let's pray.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for your grace and your mercy. We pray that you would teach us and build us up in most holy faith. Give us grace that we might serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear and courage to stand for what is right. Amen.

CHAPTER 18

Dark Winter at Valley Forge

Introduction: The Biblical Dark Winter

Our Lord said, “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.” Winter, for most folks, is a rather foreboding time. It is usually a time of darkness, a lack of sunlight, cold, ice, sleet, and snow. It is also strange how winter, for some people, becomes a source of apathy, lethargy, and depression.

I suppose one reason many people get depressed during wintertime is that they are shut in, and all they can do is watch TV—and that is depressing enough. I honestly think TV is basically a waste of time. We have not had one in our home for many, many years. I have often said that hell for me would be being locked in a room and forced to watch TV all day long.

Personally, I think most TV is not entertainment but conditioning. The news is not news but propaganda, and the sitcoms have absolutely nothing to offer except canned laughter and that which is not funny at all.

Winter is also a favorite time of year for those who love to ski, sled, or ice fish, but most people truly prefer a warmer climate. That

is why down in South Georgia and Florida we have an awful lot of snowbirds who come down and spend the winter there. It is a whole lot easier to endure wintertime when you are outside and all you need is a short-sleeve shirt, a long-sleeve shirt, or perhaps a light jacket. It is possible to really enjoy winter like that. You can do all those chores outside, even gardening. In South Georgia, where I live, we can have gardens twelve months out of the year; we do not have to have them for just two or three months.

I was preaching in Montana on July the fourth, and smoke was coming out of the chimneys, with people walking around wearing jackets. I looked at the person with whom I was staying and said, "When do you have summer out here?" She said, "Oh, we had that yesterday." Weather changes quite frequently there. But the dark winter referred to in Matthew 24:20—

Winter's Hardships and Sabbath Travel Restrictions

Our text actually refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Looking back at that verse, our Lord says, "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." This dark winter, then, spoke of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. Our Lord said that it was right to pray for mitigation, but the judgment was coming, and any attempt to escape would be greatly hindered by winter or the Sabbath day. Why would our Lord say, "Pray that your flight be not in winter, neither on the Sabbath day"? Consider winter for a moment.

The hardness and harshness of the season, the badness of the roads, the shortness of the days, the length of the nights, and the cold, ice, and snow would greatly hinder flight. If you needed to run, these things would hinder you. You must also consider families trying to deal with small children or elderly people; that would certainly hinder them as well.

Winter, of course, we understand. But He said, "I pray that your flight not only be in the winter, but not on the Sabbath either." Why? In the Bible, there was a limitation on travel during the Sabbath. Acts 1:12 tells us that they returned from Jerusalem, from the Mount of Olivet, which was from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey. There was, therefore, a Sabbath day's journey. In Exodus 16:29, when God

gave the manna for two days, He commanded that on the seventh day everyone abide in his tent. Then, in Nehemiah 13, people were violating the Sabbath by buying and selling. Nehemiah had to block the gate.

The settlers would often lodge at the gate, and he would drive them away. He said, “If you do it again, I’m going to lay hands on you.” He put guards there and said, “This is not going to happen.” Thus, people were essentially required to stay in their place. Journeys on the Sabbath day were clearly limited. The law of God did not necessarily specify the limit; it was basically established by the rabbis or by tradition. Usually, travel on the Sabbath was limited to seven furlongs, nearly a mile. If their flight occurred on the Sabbath day, they could barely get out of the way of destruction.

One commentator said it like this: The distance of a lawful journey on the Sabbath was not determined by the law of Moses, but the Jewish teachers had fixed it at 2,000 paces. This measure was determined because tradition held that, in the camp of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt, no part of the camp was more than 2,000 paces from the tabernacle. Over this space, therefore, they were permitted to travel for worship. Perhaps some countenance was also given to this by the fact that this was the extent of the suburbs of the Levitical cities, as described in Numbers 35:5.

Mount Olivet was but five furlongs from Jerusalem, and Bethany was fifteen furlongs. On the eastern declivity of the mountain was a considerable tract of country called the region of Bethany, and it was from this place that our Lord Jesus ascended. In Joshua 3:4, the people had to keep 2,000 paces behind the ark as they circled the city of Jericho. Thus our Lord says, “Pray then that your flight be not in the winter nor on the Sabbath day.”

Modern 'Dark Winter' Warnings

I am sure each of you has heard the phrase “the dark winter.” Politicians and the media have spoken of it frequently. Operation Dark Winter was the code name for a senior-level bioterrorist attack simulation that took place June 22–23, 2001. It was designed as a mock attack involving a covert yet widespread smallpox attack on

the United States. I suppose the code name could be used to warn of anything, or any attack, during the winter.

Recently, in the White House, during the so-called COVID pandemic, a warning was given: "White House COVID response coordinator tells unvaccinated Americans to prepare to die." Everybody is going to die, but this is what they were saying: "You're looking at a winter of severe illness and death. For the unvaccinated, you're looking at the winter of severe illness and death for yourselves, your families, and the hospitals you may soon overwhelm."

The message to every American was clear: "There is action you can take to protect yourself and your family. Wear a mask in public, indoor settings, get vaccinated, get your kids vaccinated and get a booster whenever you are eligible." But the truth was and still is, he said, that it is the vaccinated who are being hospitalized and dying, not the unvaccinated. The blood clots, strokes, heart disease, and death, he claimed, all come from those who have been vaccinated.

A Real, Genuine Dark Winter

There are many who had limbs amputated because of vaccination. Not too long ago, I showed my wife an absolutely beautiful young woman who was twenty-two years old. She was a beauty model. Here she was in the hospital with both of her legs amputated, fighting for her life because two weeks earlier she had taken the vaccine, which was not really a vaccine but gene therapy. Now she has lost both legs, has myocarditis, and is fighting simply to live. Twenty-two years of age.

These people are basically dying. In fact, 93 percent of those who were hospitalized, according to the record that I read, had at least two shots. Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy Jr., in his book The Real Anthony Fauci, said this: "Dark Winter, Atlantic Storm and Global Mercury were only three of over a dozen germ games staged by military, medical and intelligent planners leading up to COVID-19."

Each of these, having a nightmarishly complex, bizarre, or illogical quality, became uncanny predictors of a dystopian age that pandemic planners dubbed the new normal. The consistent feature

is an affinity among their simulator designers for militarizing medicine and introducing a centralized autocratic governance.

The term “dark winter” has been spread around quite frequently. Since that term has become familiar, I wanted to tell you today about a real, genuine dark winter—one that was a dark winter of disease and death. There are ramifications and implications in this dark winter that are very applicable for us today.

The Dark Winter took place in the winter of 1777 through 1778 at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. George Washington and his army had just lost the Battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777, and were forced to retreat toward Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Before I get to the history of Valley Forge, I want to point out something about George Washington’s character.

The Historical Dark Winter at Valley Forge

Listen carefully, because George Washington was indeed quite a man, and obviously there was another man who followed in his steps. Washington often remarked that he would rather be at home at Mount Vernon. Despite his wishes, Washington managed to return to his home on the Potomac only once between his acceptance of his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army in 1775 and the victory at Yorktown in 1781.

Under the most trying circumstances and conditions, he was there with his men at Valley Forge. General Stonewall Jackson was a man who followed Washington’s character. During the war, Stonewall never took a furlough or time off. He loved his wife and daughter, but he felt constrained to stay with his men. When he was encouraged to take a furlough, here is what he said.

“I can't be absent, as my attention is necessary in preparing my troops for hard fighting, should it be required. And as my officers and soldiers are not permitted to visit their wives and families, I ought not to see mine. It might make the troops feel that they are badly treated, and that I consult my own comfort regardless of theirs. Every officer and soldier who is able to do duty ought to be busily engaged in military preparation by hard drilling, in order that, through the blessing of God, we may be victorious in the battles

which in His all-wise providence may await us. If the war is carried on with vigor, I think, under the blessing of God, it will not last long."

So Washington visited home only once. Jackson never visited home at all. Though the revolutionary forces had won a pivotal victory at Saratoga in September and October, Washington's army had also suffered defeat at Brandywine, Paoli, and Germantown, Pennsylvania. In fact, Philadelphia, the capital, had fallen into the hands of the British. By the time Washington and his men marched to Valley Forge on December 19, they were already suffering from hunger, fatigue, and cold, and their morale was exceedingly low. George Washington described Valley Forge as "a dreary kind of place and uncomfortably provided."

If Washington viewed Valley Forge as a dreary kind of place, and if it was very uncomfortable, why did he choose it for an encampment? The encampment lasted six months, and he led approximately 11,000 men there, not counting the women and children who followed the men. Why did Washington choose this place?

There were several reasons. First, the lay of the land made it basically a natural fortress. It was high on a plateau atop a series of hills that protected it. The soldiers had tents, and later they were able to have huts. There was also ample space for a parade ground.

Secondly, Valley Forge was far enough away from the rich farmland of Pennsylvania to prevent the Army from becoming a burden on the population there. Thirdly, it was close enough to Philadelphia for them to see the movement of the British troops and protect their neighbors and those who lived close by. Washington said that if they were farther away, many of their friends and people would experience wanton depredation and distress.

So the dark winter of 1777 and 1778 was indeed dark—darker than any of us could possibly imagine. Consider this question as I speak today: How much does your freedom mean to you? And what are you willing to endure to be free? Think about it.

I do not believe that the average patriot today, or even the average Christian, has the backbone, character, integrity, determination, and

love for liberty and freedom to endure what our ancestors endured for our freedom. When you understand what these people truly went through, it is mind-boggling.

Providential Rivalry and the Battle of Saratoga

Had there not been rivalry between British generals, there would never have been a dark winter for Washington and his armies, nor a Valley Forge. Washington and his army would have been devastated and wiped out. British General "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne was bringing his troops down from Canada, while General William Howe was in New York City and was supposed to bring his troops up from there. Burgoyne had developed a plan to put Washington and his men in a pincer movement so that they might be destroyed.

The only thing that basically saved Washington, in the providence of God, was the rivalry between Burgoyne and Howe. Instead of helping Burgoyne and following the plan, Howe left New York and went to Philadelphia to capture Pennsylvania's capital, then the busiest port. Howe's lack of support for Burgoyne contributed to the British defeat. At the Battle of Saratoga, nearly 6,000 British troops surrendered. The American victory encouraged France to enter the war on the side of the colonies. It was no longer merely a war between England and America, but also a war between France and England, two of the greatest military powers of that time.

You have to ask yourself: Why did General Howe not follow the plan? Why did he not want to help General Burgoyne? Why did he want to capture Philadelphia? In European warfare, whenever a capital was captured, it meant the war was over; there was a surrender. Howe thought that capturing Philadelphia would end the war, and he would receive the greatest praise and have the biggest star on his chest.

What he did not anticipate was that, rather than surrender, the American Continental Congress quickly evacuated Philadelphia. They even took down the Liberty Bell and carried it with them so the British could not melt it down into musket balls or cannonballs, effectively depriving General Howe of his European victory.

Moreover, before they left, they placed the entire war on the shoulders of George Washington. Here is what they said: “Until Congress shall order otherwise, General Washington is possessed with full power to order and direct all things relative to the operations of the war.” They fled, but left everything in Washington’s hands.

Washington attempted to fight the British again at the Battle of the Clouds, but torrential rains came down in a vast downpour and drenched the gunpowder. Nobody could really fight at that particular time. Washington then took his 11,000 soldiers and marched them to Valley Forge, where they settled on December 19, 1777. At the same time, another 11,000 American soldiers were dying on British ships. They were being starved to death. The ships were the Scorpion, the Hope, the Falmouth, the Stromboli, the Hunter, and the Jersey. We have no idea how many people truly died on those ships.

Ezra Stiles, president of Yale University and a preacher, wrote on May 8, 1783: “Oh, that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears,” quoting Jeremiah, “that I might weep for the thousands of our brethren that have perished in prison ships, in one of which the Jersey, then lying at New York, perished above 11,000 for the last three years, while others have been barbarously exiled to the East Indies for life.”

Can you imagine that? American soldiers were starving and being ill-treated on these ships, while some were exiled for life. Interestingly, the soldiers Washington commanded ranged in age from twelve to sixty. Can you imagine a twelve-year-old boy following General Washington today? These soldiers came from every state, or every colony. Among them were notable men whom we have held in regard for years.

Suffering and Deprivation at Valley Forge

One was the Marquis de Lafayette. De Valette was the man in charge in the 1500s at the Battle of Malta, where the Christians defeated the Turks in a six-month siege. But it was Lafayette who was there with him.

Colonel "Mad Anthony" Wayne was there, along with future Chief Justice John Marshall and Lutheran pastor turned Major General John Peter Muhlenberg. There were indeed some very famous men there. But lacking food and supplies, the soldiers died at a rate of twelve per day. Over 2,500 froze to death in bitter cold or perished from hunger, typhoid, jaundice, dysentery, and pneumonia. In addition, hundreds of horses froze to death that winter. You talk about suffering. You talk about men dying like flies.

The truth of the matter is that it was absolutely horrendous. George Washington said this. Mrs. Westlake, speaking about Martha Washington, described the women who followed the men, known as camp followers. Many were wives of the men who were fighting, and over 500 women died at Valley Forge as well as the soldiers. These ladies were organized by Martha Washington, Lucy Knox, the wife of Colonel Henry Knox, and Katie Green, the wife of General Nathaniel Green.

Mrs. Westlake said of Mrs. Washington, "I've never in my life knew a woman so busy from early morning until late at night, as was Lady Washington, providing comforts for the sick soldiers." These women not only tried to scourge food up and scrounge it up and have food and clothing available, but did everything they could to keep the men well. President Calvin Coolidge told the Daughters of the American Revolution on April 19, 1926, "We have been told of the unselfish devotion of the women who gave their own warm garments to fashion clothing for the suffering Continental Army during the winter at Valley Forge."

The burdens of the war did not fall just upon the man. Surgeon Dr. Alvin Jentz Waldo wrote in his diary on December the 25th, "Christmas, we're still intense when we ought to be in huts. The poor sick suffer much intense in this cold weather, but we now treat them differently from what they used to be at home. Under the inspection of old women and Dr. Bolus Lictis, we gave them mutton and grog and a capital medicine once in a while to start the disease from its foundation at once."

"We avoid piddling pills, powders, vapors, lincolns, cordials, cough lozenges, and all such insignificant matters whose powers are merely rendered important by causing the patient to vomit up his

money instead of all his disease." They were trying to treat things differently. Two days before Christmas, George Washington wrote, "We have this day no less than two thousand eight hundred and seventy three men in camp unfit for duty because they are barefooted and otherwise naked."

Washington added, "unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place, this army must inevitably starve, dissolve, or disperse in order to obtain subsistence in the best manner they can." These men were not only starving and freezing to death; they also lacked proper clothing and shoes. Washington then wrote Virginia Governor Patrick Henry: "For several days past, we've experienced little less than a famine in the camp, have had much cause to dread a general mutiny and dispersion."

"From every appearance, there has been heretofore so astonishing deficiency in providing that unless the most vigorous and effectual measures are at once everywhere adopted, we shall not be able to make another campaign." The men could not fight; this appeared to be the end. Henry was outraged, saying, "I'm really shocked at the management of Congress." There was a reason for this, which will be explained momentarily.

The difficulty of that winter is evident in another letter Washington wrote to Lieutenant Colonel John Bannister: "No history can furnish an instance of an army suffering such uncommon hardships as ours has done, and bearing them with the same patience and fortitude. To see men without clothes to cover their nakedness, without blankets to lay on, without shoes by which their marches might be traced by the blood of their feet, and almost as often without provisions marching through frost and snow and at Christmas, taking up their winter quarters within a day's march of the enemy without a house or a hut to cover them and submitting to it without a murmur is a mark of patience and obedience, which, in my opinion, can scarcely be paralleled."

Continental Army Private Joseph Martin wrote that the Army's new winter quarters left them in a truly forlorn condition, no clothing, no provision, and as disheartened as need be. Years ago, an article described Mrs. Washington going to view the troops. The men had to be shuffled around because many were basically naked, so

that when she reviewed them, none of their nakedness would be exposed.

It was a Hessian major, Carl Bernmeister, who noticed that the only thing keeping the American Army together was the spirit of liberty. Why was the Continental Army in such dire distress? How could such mismanagement and neglect take place in such an important cause? You have to remember, if Washington failed, then freedom failed. If freedom failed, we would go back under George III, whom I am sure would not be very forgiving.

Corruption and the Conway Cabal

How could Congress, or whoever was responsible, allow these men to starve and remain without clothes and blankets? The answer to those questions then is the answer to the questions we have today. The problems back then and the problems today were caused by corruption and politics. It was discovered that the mismanagement under the Continental Army's quartermaster, General Thomas Mifflin, was the source of the problem.

A controversy arose as to whether Mifflin was simply incompetent or, as some alleged, was waylaying supplies, putting them in his own warehouse, and later selling them to the highest bidder. When confronted, Mifflin immediately resigned. He was also caught up in what was known as the Conway Cabal. The Continental Congress had discussed replacing General George Washington with General Horatio Gates, the hero of the Battle of Saratoga. The cabal was orchestrated by Thomas Conway, whose grudge against Washington was that he had been passed over for promotion. An anonymous letter was sent to Patrick Henry, governor of Virginia, requesting that he join the cabal. When Henry received it, he immediately informed General Washington.

Everything was taken care of almost instantly, and a new quartermaster was appointed: Nathaniel Green. When General Green took over, Valley Forge had food, clothing, and other supplies within days.

Drilling and Leadership: Von Steuben and Lafayette

In spite of the freezing conditions, the soldiers still prepared to fight. In February 1778, a Prussian drillmaster arrived at the camp: Baron Frederick von Steuben. He had been a member of the elite general staff of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, and had been recommended by Ben Franklin. Von Steuben was indeed a drillmaster, and he kept drilling these colonial soldiers until he turned them into a real fighting machine.

I never will forget seeing a cartoon years ago. It was not necessarily funny, but it clearly showed what I am talking about. Von Steuben stood in his Prussian uniform, all decked out, while the Continental soldiers stood in line, their clothes torn and their feet wrapped in rags. Blood was visible on the snow. Von Steuben was saying, “And when I say ‘tongue,’ let me hear those rags snap.” It would be hard to get those rags to snap when he hollered, “Attention,” if you were so sore that you could hardly move.

Yet that was exactly the condition they were in. Von Steuben helped drill these men and make them real soldiers. The Marquis de Lafayette, a French officer, also came to Washington’s aid. He suffered with those men, taught them, and was known as a hero. Lafayette was one hundred percent behind Washington and the American cause. He identified with these soldiers because he suffered when they suffered.

He did without when they did without. Between Von Steuben and Lafayette, they made the soldiers able and capable of fighting. Lutheran Pastor Henry Muhlenberg, whose sons Peter and Frederick served in the first United States Congress, wrote in his notebook of a colonial clergyman's report about Washington:

“I heard a fine example today, namely that His Excellency General Washington rode among his army yesterday and admonished each to fear God, to put away wickedness, and to practice Christian virtues. From all appearances, General Washington does not belong to the so-called world of society, for he respects God's word, believes in the atonement through Jesus Christ, and bears himself in humility and gentleness. Therefore, the Lord God has also singularly, yea, marvelously preserved him from harm in the midst

of countless perils, ambushes, fatigues, and his hitherto graciously held his hand as a chosen vessel."

Washington's Faith and Prayer

Washington successfully kept his army intact through this devastating dark winter at Valley Forge. Congress recommended a day of fasting and prayer, and George Washington addressed his men: "The Honorable Congress having thought proper to recommend to the United States of America to set apart Wednesday the 22nd to be observed as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, and at one time and with one voice, the righteous dispensation of providence may be acknowledged, and His goodness and mercy toward our arms supplicated and implored. The general directs that the day shall be most religiously observed in the army, that no work shall be done their own, and that the several chaplains do prepare discourses."

He continued: "The commander-in-chief directs that divine services be performed every Sunday. While we are zealously performing our duties as good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of patriot, it should be our highest glory to laud the more distinguished character of a Christian." Washington was indeed, I believe, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and certainly applied the Word of God.

We are familiar with the picture of Washington kneeling in the snow, praying at Valley Forge. Painted by Arnold Friberg, it is one of the best-known paintings of the American Revolution. General Washington kneels in the snow beside his horse, Nelson. The story was told by a local Quaker who was a Tory at the beginning, Isaac Potts, who spied General Washington praying alone in the woods during one of the bleakest times in American history.

However, the account comes from Reverend Nathaniel Randolph Snowden, an ordained Presbyterian minister, graduate of Princeton, and holder of a degree from Dickinson's College. Born in 1770 and dying in 1851, Reverend Snowden gave this first-hand account, received from Isaac Potts:

"I knew personally the celebrated Quaker Potts, who saw General Washington alone in the woods at prayer. Weems mentions it in his history of Washington, but I got it from the man myself. I was riding with him, Mr. Potts, in Montgomery County near Valley Forge, where the Army lay during the War of Revolution. Mr. Potts was a senator in our state and a Whig.

"I told him I was agreeably surprised to find him a friend to his country, as the Quakers were mostly Tories. He said, 'It was so, and I was a rank Tory once, for I never believed that America could proceed against Great Britain, whose fleets and armies covered the land and ocean. But something very extraordinary converted me to the good faith.' 'What was that?' I inquired. 'Do you see those woods and that plain?'

"It was about a quarter of a mile from the place where we were riding. 'There,' said he, 'lay the army of Washington. It was the most distressing time of the war, and all were forgiving of the ship but that great and good man. In that woods,' pointing to a close view, he said, 'I heard a plaintive sound as of a man at prayer. I tied my horse to a sapling and went quickly into the woods. To my astonishment, I saw the great George Washington on his knees alone, with his sword on his side and his cocked hat on the other. He was at prayer to the God of the armies, beseeching Him to interpose with His divine aid, as it was a crisis for the cause of the country and of humanity in the world. Such a prayer I never heard from the lips of a man. I left him alone praying. I went home and told my wife, I saw a sight today such as I never saw or heard before, and related to her what I had seen, heard, and observed.'"

"We never thought a man could be a soldier and a Christian. But if there is one in the world, it is Washington. She also was astonished. We thought it was the cause of God, and America could prevail." He then put out his right hand and said, "I turned right around and became a Whig." In other words, he changed from the Tory, or English, side to the American side. Certainly, God did indeed answer George Washington's prayer. Let me tell you what I believe is one of our major problems today.

Applications: Tyranny, Corruption, and Our Dark Winter

This truth has certain implications for us. George III was indeed a tyrant, and Parliament tried to be a tyrant as well. We tend to think that tyranny originates with one man: George III, Idi Amin, Pol Pot, Stalin, or Mao Zedong. But tyranny can originate from an aristocracy, a democracy, or a monarchy. It can also originate from a congress, a president, a judicial system, or political parties.

The black lawmaker from Florida, whose name slips my mind, was asked about the rules in Congress, especially the Constitution. His reply was, "There are no rules. We make them up as we go." What we are witnessing today is the total corruption and tyrannical influence of our political parties and judicial system.

I had a friend years ago who began to study history and the Constitution of the United States. On one occasion, he received a speeding ticket. Since he had received it, he decided to exercise his rights, go into the courtroom, and argue his case from the Constitution. As he argued, it was Constitution this and Constitution that.

Finally, the judge said, "Mr. Irby, if you mention the Constitution one more time in my courtroom, I'm going to fine you in contempt of court." Notice that he did not want the Constitution mentioned. Henry Irby looked at the judge and said, "Your Honor, if you did find me in contempt, it would be the only honest thing you've done all day long, for all I have for this court is contempt." Bam—a hundred bucks. Henry said, "Best hundred bucks I ever paid in my life."

Do you understand where we are today? We have our own Valley Forge, so to speak. We're witnessing the unbiblical, unconstitutional, and undeniable effort by a global elite to enslave us—not just America, but the world as well. We see corruption on every hand, on every turn. I was telling someone the other day, I just read where a grant was given to some folks for ten million dollars—$10 million Federal Reserve notes—to ascertain the best way to ask someone their sex and preferred pronouns. What? And when you pay $20 million to study the mating habits of the green frog, something is wrong somewhere.

Thomas Jefferson said this: "Our legislators are not sufficiently apprised of the rightful limits of their power. That their true office is to declare and enforce only our natural rights and duties and to take none of them from us." Our legislators are not sufficiently apprised. They don't know. I'll be honest with you, there are very few politicians who are really concerned with our liberty, our freedom, and our rights from God.

And the appraisal that we should give them should be sufficient for them. You remember Everett Dirksen, who is now dead; he was a senator. He made the famous statement, "When I feel the heat, then I see the light." Our legislators have never felt any heat. You want a good definition of tyranny? John Taylor, 1753 to 1803, wrote this: "Tyranny is something which takes away our money, transfers our property and our comforts to those that did not earn them and eats the food belonging to others." Think about that.

That's exactly what has happened. Now, let me make some applications. It should not be counted strange to understand that corruption, cabals, and political intrigues actually began even before our country was formed. The Mifflins, the Conways, and others are still with us, just under different names. Total depravity is the root cause, and men are just as depraved today as they were in the eighteenth century.

Psalm 118, verses 8 and 9, say this: “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.” And, “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” Psalm 118, verse 8, is indeed the middle verse of the Bible.

Samuel Adams said, “If ever a time should come when vain and aspiring men shall possess the highest seats in government, our country will stand in need of its experienced patriots to prevent its ruin.” That is exactly where we are today, where vain and aspiring men possess the highest seats in our government.

John Philpott Curran, who died in 1870, said in a speech in 1790, “It is the common fate of the indolent to see their rights become a prey to the active. The condition upon which God had given liberty to man is eternal vigilance, which condition if he break, servitude is

at once the consequences of his crime and the punishment of his guilt."

Thomas Jefferson said, "God, who gave us life, gave us liberty, and can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? They are not to be violated, but with his wrath. Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever."

Biblical Foundation for Righteous Government

George Washington said it is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible. Turn, if you would, to 2 Samuel, chapter 23. I want to show you where George Washington caught that quote. Notice verse 1, and we will read through verse 3: "Now these be the last words of David. David, the son of Jesse, said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel said, 'The spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said the rock of Israel spake to me. He that ruleth over men must be just ruling the fear of God.'"

Here is a very simple statement: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." But notice how many times David claims direct inspiration from God for this one simple truth. In verse one, he says, "The anointed of God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel said": first, "The spirit of the Lord spake by me"; second, "His word was in my tongue"; third, "The God of Israel said"; and fourth, "The Rock of Israel spake to me." Four times David claims direct inspiration for this truth: he that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. It is impossible to rightly govern without God and the Bible.

Our dark winter today is being brought to us by men without faith, politicians without law, judges without righteousness and justice, and people who love sin, wickedness, and rebellion. It is also being brought to us by the holy, righteous, and just Judge of all the earth, who will not allow sin to go unpunished.

Isaiah 59, beginning with verse 12, says: “For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us. For our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them. Yea, we really do. In transgressing and lying against the Lord and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood and judgment is turned away backward and justice standeth afar off for truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth. And he that departed from evil maketh himself a prey, and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.” When man does not judge righteously according to God’s law, God often judges himself.

Any society, community, or nation that seeks to circumvent, deny, disregard, and denigrate God and His law is inevitably destroying itself. It was Sam Adams who said that the successful revolution began before the first shot was fired, because the revolution was already in the hearts and minds of the people. They had been taught in the Word of God, and they held those convictions before the first shot was fired.

Conclusion: Call to Endurance and Repentance

What are you willing to do to maintain your freedom? How far are you willing to go? What are you willing to endure? Considering what the Continental Army went through, what our ancestors endured, and how selfish we are, even as Christians, we value comfort over everything. As our Lord said to the Israelites, they like to worship under the oaks because the shade thereof is good. Our dark winter, unless we repent individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally, will be brought to us by the judgment of God.

I do believe we are headed for something that we do not even realize is waiting for us down the road. How much do you value freedom?

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We pray that You would stir our minds and hearts, build us up in the most holy faith, and give us grace to serve Thee. Give us character to stand. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 19

Who is Your King?

Introduction: The Question of Kingship

In 1 Samuel 8:4, we read, “Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways.” They continued: “Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people and all that they have said unto thee. For they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me that I should not reign over them.”

“According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day, wherewith they have forsaken me and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.”

So the question is, who is your king? If you ask the average American or the average Christian, I am sure you would probably get a response something like this: “I do not have a king; I live in a democracy.” First of all, the truth is, you have a king whether you

know it or not. You have a king whether or not you confess it. Secondly, you do not live in a democracy.

The Fraud of Democracy

The word democracy is basically a fraud, a scam, and a threat to freedom. You get the word democracy from two Greek words, demos, which refers to people, and kratos, which is power. So it means people power, but usually today it is translated as "the majority rules." In other words, why in the world should the majority rule over a minority? Why should a majority tell me how to live? Why should a majority tell me what I may or may not do? If you read through the Scriptures, you will find that the majority in the Bible is usually wrong.

In fact, the truth of the matter is, God does not use majorities. He uses men. But the question is, who is your king? Most folks will say, "Well, we live in a democracy." Let me give you a quote from Sam Francis, written in 2004. Sam is now dead, but he said this: "What they mean by democracy is nothing more than the system of dominance that came to prevail in the United States and the Western world in the last half of the last century. That system has nothing to do with elections, opposition parties, civil and political rights, or liberty, nor does it have anything to do with political theory, ancient or modern."

Democracy, as the neocons, the president, and most others enthusiastic about the word use it, means the centralized Leviathan state under the firm and unqualified control of the managerial bureaucracy and those political forces able to influence it. And that is basically the truth.

We were given a republic by our founding fathers. A republic is that which is ruled by law. If you understand the rule of law, then clearly the elite are not in charge; the law is supposed to be in charge. In a republic, the law determines right and wrong, justice and injustice. The rule of law constitutes a republic. When the rule of law is upheld and respected, you have liberty and freedom. Where the rule of law is trodden underfoot, denied, and discarded, there is always tyranny.

The Constitution as Supreme Law

Consider Article 3, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the United States Constitution. I have read this before, but in light of this message, think about it again. The Constitution says: This Constitution and the laws of the United States, which shall be made in pursuance thereof, or in agreement with the United States Constitution, and all treaties made, or which shall be made under the authority of the United States—and the authority, of course, is the Constitution—shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the constitution of the laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding. Now here it is: The senators and representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several state legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several states, shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support this Constitution. But no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

According to Article 3, Paragraph 2, this Constitution is supposed to be the supreme law of the state, or the supreme law of our country. As Christians, of course, we believe that God's law is the supreme law of the land. But when you consider that we have actually traded God's law for man's law, then you have to consider this truth: since the Constitution is the supreme law, the states do not have the authority to violate it. They do not have the authority or right to make any law or state constitution that contradicts the United States Constitution.

Moreover, Congress does not have the power or authority to nullify the Constitution. If Congress nullified the Constitution, it would nullify its own authority, because the only authority Congress has is from the Constitution. No president has the authority to overthrow the Constitution. I remember when Joe Biden said, when he was elected president, that he would do everything and use all of his power to do certain things.

The only power any president has is that which is granted in the Constitution. There is no power above the Constitution. The judicial system likewise does not have the right, authority, or power to do anything contrary to the Constitution. Judges, law enforcement

officers, congressmen, states—everyone is bound by the Constitution. Therefore, any law passed by Congress should be in agreement with the Constitution.

When you think about democracy, majority rule, and the power of the people, what has happened today is that we have not only traded God for a man—I have a message titled "Trading God for a Man," based upon First Samuel, chapter eight—but we have traded God's law for man's law. Listen carefully: we have traded man's law, even the Constitution, for what is known as the will of the people, because even now some on the Supreme Court are saying, "It is the will of the people that really counts."

It is not the will of the people that counts; it is the Constitution that counts. Basically, you then have a democracy overthrowing what is known as the rule of law. So I asked a question at the beginning of this message: Who is your king? You are going to find that question is very significant and also very important.

Historical Cry: No King but Jesus

During the war for independence, there was a cry that was very common: “No king, but King Jesus.” On April 18, 1775, John Adams and John Hancock were at the home of Reverend Jonas Clark, who abandoned the pastor at Lexington. The Minutemen had assembled there because Jonas Clark had trained them. The pressing question from Hancock and Adams was, Would the people fight? He said, “Yes, they will fight. That is why I trained them.”

The next morning, when the British approached, all the Minutemen were out in Lexington Green, which was the church square, or churchyard. Paul Revere had warned them that the British were coming. At that time, British Major Pitcairn said, “Despair, ye villains, lay down your arms in the name of George, the sovereign king of England.” To this, Jonas Clark, or one of the men, responded, “We recognize no sovereign but God and no king but Jesus.” Hence came the cry, “No king but Jesus,” during the war for independence.

The Inescapable Reality of Kingship

Now listen carefully to this statement, because I want to develop this thought and show it to you: Either God will be your king, or your king will be your God. Either God will be your king, or your king will be your God.

Years ago, I preached a message from 1 Samuel, chapter 8, titled "Trading God for a Man." I am not going to preach that message again. In that context, they came to Samuel and said, "We want a king." God said to Samuel, "Go ahead, give them what they ask," but he was to show them the difference and tell them exactly what would be demanded by the king they had requested.

Understand this simple truth: We are going to have a king regardless of what kind of government we have. You do not have to have a monarchy in order to have a king.

In 1 Samuel, chapter eight, when God was obviously the King of Israel, He ruled over them and reigned over them. His law was the expression of His will, and they were to obey it. I have said this before, and I am going to say it again: every king rules by his law. When they chose a man to be their king, God said, "You show them what manner of law and what manner of man is going to be ruling over them." When you read the rest of this chapter, the man is going to take, take, take, take. That is all he does: take.

The only way you can really understand 1 Samuel chapter eight is to see it as a transition from one law structure to another. When you think about what has happened in our country, you can see a transition from biblical law to man's law, and from man's law now to democracy, or what you and I would call the will of the people.

The issue I want to emphasize today is very simple: you are either going to be ruled by God, or you are going to be ruled by man. There is no other alternative. If God is your King, you are going to be under His law. If man is your king, you are going to be under his law. Every king has a kingdom, and every kingdom has a king.

Three Kingdoms: God, Man, and Satan

There are three kingdoms mentioned particularly in the Bible, and there are three kings I want to emphasize today. The first King, of course, would be God Himself, who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. I probably should not have to delineate this truth; you should know it because you read your Bibles. But the Bible does teach us very clearly that there is the Kingdom of God.

Hold 1 Samuel, but turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 6. Begin reading with verse 9. Notice the emphasis upon the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul writes: “Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor feminine, nor abuses of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” So twice in these two verses you read about the kingdom of God.

Of course, this is all through Scripture. In Ephesians 5:5, we see a similar statement, once again mentioning the kingdom of God: “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.” Note that it is not just the kingdom of God; now it is the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God.

In Colossians 1:13, the kingdom is referred to as the kingdom of His dear Son. The Bible talks about God giving us grace and saving us: He “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.” Then, in Colossians 4:11, we read, “…and Jesus, who is called Justice, who are of the circumcision, these only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.”

Over and over in the Bible, you will read about the kingdom of God. You remember that passage in Luke chapter 11, where our Lord was approached by His disciples, and they said, “Lord, teach us to pray.” He said, “When you pray, say, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.” God does indeed have a kingdom, and He is clearly a King. He has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a King. He is not simply a King, but He is

King of kings and Lord of lords as well. So you have the kingdom of God. Secondly, you have the kingdom of man.

The kingdom of man actually began in the fall, and that kingdom has continued because man is still fallen and depraved. In Genesis 3, the serpent said to the woman, "You shall not surely die: for God does know that in the day that you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened. And you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that was the lust of the eyes; it was pleasant to the eyes, and the tree was desired to make one wise—there was the pride of life. She took the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her; and he did eat.

Go back to verse 5: "For God doth know that in the day that you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be open, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Remember, the word knowing in the Hebrew has the force of determining: "You shall be as gods, determining good and evil." In other words, here is the temptation: You do not need God telling you what to do. You do not need God telling you right and wrong. You do not need God telling you how to live. Eat this fruit, and you can be your own God. You can determine for yourself, make your own law, and become God yourself. This is basically the temptation to become God.

It took only seven more chapters until fallen man became absolutely, totally corrupt, wicked, and tyrannical. In Genesis 10, Cush begat Nimrod, and he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. "Wherefore, it is said, Even as Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord, and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Achad, and Kalna in the land of Shinar."

Who was Cush? Cush was a son of Ham. Who was Ham? He was a son of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Thus Cush was Nimrod's grandfather, and Nimrod was Noah's great-grandson. Out of that land went forth Asher and built Nineveh, and the city of Rehoboth and Calah. "For in resin between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city."

The Bible says that Nimrod was a mighty hunter. He was not hunting deer, buffalo, or elephants; he was hunting men. That

means he was basically a tyrant. He was a persecutor, cruel, wicked, and tyrannical.

Arthur W. Pink writes concerning Nimrod: “The first thing we note here is that Nimrod was a descendant of Ham through Cush. In other words, he sprang from that branch of Noah's family on which rested the curse. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.” Here is the key to the first nine verses of the eleventh chapter. This is the first mention of Babel, and like the first mention of anything in Scripture, it demands careful consideration. In the language of that time, Babel meant the gate of God.

“Afterward, because of the judgments which God inflicted there, it came to mean confusion. And from here onwards, this is a force or meaning. By coupling together the very sense which the Holy Spirit has given to us, we learn that Nimrod organized not only an imperial government over which he presided as king, but that he instituted a new and idolatrous worship. If the type be perfect, and we believe it is, then like the lawless one will yet do, Nimrod demanded and received divine honors.”

In all probability, it is just here that we have the introduction of idolatry. Again, we learn how wonderfully the first mention of anything in Scripture defines its future scope. From this point, Babylon in Scripture stands for that which is in opposition to God and His people. It was a Babylonian garment in Joshua 7:21 that led to the first sin in the promised land. And while from Revelation 17, we learned that Romanism will gather unto itself the whole of apostate Christendom and is turned mystery Babylon. Then he gives this last sentence out of that land: “He went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and the city of Rehoboth and Calah and Resen between Nineveh and Calah. The same is a great city.”

From these statements, we gather the impression that Nimrod's ambition was to establish a world empire. Nothing has changed in this world since Genesis chapter 10. Every tyrant seeks to establish world domination. There have been empire after empire after empire down through history. Interestingly, every tyrant thinks somehow that his empire is the one that will last forever and ever and ever. Of course, it never will.

Empires are easily made and usually easily destroyed. If you read some historians, especially on the Second War for Southern Independence, sometimes known as the War of Northern Progression, the Civil War, or Lincoln's War Against All Christian States, you will find historians who make this statement: America went into the war of 1861 to 1865 as a republic and came out as an empire. And that's true. I saw recently a map of all the military bases that the United States has in the countries surrounding Russia. It's absolutely mind-boggling.

Here we are in the great reset. What in the world do you think this great reset is all about? Do you honestly think that Bill Gates, George Soros, Paul Schwab, Yuval Noah Harari, Zuckerberg, and all these others are nothing more than humanitarians who have the best interests of the people at heart? If you think that, then you're thinking very wrongly.

The Bible tells us that Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord, which means he hunted men in the presence of the Lord, or in defiance of God, or in contempt of God. He could care less what God thought or what God said. In other words, he defied God, denounced God, and despised God. He himself claimed and believed that he could be God. That's like Yuval Noah Harari saying that Jesus Christ was not God and that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a myth.

What we need to do is extinguish and exterminate millions of useless eaters. My thought was, if he really thinks that there are a lot of useless eaters, why does he not start with himself? The reason he does not start with himself is because he's one of the elite. He is the one who is going to be dictating, controlling, and exercising tyranny.

As you read through the Bible, you will find that kingdom has always been against kingdom, nation against nation. Our Lord himself said in Mark 13:8, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." Why in the world are there so many wars? Because every tyrant is not only a furious man, but a madman. Every tyrant will do everything he can to keep his kingdom and empire going. There is Gary and his empire; here I am with my empire. Gary has something that I need, something that I want, and he won't give it to me.

What do I do? I am big and strong, so I go over and take it. I destroy his empire to build up my empire. Then I destroy your empire to make mine even greater, until someone comes along and destroys mine to build up theirs. That is what war is all about: you have what I need and will not give it to me, so I will take it.

Clearly, our Lord is talking about the kingdom of man. It is much like that passage in 1 Kings chapter 16 and verse 22. Omri and Tibni were both contending to be kings, and both of them had followers: "But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni, the son of Gennath. So Tibni died and Omri reigned."

That is the way it works. If we are tyrants, and Gary has what I want while I am stronger than he is, he dies and I reign. That is the way it works; that is the way it has always worked.

In Proverbs chapter 8, verses 35 and 36, Jesus Christ, who is wisdom personified, says, "For whosoever findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." Whoever finds Jesus Christ finds life and obtains favor of the Lord, that is, the Father. But all that fallen man can do is bring forth the society of death, an empire of death. Look at all the vaccination deaths. Look at the genocide.

George Orwell, speaking of the kingdom of man, said, "If you want to picture the future, imagine a boot stomping on a human face forever." That is all the kingdom of man can produce: death. Our Lord said, "Whosoever findeth me findeth life," but all those that hate Him love death. We have the kingdom of God, and we have the kingdom of man, but there is a third kingdom: the kingdom of Satan.

Yes, he is a king—a king of lies, deceit, death, and destruction—but he is still a king. In Luke chapter 11, our Lord is talking about his kingdom. He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb; and it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake, and the people wondered. But some of them said, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." Others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.

Knowing their thoughts, he said unto them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided

against a house falleth. Now watch: if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because you say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you."

Here he talks about the kingdom of Satan. They were accusing him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the chief, but he said a kingdom cannot stand if it is divided. Revelation 9:11 gives another plain statement: "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." They had a king over them. So he is a king, and yes, he does have a kingdom.

Here is an ironic truth: while it is true that the unsaved are, in essence, in Satan's kingdom—you remember the Bible says that God has translated us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son—even most unsaved people would never say that Satan was their king. They would never be that straightforward, and probably would not even think they believed Satan was their king. Not everyone who is unsaved would be a follower of Anton LaVey, who started the Church of Satan.

Satan's Kingdom Manifested Through Human Government

And if you have ever seen some of his pictures, he kind of looked that way as well. Anton LaVey authored several books: The Satanic Bible, The Satanic Rituals, The Satanic Witch, The Devil's Notebook, and Satan Speaks. He also released three albums: The Satanic Mass, Satan Takes a Holiday, and Strange Music. I suppose it would be strange if it came from the pits of hell.

Very few people have the audacity to say, "I am a follower of Satan," or, "I believe that Satan is my king," or, "I am going to obey him." Most people, even though unsaved, are not engaging in ritualistic sacrifices, ceremonies, and that kind of thing. But here is the question: How does the kingdom of Satan manifest itself? You do not see people running around going to satanic churches. I am sure there are some in this country, and I know people do worship him.

Still, you do not see much of that. So, if Satan is a king and has a kingdom, how does He manifest His kingdom?

Here is the ironic twist: Satan's kingdom is manifested in the kingdom of man.

Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10–13, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Notice that after speaking of the wiles of the devil, Paul says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood.” But wait a minute. Flesh and blood is what we see. I can see Joe Biden. I can see Kamala Harris. I can see George Soros. I can see Zuckerberg. I can see Bill Gates. Yet Paul is saying that the flesh and blood we see are not our real adversaries. It is not the flesh and blood that we see that is our real adversary. The real adversary is the one controlling them. It is the one using them, because Satan uses men. Our warfare, therefore, is not merely with flesh and blood, but with the wiles of the devil.

These wicked men are nothing more than representatives of his kingdom, just as the saints and preachers are representatives of the kingdom of God.

Paul continues: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” The word principalities in the Greek is arche, which actually refers to someone in the first place. It refers to someone who is a principality, a ruler, or someone who has magistrate powers, or the power of a magistrate, whether angelic or demonic. It refers to the chief ones, to the leaders, and it can describe what is human, angelic, or demonic.

This is how the word is used in Ephesians 3:10. There Paul speaks of principalities so that we may understand that the term refers to leaders and rulers, whether human, angelic, or demonic.

He says this: “To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” But he notes, unto the principalities—the chief ones.

Now look in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 1, verse 16: “For by Him, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created by Him and for Him.”

Now, one more. Look in Colossians 2, verse 15. Out of all the wicked principalities, notice what has happened: “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” So our Lord has spoiled all the principalities and powers.

Now, if you go back to Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12, he says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood”—that is what we see, but that is not what we are wrestling against—“but against principalities, against powers.” The word for “powers” there is exousia. The word exousia literally refers to power, jurisdiction, or authority. May I tell you where you will find this word very prominently? Romans chapter 13, when he is talking about government.

Literally, what he is saying is that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities—someone who is behind these men, even these governments. You will find, before I finish, that we will be wrestling even against our own government in one sense of the word. I will show you momentarily. He also says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” So the spiritual wickedness is in high places, and he has talked about principalities and powers.

He talks about “the rulers of the darkness of this world.” The Greek word there is very interesting: cosmocrator. Cosmos is the Greek word for world, and kratos is the Greek word for power. So he is talking about the power of this world.

Sometimes we are talking about the prince of this world. Look in your Bibles at John 12:31: “Now is the judgment of this world: now

shall the prince of this world be cast out." In John 14:30, our Lord said, "Hereafter, I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Then, in John 16:11, He says of judgment, "because the prince of this world is judged."

Now, I want to give you a caution. Do not think that Satan is in charge of this world. He is not. God is the sovereign Creator of this world, and God is the sovereign Ruler of this world. Satan may be called "the prince of the power of this world," but that is not talking about God's creative world. It is talking about the world system.

Let me give you a quote from 1 John 2:15–17. The first three words are, "Love not the world." Does that mean we cannot love God's creation? Alice and I were coming to church this morning, and I passed some beautiful trees. I told Alice, "Look at those trees. Look at the leaves—reds, yellows, just all colors. Look how beautiful." Am I being commanded not to love God's creative world? Of course not. This is God's world. I can love it.

I can enjoy His mountains, His swamps, His oceans, and anything that He has created. But when He says, "Love not the world," He continues, "neither the things that are in the world." Listen to me very carefully: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Why? "For all that is in the world is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, which 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."

You remember back in Genesis chapter 3? What did Eve do when she saw that the tree was good for food—the lust of the flesh—pleasant to the eyes—the lust of eyes—and a tree to be desired to make one wise—the pride of life? She took it. When he says, "Love not the world," he is talking about the world system that is absolutely, totally, completely opposed to God.

That is exactly where we are today. We are living in a time when basically the whole world is opposed to God, opposed to His rule, His reign, and His sovereign authority. John Whitehead, a constitutional attorney, quotes J. Edgar Hoover's Masters of Deceit: "To exploit all the grievances, hopes, aspirations, prejudices, fears, and ideals of all the special groups that make up our society—social,

religious, economic, racial, political. Stir them up, set one against the other, divide and conquer. That's the way to soften up a democracy."

Now, you are wondering why you have Black Lives Matter and TIFA, the Proud Boys, this one and that one. Everybody is being pitted against everybody because we are being softened up.

Whitehead goes further: "The United States government has become a master of deceit. It's all documented, too. This is a government that lies, cheats, steals, spies, kills, maims, enslaves, breaks laws, overreaches its authority, and abuses its power at almost every turn; treats its citizens like faceless statistics and economic units to be bought, sold, bartered, traded, or tracked; wages war for profits, jails its own people for profit, and has no qualms about spreading its reign of terror abroad. Worse, this is a government that has become almost indistinguishable from the evil it claims to be fighting. Whether that evil takes the form of terrorism, torture, drug trafficking, sex trafficking, murder, violence, theft, pornography, scientific experimentation, or some other diabolical means of inflicting pain, suffering, and servitude on humanity."

With every passing day it becomes painfully clear that this is not a government that can be trusted with your life, your loved ones, your livelihood, and your freedoms. Why? The answer comes back: because it is in the kingdom of man, which is being controlled by the kingdom of Satan—an absolute rebellion against God, His law, and His righteousness. That is why.

Who Do You Obey?

Kingship is an inescapable idea and issue. You cannot avoid kingship. You have a king. You may not know it, realize it, acknowledge it, or confess it, but that does not change reality. We do have a king. So I could ask this question: Who is your king? The answer can be found in another question: Who do you obey? Remember, a king rules by his law.

Look at 2 Kings 17. I showed you this passage last week, but I want to show it to you again in light of what I am teaching today. Verse 7 says, "For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned

against the Lord their God," who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, "and had feared other gods." They had forsaken the one true and living God and feared other gods.

How do we know they feared other gods? What is the evidence? Verse 8 says they "walked in the statutes," or laws, "of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel which they made." Verse 19 says, "also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes," or laws, "of Israel which they made." All the kings of Israel were apostates. There was not one godly king in all of Israel. There were godly kings in the southern kingdom, but not in the northern kingdom.

So who is your king? The answer is: Who do you obey? In other words, a king rules by his law. Do you remember what our Lord asked in Luke 6:46? "Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not those things which I say unto you?" The word Lord is kurios, which means boss, owner, master, sovereign. When you call Jesus Christ Lord, you are acknowledging Him as King. And you remember what the apostles answered the high priest and the elders in Acts 5:29: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than man."

Christ as King of Kings

The first application is this: We do have a King, and our King is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is King of the saints, King of the church, King of the world, and King of everything. If you look in your Bibles to Revelation 15:3, the Scripture says, "And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of the saints." Let that sink in: we have a King.

Revelation 17:14 says, "And these shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with Him are called and chosen and faithful." Then Revelation 19:16, speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ, says, "And He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

The truth of the matter is, God is the sovereign King of everything. In Jeremiah 10:7, the question is asked, “Who shall not fear thee, O thou King of all nations?”

He is King. People may not recognize it; in the end they shall. It may be too late, but they will certainly recognize it. You are either having God as your king, or you are having man or Satan as your king. You do not have to acknowledge Satan as king. If you just recognize man as king, you are acknowledging Satan as king at the same time.

The Apostle Paul makes it very plain in 1 Corinthians 10:20–21: “But I say that the things which the Gentiles,” that would be the unsaved, the ethnos, the nations, those who do not know God, “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.”

The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice unto devils. So those who do not acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their king, whatever they sacrifice, what do they give? They are giving to devils, not to God. You have a king, whether you like it or not. If you are a child of God, you like your king. If you are unsaved, you still have a king. You may not admit it, but you do have one.

The truth of the matter comes down to this: You are either going to acknowledge, serve, and worship the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ, or you are going to end up worshiping in the kingdom of man and sacrificing unto Satan. You are going to be ruled either by God or man. Those who refuse to be ruled by God condemn themselves to be ruled by man.

Conclusion: The Bible or the Bayonet

I want to close with a quote. Robert Winthrop, a congressman and former Speaker of the House who died in 1894, was speaking before the Massachusetts Bible Society. Here is what he said: “All societies of men must be governed in some way or the other. The less they may have a stringent state government, the more they must have of individual self-government. The less they rely on public law or

physical force, the more they must rely on private moral restraint. Men in a word must necessarily be controlled either by a power within them or by a power without them, either by the word of God or the strong arm of man, either by the Bible or the bayonet."

You know what he said? It is either going to be the Lord Jesus Christ who is governing you within by His law, or you are going to have a king of man who uses the bayonet and force to make you do what he wants you to do. So the question is, Who is your king? I do not want to trade God for a man.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, we acknowledge today that Thou and Thou alone art the one living and true God, and the one living and true King. Thou art King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and besides Thee there is none other. Help us, Father, to live in light of Thy Kingship: to worship Thee, honor Thee, bow before Thee, give Thee praise, and acknowledge Thy divine kingship and rule in our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 20

From Freedom to Slavery

Their marches through the centuries, the martyrs of the cross. All those who chose to follow Christ, who suffered any loss. And though their journey led them through the shadowlands of death, the song of their commitment they rehearsed with every breath: “I will serve our Lord, I will serve the Lord my God. And if God should choose and my life I lose, though my foe may slay me, I will serve the Lord.”

Introduction: The Reality of Slavery

This program is dedicated to all who resist tyranny imposed by our government servants upon us. Many of these resistors have already lost their property and gone to jail. Probably many more will. Tyrants must learn that conscience and the God-given gift of freedom can never be overcome by tyranny.

Pastor John Weaver, from years of research and travel, will show how we Americans have turned from freedom to slavery. Slavery is an issue that has been hotly debated over the ages. Most of us probably have never understood that there is indeed a biblical doctrine of slavery. Most have only been aware of what we would call the humanistic view of slavery. But simply because there is a

humanistic view does not negate the fact that there is indeed a biblical view of slavery. It is not my intention today to develop the biblical doctrine of slavery, however applicable that may be to our present time.

I do want to dwell for a little while on the slave mentality. It really galls men to think that they are slaves, and certainly it upsets us even to think that we have been enslaved. We like to consider ourselves free men. We are much like those people in John chapter 8 who said to the Lord Jesus Christ, "We be Abraham's seed. We've never been in bondage to any man." Oh, how we like to think that we are free, when in reality we are slaves.

Jesus Christ in John 8 and verse 34 said, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant or the slave of sin." There is more than one kind of slavery. Whoever commits sin is indeed the slave of sin. Sin brings a bondservitude, and those who commit sin are captured, captivated, and enslaved by sin.

Three Types of Slavery

But then there is another type of slavery: financial slavery. The Bible says in Proverbs 22 and verse 7, "the rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." Note those words carefully: the borrower is a servant or a slave to the lender.

The Bible places a six-year limitation upon debt. Why? Because the Bible teaches us that it is wicked, wrong, and ungodly to mortgage or sell our future for present gratification. I remember when I was a boy, even my grandparents and parents, when they wanted something, saved until they had enough money to pay cash.

That is not the way it is today. We are too present-oriented and too lustfully oriented. If we want something, we charge it, put it on credit, and go out and get it. What are we doing? We are mortgaging, selling our future for present-day gratification. Most of us are literally in hock up to our ears. Therefore, we are working not for ourselves but for others; we are slaves to the lender. Unhappily, most people do not have the discipline or strength to live out of debt.

Not only is there a sin slavery, as our Lord talked about, and a financial slavery; there is also a political slavery. Our forefathers

would probably be embarrassed to death if they saw how we have destroyed our Republic, denied the Word of God, trampled under our feet the liberties and freedoms for which they so bravely fought and which they gave to us, and literally ripped the Constitution of the United States asunder and thrown it to the wind. The Bible teaches that God's people are to be free. In Galatians chapter 5 and verse 1, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

Very obviously, freedom comes in Jesus Christ. But along with freedom comes responsibility and self-control. The individual who will not exercise self-responsibility and self-control must inevitably be manipulated and controlled by someone else. When we deny personal responsibility, we open ourselves to enslavement and governmental tyranny. If we will not discipline ourselves, someone must rule over us, manipulate us, and control us to save us from ourselves. He who will not be responsible, exercise self-control, and discipline himself can never be free. The first freedom in the Bible is based upon self-government, self-responsibility, and self-discipline.

SCRIPTURE READING - Judges 15:9-16 (KJV)

The Slave Mentality Defined

What in the world are we talking about when we mention the phrase, the slave mentality? You say, "Brother Weaver, I'm free today. I'm not a slave at all." The problem is we think like slaves, and we act like slaves, even though most of us move around without chains, and without shackles, and without getting permission every single day from our oppressors.

The Word of God says, "Then the Philistines went up and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. And the men of Judah said, Why are you come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we now come up, and to do to him as he hath done to us. Then three thousand men of Judah went up to the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. And they said unto him, We are come

> down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me that ye will not fall upon me yourselves. And they spake unto him, saying, No, but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand, but surely we will not kill thee.

Evidence 1: Uninterested in Justice

> "And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock Etam. And when he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him, and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burned with fire, and the bands loosed from his hands. And he found the jawbone of an ass, and he put forth his hand, and he took it, and slew a thousand men therewith. And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men."

As we study the Word of God, certain evidences demonstrate a slave mentality. First, the slave mentality is uninterested in justice.

When the Judahites came to Samson, they asked, "What hast thou done unto us?" Samson answered, "As they did unto me, so have I done unto them." The slave mentality is not concerned about justice, or about right and wrong. It did not matter to the Judahites that Samson had been wronged, nor whether the Philistines were punished. They were simply uninterested in justice.

To understand Judges chapter 15, we must go back to Judges chapter 14. Samson went down to Timnath and found a woman who pleased him. He told his father, "Get her for me. It's a wife." His father protested, but they went down and arranged the engagement. At the marriage feast, thirty Philistines were given to Samson as companions.

Samson said, "Look, I'm going to give you a little riddle. If you can answer my riddle within the seven days of the feast, I'll give you thirty changes of garments and thirty shirts. If you can't, you give the same to me." They agreed. Samson said, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." Everyone knows

this came from the lion he killed on the way to Timnath to visit his wife-to-be.

The Philistine men could not answer the riddle, so they threatened his wife: "Did you invite us to take everything that we have? If you don't find out the answer and tell us, we will kill you and kill your father." His wife began pressing him heavily: "Samson, you haven't even told me the answer. You just don't love me." He replied, "I haven't even told my father and my mother. What makes you think I'm going to tell you?" But she continued, "Samson, you just don't love me." She kept pressing him until finally he broke and gave her the answer.

On the last day of the feast, the young men came and said, "What is stronger than a lion? And what is sweeter than honey?" Samson said, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would have found out the answer to my riddle." The Bible says the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, and he went down to Ashkelon and slew thirty Philistines. He took their garments and shirts, returned, paid his debt, went away angry, and left his wife, returning to his father's house.

The father of the bride, supposing that Samson did not want her, gave her to a companion. A little while later, Samson brought a young kid and said, "I'll visit my wife." When he came back, the father said, "You can't go into her." "Why?" asked Samson. "I thought you altogether hated her, so I gave her to someone else. Here's her younger sister. She's much fairer. Take her." Samson would not have that at all.

At that time Samson went out and caught three hundred foxes. He took their tails, tied them tail to tail, set a firebrand in their tails, set it on fire, and turned the foxes loose. They ran through the fields of the Philistines, burning their corn and grain, absolutely destroying it. Samson was seeking biblical justice. What did that have to do with justice? Let me read from Leviticus, chapter 24. This is known as the lex talionis of Scripture, literally, the law of retribution.

God says, "And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. And he that killeth a beast shall make it good, beast for beast. And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor, as he hath done, so

shall it be done unto him. Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again. And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it, and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death. You shall have one manner of law, as well as for the stranger, as one for your own country. I am the Lord your God."

But what does burning the Philistines' harvest have to do with biblical justice? The Philistines, by their duplicity and oppression, had ruined Samson's marriage. He not only did not have a wife; he no longer had a home. The reason he brought that young kid to go into his wife was because young kids in the Bible represented children. When Samson brought that young kid, he was saying to his wife, "I want to have a child." Now he could not have a child, and he did not even have a wife. The Philistines had destroyed his harvest. Likewise, Samson turned around, took these foxes, turned them tail to tail, and destroyed their harvest.

There is another law in the Bible: the law of restitution. When a powerful man oppresses a poor man, as in 2 Samuel chapter 12, God demands a four-fold restitution. But when a weaker man oppresses a godly leader, God demands a five-fold restitution. Samson was a leader; Samson was a judge. There were thirty young men. Samson went out and caught three hundred foxes. He tied them tail-to-tail. That was 150 pairs. What does that mean? Five times thirty is 150. All Samson was doing was deriving and executing a biblical justice, a biblical restitution.

After this was done, the Philistines burned his wife and her father with fire. Then the Bible tells us that Samson went up and slew those murderers hip and thigh. If you study Leviticus chapters 7 and 8, you will find that hip and thigh is sacrificial language. Samson literally sacrificed, or executed, those murderers as unto the Lord. Then Samson went up to the rock Etam to dwell there. At this time, the Philistines came into the land of Judah to encompass that rock and bind Samson. The Judahites asked, "Why are you coming to our land? What have we done?"

"Why are you invading us?" And they say, "To bind Samson are we, therefore, come." And so the men of Judah now go up to Samson

and say, "Man, you've upset these Philistines. Look what they're doing to us."

The Judahites were not interested in justice. Keep in mind that Judah was the royal tribe, the kingly tribe. It did not matter that Samson was a judge, that Samson had been wronged, or that the Philistines were wicked, ungodly, and reprobate. They were not interested in anything that had happened. You know, I saw a cartoon not so long ago. A man was standing with his hands up, surrounded by issues such as abortion, sodomy, crime, and political corruption. He was saying, "So what? None of it is happening to me."

That is exactly the attitude of the slave—the slave mentality. As long as corruption, sodomy, abortion, and wicked socialism do not affect us personally, we are not involved or upset. We say, "Well, it has not happened to me yet. Why should I get upset? Why should I get involved?"

Most of you have probably heard about Martin Niemöller, the Lutheran pastor in Germany. He said, "When they came for the trade unionists, I did not speak out, for I was not a trade unionist. When they came for the Catholics, I did not speak out, for I was not a Catholic. When they came for the Jews, I said nothing, because I was not a Jew. When they came for the communists, I said nothing, for I was not a communist." Finally, he said, "When they came for me, there was no one left to speak out."

The Biblical Demand for Justice

You have to understand that whatever a wicked, oppressive, tyrannical government can do to others, it can also do to you. Why in the world should we be interested in biblical justice? Here are several reasons. Biblical justice is a principle of Scripture, and the original word for justice in Hebrew is the same word for righteousness. He who is not interested in justice is not interested in righteousness. If something is just, then it is right; if something is right, then it is just, because justice and righteousness are synonymous.

You cannot have one without the other. God demands justice throughout the Bible, including in our daily lives. In Leviticus 19 and

Deuteronomy 25, He says, "A just weight and a just measure shall you have." A false balance is an abomination unto the Lord. In our dealings with society and our fellow man—in economics and in our money—God demands a just weight and a just measure, absolute honesty.

There is such a thing as an unjust money system, an unbiblical and ungodly money system. The way our money system is today is not only contrary to the Word of God, but even to the Constitution of the United States. The Word of God and the Constitution demand gold and silver as money. Why? Because you can weigh gold and silver. There can be a just weight and a just measure; you cannot do that with paper money.

Moreover, God demands justice in the judicial system. In Exodus 23 and Deuteronomy 16, the Bible says that we are not to countenance a poor man in his cause. Just because a man is poor does not mean that we should have sympathy for him. What counts is what is right and just—not whether a man is poor or whether he has money. God says we are not to pervert justice, justify the wicked, or oppress the righteous. Unhappily, in our modern-day justice system, we see all kinds of injustice. God demands justice.

There is something wrong with our judicial system when a man who opposes a political agenda is in prison for five, ten, or fifteen years, while a man convicted of murder is given two years, or one convicted of armed robbery is given three years. There is something inherently wrong. We have got to come back to biblical justice. We have got to be like that widow woman in Luke 18. Do you remember? She came to the judge and cried, "Avenge me of mine adversary." Though he would not for a while, he said, "Though this woman weary me with her continual coming, I'll avenge her."

God demands justice. In Isaiah, chapter 1 and verse 17, God says, “Learn to do well, seek justice or judgment.” How do we learn to do well? By seeking judgment and justice.

Jeremiah chapter 22, verses 15 and 16, says, “Shalt thou reign because thou closest thyself in cedar?” Just because you are rich does not mean that you will always be rich or remain in control. “Did

not my father eat and drink and do judgment and justice? And then it was well with him."

"He judged the cause of the poor and the needy. Then it was well with him. Was not this to know me, saith the Lord." What was it to know God? To know God was to judge the cause of the weak and the oppressed, to do justice and righteousness. One of the charges God levels against His people is found in Isaiah 59 and verse 4: "Truth has fallen in the land and none calleth for justice. None calleth for justice."

You say, "Brother Weaver, I'm helpless. I can't control Congress, judges, or the presidency. What in the world can I do?" In one sense, we are helpless because we cannot make a judge do right, make a congressman uphold his oath to the Constitution, or make the president be faithful to his oath. But there is something we can do. We are not absolutely helpless.

Go back to Luke 18. This widow woman came to a judge and said, "Avenge me of mine adversary." The judge said, "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, shall I not avenge this widow woman?" Why? "Because by her continual coming, she is wearying me." He said, "I'll give her what she wants just to get her off my back."

In Luke 18, our Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall not God avenge his own elect who cry unto him day and night, yea, I tell you verily, he shall avenge them speedily?" God is not like that unjust judge. God is interested in justice and righteousness. Part of the injustice and wickedness in our land today is because you and I have not cried out and said, "Oh God, rise up and make things right." If we, his people, cry to him for justice, I can assure you the judge of all the earth shall do right.

You study the prayers of the psalmist. Over and over, David prays, "Arise, O Lord, and show thyself. Let not the wicked triumph." You and I may not have any influence over our congressmen and over our judiciary. But as Christians, we do have power with God, and certainly God has power over each and every one of them. For "the king's heart is in the Lord's hand. As rivers of water, he turneth it, whithersoever he willeth." We need to learn to cry to God for justice.

Evidence 2: Viewing Action Against Government as Personal Threat

Secondly, the slave mentality views any action against the government as a personal threat. The Judahites came up to Samson and asked, "What is it that thou hast done to us?" In reality, Samson had not done anything to the Judahites. The slave mentality is the mentality that says, "Don't rock the boat." It says, "You can't fight City Hall." It says, "Why fight against tyranny, even though it is tyranny?" In other words, submit to authority even though that authority is usurped and tyrannical. The slave mentality does not wish to call government into account for its actions.

The Philistines were wrong. It is true that they were the governing authorities in those days, but they were wicked and wrong. The Judahites, rather than say, "Here is wickedness in its highest degree," looked at Samson and asked, "What is it thou hast done unto us?" The truth is that the slave mentality always follows the course of least resistance. It says, "I don't want the boat rocked."

This same slave mentality prevailed in Moses' day. God sent Moses to deliver Israel. Moses went to Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go." Pharaoh replied, "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Finally, the elders of Israel went in and said, "Now you let us go that we may go and worship and serve the Lord our God." Pharaoh answered, "You be idle. Get out of here. You're going to make the same number of bricks, but you're going to make them without straw. You'll have to get your own straw. And if you don't, we're going to beat you."

When the elders left, they were very upset. They saw Moses and Aaron and said, "The Lord look between you and us and judge, because you've made our savor to be abhorred, that is, to be hated in the eyes of Pharaoh and his servants, to put a sword in his hand to slay us." They were criticizing their deliverer and attacking the man fighting for their freedom. They were saying, "You have disturbed our personal comfort. You've upset our safety zone and our comfort zone."

The problem in America today is that we have a slave mentality. We want comfort and convenience. The slave is not interested in

justice or righteousness; he is interested only in making his slavery as convenient and comfortable as possible. We want all the benefits of a welfare state—its holidays, vacations, parks, welfare, and food. We want all the conveniences of a welfare state, but we do not want the control that comes with it. Our forefathers did not have this slave mentality.

I want to read some words penned by our founding fathers. Here is what our forefathers said: "We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude, that is, for the justice of our intentions, due in the name and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare that these United Colonies are, and in right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be totally dissolved, and that as free and independent states they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and do all other acts and things which independent states may have right do."

"And, for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance upon divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." The fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence did exactly that. They not only lost their fortunes and sacred honor; many of them lost their lives as well. Have you ever stopped to think that our founding fathers were called kooks, rabble-rousers, and troublemakers? They were mocked, jeered, maligned, and made fun of.

They were not interested in personal comfort and convenience. If all our forefathers had been interested in those things, we would not have the United States of America today. Thank God our founding fathers did not have a slave mentality. Unhappily, today the average citizen of America is happy as long as he has a six-pack of beer, a color TV, a boat, and a four-wheeler. That is all he is interested in. The slave mentality is not interested in justice, righteousness, freedom, or principle. It is only interested in comfort and convenience.

Now there is a very important third point: the slave mentality views any action against the government as a personal threat. What?

These Judahites said to Samson, “Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?” Samson, you have royally fouled up. You have upset our rulers and made those in charge angry with us. They have invaded our land. Don’t you know you can’t fight city hall? Don’t you understand that these individuals control the power and authority?

The slave mentality does not wish to call government to account for its abuses, usurpations, tyranny, and wickedness. It does not recognize that government was ordained and established by God to be His servant. In Romans chapter 13, verse 4, the civil authorities are called the minister of God twice. That word minister is diakonos, from which we get the English word deacon, and a deacon is a servant. God has ordained government to be His servant. But the slave mentality views government as a master and tyrant. In other words, it recognizes only force.

You have heard the expression, “You better not say that. They can put you in jail. They can confiscate your property. They can make it hard on you.” Who is the “they”? They are the powers that be, or the rulers. To the slave mentality, right and wrong do not matter; freedom and justice are a moot point. To the slave, you simply do not rock the boat or make things hard on yourself.

In 1 Samuel chapter 12 and verse 25, God said, “But if you shall continue to do wickedly, you shall be consumed, both you and your king.” God holds rulers accountable as well as each of us. It is not only the ruled who are accountable to God; the rulers are accountable as well. Every citizen has a biblical and constitutional right to a redress of grievances in this country. We have the right to hold any elected or unelected official responsible for unconstitutional acts. The Constitution of the United States is our covenant. It is our contract with the government, and our government has agreed to be constitutional.

The Supreme Court has ruled repeatedly that when any law, statute, or ordinance is contrary to the Constitution, it is null and void from its inception. It has no binding power, and no one is

obliged to obey an unconstitutional law. But what we have done in America is this.

We've said, "Whatever they want to do is right with us. Well, they have the power, they have the swords, they have the judicial system. Let them go." No, dear friend. We must call every elected official and every unelected official into account for unconstitutional and ungodly conduct. To not do so is to evidence a slave mentality. One of the problems in this country is that we've let our rulers get by with ungodly and unconstitutional acts over and over and over.

Now here's the thing that is so disturbing about this account in Judges chapter 15. The Judahites are the royal tribe, the kingly tribe. They come to Samson and say, "Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?" My dear friend, God had never called the Philistines to rule. God had called Israel to rule. Israel was to be the head, not the tail. Israel had been called to dominion. We, as God's people, have been called to dominion.

The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 10, verse 5, that every thought is to be brought into subjection and captivity of Jesus Christ. What in the world do you think the Great Commission is all about? We're to go into all the countries and make disciples and teach them to observe all things whatsoever Christ has taught us. We are to be a dominion-oriented people. And here the Judahites come and say, "Knowest thou not that the Philistines are our rulers?"

Dear friend, we've got to understand that God has called us to rule. God has not called the wicked to rule or to reign. We, as God's people, are to be the head and not the tail, as we obey Him and bring our lives into conformity to His law. The slave mentality, though, says, "Let it go." It does not wish to call government into account.

We've got to learn that anyone who is fighting for freedom, righteousness, and justice, no matter how much it upsets us, disturbs us, and makes us uncomfortable, is not our enemy but our friend. The enemy is the oppressor, the tyrant, the one who goes contrary to the Word of God and contrary to the Constitution of the United States of America. The slave mentality is so prevalent in our country today. It is also willing to deliver God's man into the hands of the enemy in order to save oneself.

Evidence 3: Willing to Deliver God's Man to the Enemy

Three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam. Why? To bind Samson. Samson was God's man, God's judge, and anointed with the Spirit of God. And yet these men went up to bind Samson in order to deliver him into the hands of the enemy. You see, the slave mentality is only interested in self and self-preservation.

You find this mentality all throughout the Bible. First Samuel chapter 23 tells us about David and the Philistines. The Philistines had attacked Keilah and robbed the threshing floors. David inquired of God, asking, "Shall I go up and smite the Philistines?" God told him to go. The men were afraid, so David checked with God again, and God said, "Yes, go, and surely I'll deliver the Philistines into thy hands." The Bible tells us that David went up and defeated the Philistines, yea, with a great slaughter, and delivered every one of the men of Keilah and all their possessions. David and his men were then treated very royally in the city.

But Saul, David's enemy, said, "God has surely delivered David into my hands by shutting him up into a city of walls." So he gathered all of his men and was going to attack the city of Keilah, where David was. Abiathar escaped and came to David, saying, "Saul is coming with all of his men." The priest checked with God for David. David asked, "Will Saul certainly come to this city?" God said, "He will come." Then David asked this startling question: "Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand?" God answered, "They will."

Did you hear that? David had just saved Keilah, the entire city, and all of their possessions. And now God was saying to David, "The men of Keilah will deliver thee up in order to save themselves."

You see, the slave mentality isn't concerned with justice, righteousness, freedom, liberty, or principle. It is only interested in self. Let me show you from the Bible just how wicked and perverse the slave mentality is, and how far it will drive a man. There is a passage in the book of John, John chapter 11, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees said, “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees of councils and said, What do we? For this man doeth

many miracles." In other words, they could not deny the miracles or stop them. What were they going to do? They said, "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." Now, pray tell, what were these men interested in? They were interested in their place, their position of power, and their party affiliation. In other words, these men were willing to crucify the sinless Son of God in order to save their jobs.

I hope you understand this principle. If wicked, ungodly men would crucify the Lord Jesus Christ in order to stay in power, what in the world will wicked men do today to anybody just to stay in power? The slave mentality is this: We will deliver this man up, and that man up, just to keep our position, power, and influence. Truth is irrelevant.

You and I must understand this vital principle: We can never sacrifice an innocent and righteous man simply to save ourselves. We cannot turn an innocent, righteous individual over to a wicked, tyrannical, abusive government just to get some little dole or welfare, or even deliverance for ourselves. It is the mentality of a slave that will sacrifice freedom and principle for self-preservation. The slave mentality has infected all of America, and unhappily, most of us are interested only in ourselves, not in justice and righteousness. Here is a very important point: The Lord is on the side of those who are seeking biblical justice. What happened?

God's Deliverance and the Call to a Free Man's Mentality

Samson said to those 3,000 Judahites, "Just promise me that you will not kill me yourself. I don't want to have to fight with you." The men of Judah said, "No, we won't kill you, but we'll deliver you over to the Philistines." And so they bound him with new ropes. When Samson came down, the Philistines shouted against him, and the Bible says the Spirit of God came mightily upon Samson. He snapped those ropes as if they were flax; the bands were burst asunder. Samson reached down and picked up the new jawbone of an ass, and with that jawbone he slew a thousand men. The

interesting thing is this: God and one man make a majority. In fact, the truth is, God is a majority in and of himself.

He really does not need anyone. You see, we are so infected with the attitude, "The majority is always right." No, dear friend. If you study the Word of God, you will find that the majority is usually wrong. Truth is usually with a minority. Justice and righteousness are usually with a minority in the Word of God.

We do not need a majority of the people to affect biblical change in our country. We do not need all the nation to affect a righteous and moral change. What we need are men dedicated, surrendered, and sold out to Jesus Christ—men willing to stand and do what is right.

It has been reported that George Washington never had over 3,000 men at one time under his command. There were more men in general, but the highest number at once was 3,000. With 3,000 men, George Washington, with the blessings of God, whipped the greatest military power in the world at that time. What in the world do you think can happen today? Jesus Christ took twelve men and turned the world upside down.

We do not need a lot of people. We need individuals sold out to God, interested in justice and righteousness, truth and liberty and freedom—men willing to take and use what God places at their disposal. Someone says, "But Brother Weaver, I do not have a million dollars. I do not have twenty million dollars." It does not matter. Samson did not pick up a Mini-14 or an AK-47. He picked up the jawbone of an ass.

We can use whatever God places at our disposal. God, in His providence, will always place in our hands that which we need, at His time, for righteousness and justice if we seek it. Let us not think like slaves. Let us think like free men. Let us not think of self-preservation, comfort, and convenience. Let us think of justice, righteousness, liberty, freedom, and truth. There are things in this land worth dying for, and truth, liberty, and freedom are some of them. I am thankful that our founding fathers did not have a slave mentality.

Here is the question, dear friend: Unless you change from a slave mentality to a biblical, righteous, free man's mentality, what is going to be left for your children and grandchildren? What kind of country will we hand over to our posterity? Free men are interested in justice and righteousness.

CHAPTER 21

Run Jonah Run

SCRIPTURE READING - Jonah 2:1-10 (KJV)

Introduction and Reading of Jonah 2

The title of the message today is “Run, Jonah, Run.”

“Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me. Out of the belly of hell I cried, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hast cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas, and the floods compass me about, all thy billows and thy waves pass over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

“The waters compassed me about, even to the soul. The depth closed me round about. The weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains. The earth with her bars was about me forever. Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came in unto thee, into thy holy temple.

> "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving. I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."
>
> And the Lord spake unto the fish and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. If you remember last week, I made several opening statements. I said, first of all, that Jonah was a real historical person. And that Jonah was a real historical prophet. And of course that Jonah was also a real disobedient believer.

Historical Context of Jonah and His Contemporaries

He confessed that he worshipped the one true and the living God. He also confessed that he was running from the presence of God. Last week we looked at the fact from Psalm 139 that God is omnipresent—that is, God is everywhere at once in the totality of His being. Obviously, Jonah could not run away from the omnipresence of God. What he was running from was the manifest presence of God, which was the temple. That is where God particularly and peculiarly manifested Himself in the Old Testament, first in the tabernacle and then in the temple.

Interestingly, when you read Jonah 1, Jonah is running from God, and when you read Jonah 2, Jonah is running to God. It is absolutely necessary that we understand that both Jonah and the book of Jonah are historical books, or that the book of Jonah is a historical book, and that Jonah is a historical person. The reason I am saying that is because our Lord, in Matthew 12:39-41 and Luke 11:29-32, said, "As Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, even so must the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."

Simply stated, when someone rejects the prophet Jonah and doubts the book of Jonah, at the same time he must reject the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. Jesus testified to the reality of the book of Jonah and the person of Jonah as well. When someone rejects Jonah, he is not merely questioning an isolated account; he is rejecting what Jesus Himself testified concerning the book and its person.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah were contemporaries. They all prophesied around the same time, and all of them prophesied before the exile. That does not mean that they had a prophets club and knew each other. It means that they were alive and preaching in different parts of the kingdom at the same time, some in the southern kingdom and some in the northern kingdom.

Consider Isaiah 1:1: “The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” Isaiah had a rather lengthy ministry as well. Notice that he mentions four kings. He was there during the reign of Uzziah, and Uzziah will be pointed out again later. This helps put the ministries of these prophets in perspective: they lived and preached during the same broad period, though in different parts of the kingdom.

Jeremiah chapter 1 and verse 2 gives us the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry. Here is what the word of God says concerning Jeremiah's ministry: "To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign."

You are going to hear that name again as well. Jeremiah chapter 25 and verse 3 says, "From the thirteenth year of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah, even into this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking, but you have not hearkened." Notice that Jeremiah had a rather lengthy ministry as well. So we have the ministry of Jeremiah, beginning in the thirteenth year of Josiah and continuing into the three and twentieth year.

Hosea chapter 1 and verse 1 says, "The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel."

You have the southern kingdom and the northern kingdom. Depending upon where these men preached, they may list southern kings or northern kings or both. Hosea mentions not only a southern

kingdom, but also the northern kingdom as well. Amos chapter 1 and verse 1 says, "The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake."

Interestingly enough, Amos was not only from the southern kingdom, but he preached primarily in the northern kingdom. So he is listing Uzziah, which I will mention again later. He also mentioned Joash, the son of Jeroboam. By the way, there was a Joash in the southern kingdom and there was a Joash in the northern kingdom.

In Zephaniah 1:1, the Bible says, “The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah.” Zephaniah is found among the last books of the Old Testament, following Haggai and Zechariah and preceding Malachi.

Zephaniah has been mentioned as well. All of these men were basically contemporaries in the sense that they preached sometimes in the same territory, sometimes in the same kingdom, and sometimes in another kingdom. They may not have been buddy buddies in the sense that they got together each week, but they certainly knew of each other's ministry and they knew of each other's preaching as well.

Now, I mentioned Uzziah. I want to show you another passage that also connects Jonah. Look at 2 Kings 14:21: “And all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was 16 years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah.” Do you know who Azariah was? Azariah's name is also Uzziah. Azariah was made king when he was 16, and he reigned 52 years. That's why all of the prophets I have read about kept mentioning Uzziah: he had a long reign, and they prophesied sometimes during those 52 years of his reign.

The passage continues: “And all the people of Judah took Azariah, which was 16 years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. He built Eloth and restored it to Judah. After that, the king slept with his fathers. In the fifteenth year of Amaziah, the son of

Joash, king of Judah, watch, Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, began to reign in Samaria, and he reigned 41 years."

"And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet which was of Gath-Heper."

So we are connecting Jonah with the reign of Uzziah, as well as with Joash, king of Judah, and Joash, king of Israel. All of these people understood each other's prophecy in that sense of the word.

Jonah, of course, was sent by God to Nineveh. As I told you last week, Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Jonah did not want to preach to Nineveh because the Assyrians were the mortal enemies of Israel. Nahum, in the book of Nahum, prophesied the destruction of the Assyrians.

God's Use and Judgment of Assyria

Habakkuk also spoke about the Assyrians, but his problem was that he could not discern or grasp the fact that God was going to use a more wicked nation, such as the Assyrians, to chastise a less evil nation, Israel. Habakkuk had to wrap his mind around that, and you will find this in Habakkuk 2.

Zephaniah also demonstrates how God would judge the Assyrians and destroy Nineveh. In Zephaniah 2:13, the Bible speaks of God: "And He will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria and will make Nineveh a desolation and like a dry wilderness." Thus, Zephaniah also speaks about the destruction of Assyria.

God does exactly what people say that He cannot do, because God is God and can do as He pleases. God took the Assyrians, as wicked and vile as they were, and sent them against Israel. They were exceedingly cruel. Yet He then turned around and judged the Assyrians for doing what He had sent them to do. God used them to chastise and correct Israel, and then judged them for doing what He wanted done.

You say, how can that be right? Look in Isaiah 10, beginning with verse 5. Concerning the Assyrian, God says, “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.” God was using them; He called the Assyrian the rod of His anger, and their staff His indignation.

Look at verse 6: “I will send him.” The Assyrian came at God’s command. God said, “I will send him against the hypocritical nation and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil and to take the prey and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.” God said, “I am sending the Assyrians. I am giving him a charge. I want him to take the spoil and the prey and to tread them down.”

Now look at verse 7. Here is the crux of the matter: “Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy, to cut off nations, not a few.” Although God used and sent the Assyrians, they did not come in obedience to Him, nor for His honor and glory. They came because they wanted to plunder, steal, and kill. God said, “I sent him, but he did not come for My honor and My glory. He did not come in obedience to Me.” Therefore, God would turn around and judge the Assyrians for doing what they did.

“Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord had performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his high looks.” So God says, “I'm going to judge him for doing what he did.” Why did not God send him? Yes. Did not God use him? Yes. But remember, he said he did not mean to obey God; he did not desire to obey God. And look what he did in verse 13: “For he, that is the king of Assyria, said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent, and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.”

"And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people, and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth, and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped." Now look at the question that God asked: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it, as if the rod should shake

itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself as it were no wood?"

"Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness, and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire, and the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame, and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day." So God is saying, "I'm going to judge him because he did it because he wanted to do it. It was his sin. It was his wickedness."

He was in rebellion against me. Clearly, then, God is going to use the Assyrians. Jonah did not want to preach to the Assyrians because he knew the prophecy of Nahum. He knew the prophecy of Habakkuk as well. In Jonah chapter 1, Jonah is running from God. When you get to Jonah chapter 2, Jonah is now running to God. When he is running from God, from the presence of God, he is running from the temple and from God's manifest presence. He is also running from his commission. He does not want to preach to the Assyrians. He did not want them to repent or to be spared. He wanted them destroyed because they were mortal enemies to his people.

Jonah's Desperate Prayer from the Fish

Evidently, Jonah thought that when he was cast into the sea, that would be the end of it. He thought he was going to die by drowning. In verse 12 of chapter 1, they asked Jonah what they should do to make the tempest cease. "And he said unto them, Take me up and cast me forth into the sea. So shall the sea be calm unto you. For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." Jonah appeared willing, eager, and ready to die, thinking that simply being cast into the sea would be sufficient. "So they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging." Jonah did not know what was waiting for him. He surely thought this would be over very quickly.

But in verse 17, “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” I spoke about this last week, and I am going to mention a little of it again this week. This had to be an absolutely

special fish, a special whale. He swallowed Jonah. If you remember the story I read last week of the man who was swallowed by a whale and was in its stomach for sixteen hours before his mates cut him out, the man's skin was bleached white from the digestive juices, his hair was removed from his body, and he was blind for several weeks until he regained his sight after several months. He survived, but he had great problems. I cannot even contemplate being swallowed by a fish. There are things in the ocean that I certainly do not wish to face.

I suppose one of the funniest incidents I have ever viewed was a video clip of a black nurse who was on her way to work. Several people on the East Coast had been eaten by sharks. She said, "If you don't want to be eaten by the shark, stay out of the kitchen. The ocean is his kitchen. You jump in and he'll eat you. Stay out of the kitchen." There is a lot of truth to that. I have never been eaten by a shark because I am not going in his kitchen. It was absolutely hilarious.

But Jonah—wow. Look in chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. He had just been swallowed in verse 17: "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly. And he said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me." Now watch this: "Out of the belly of hell, cried I, and thou heardest my voice." Verse 1 says, "out of the fish's belly," and then he said, "out of the belly of hell." Wow. Wait a minute. Let us also read verse 3: "For thou hast cast me into the deep, into the midst of the seas, and the floods compassed me about."

"All thy billows and thy waves passed over me." That is bad, but hang on to verses 5 and 6: "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul." Not just his body, but his soul, his inner being. "The depth closed me round about, and the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottom of the mountains. The earth with her bars were about me forever."

"Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God." It is interesting that Jonah now believes he is going to die. In chapter one, he wanted to die. He said, "Just throw me in the ocean. That'll stop this storm. Just throw me in the ocean." But he did not

know about this special whale that God had prepared for him. Now he is in the belly of that whale, and he is fearful. Why is he so fearful?

I do not think Jonah was perspiring. I think he was shaking because the seaweeds were wrapped around his head. If he was perspiring, he probably could not have distinguished it from the water and seaweeds. Here he is in the belly of this fish, in absolute, total darkness. Think about that.

The Horror of Being Swallowed and God's Protection

Years ago, Alice and I were in Utah with a couple of grandchildren. We went to Timpanogos, which is a cave. We had to walk a mile up a mountain to reach it. It was a national park, with rangers there, and a ranger escorted us through the cave. It was not simply a hole in the ground. There were passages far back into the mountain, with huge rocks to step over and climb through.

We went deep into that cave. They had lights, and the ranger said, "Stand absolutely still, do not move, hold hands." We held hands and did not move. Then the ranger turned the lights off. You talk about darkness. You talk about the expression, "I couldn't see the hand in front of my face." You could not see anything. It was absolutely, totally pitch black.

Now here Jonah is in the belly of this whale, and it is absolutely pitch black. Jonah finally realizes he is not at the top of the food chain. He is at the bottom of the food chain. He has just been eaten by a great fish.

I saw a picture taken by a diver of another diver. Just as the picture was snapped, an excellent picture, the diver dropped the camera and fled. Behind the diver whose picture he had taken was a huge grouper, almost ready to eat him. There are things in the ocean that I do not want to face, that is for sure.

There have been incidents that happened to men, but not to the degree that it happened to Jonah. Here is one from Provincetown, Massachusetts. A little before 8 a.m. on Friday, veteran lobster diver Michael Packard entered the water for his second dive of the day. His vessel, the J&J, was off Herring Cove Beach and surrounded by boats catching striped bass. The water temperature was 60 degrees,

and visibility was about 20 feet. Licensed commercial lobster divers literally pluck lobsters off the sandy bottom. As Packard, 56, dove down, he saw schools of sand lances and stripers swimming by. In something truly biblical, Packard was swallowed whole by a humpback whale.

“All of a sudden,” he said, “I felt this huge shove, and the next thing I knew it was completely black.” Following his release from Cape Cod Hospital in Hyannis, Packard recalled that he could sense he was moving and feel the whale squeezing with the muscles of its mouth. Initially, he thought he was inside a great white shark, but he could feel no teeth and had suffered no obvious wounds. It quickly dawned on him that he had been swallowed by a whale. “I was completely inside. It was completely black,” he said. “I thought to myself, there’s no way I’m getting out of here. I’m done. I’m dead. And all I could think of was my boys.”

“They’re 12 and 15 years old.” Outfitted with scuba gear, he struggled, and the whale began shaking its head, so Packard could tell that it did not like him. He estimated that he was in the whale for 30 to 40 seconds before it finally surfaced. “I saw light, and he started throwing his head from side to side, and the next thing I knew I was outside in the water,” said Packard, who lives in Wellfleet. Packard’s sister, Cynthia Packard, spoke with crewman Josiah Mayo, who relayed details to her. Mayo saw the whale burst to the surface and initially thought it was a great white shark. Then the whale flung her brother back into the sea. Mayo picked him up, called the shore by radio, and sped back to the Provincetown pier.

A Provincetown Fire Department ambulance took him to Cape Cod Hospital. “Thank God it wasn't a white shark. He sees them all the time out there,” said Cynthia Packard. “He must have thought he was done.” Well, I suppose so.

Here was a man in the mouth of a whale for less than a minute. Stop and think that Jonah was there three days and three nights. There have been men swallowed by whales, but not to the degree that Jonah was. Yet each one spoke of the absolute horror of being swallowed by a whale. Jonah was there three days and three nights.

Consider Jonah's words: “The waters compass me about even to the soul.” I can look at Steve and recognize Steve, but that body is nothing more than a shell. The real Steve is inside that body. That is the soul. By the way, you do not have a soul; you are a soul. God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he became a living soul. We are a soul, period. Jonah is saying that this experience had taken him to the very heart of his being.

“The depth closed me round about. The weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountain. The earth with her bars was about me forever. Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.”

The only reason Jonah did not die was God's sovereign protection and preservation. God was teaching Jonah a particular lesson. Jonah speaks of the depth, the weeds wrapped around his head, and going down to the bottoms of the mountains. Can you imagine the change in pressure when the whale went to the bottom and then came back to the top?

This is what he is talking about. The whale was diving and then coming back up. Do you realize the effects pressure can have on your body? Water is a thousand times denser than air, and while air's density can vary, the density of water cannot. That is why the deeper you go in the ocean, the stronger the pressure. Several years ago, a submersible, that little sub, cracked up; it broke under the pressure of the water.

Everybody died, of course. But the deeper one dives, the greater the pressure becomes. How this affected Jonah, I have no idea. I know God was protecting and preserving him. The whale, as Jonah says, went down to the bottom of the mountains and then came back up to the top. The closer you get to the surface of the water, the greater the changes in pressure. That is why divers who come up too quickly can get what is known as the bends. They have to rise easily, gradually, and slowly because of the change in pressure.

Observations on Death and God's Sovereignty

Jonah had been swallowed and was in the whale's belly, experiencing things he had never experienced in his entire life.

Before going further in this chapter, let us stop and make some obvious observations—things you and I need to think about. First of all, understand this: Those who think they want to die really do not want to die. They want to live.

In chapter one, Jonah wanted to die. He was willing to die. He thought he was ready to die: "Just throw me over. Just pitch me in." But he did not realize that God had prepared this great fish for himself. When we come to Jonah chapter two, Jonah is wanting to live.

I remember, as a young man, a neighbor girl decided she wanted to kill herself. She took a handful of rat poison. By the time she began experiencing great agony and pain, and her parents rushed her to the doctor and hospital, where they pumped her stomach, she was screaming and crying that she wanted to live. But she did not make it. She thought she really wanted to die, but when it came time to die, she wanted to live more than anything else.

Just this week, I received a message from a friend informing me about a young man who took his own life. He was at a university and seemingly had everything going for him. According to her, he had previously attempted to take his life. This time, he actually succeeded.

But I have watched in nearly sixty years of preaching as saints and sinners die. When it comes time to die, it does not matter whether you are a saint or a sinner; your body is still struggling to live. You want to live. The body wants to live. It is normal and natural to want to live. You will find people who are dying fighting for their breath. They want that breath more than anything in the world. So Jonah thought he wanted to die.

But when he came to be in the belly of the hell, or the belly of the fish, he changed his mind. A lot of people try to change their minds, but sometimes it is too late.

Here is the second truth: We have to understand that death does not end it all. Many people think their suffering will be eased when they die. That may be true for a Christian, but it is not true for someone who is unsaved. I do not care how horribly an individual is suffering. He may be suffering from cancer or from the most

grievous and aggravating diseases in the world. But if he is unsaved and dies, that physical suffering will not be anything compared to the spiritual suffering. Nothing painful in this life—physical, mental, or emotional—can equate to, or come anywhere near, the suffering of those who die without the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to remember that death does not end it all.

Here is the third thing: We cannot die when we want to die. Someone is going to say, “Well, I can. All I have to do is shoot myself.” No, no, no, no. That does not mean you are going to die when you want to die. The Bible teaches us that life and death are in the hands of the Lord. God has sovereignly appointed the day of our death, just as He has sovereignly appointed the day of our life.

Now, I want you to hold Jonah chapter two, but turn back in your Bibles to the book of Job, right before the book of Psalms. Look in Job chapter 7 to begin with, and then we will go to Job chapter 14. Look in Job chapter 7, verse 1. Here is a good question: “Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?”

"Are not his days also like the days of a hireling?" So there is an appointed time for man upon the earth. There's a time to be born and there's a time to die according to the book of Ecclesiastes. Job 14:1-5 says, "Man that is born of woman is a few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down. He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, not one? Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, Thou hast appointed His bounds that He cannot pass."

None of us are going to live one day, one minute, or one second longer than God has ordained. Period. Now, you're going to say, "Well, I believe I can die when I want to. I just think I can end my life." If you're that foolish, you might go ahead and try it. But the truth is, you're not going to succeed in doing that which you want to do. Do you realize only God could die when he wanted to die? Do you remember what our Lord said? "No man taketh my life from me. I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it again."

Jesus Christ, when he gave his life, said, "Father, in thy hands I commend my spirit." And he gave up the ghost. Man cannot die whenever he wants to die. No.

Let me give you a good illustration. I witnessed a young man who had placed a shotgun under his chin and pulled the trigger. I did not see him do it, but I was at the hospital when they brought him in through the emergency room. When I was at the university, I worked at the hospital, and oftentimes I was on that back desk at the emergency room. They brought this young man in, and he had half of his head blown off. He was on the stretcher. As he came by my desk, his chest was going up and down, and you could hear him and all the gurgling. That man lived three days in that condition before he died.

You cannot kill yourself and die when you want to die. You may kill yourself, but you are not going to die until God allows you to die. Period. Mark this down: not everybody who thinks they want to die really and truly wants to die. They had better understand that death does not end it all, and that they cannot die when they want to die. Just because you shoot yourself or do something stupid and foolish does not mean that you are going to die when you are going to die.

Alice and I know of a young woman who thought she was going to take her life. She shot herself and lived for, I do not know, twenty or thirty years in a wheelchair, a vegetable. I am simply saying that life and death are in the hands of the Lord, not in the hands of man.

The fourth observation is this: God knows exactly what it is going to take to get our attention. Remember Jonah. In chapter one, he is running from God and from his commission. He does not want to preach to the Assyrians; he wants the Ninevites to die. But in chapter two, he is running to God. He is praying and beseeching, and he is ready to preach.

Jonah 2:1 says, “Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly.” Verse 2 says, “I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord.” In verse 4 he says, “Then said I, I’m cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.” In other words, he was running from it, but now he was willing to run to it.

Jonah's Submission and the Example of Saul

Verse 6 says, “I went down to the bottoms of the mountains. The earth with her bars was about me forever. Yet thou hast brought up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God.” The words are, “I’m not going to die. I’m going to live.” Verse 7 says, “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.” Then, in verse 9: “But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving.”

"I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." Do you realize what you have in Jonah chapter 2? Jonah is running back to God, and I believe he is running back to God far more quickly than he ran from God, because he realizes that he is in a very desperate situation.

In Jonah chapter 2, God has Jonah exactly where He wants him, in the position that He exactly wants him in. That is, He wants him submissive and obedient. And that is where Jonah is at right at this particular time. "I'm willing to do whatever You would have me to do."

Let me give you a good illustration of this. Hold Jonah chapter 2, but turn to Acts chapter 9. You will see a similar situation in the life of Saul of Tarsus. Saul was an enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was consenting to the death of Stephen, and he held the cloaks of those who stoned Stephen. He had papers from the high priest going to Damascus, that he might find any of this way—that is, Christians. He might bind them and bring them back and throw them into prison or into a dungeon.

Saul of Tarsus was the enemy of Christians and the enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ. But on that road our Lord revealed Himself to Saul and said, "Saul, Saul, it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The pricks were those sharp goads that they used to goad the oxen with. Saul immediately said, "Who art thou, Lord?" He knew that whoever struck him down was Lord. He said, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Then Saul said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Of course, he was blind, and he was told to go into Damascus. They took him and led him by the hand to Damascus.

Now look in your Bibles to Acts 9, beginning with verse 10: "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. And to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus. For behold, he prayeth, and hath seen a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done to thy saints of Jerusalem."

“And here we have authority from the chief priest to bind all that call on thy name.” And the Lord said unto him, “Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”

Now, here is what Ananias missed. Go back to verse 11: “And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire of the house of Judas, for one called Saul of Tarsus. For behold, what? He prayeth.” God had Saul tamed. “Don’t worry about him. He’s broken to yoke. It doesn’t matter what you’ve heard about him. You do as I tell you, Ananias, because he is a chosen vessel unto me. I will show him exactly what he must suffer for my name’s sake.” What God did to Jonah was tame him. What God did to Saul of Tarsus was tame him.

Conclusion: Learning Obedience Willingly

You remember that passage in Matthew 11 where our Lord said, “Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest.” Then He said, “Take my yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly, and you shall find rest for your soul.” Have you ever tried to plow with an untamed oxen or an untamed mule? It is impossible. In order to plow with an oxen or a mule in the yoke, they had to be tamed. I used to plow when I was a boy. What our Lord is saying in Matthew 11 is, “You come to me and take my yoke, you submit to me, you be taught of me, you be obedient to me, and you'll find rest for your soul.”

Now look at Jonah 2:10. God has Jonah praying, wanting to go back to the temple, and ready to obey Him: “And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry ground.” When God got through with Jonah, he might have smelled a lot like fish, but he felt a whole lot more like preaching. I think probably when he hit that dry ground, he went running toward obedience. I believe I would have run in obedience a lot faster than I ran in disobedience.

Psalm 32 gives us the promise of God and the warning of God. God says, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye.” Is that not a blessed truth? God says, “I will instruct you. If you'll listen, I'll teach you. I'll show you the way to go.”

All of us have had children. Is it not absolutely wonderful when you can speak to your children and they say, “Yes, sir” and “Yes, ma'am,” and do exactly what they are told? It is a blessing to have an obedient child. This is what God is saying: He will instruct and teach us in the way we should go and guide us with His eye.

You do not have to guess. All you have to do is listen and obey. God says, “I will teach you.” But look at verse 9: “Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come nigh or near unto thee.” God says, “Don’t make me put a bit and bridle on you.” God can do that. He knows exactly what it will take to tame each one of us, to bring us to the yoke, and to make us submissive and obedient to His will. Yet God is willing to teach us.

There is an interesting verse in Micah 6:9: “Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it.” If you disobey your father and mother, what comes next? The rod. This is what God is telling us: “I will instruct thee. I will teach thee. Listen. Obey.” That is a wonderful way to learn. You can also learn by the rod, but that is a more difficult way. “Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it.” So Jonah was tamed of God and became the obedient, submissive servant and prophet God ordained him to be.

He may not have liked the message he had to preach, but he had to preach it. We may not particularly like God’s will in our lives, but if we realize it is God’s will, we need to submit to it. God has a unique

way of breaking us and making us submissive and obedient. It may not be being swallowed by a whale or lying on our backs in bed for six months, but whatever the way, God knows what it will take to bring us into obedience and submission. That is the position in which we want and need to be.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your blessing and help. Make us obedient and submissive. May we not run from Thee, but run to Thee. May we listen, be instructed, and be taught by Thee. May we not have to be bridled with a bit in our mouth or have the rod applied to our lives. May we be willing to listen, hear, heed, and obey. We ask for Your grace and mercy. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 22

The Sovereignty of God over Nations

Introduction: God's Exclusive Sovereignty

The book of Job, chapter 12. We will read verses 23 through 25. The message is entitled, “The Sovereignty of God Over Nations.” Notice Job 12:23: “He”—and we are talking about God—“he increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them. He enlargeth the nations, and straighteneth them again. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them stagger like a drunken man.”

When we look around today at all of our nations, including America, we can say that, like the Bible says, men’s hearts are failing them for fear. Look at the turmoil and trouble in practically every nation: China, North Korea, Iraq, and Iran—nations that we may think, as a whole, are threatening us. Yet we never stop to think of one simple truth: God is sovereign, and that sovereignty extends over the nations.

When I say that God is sovereign, understand that He is the only sovereign. There can be only one sovereign, and the word sovereign, or sovereignty, excludes anything or anyone else. There cannot possibly be two sovereigns. Sovereignty belongs to God exclusively.

Let me give you a couple of verses by way of introduction. In Isaiah 43:11, God said, “I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Savior.” In Isaiah 44:6: “Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts, I am first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.” Isaiah 45:6 says, “That they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none beside me, I am the Lord, and there is none else.” And Isaiah 45:22 says, “Who had declared this from the ancient time? Who had told it from that time? Have not I the Lord? There is no God else beside me, a just God and Savior. There is none beside me.” So God is exclusively the sovereign.

God's sovereignty extends to anything and everything. There is nothing over which God is not sovereign. Years ago, when I was in the university, we were talking about God's sovereignty in a class packed with young preacher boys. One young man raised his hand and said, "Well, sir, I believe that God is sovereign over all the big things but not the little things."

Before I even caught myself, I said out loud, "Oh, what utter blasphemy." Everyone looked at me, including the professor. I said, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say that out loud. But, sir, if you don't correct him, I am, because every big thing is made up of a series of a lot of little things. If there is even one thing over which God is not sovereign, then God is not God, because that thing is over and above God and independent of God."

God's Sovereignty Over All Things (Job 12:13-22)

The professor said, "Mr. Weaver is right." Certainly I was right, because God is sovereign. He is sovereign; He extends to everything.

In Job chapter 12, beginning at verse 13, we see how God's sovereignty extends to things that we hardly ever think of: "With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding. Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a

man, and there can be no opening. Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bonds of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death."

God is sovereign over all these things, and He does all these things. God's sovereignty means that God is sovereign over everyone and everything, and that everyone and everything is under His control.

God's sovereignty not only includes individuals, families, churches, and states, but even nations as well. His sovereignty includes wicked nations as well as righteous nations, and wicked people as well as righteous people. It should be a comfort to the saints of God to know and understand that God is sovereign over every kindred, tongue, tribe, and nation. That means this: dictators, tyrants, despots, presidents, congresses, parliaments, and all types of rulers are under His direct sovereign control.

The Question of Wickedness and Rebellion

Once that concept is grasped and realized, a question automatically arises in everyone's mind. What is that question? Here it is: “Well, pastor, if God is sovereign, and if God is in control of every dictator, every ruler, every nation, and every state, if God is in control, why then does He allow so much wickedness and so much rebellion in the world?” It is a good question, and I want to answer it. Hold Job 12, but turn in your Bibles to Psalm 76 and look at verse 10. If God is sovereign, if God is in control, why then does He allow so much wickedness and so much rebellion in these nations, in individuals, in families, and in rulers?

Notice what the Bible says in Psalm 76:10. It is exceedingly plain. The psalmist says, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the

remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Now notice what he said: "Surely the wrath of man will praise thee and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." The word wrath is the Hebrew word chemah, and it refers to fury, wrath, venom, poison, anger, indignation, furious and burning anger, and displeasure. Take all the anger, all the indignation, all the poison, all the venom, and all the wickedness that has been, that is, and that will be. Notice what Scripture says: "Surely the wrath"—that wicked, rebellious spirit of man and his wicked actions—"surely the wrath of man shall praise thee. And the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

Now here is the question: How much wrath, how much wickedness, and how much rebellion will God allow? Here is the answer: Just enough that it will redound to His honor and His glory, and the remainder of wrath will He restrain. Look in Psalm 76:10 again: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee."

The word praise literally means to confess, to give thanks, thanksgiving, and to make a confession. Ultimately, fully, and finally, man's wickedness and rebellion will offer up thanks and praise unto the one true and living God.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "It," speaking of the wrath of man, "shall not only be overcome but rendered subservient to God's glory. Man with his breath of threatening is but blowing the trumpet of the Lord's eternal fame. Furious winds often drive vessels more swiftly into port. The devil blows the fire and melts the iron, and then the Lord fashions it for his own purposes. Let men and devils rage as they may. They cannot do otherwise than but to subserve the divine purposes."

Everything that man does, everything that wicked people do, will ultimately serve the Lord's purposes. I've said it before: I don't always understand it, but everything is going wrong just right, because God is in control. He has not lost control.

Now notice what the Bible says: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee and that which will not praise God he will restrain." He will not allow it to happen.

Illustration: God Restrains Abimelech (Genesis 20)

Consider an illustration from Genesis chapter 20. There had been a famine in the land, and Abraham and Sarah left because of the famine. Sarah was evidently a very beautiful woman, and Abraham was concerned that someone would kill him to get his wife. Therefore, he told her, "You tell everybody you're my sister." In those days, her being his sister would have protected her, because no one could have approached her without first asking his permission, since he was the head of the family.

Genesis 20:1 says, "And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country and dwelled toward Gerar and Shur and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah's wife, 'She is my sister.'" Then, "And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said unto him, 'Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken, for she is a man's wife.' But Abimelech had not come near her. And he said, 'Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he, nodding to me, she is my sister.'"

“And she, even she herself, said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this.’ And God said unto him in a dream, ‘Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thine heart, for I also withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore I suffered thee not to touch her. Now therefore restore the man his wife, for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live, and if thou restore her not, know that thou shalt surely die, thou and all that are thine.’”

Abimelech saw Sarah and said, “She’s a beautiful woman. I’d like to add her to my harem.” She went into his court, and God appeared to Abimelech and said, “If you touch her, you’re a dead man. I’ll kill you.” The Bible says Abimelech had not come near her. What did God do to stop him? I have no earthly idea. Maybe He gave him a case of 24-hour virus. But I know one thing for sure: he never touched her. God said, “I have withheld thee from sinning against me. I’ve stopped you. Therefore, I suffered you not to touch her.” Obviously, to defile the lineage of Christ would not be glorifying to God, and God did not allow it to happen. “The wrath of man shall praise the Lord, and the remainder of wrath shall he restrain.”

That is why the Bible says in Proverbs 21:1, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water. He turneth it whithersoever he willeth.” The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord as rivers of water; He turns that heart any way He pleases, anywhere He pleases.

So why does God allow wickedness, rebellion, and sin? Here is the answer: just enough to get honor and glory for Himself. If there were no sin, rebellion, or wickedness, we would never comprehend the holiness and justice of God, or God’s righteous anger and indignation against it. Nor would we grasp God’s mercy and grace when He saves people out of that sin and rebellion. Sin and wickedness ultimately will redound to God’s honor and glory. What will not glorify Him, He will restrain and withhold.

Returning to Job 12, everything God has said in verses 13 through 22, talking about rulers and men, He now applies to nations in verses 23 through 25. God is just as sovereign over the nation as He is over the individual. The Bible says in Psalm 22 and verse 28, “For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the governor among the nations.” God is the governor among the nations. In Psalm 113 and verse 4, the Bible says, “The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory filleth the heavens.”

Let me show you three quick references. Two of them are in Isaiah, and one is in Jeremiah. Isaiah 40:15 says, “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as a small dust to the balance. Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” When we think of the nations of this world, their greatness, power, and might, we are awed. God says they are just a drop in the bucket; they are nothing to God. Just a drop in a bucket. Isaiah 40:17 says, “All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counting Him less than nothing and vanity.” Wow. Jeremiah 10:7 says, “Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee.”

This shows you the greatness of God and the weakness of men. Jeremiah 10:7 asks, "Who would not fear thee, O king of nations? For to thee doth it appertain, for as much as among all the wise men of the nations and all their kingdoms there is none like unto thee."

God is called the King of the nations. That is, He is their sovereign; He rules over them.

In Job 12:23, we read, "He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them. He enlargeth the nations and straighteneth them again." First of all, it is the sovereignty of God that increases and enlarges nations. You want to know why America got as far as she got? Because of God's sovereignty.

God Increases and Enlarges Nations

Someone called me yesterday asking about some of the founding fathers. He said, "I know not every one of them was a Christian." That is true. The majority of the founding fathers were Christian. But those men who were not Christian were so deeply influenced by the Christian religion that it pervaded every part of their being and everything that they did.

For instance, most people count Benjamin Franklin a deist. Benjamin Franklin was personal friends with George Whitefield, and he often went to hear Whitefield preach. Franklin calculated that Whitefield's voice could be heard by approximately 40,000 people. They did not have megaphones or electronics back then.

But if Benjamin Franklin was a deist and was not a Christian, consider what he said as the oldest man at the Constitutional Convention. Speaking to George Washington and all the other men there, he said, "In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of superintendent providence in our favor."

To that kind providence—not luck, not fate, not fortune—we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. Have we now forgotten that powerful friend? I have lived a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this: God governs in the affairs of men. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been

assured in the sacred writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also believe that without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.

We shall be divided by our little partial local interests, our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down to ages. What is worse? Mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing governments by human wisdom and leave it to chance, war, conquest. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessing on our deliberations be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service.

Now if Benjamin Franklin was not a Christian, he certainly had Christian understanding and Christian principles. He understood this truth: no nation can rise without the divine providence and help and blessing of God. Scripture tells us it is God who allows the nations to increase and expand.

There are multitudes of examples in the Scripture, and I am going to show you a little bit later about Israel. But the same truth is given concerning the pagan nations as well. For instance, in Jeremiah 25, God speaks in reference to Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon:

"I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant"—that is what he called Nebuchadnezzar, "my servant"—"and will bring them against the land and against the inhabitants thereof and against all the nations round about, and will utterly destroy them," that is, all those nations, "and make them an astonishment and a hissing and perpetual desolations. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness and the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."

What did God do? God took a pagan man and a pagan nation and sent them to conquer because His people had sinned against Him, and God said they would serve him for seventy years.

Notice in Jeremiah 26: "In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from the Lord, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord, Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak in all the cities of Judah which come to worship in the Lord's house all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word. If so be they will hearken and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil which I purposed to do unto them, because of the evil of their doings. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, If ye will hearken to me, and walk in my law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened, then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse in all the nations.'

So the priests, the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. When Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord commanded him, they said to Jeremiah, 'Thou shalt surely die.'

God told the people, "I'm sending Nebuchadnezzar. I'm sending the Babylonians." If you will listen to my preacher, hear him, repent, and obey me, I will withhold this. But if not, I'm going to send him, and you're going to die. That is exactly what God did. God sent a pagan king and a pagan nation to conquer.

In relationship to Israel, we are specifically told that it was God who increased and enlarged Israel. Isaiah says, "Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord. Thou hast increased the nation. Thou art glorified. Thou hast removed it from the ends of the earth." The word removed there means, "Thou hast extended it." In other words, "You have enlarged it to all of the ends of the earth." God can enlarge and extend the kingdom of His people, or He can enlarge and extend the kingdom of the wicked. Why?

Because He is sovereign over both. In Habakkuk 1:6, God says, "For lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who

shall march through the breadth of the land to possess dwelling places that are not theirs." God said, "I'm raising them up. I'm going to send them to the land. They're going to possess lands that are not theirs."

It does not really matter whether we are talking about a Christian nation, a pagan nation, or anything in between, if there can be anything in between: the sovereignty of God is over every nation. It is the sovereignty of God that allows a nation to expand and enlarge. It is God who gives that nation the ability to conquer, the ability to understand, the ability to comprehend, and the ability to apply a work ethic. It is God who even allows one nation to conquer another nation or people.

God's Right to Dispossess Nations

Look what God did. God took Israel and sent them into the land to conquer nations that had been there for hundreds of years, some perhaps even thousands. Here is the question: How just is it for God to take some upstart people, some young little group, some young little nation, and send them in to conquer and take land away from a people who have been there for hundreds and thousands of years? How just could it be, in our thinking, for God to allow a little old insignificant, puny Cuba to come in, whip America, and take our land and our cities?

Let me first establish one principle from Scripture. Who is the rightful owner of the world and everything in it? God, the sovereign God of heaven and earth.

In 1 Chronicles 29:11, King Asa confessed, "Thine, O Lord is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty for all that is in heaven and that is in earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom of the Lord and thou art exalted as head above all." Most of you can quote Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein." Did you know that this verse is quoted twice in the New Testament? In 1 Corinthians 10:26, the Bible says, "For the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." In 1 Corinthians 10:28, it says, "For the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

In other words, here is the principle we have established: this world and everything in it belongs to God. It is His.

Here is a second question that must be asked in light of that truth: Does God not have the right to do with His own as He pleases? Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 20, and let us begin reading in verse 1. The problem is this: many times we want to claim a prerogative or a right for ourselves that we will not allow God to have. Look in Matthew 20:1.

Our Lord says, "For the kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that is a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. Now look, and when he agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into the vineyard." It was six o'clock in the morning. "And he went out about the third hour," nine o'clock, "and saw others standing idle in the marketplace. And he said to them, 'Go you also in the vineyard and whatsoever is right, I'll give you.' And they went their way. Again, he went out the sixth hour," twelve noon, "and the ninth hour," three in the afternoon, "and did likewise. About the 11th hour," say five in the afternoon, "he went out and found others standing idle and said to them, 'Why stand you here idle all the day?' And they said to him, 'Because no man hath hired us.' He said to them, 'Go ye also in the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that you shall receive.' So when the evening was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their hire, beginning from the last into the first.' And when they came that were hired about the 11th hour, that is, they'd only worked one hour, they received every man a penny. And when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more, and they likewise received every man a penny. Remember, they agreed for that. And when they received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, 'These lasts have wrought but one hour, but thou hast made them equal unto us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst thou not agree with me for a penny?'"

"Take that thine is and go thy way. I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?" Can God not do with His own

as He pleases? The answer is yes: God can. Everything belongs to Him, and God may do with it as He pleases. God has the sovereign right to dispossess anyone from His creation, either temporarily or permanently. Most of the nations that God dispossessed were nations that refused to honor Him, glorify Him, and obey Him. In other words, they refused to give God His just due as a righteous landlord; and when they refused to give Him His just due, He justly kicked them out.

The Bible says in Proverbs 29 and verse 2, “Give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord the glory due in His name, and worship the Lord in the beauty of His holiness.” In Psalm 96 and verse 7, “Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people.”

“Give unto the Lord glory and strength.” And then in Psalm 96 and verse 8: “Give unto the Lord the glory that is due in His name. Bring an offering and come into His courts.”

If you owned a house, or several houses, would you allow renters to remain who never paid any rent and constantly destroyed your property? Or would you kick them out? And if you kicked them out, would you be just and right in doing so? Yes. You were the owner; you could do with it as you pleased. If someone would not pay what they justly and rightly owed, they should be dispossessed.

The same is true when God is sovereign over the nations. When nations do not give God His due, this earth is His. He may lawfully, righteously, and justly kick them out.

Years ago, I was preaching in Ohio, and an American Indian was attending the church. The pastor took us out to eat every day, and this man and a few others went with us. He was kind, gracious, and cordial until the very last day. Then he looked sullen and angry, keeping his head down most of the time. I called his name and asked, “What in the world is wrong with you?” He answered, “You white men stole our land.”

He should not have said that. I replied, “First of all, it’s not your land. It’s God’s land. Secondly, your people were out worshiping the sun, the moon, the stars, the trees, the water, the birds, and anything that walked instead of the one true and living God. You refused to

give Him honor and glory. Moreover, you not only killed people, you ate people."

He asked, "How did you know that?" I said, "It's all right; I know because I do some studying. You did that. God had the absolute right to take the land away from you and give it to us, and God has the absolute right to take the land away from us and give it to someone else if we fail Him and refuse to honor and glorify Him." And He does. It belongs to Him. God is the one who increases and enlarges nations.

God Diminishes and Destroys Nations

Job 12:23 says, "He increases the nations and destroys them. He enlarges the nations and straightens them again." The sovereignty of God diminishes and destroys nations just as God increases, enlarges, and builds them up. It is God also who diminishes and destroys them. God has entire and complete control over every nation.

The sources of prosperity are in His hand. In His pleasure, He may visit any nation with famine, pestilence, or war. He may diminish our numbers. He may arrest our property. He may do whatever He pleases. Our prosperity is in His hand.

Consider what God did to Egypt, as recorded in Psalm 105: "Saying unto thee, will I give the land of Canaan the lot of your inheritance? When they were but a few men in number, yea, they were few and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, he," that is God, "suffered no man to do them wrong. Yea, he reproved kings for their sake, saying, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.' Moreover, he called for a famine upon the land. He broke the whole staff of bread.

"He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant. Whose feet they hurt with fetters, he was laid in iron. Until the time that his word came, the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him, even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house and ruler of his substance, to bind his princes at his pleasures and to teach his sinners wisdom. Israel also came into Egypt, and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

Now look, and he increased his people greatly and made them stronger than their enemies."

Isn't that amazing? But the next verse says, "He turned their heart," that is, the Egyptian's heart, "to hate his people and to deal suddenly with his servants. He sent Moses his servant and Aaron whom he had chosen. They showed his signs among them and wonders in the land of Ham."

Now look what God did: "He sent darkness, and he made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word. He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. He spake, and there came diverse sorts of flies and lice in their coast. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He smote their vines also, and their fig trees, and broke the trees of their coast. He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number, and did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of the ground. He smote also the firstborn in their land, the chief of their strength." God is doing all of this.

Psalm 105:44 says, "And gave them the lands of the heathen, and they inherited the labour of the people, that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the Lord." God often permits a nation to acquire territory and afterwards shuts them up and reduces them. They lose that territory; sometimes He shuts them up within their natural boundaries, and sometimes He even reduces those boundaries.

Men say, "Oh, it's natural events. It was the flood, or it was the drought, or it was state intrigue, or political intrigue, or it was this or it was that." Very few people ever see that God is behind everything. It is God who set it up one and take it down another. Psalm 75:6–7 says, "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and he setteth up another." God is the one who puts down rulers and sets them up. Daniel 2:21 says that He "changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and he setteth up kings. He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding."

It is God who removes kings and sets up kings. Spurgeon said, “Men forget that all things are ordained in heaven. They see but the human force and the carnal passion, but the unseen Lord is far more real than all of these. He is at work behind and within the cloud.”

The foolish dream that he is not, but he is near even now and on the way to bring in his hand the cup of the spiced wine of vengeance, one draw of which shall stagger all of his foes. Certainly, you and I understand how God destroyed the people in the flood. We not only understand how God destroyed the people in the flood, we understand how He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain. Where are all the nations that God cast out before Israel?

Ask yourself, where are the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Hivites, and all the otherites? They're gone. The kingdoms of Persia and Greece and Babylon and Rome—oh, the geographical locations may still be here, but the national power and the empires are gone. They've vanished. The Bible says in 2 Chronicles 15 and verse 6, “And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city, for God did vex them in all adversity.” God did vex them. Nation was destroyed, the nation went, God vexed them.

In Job 34 and verse 29, it says of God, “When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? And when He hideth His face, who then can behold Him, whether it be done against a nation or against a man only?” God says, when I give quietness, nobody can cause trouble. And when I had my face, you're done for. Whether it's against a man or against a nation, it doesn't matter.

Listen to what God specifically said concerning the nation Israel. Jeremiah 31 gives a wonderful illustration of this. Notice what God says, beginning there in verse 27: “Look what God says.”

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that like as I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down and to throw down and to destroy and to afflict, so will I watch over them to build and to plant, saith the Lord."

Here is a promise that God says He is going to build and plant Israel. But note what God said: just as He watched over them to break down, to pluck up, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, it was God who built them up, and it is God who broke them down. Very clearly, God is the one who diminishes and destroys.

How God Destroys: Removing Wisdom from Rulers

This is where it becomes especially interesting. You grasp the simple fact that God enlarges, increases, diminishes, and destroys. We have read all of that in verse 23. But look at verses 24 and 25: "He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man."

Now we are considering how God diminishes and destroys nations. Verse 24 says, "He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth." The word heart refers to the mind, intelligence, common sense, and wisdom. One way God diminishes and destroys a nation is by taking away its mind, intelligence, wisdom, and common sense.

The chief of the people refers to the rulers of the earth, or the rulers of the nation. When He takes away the heart—the wisdom—of the chief of the people, He takes away their understanding and common sense and leaves them as absolute fools. The perplexion, perplexity, and confusion of the rulers of the earth is strikingly resembled here to a lost man in the wilderness: "He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth and causeth them to wander in the wilderness where there is no way."

In other words, they do not know which way to turn. They do not know which way is up or which way is down. It is like having vertigo, either underwater or up in the air. You do not know where to go or where to turn.

Here is an excellent example with Sihon in Deuteronomy 2, beginning at verse 26. Moses said, “And I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth, unto Sihon, king of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying, ‘Let me pass through thy land. I will go along by the

highway. I will neither turn into the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me meat for money that I may eat and give me water for money that I may drink. Only I will pass through on my feet as the children of Esau which dwelt in Seir and the Moabites which dwelt in Ard did unto me until I shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the Lord our God gave us.'"

"But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let him pass by: for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinance, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth unto this day."

What did Moses do to this king? He sent him words of peace. He said, "Let me pass through the land. I'll go along by the highway. I won't go to the right hand or to the left. I won't mess up any of your property. You will sell me meat for money. You can make money off us, and you can sell us water to drink."

Moses said, "I can give you references. Edom and Moab allowed us to do this. We never messed up their land. They made money on us as we passed. Just let us go through. That's all we want." Who is going to miss an opportunity like that to make money and have references already? It is true that God hardened Sihon's heart, but He hardened it because, once again, Sihon was already a wicked, ungodly, reprobate man, and so were his people. God was going to give Israel that land, and He did. But here was a king who was absolutely devoid of common sense. Why would he not take up an offer like this? There were references, an opportunity to make money, and words of peace. No, he was just going to fight. They were going to pass through his land.

The Bible says in Job 5 and verse 13, "He taketh the wise in his own craftiness, and the counsel of the forward is carried headlong." In other words, He captures them and throws them down. What did He say in Job 12? "He looseth the bond of kings and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trustee, and taketh away the understanding of the age. He forth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty."

When God begins to diminish and destroy a nation, He makes its leaders absolute fools. Look in your Bibles to Job 34, beginning with

verse 24. Look what the Bible says concerning God: “He shall break in pieces mighty men without number and set others in their stead.” You are already getting my application; I do not even have to make it. I have already been telling you about that from Psalm 75. He shall break in pieces mighty men without number and set others in their stead.

“Therefore He knoweth their works and He overturneth them in the night, so they are destroyed. He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others, because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways. So that they caused the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted. When he giveth quietness, who can make trouble? And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only, that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.” What is God saying? When He diminishes and destroys, they are done for. It is that simple.

Isaiah 19:13 says concerning the princes of Egypt, “The princes of Zoan have become fools. They have seduced Egypt, even those that are the stay of the tribes thereof.” Their princes became fools. Job 12:24 says, “He taketh away the heart of the chief of people, of the earth and causeth them to wander in the wilderness where there is no way.” They grope in the dark without light, and He maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.

What is the usefulness and worth of a lost, wayward, drunken, staggering, stumbling man? Such a man cannot even find his own way out of a house, much less lead a nation. One of the greatest evidences that America is being diminished and destroyed is that, in the judgment of God, He has made most of our leaders absolute fools.

Application: America's Foolish Leaders and God's Judgment

They have no common sense or understanding; they are useless and worthless. A fool in the Bible is not a mentally deficient person. A fool is someone who will not listen, receive instruction, or take correction. When God begins to diminish and destroy, He takes away the wisdom, common sense, and understanding of rulers.

Here is the first application: God is the true and only sovereign. It is God who puts up one ruler and takes down another. God can soon confuse and confound the most cunning politicians. He can take their wits and make them reach their wits' ends. It is God who will do that. How do I know?

Because He's promised in the Scripture to abase the proud and to exalt the humble. In Ezekiel 21, verse 27, he said this: "Thus saith the Lord God, remove the diadem and take off the crown. This shall not be the same. Exalt him that is low and abase him that is high."

You remember old proud, arrogant Nebuchadnezzar? "Is this not great Babylon that I have built for my name and for the honor and the glory of my name?" What did God do? God drove him insane for seven years. For seven years he ate grass like an ox, let his fingernails grow like bird claws, and his hair like bird feathers. When God restored him, Nebuchadnezzar said this in Daniel 4 and verse 37: "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride, he is able to abase." Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way that God is able to bring a man down, no matter how high he is in authority.

And God will do it. My prayer is that He'll do it soon. One last passage: Hebrews chapter 12. Here is another reason to seek Christ, to trust Him, to obey Him, and to be in His kingdom. Look what the Scripture says, Hebrews chapter 12, verse 24: "And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel, see that you refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escape not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

Now watch: whose voice then shook the earth, but now he hath promised, saying, 'Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.' This word yet once more signified the removing of those things that are shaken, as of those things that are made, and those things which cannot be shaken may remain. What is one thing that cannot be shaken that's going to remain? Verse 28: 'Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved. Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,

for our God is a consuming fire.' What is God going to do to the kingdoms of this world? Destroy them. Remove them.

Until, as Hobie pointed out, that stone came out of the mountain, cut without hands, and broke the beast, and the beast fell to pieces. That stone is none other than Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. And when our sovereign God finishes, the only kingdom that will remain will be the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, who deserves all honor, all praise, and all glory. What a comfort it is to know that Obama is really not in charge in this country.

Thank you, Father, for Your Word and Your truth and Your blessing. Help us to love, live, and serve Thee, and to stand fast in the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ, in whose name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 23

A Wild Confederate Rose

Introduction: The Wild Confederate Rose and Jael

We are going to look at a number of passages. When you see the Scripture I am going to read, I am sure a question will arise in your mind. The title of the message is “A Wild Confederate Rose.” In Judges 5:24—we will go back and look at the context shortly—the Bible says, “Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.”

Stop and think about that: “Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.” What possible connection could this Scripture verse have with the subject matter and the title, “A Wild Confederate Rose”?

Let me ask you another leading question. Have you ever tried to grow what are known as confederate rose bushes, or seen a wild confederate rose bush? They are very lovely to behold. They are beautiful, and they smell deliciously. But have you ever tried to get rid of one? Getting rid of one is one of the greatest problems you will ever face, because confederate rose bushes are strong, hardy, and resilient.

If you leave the tiniest root in the ground, it will come back. It will grow everywhere. It will run everywhere. You will find that a confederate rose is almost impossible to stop.

The reason I say that is to tell you that there are some women just like that. They are given to us not only in Scripture, but also in history. Everyone should know the story of Jael. She was a very brave, resourceful, and heroic woman. When Sisera was fleeing from Barak, he made a very tactical mistake, which became a very fatal error: he went into the tent of Jael.

SCRIPTURE READING - Judges 4:18-24; 5:24-27 (KJV)

Jael's Heroic Act

In Judges 4:18-24 we read:

"And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me, fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink, for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. And he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here, that thou shalt say no. Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it to the ground, for he was asleep and weary, and so he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they destroyed Jabin king of Canaan."

In Judges chapter 5, Jael is praised for this act. Deborah and Barak are singing a song of praise to God for deliverance. In verse 24 we read:

> "Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked for water and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail and her right hand to the workmen's hammer, and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell dead. Where he bowed, there he fell dead."

So here was a woman who took matters into her own hands. She killed her enemy, and actually the enemy then of Barak who was pursuing them. She was undoubtedly a very brave and courageous woman. There are multitudes of women like that recorded in the Bible. Some are given by name, and some are not.

Women of Faith in Hebrews 11

Hebrews 11:32-36 says, "And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and of Barak"—and, by the way, that was the one who was chasing Sisera when Jael killed Sisera—"and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mocking, scourgings, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment."

Notice carefully that passage. The Bible says that women received their dead raised to life again. If women received their dead raised to life again, referring to their husbands, their sons, or their children, that means that, previous to that blessing, there were indeed persecutions and sufferings as well.

I cannot necessarily prove it contextually, but in all probability, in Hebrews chapter 11 and these verses that we are reading, when he lists Barak, Samson, Jephthah, Gideon, and a number of others, when he talks about the women, there probably were a lot of women

included who were being tortured as well. In fact, if you do nothing else other than read the Bible, there is one other book you should read: Foxe's Book of Martyrs. There you will find many women who suffered for the faith and were tortured simply because they were Christians. The interesting thing is this: you will also often find people who were tortured, killed, and slain simply because they were Southern, and many of them Southern Christians.

The Overlooked Suffering of Southern Women

When we begin to think about the war, and since this is Confederate Memorial Day, we tend to want to honor our Confederate heritage and our Confederate ancestors. When we think of the war, we normally think of men marching off to war, and usually emphasize their suffering, their hardships, and their dangers faced on a daily basis. Seldom do we think of the women they left at home.

When you stop and think about a man who marches off to war, especially in 1861, when there were no Walmarts or convenience stores nearby, that meant the wife, the woman, was left to run the farm. She not only had to run the farm, but all of a sudden the roles of protector, provider, educator, administrator, doctor, and homekeeper—all of these fell upon the woman at one time. Moreover, many of the men died in battle, which means the husbands never came back, adding additional suffering to the role of the woman. More agony was then thrust upon her.

It is interesting, as you study the war, that you find some women who were so patriotic and brave that they did something I consider not only unbiblical but very foolish. They disguised themselves as men and actually fought in the war. But there were other women who used their talents in other ways. They used their charm and their positions to help the Confederate States in a multitude of ways, and one of those ways was as a spy. You have to remember that during the 1860s women were usually considered harmless, and they were actually protected, usually even by Northern men.

Rose O'Neill Greenhow: The Confederate Rose

I realize there were men like Benjamin Butler, et cetera, and I understand that. But by and large, most men, even in the North,

would very seldom want to reproach a woman. Before they would ever try to arrest a woman or cause harm to a woman, they would have to have real hard evidence—something absolutely imminent and before their eyes—in order to exile or deport a woman in particular.

One such spy was known as the Confederate Rose or the Rebel Rose. Who was Rose O'Neill Greenhow? From childhood, she had the nickname Wild Rose—not necessarily because she was immoral, but because she seemingly had a strong will and a disposition to be absolutely independent.

Rose O'Neill Greenhow was not only a leader in Washington society; she was also a passionate secessionist and one of the most renowned spies during the War of Northern Aggression. Rose O'Neill Greenhow was born in Port Tobacco, Maryland. She was Rose O'Neill, but then she married the wealthy Virginian, Dr. Robert Greenhow. He was not only a physician, but also a diplomat in the State Department. While they lived in Washington, D.C., Rose raised her four daughters and became very prominent in Washington society.

In 1850, the Greenhows moved to Mexico, and from there to San Francisco. Dr. Greenhow then died of an injury, leaving Rose a widow. Rose had grown up as a pampered Washington belle, and her girlhood mentor was none other than John C. Calhoun. She was also personal friends with President Buchanan. Her husband, Dr. Greenhow, had worked for the State Department and therefore had many diplomatic contacts. After her husband's death, the widowed Rose O'Neill Greenhow moved back to Washington, D.C., assumed her role as Washington hostess, and hosted many political and military events. At the very start of the war, she began priming the pump, gathering information from her contacts and making sure that it got to her Confederate friends to be passed on to the Confederate government.

Rose’s Espionage and the First Manassas Victory

In fact, Colonel E.D. Keyes, who was military secretary to General Winfield Scott, made this remark while on duty in Washington: He found great delight with the Southern damsels, even with some of

the matrons, notwithstanding the incandescence of their treason. In other words, he realized that these super nice, charming ladies were far more than just super nice and charming. He knew that their hearts were really for the South. Rose O'Neill Greenhow was reputed to be the most persuasive woman ever known in Washington. One disgusted federal officer said concerning Rose, “She has not used her powers in vain among the officers of the army, not a few of whom she has robbed of their patriotic hearts.” Rose was very capable of getting information from soldiers as well as diplomats. In the 1860s, she was a very wealthy, attractive, and outgoing widow, and she made absolutely no effort to conceal her Southern sympathies.

She lived just across Lafayette Park from the White House in Washington, D.C. Being very high in society and a popular member of Washington's social circles, Rose was strategically placed to secure information valuable to the Confederate government. One illustration of her outspoken courage and frankness occurred during one of her social-political dinners. Among her guests was Senator William Seward, who would become Secretary of State under Abraham Lincoln.

Also present were Charles Francis Adams of Massachusetts and his wife. Adams would become Lincoln's minister to England. John Bankhead Magruder was there as well; he would become a Confederate general. During the meal, Mrs. Adams insisted on discussing the hanging of John Brown, whom she called a holy saint and martyr. That was too much for Rose. She shot back, "John Brown was a traitor and he met a traitor's death."

John Brown, as many know, was hanged on December 2, 1859. He was not only a traitor but also a murderer. He murdered several men in Kansas in front of their wives and children, hacking them to pieces with his sword—some before he shot them and some afterward. He murdered them simply because they were Southerners who espoused Southern views.

John Brown was essentially paid by the Secret Six to foment a war. He began in Kansas by murdering five men. His stated mission was to "free the slaves." He wanted to come to the South, foment a revolution, and have the slaves rise up and murder their masters and their families. Yet the first man Brown's gang murdered when they

came to the South was Haywood Shepard, a free black man employed by the West Winchester Potomac Railroad as its baggage master.

When they murdered Haywood Shepard on October the 17th, 1859, he was only 46 years of age, and he left a wife and five children. No wonder there was no Southerner who had any respect for John Brown. Rose was right: he was not only a traitor, but a murderer. Yet Rose was even bolder after she began her espionage work, even after hostilities had broken out.

Many ladies were just as openly bold and did not try to hide their southern sympathies. One federal agent said that fine ladies were secretly giving information to the enemy. He added, "It was openly boasted that the secret information given to the rebel generals had been mainly the cause of the defeat of our armies at Bull Run." Certainly, Rose helped in that defeat. She was motivated and driven by her understanding of the war. Tutored by John C. Calhoun, she understood states' rights, nullification, and secession.

Schooled in that truth, she said concerning Washington, "Instead of friends, I see in those states of Washington only mortal enemies. Instead of loving the old flag of the Stars and Stripes, I see in it only the symbol of murder, plunder, oppression, and shame."

One Baptist preacher was arrested in the North for a comment about the Stars and Stripes. He was put in prison for two years because he said he could not respect the flag, since it had been turned into an enemy of the South to oppress Southerners and states' rights. Colonel Thomas Jordan, a United States officer with strong Southern sympathies, had approached Rose about developing a Confederate spy ring and supplied her with a cipher code so that she could transmit messages to the South.

By April of 1861, Rose had developed a network of spies ranging from ordinary household servants, whom she called "little birds," to prominent professionals and governmental officials. Through this network, Rose provided General Beauregard with a timetable of the Union advance on Manassas. On July the 10th, a courier delivered a small package to Brigadier General Milledge Bonham to forward to

General Beauregard. The package was a piece of black silk folded to the size of a silver dollar.

Betty Duvall brought the information in her bun on the back of her head. She took her hair down, removed the little package, and gave it to him; he, in turn, gave it to General Beauregard. The information concerned Union General Irwin McDowell and his thirty-five thousand Union troops, who were to leave Washington on July 16. Rose was giving information not only about their strength, but also about their movements and the timetable for their departure.

Subsequent information from Rose outlined McDowell's plan to advance through Arlington, Alexandria, and Centreville, Virginia, on his way to destroy the railroad at Manassas Junction. This information allowed Beauregard time to consolidate his forces, and Jefferson Davis himself credited Rose O'Neill Greenhow with helping the Confederate Army achieve victory at First Manassas. On July 23, 1861, after the Confederate victory, Colonel Thomas sent Rose a message: "Our president and our general direct me to thank you. We rely on you for further information. The Confederacy owes you a great debt."

Rose was very efficient at organizing her spy rings and her letter drops. Although Rose herself was arrested, many of her couriers and friends were so discreet, devoted, and crafty that neither the couriers nor the letter drops were ever discovered throughout the entire war.

Rose even discovered the federal alarm system that would be used if Washington were attacked by the Confederates. How did she obtain that information? She went around with the officer in charge of the duty, and he simply told her. Rose was a very attractive and charming woman, and she could get information from these men. Concerning what she had learned, she said that the information she collected was "a result of a direct intervention of divine providence. It would be wrong," she said, "to ascribe these things to chance."

In other words, she said God had worked it out for her and allowed her to discover the information. Rose went on to say, "I employed every capacity which God had endowed me, and the result was far more successful than my hopes could have flattered me to

expect." The success God had given her was beyond her wildest imagination. Rose was not simply a spy.

She was more than that. She was busy organizing what you and I would call a fifth column or fifth element to help in case the Confederates ever did attack Washington, D.C. She wrote: “We’re endeavoring to affect an organization here in order to take advantage of emergencies. If possible, their telegraph wires will all be simultaneously cut and their guns spiked along the Virginia side.” Here was a woman who was not merely a spy; she was planning to help her beloved South in any way she could.

Obviously, it was only a matter of time before Rose and her friends aroused federal suspicion. In fact, it was the notorious Allan Pinkerton, founder of the Secret Service, head of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, and defender of Abraham Lincoln, who took it upon himself to bring down Rose Greenhow.

Arrest and Imprisonment

One of the funniest incidents I came across while researching this message occurred when Pinkerton and several agents endeavored to spy on Rose by looking into her window. Her house was high off the ground, so Pinkerton had to stand on the shoulders of another agent. It was raining cats and dogs. The wind was blowing and howling. Pinkerton took off his shoes to alleviate some of the pain and pressure on his agent’s shoulders as he stared into the empty room, hoping someone would come in.

He also had a lookout. If anyone came down the street, the word would be given, Pinkerton could get down, and they could hide in the bushes until the stranger passed. This happened several times. Finally, a man came to Rose’s house and entered the room where Pinkerton was spying. The rain was raining so hard, and the wind was blowing with such force, that Pinkerton could not hear a word they said. Yet he recognized the man: a young infantry captain.

After the man left, Pinkerton attempted to tail him. The infantry captain realized that someone was following him, so he allowed the man to follow until he reached his post. There he sent soldiers out to arrest him. Thus Alan Pinkerton—the head of the detective agency,

founder of the Secret Service, and friend of Abraham Lincoln—was thrown into a very cold guardhouse under guard, shoeless, sopping wet, and destined to spend a miserable night. Of course, Pinkerton did not tell them that he was Alan Pinkerton. He had a pseudonym.

He had a false name, Major E. J. Allen. He got word to some of the higher-ups that he was in prison, and the next day they came down and made sure that he got out of prison. But they continued to spy on Rose, trying to identify every person who entered and left the house. Moreover, if you left her house, you were followed. They wanted to discover whether those who left Rose's house had conversations with what they called suspicious persons. How do you define a suspicious person?

Just stop and think about that. What is suspicious about a person? Just because you talk to someone, does that mean they are suspicious? If they talked to a suspicious person, the agents took that person's name and address down if they could get it. If someone who left Rose's house attempted to go south, they were seized and arrested, then interrogated and examined by the Secretary of War or the Assistant Secretary of War. Rose was no dummy. She realized that she was a person of interest.

Interestingly enough, one of General McClellan's own officers let slip to a lady in Georgetown that Mrs. Greenhow and a very prominent pro-Confederate man had been placed on a special list of dangerous persons. When that officer let it slip, it went straight to Rose O'Neill Greenhow. Rose often found herself being followed by emissaries of the State Department or emissaries from the Pinkerton Detective Agency.

This was the beginning. Some of these individuals were not too swift; they did not know how to tail or follow. Rose and those walking with her often knew they were being tailed. Especially when Rose was walking with another young lady, they would turn and look straight into the eyes of the men following them. When the men realized that they had been spied and recognized, they would turn and walk away as if they were really not interested in them. Then Rose and her friend would try to tail and follow them, putting the pressure back on them.

Very obviously, it was not going to be fun and games for long. On August 23, Rose went for a walk with a diplomat, and, as usual, a Pinkerton agent followed her. After the diplomat had left Rose, she stopped by a neighbor's house to inquire about the neighbor's children, who had been sick.

At that time, she spied some other Pinkerton agents. She had one small but important paper on her person, and she figured she was going to be arrested. When she spotted the two who had been following her very closely, they tried to walk toward her and past her with a conspicuous air of authority, which was a dead giveaway. At the end of the street, instead of continuing, they stopped, turned around, and watched her. That was another dead giveaway. By this time, Rose had put two and two together. She figured she was going to be arrested.

She walked by an individual she knew was a Confederate agent and murmured, as she went by, "Those men will probably arrest me. Wait at Corcoran's corner and see. If I raise my handkerchief to my face, I have been arrested. Give out the information." When another Pinkerton man walked past her with a cheery nonchalance, as if to say, "We're not interested in you," Rose took the opportunity to take the important paper, put it in her mouth, chew it up, and swallow it. With the evidence destroyed, Rose went straight to her house.

Before she could get the door open, the detectives were behind her. One of them was Alan Pinkerton himself. She was arrested on August the 21st, 1861, by Alan Pinkerton, Chief of the Secret Service, and on the staff of General McClellan, at the instigation of Abraham Lincoln.

Now listen to the conversation that ensued during her arrest. Alan Pinkerton asked, "Is this Mrs. Greenhow?" "Yes." Both detectives hesitated momentarily. This woman was a prominent social hostess in Washington, D.C., a friend of President Buchanan, with diplomatic contacts who knew many high and important people. Seeing their hesitation after she identified herself, Rose asked, "Who are you and what do you want?" Pinkerton replied, "I've come to arrest you." "By what authority?" shot Rose. "By sufficient authority," replied Pinkerton. "Let me see your warrant," said Rose. It was an awkward moment, for there was no warrant. At that

moment, Rose raised her handkerchief to her face, giving the signal that she had been arrested.

The two men took her by the arms and forced her inside her house. She said to the detectives, “I have no power to resist you. But had I been inside my house, I would have killed one of you before I’d submitted to this illegal process.” Remember that there was another lady Confederate spy, Belle Boyd, who did indeed shoot and kill a Yankee soldier at her door. To pacify the furious widow, Pinkerton and his men said, “We only obey orders.”

That sounds familiar, doesn’t it? “We’re just following orders. We’re just doing what we’re told.” Suddenly, more agents appeared absolutely out of nowhere. Rose asked, “What in the world are you going to do?” The answer was, “Search.” Rose carefully tried to help them by showing the detectives letters from leading people who were quite innocent and harmless. They were not easily fooled, however, and Pinkerton was wise enough not to leave agents outside Rose’s house, because he did not want anyone to know that Rose had been arrested. Rose had a little eight-year-old daughter.

The other daughters were grown and gone, but the eight-year-old child was with Rose. When they pushed Rose inside and began to search the house, the little girl ran outside shouting at the top of her lungs, "Mother has been arrested! Mother has been arrested! Mother has been arrested!" When Pinkerton's agents went outside to silence her, she quickly climbed a tree and continued to shout, "Mother's been arrested, mother's been arrested!" She continued until an agent was able to haul her down and silence her. Later, a couple was allowed to approach close to the house. Rose saw them coming and was able to warn them away.

As she did, Captain Dennis grabbed her by the arm to stop her. It was different in those days; you simply did not grab a lady. Rose was absolutely infuriated at what she called this brutal outrage. To calm her down, they decided to take orders for meals for everyone in the house and supply the food. When they asked Rose what she would like and how they could make this up to her, she answered, "Ought, but the life's blood of the bastard could efface it." In other words, Rose said, "The only thing that'll satisfy me is his death. Don't try to

pacify me with food." She was outraged that the man had grabbed her.

Rose then used the heat of the day as an excuse to go upstairs to change her dress. One of the Pinkerton agents foolishly allowed her to do so. Afterward, he thought better: "Man, what did I just do? Who knows what that woman has on her, and who knows what she's trying to get rid of?" He ran upstairs very quickly, knocked on the door, and said, "Madam, madam, madam." He opened the door just a little, enough to see that Rose was indeed legitimately employed in changing her garment.

Rose also had a pistol pointed at him, which he failed to confiscate. He quickly closed the door, and Rose decided not to shoot him because he had given her an opportunity to dispose safely of the cipher code, ensuring that it would not be found by the Federals. When a Pinkerton woman came in to inspect all of Rose's garments—the men would not even do it—it was too late. She had already safely disposed of the cipher. In fact, Rose said later that, had she not been able to get rid of it safely, she was willing to burn her own house down to make sure that the Federals did not get it.

Shortly thereafter, word began to spread that Rose had been arrested, and on August 26 both the New York Times and the New York Herald reported her arrest. The interesting thing is that the Federals then tried to buy her house, which she refused to sell. So they simply did what they did best: they confiscated it. They turned it into a prison, and it became known as Greenhow Prison. Rose was imprisoned in her own house for four or five months.

It is very interesting that Lincoln was a lawyer, with a cabinet full of lawyers and Congress full of lawyers. You remember, it was Lincoln who wanted to preserve the Union and the Constitution. Yet at the same time, he was doing everything he could to destroy the constitutional rights of practically every citizen. He was the man responsible for basically nullifying and abrogating our Constitution. Here was this woman, arrested with no warrant, her home confiscated for no reason, and yet kept in a prison. Not only that, other women were eventually brought to her house and imprisoned there as well.

One prisoner was Miss Ella or Ellie M. Poole, who was a Virginian and not one of the Washington spies, but who was arrested in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Since Miss Ellie was not in good health, the United States Marshal allowed the poor creature to live at home under guard. That night, the poor, suffering lady arose from her bed of pain, found a key, unlocked the door, and escaped to a neighbor's house. As the Federals were coming in the front door, she was going out the back door. In fact, she escaped four more times from the Federal agents before she was able to find a skiff and float down the river to safety. In spite of the ill health that many suffering Southern ladies were likely to develop when they were arrested, they recovered remarkably in order to escape their federal captors.

Miss Ellie was later recaptured in Louisville, Kentucky, and spent time in Greenhow Prison, which was Rose's house, before she was sent to the Old Capitol Prison in Washington. Rose was also sent to the Old Capitol Prison in Washington. The Old Capitol Prison was not a delightful place. On January 18, 1862, Rose was given two hours to get ready to move from her house to the Old Capitol Prison. She was sent there with a military guard.

After the British had burned the United States Capitol during the War of 1812, Congress built a brick building on First Street in Washington to serve as a temporary Capitol. In 1825, when the new Capitol building was ready, the old building was vacated and became known as the Old Capitol. It then became a fashionable boarding house. When Rose was a young woman, her aunt and uncle ran that boarding house, and Rose was sent to live there. One of the renters was John C. Calhoun. That was how he and Rose became friends and how he began to be Rose's mentor.

After the boarding house ceased to be, it became a school. That ceased to be when the War of Northern Aggression began. The old Capitol building was then 61 years old.

The building was dilapidated, but they decided it could be made into a prison. Bars were added, and notable prisoners were sent there. Belle Boyd and Rose O'Neill were held in the Old Capitol Prison. Many hangings took place there. Supposedly, the Lincoln

conspirators were hanged there, and Major, or Captain, Henry Wirz, the captain of Andersonville, was hanged there for “brutality” and all this kind of stuff, which was totally and completely false. There is absolutely nothing remaining today of the Old Capitol Prison, because the Supreme Court building now sits on that site.

Rose was sent to this prison, but that did not mean her spying for the Confederacy ceased. Once in the Old Capitol Prison, she suddenly became interested in tapestry making, which today we would call embroidery. Who in the world is going to deny a lady prisoner the occupation of embroidery? It was harmless and innocent, something that would probably help occupy and pass the time. But Rose was such a dangerous prisoner that when her rolls of yarn, in various colors, arrived, they had to be unrolled and inspected to make sure there was nothing in them. Inevitably, they were always passed on to Rose. When the balls of yarn came into the prison, they were harmless; there was nothing there. But when her embroidery left the prison, it was not harmless, because Rose had developed a vocabulary of colors and was sending messages through her embroidery.

Not only that, she was still able to sneak her cipher code into prison with her. She continued getting coded messages out to the Confederacy. How? When Rose went to prison, her eight-year-old daughter went with her. Oftentimes, when the little girl went out to play, undoubtedly she probably carried some messages with her. Rose did not destroy the cipher until she received direction and authority to do so from Jefferson Davis himself.

Davis was concerned for Rose’s safety, having lived in Washington not only as a senator but also as a former Secretary of War. Yet he was absolutely amused and tickled at how easily Rose succeeded in deluding and deceiving the Yankees. On January 7, 1862, Major General John E. Wool telegraphed Secretary of State Seward: “Some Confederate agent in Washington was obtaining all the information necessary for those who commanded in the rebel army. They know much better than I do what is going on in Washington.”

He said, "The expedition of General Burnside is perfectly known at Norfolk." Then he added, "You've got a number of rebel spies in Washington." Rose continued there, as well as many additional men

and women spying for the Confederacy. In June 1862, Rose was released from prison with a Confederate flag wrapped around her, concealed under a light shawl.

Release, Diplomatic Mission, and Death

She was taken to Fortress Monroe, where she signed a promise—not to return north of the Potomac River during the present hostilities without the permission of the Secretary of War of the United States. Rose was officially not only released from prison but deported and exiled to the South. Evidently, the Yankees believed she would be less danger in the South than in the North. On June 2, the New York Times recorded her release and removal.

When Rose reached Richmond, Virginia, she was treated as a heroine. Jefferson Davis himself appointed her to a diplomatic mission in England and France, and that summer she left to represent the Confederacy. While there, she wrote her memoirs, entitled "My Imprisonment and the First Year of Abolition Rule at Washington," as propaganda to help bring England into the war on the side of the Confederacy. Her memoirs were widely received and sold abundantly throughout Europe, where Rose found many who had deep sympathy for the South, particularly among the ruling classes. In England, she met Queen Victoria.

She also became engaged to the second Earl of Granville, met Napoleon III, the Emperor, and received an audience with him. She was very successful in England and France, but the thrill of Europe could never keep the heart of a southern lady for long, and she longed to return to the South. In 1864, after a year abroad, she boarded the Condor, a British blockade runner, to take her home.

Just before reaching her destination, the vessel ran aground at the mouth of the Cape Fear River near Wilmington, North Carolina. The vessel was being chased by a Union gunboat. To avoid capture, Rose got into a little rowboat and tried to make it to shore. The wind and the ocean was too much, and the little vessel capsized and Rose drowned. Probably one of the things that aided her drowning was that she was bringing back gold for the Confederacy, and she undoubtedly had it upon her person. So, in October of 1864, Rose

was buried with full military honors in Oakdale Cemetery in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Her coffin was draped with the Confederate flag and carried by Confederate troops. The marker for her grave, a marble cross, bears the epitaph: “Mrs. Rose O'Neill Greenhow, a bearer of dispatches to the Confederate government.” Rose was one of the most successful female spies for the Confederacy during the war. One author wrote, “At the last day, when the martyrs who have with their blood sealed their devotion to liberty shall stand together, firm witnesses that truth is stronger than death, foremost among the shining throng, co-equal with the Rolands, the Joan of Arcs of history, will appear the Confederate heroine, Rose O'Neill Greenhow.”

I am sure that Rose would agree with the words of another female Confederate spy, Belle Boyd, who, when they tried to put her out of prison, said, “If it's a crime to love the South, its cause, and its president, then I'm a criminal, and I'd rather lie down in this prison and die than leave it in allegiance to a government such as yours.”

Application: Where Are Such Men and Women Today?

When I began to study the life of Rose O'Neill Greenhow, my heart began to rejoice simply because here was a woman full of courage, conviction, and dedication. She was determined, resourceful, and stood passionately for that which she believed was right. The question that hit my mind was this: Where are our ladies like that today? You always heard, behind every good man is a good woman. Where are our women who understand truth and principle, who understand liberty and freedom, who are willing to oppose tyranny and corruption, and stand for what is right?

One of my favorite songs is “The Homespun Dress.” Supposedly, it was written by Cary Bell Sinclair. “Oh yes, I am a Southern girl, and glory in the name, and boast it with far greater pride than glittering wealth or fame.”

“We envy not the Northern girl, her robes of beauty rare, though diamonds grace her snowy neck and pearls bedeck her hair.”

“Hurrah! Hurrah! For the sunny South so dear! Three cheers for the homespun dress that Southern ladies wear!”

“The homespun dress is plain, I know, my hat’s palmetto too, but then it shows what Southern girls for Southern rights will do. We’ve sent the bravest of our lads to battle with the foe, and we will lend a helping hand; we love the South, you know. Now, Northern goods are out of date, and since old Abe’s blockade, we Southern girls can be content with goods that Southern made. We sent our sweethearts to the war, but dear girls, never mind, your soldier love will never forget the girl he left behind. The soldier is the lad for me, a brave heart I adore, and when the sunny South is free and fighting is no more, I’ll choose me then a lover brave from out of the gallant band; the soldier lad I love the best shall have my heart and hand.”

“The South’s land is a glorious land and has a glorious cause; then cheer, three cheers for Southern rights and for Southern boys! We scorn to wear a bit of silk, a bit of Northern lace, but make our homespun dresses up and wear them with such grace. Now, young men, a word for you: if you would win the fair, go to the field where honor calls and win your lady there. Remember that our brightest smiles are for the true and brave, and that our tears are for all of those who fill a soldier’s grave.”

Our Southern ladies sacrificed, suffered, and yet some died. Very few today could measure up to the standard of some of these Southern ladies in the 1860s. What has happened to our women? What has happened to our men? I know very few men who could do what Rose Greenhow did. I know very few men who would be willing to burn their own house down to protect the South, or to go to prison to protect truth. We have forgotten such admonitions as 1 Corinthians 16:13: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” We’ve forgotten.

Ephesians 6:10 says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." We have forgotten 2 Timothy 2:1: "Therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." He also said, "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Where are our women? Where are our men?

Let me remind you of the words of President Jefferson Davis: "The principle for which we contend"—that is the principle for which the South fought, and it was not slavery—"the principle for which we contend is bound to reassert itself, though it be at another time in another form." May I submit to you, I believe that time has arrived.

We too, as our ancestors, must learn to stand for principle and truth and righteousness and liberty and freedom. We must learn to fight against tyranny in every form, and we cannot do it without men and without women. What would it be like if each county had one man like Robert E. Lee or Stonewall Jackson? What would it be like if America had a whole army of Robert E. Lees and Stonewall Jacksons? I am not talking merely about their fighting ability, but about men of character, courage, consistency, and faith—men who understand that some things are worth dying for and some things are worth fighting for.

I think it is time that you and I learn to pray, "God give us men. God give us women that hear and know and understand and are willing to fight." Jael was willing to fight.

"Blessed art thou among women." Here was a woman who was not afraid to take an enemy on. God praised her for what she did; He did not condemn her. The truth is this, dear friend: those who stand for His Word, His truth, and His righteousness, though the world condemn them and governments may execute or imprison them, the Lord will never condemn them for standing for what is right.

He will commend them and reward them. May God be pleased to give us men and women.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask that You help us. Teach us. Build us in the most holy faith. Give us courage. Give us conviction. Give us character. Help us learn to stand. O God, we men should be ashamed when we hear women like Rose O'Neill Greenhow and Belle Boyd, that we have lost the very thing that our forefathers have fought and died to preserve for us. Renew our courage. Convict us. Give us Your leadership, Your wisdom, and Your direction, that we may serve and honor Thee. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 24

The Black Robe Regiment

Introduction and Scriptural Foundation

Hebrews 11, verse 32, says: “And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Let us go back to verse 32 for a moment: “And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.”

Hebrews 11 is full of men whom God has placed among the heroes of faith, and there are a few women as well. These are individuals

whom God has used. Let me establish three simple principles to begin with.

Number one, God uses men. I understand that God does not have to use men; He is not bound to that. Theologically speaking, we use two terms: God may work immediately or mediately. When He works mediately, He uses means—He uses men. When He works immediately, He does not use men or means. Generally speaking, however, God does use means, and therefore God uses men.

Number two, the message I am preaching is not designed to glorify men. I am not praising men; I am praising the God who used those men. God has given many men character, insight, and fortitude, and we are to be thankful unto God for everything He has given to all His servants.

The Black Robe Regiment Defined

The third thing I want to point out is this: once you hear this message, it ought to call upon each of us to be strong and to quit ourselves like men. It ought to encourage us and, at the same time, motivate us to pray for God's preachers in America.

Let's begin today with what I'm going to call the Black Robed Regiment. The Black Robed Regiment was the name given to the ministers who spoke, fought in, sparked, prayed for, and advanced the war for independence, commonly referred to as the American Revolution.

You must remember that at that time all ministers wore long, flowing black robes. The robes were symbolic of their office. One of these days, Lord willing, I'm going to bring a message entitled "The Stealing of the Robes." Note how most pastors today do not wear robes. College professors wear them, especially during graduation, and judges wear them. There has actually been a theft of the robes of authority from the church, and now that authority is placed in the universities and courtrooms.

These pastors were despised and hated. They were eagerly sought by the British. In fact, the British hated them so much that they placed bounties upon their heads. When the pastors were captured, they were brutally ill-treated and oftentimes murdered.

The Cost of Leadership: Pastor Moses Allen

Pastor Moses Allen of Georgia was cursed by the Tories. He was more obnoxious to the British than the military leaders of the Patriots. Hence, the most deadly threats were uttered against him. His enemies labeled him the rebel parson and said that he did more to hurt the king and the king's armies than did a dozen military colonels. Therefore, when Savannah fell, Pastor Allen's church and home were burned by the British in Midway, Georgia. During that battle, Pastor Allen himself was captured and placed into a prison ship.

There, in cramped, unsanitary conditions, disease, starvation, and cruel treatment were rampant. But during all of this, he ministered to the men under his charge in the prison ship until God, in His grace, seemingly opened a way for Pastor Allen to escape. He based that escape upon his obedience to the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” the positive form of which is, “Thou shalt preserve life.” When the men were not looking, he dived over the ship and attempted to swim to safety. His escape plan was good, but his body had been so weakened by starvation, disease, and the mistreatment he had suffered at the hands of the British that, before he could reach land, he gave out and drowned. Many of the men clamored to the British, pleading for the opportunity to bury Pastor Moses Allen, because he was a pastor and God’s man. The British refused. They unceremoniously stomped his body into the soft mud and left his hands and head exposed for the buzzards to eat. This was simply the way most of them treated the pastors.

Pastors as Spiritual Magistrates and Leaders

Pastors such as Moses Allen nourished the flame of piety and the love of civil liberty. These men prayed for, preached for, and fought for liberty. Many went into the army as chaplains. Others stirred the people with patriotic sermons and swelled the ranks of the Continental Army. Still others showered the enemy with tracts and pamphlets, simply enunciating the righteousness of God and the righteousness of the patriot cause.

These pastors taught their hearers to reject with the utmost abhorrence the divine right of kings, as well as what is known as

passive obedience and non-resistance. Further, they taught that rights came from God, that governments were instituted among men to protect those rights, and that it was therefore the responsibility of government to establish God's law and God's orderly way. Everywhere you look in the American Revolution, you find pastors. They were everywhere.

They were huddled together at Valley Forge, facing the storm and the wintry march on Trenton. You find them covered with smoke at the Battle of Bennington and standing under the enemy's fire at Yorktown. At Lexington, the first battle, there were three pastors fighting as common soldiers. Two of them were Faxter of Westford and a pastor by the name of Foster. Chaplains and pastors were attached to every expedition, no matter how hazardous and no matter how exhausting. So pastors were the leaders of the war. They had to be the leaders of the war, because pastors are magistrates as well as civil magistrates are, though they are spiritual magistrates. At that time, all of the civil magistrates were the king's men. Pastors, acting as spiritual magistrates, led the people in preaching, praying, and fighting. There were numerous types of sermons in those times.

Bold Preaching: Gad Hitchcock and Others

One of the sermons was known as an election sermon. Anytime there was voting, anytime anyone was to be elected to a civil office, there was always a sermon addressed to the gentleman who won that civil office as well as to the people; they all flocked there to hear the election sermon. The sermon I am going to quote was preached on May 25, 1774, by Pastor Gad Hitchcock. He was preaching from Proverbs 29, verse 2: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn." Note the boldness and the plainness of this pastor.

He said, "If I am mistaken in supposing plans are formed, and executing, subversive to our natural and chartered rights and privileges, and incompatible with every idea of liberty, then all America is mistaken with me. Our continued complaints, our repeated humble but fruitless, unregarded petitions and remonstrances, and if I may be allowed the sacred allusion, our

groanings that cannot be uttered are at once indications of our sufferings and the feeling sense we have of them."

Then he said, "Let the governor in his chair of state hear it. We not only mourn, but with groanings that cannot be uttered, and all because the wicked bear rule. The castle cannot shelter him from that scorching thunderbolt." Did you hear what he said? The king's not going to protect you, governor. "The castle cannot shelter him from that scorching thunderbolt. Families are divided. Brother is arrayed against brother. Friend against friend."

“Society is cut from its mooring, and hate and consternation reign on every side, all because the wicked bear rule. King George may say the evils that produce this state of things are imaginary, but I tell you, and I tell the tyrant to his face,” says Gad Hitchcock, “it is because the wicked bear rule.” Needless to say, these pastors were not reticent.

They were courageous, brave, bold, and extremely influential. The British were well aware of the authority and influence these pastors wielded in the colonies, and they viewed with alarm that authority and influence being thrown on the side of what they called the rebellion. In 1774, the British governor of Massachusetts refused the request of the Massachusetts Assembly to appoint a fast day—a day of fasting and prayer for conditions in the community or state. On a fast day, there was always a sermon preached. Here is what the governor said when he refused to appoint one.

“For,” said he, “the request was only to give an opportunity for sedition to flow from the pulpit.” To the tyrant, truth and liberty are sedition. Liberty, freedom, and non-passive resistance are regarded as rebellion. If a man stands for liberty, freedom, and truth, the tyrant will call him rebellious and say that proclaiming that truth is seditious. Official governmental proclamations, sanctions, and indictments do not change truth, righteousness, and justice.

They may defame, denounce, and deny them, but they cannot destroy them. The governor said it was only an opportunity for sedition to flow from the pulpit. Dr. Timothy Dwight—author, theologian, chaplain, and president of Yale University—urged that a Declaration of Independence from England be publicly stated long

before it was done. He said, “I urged in conversation with several gentlemen of great respectability, firm Whigs, and my intimate friends, the importance and even the necessity of a declaration of independence on the part of the colonies.”

"For myself, I regarded the die as cast, and the hope of reconciliation vanished, and believed that the colonists would never be able to defend themselves unless they renounced their dependence upon Great Britain." So wrote Dr. Timothy Dwight, a pastor and the president of Yale University, urging independence before the Declaration was ever authored and proclaimed. Dr. Jonathan Mayhew was literally the originator of the phrase "a more perfect union," or "a better confederation." Robert Treat Paine called Dr. Mayhew the father of civil and religious liberty in Massachusetts and America. John Adams called Dr. Mayhew the morning gun of the Revolution.

On August 25, 1765, Mayhew preached a sermon against the Stamp Act from Galatians 5:12–13, where the Scripture says, "I would that they were even cut off which trouble you." His sermon was full of divine truth about the nature and exercise of government. George Bancroft, an American historian and a Christian man, said concerning Jonathan Mayhew:

"Whoever says Bancroft repeats the story of the Revolution will rehearse the fame of Mayhew. He spent whole nights in prayer for the dangers of his country. Light dawned on his mind on a Sunday morning of July 1776, and he wrote to Otis," that is, James Otis, "saying, 'You have heard of the communion of the churches. While I was thinking of this in my bed, the great use and importance of the communion of the colonies appeared to me in a striking light.'

'Would it not be decorous in our assembly to send circulars to all the rest, expressing a desire to cement a union among ourselves? A good foundation has been laid by the Congress of New York. It may be the only means of perpetuating our liberties.'"

The suggestion of a more perfect union for the common defense originated with Pastor Mayhew. It was the first public expression of that future union which has been the glory of the American Republic, and it came from a pastor on a Sunday morning under the

inspiration of heaven while he meditated upon the Word of God in his bed.

Pastors were the leaders, inspirers, movers, and shakers in the war. One example was Reverend John Woodhull, pastor of the Freehold Presbyterian Church of New Jersey. He was one of the strongest leaders of the patriots of his day.

Examples of Courageous Pastors

His zeal for his country, liberty, and freedom was well known. On one occasion, every man in his church went out to oppose the enemy except one feeble old man who was unable to do so. He prayed for them and gave them God's speed. It was the pastor, Pastor Woodhull, who led his congregation in fighting the enemy.

Dr. David Ely of Huntington, Connecticut, though surrounded by Tories, preached liberty and freedom so warmly and effectually that the Tories said when the rebellion was put down, they would hang Dr. Ely from the closest oak tree to his church.

Jonathan Fish of Duxbury, Massachusetts, was seventy-six years of age when he was invited to address the people assembled at the call of George Washington. He immediately cried out for volunteers after a stirring sermon, and then said, "Were it not that my nerves were unstrung and my limbs enfeebled with age, on such a call as you have, I think I should willingly quit the desk, put off my priestly garments, buckle on the harness, and with trumpet in hand, hasten to the battle."

Jonathan Stearns of New Hampshire not only preached liberty and freedom, but sacrificed most of his worldly goods in doing so. When he returned from Exeter, he called his boys together to give them his decision: "If the cause succeeds, it will be a great blessing to the country. But if it should fail, your old father's head will soon be a button for a halter." Then he sent his own sons into the army, bidding them to strike manfully for liberty and freedom.

John Mills of Delaware, though normally of a nervous temperament, knew no fear himself. A few days before the Declaration of Independence was signed, he preached from 1 Kings 12:16: "What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance

in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel." He proclaimed that the colonies no longer had any part with George III of England, and said, "To your tents, O you colonists, and O you patriots."

From that time he sought to overthrow all allegiance to George the Third by any man who lived in that colony. Dr. David Caldwell of Pennsylvania had his house plundered, and his library and furniture burned, while he was hunted down like a common felon over all the country because of his devotion to liberty. There was Dr. Thomas Reed of the same state in 1776. He shouldered his musket with forty or fifty others from his own church and marched to Philadelphia to aid in defending it against Howe. The very next year, he saved Washington and Washington's men by his knowledge of the country when he led them, as they were overwhelmed at Elk Ferry. There was Dr. Robert Davidson of Maryland, who preached to his troops on 1 Chronicles 5, verse 22: "There fell down many slain, because the war was of God."

There was William Graham of Paxton near Harrisburg. When he saw the backwardness of his young men and their reticence to enlist in a company of volunteer riflemen, William Graham stepped up, had his own name enrolled as the first volunteer, and shamed his congregation into volunteering, picking up their muskets, and fighting. There was John Steele of Cumberland, Pennsylvania, who served as captain and the lead advance company of 900 men in their march to the seat of war and often preached with his gun standing by his side.

There was Ezel Rowe. To make the militia of his parish fight, he put himself under the enemy's fire and refused to move until he obtained their promise that if he would fight it out to the end, so would they. When they agreed to fight it out, he removed himself from the enemy's fire, joined them, and fought with them in the battle. Later, he was captured and thrown into the infamous Sugar House of New York. There was Charles McKnight of Shrewsbury, who, on account of his devotion to the cause of liberty and the gallant conduct of his patriotic sons on the field of battle, was thrown into prison and treated with brutality that would disgrace a savage. There was Dr. Samuel McClintock of New Hampshire, who often represented in the Battle of Bunker Hill his robes of office and sent

four of his sons into the army, of whom only one returned and heard the anthems of peace. There was Dr. Hezekiah Ripley, a friend of Washington, who went back and forth comforting the sick and the wounded.

John Martin always preached to the troops, trying to animate them to fight. As he walked along, consoling the men who were wounded and sick, he carried his musket on his shoulder because of the threats against him by the Tories. After praying with the soldiers at Bunker Hill, he seized a musket and fought gallantly to the close of the battle. Shortly afterward, he preached from Nehemiah chapter 4, verse 14: "And I said to the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them." Nathaniel Bartlett of Reading, Pennsylvania, was a chaplain who also made his parochial visits with a musket on his shoulder.

Not all the preachers were as eager to fight as some of these men. There was a pastor named Payson of Chelsea, an amiable and learned individual. So averse was he to bloodshed and all the horrors of war that he felt it his duty to preach patience, even submission. His attitude was, "Let's wait," taking a wait-and-see approach. Some of his fellow pastors were so offended by his position that they refused to allow him to preach in their pulpits. They wanted no conciliatory doctrines taught or preached.

But when the Battle of Lexington began, and the British soldiers opened fire on the patriotic colonists, that brutal outrage transformed the peaceful scholar and meek divine into an intrepid, fiery soldier. Seizing a musket, he placed himself at the head of a party and led them forward to attack. The body of British soldiers advancing along the road was met with such a volley of musketry that all of them were either killed or captured. Thus this meek, intrepid scholar became a soldier in the cause of liberty. When the innocent blood of those men was shed on Lexington Green, it swept away all his arguments for conciliation, patience, and waiting to see. He took up his arms and thenceforth fought for liberty.

These men were great, fearless, brave, patriotic, and godly. I could spend hour after hour talking about them, but time will not allow me to tell about all of them. I do want to take three or four and show you

how God used these men in praying, preaching, and fighting. First of all, let me tell you about Thomas Allen.

Thomas Allen: Preacher and Fighter

I've already spoken to you about Moses Allen of Georgia, who lost his life in the cause of liberty. Thomas Allen was his brother, and a very unique man. When the English soldiers converged upon and covered the hills at the Battle of White Plains, the colonists were outnumbered and outgunned. It looked almost like a helpless and hopeless situation. The military leaders decided to consult and determine whether they should fight or retreat. While they were having their consultation, Thomas Allen began preaching to the troops.

He cried, "Valiant soldiers, yonder," pointing to the enemy in sight, "are the enemies of your country who have come to lay waste and destroy and to spread havoc and devastation through this pleasant land—the enemies hired to do the work of death, and have no motive to animate them in their undertaking." You must remember that George III hired many German mercenaries, Hessians, to fight against the colonies.

"You have every consideration to induce you to play the man and to act the part of valiant soldiers. Your country looks up to you for its defense. You are contending for your wives, whether you or they shall enjoy them. You are fighting for your children, whether they shall be yours or theirs; your houses and lands, your flocks and herds, your freedom, future generations, and everything that is great and noble, on account of which only life itself is worth a fig.

"You must, you will, abide the day of trial. You cannot give back while animated by these considerations. Suffer me, therefore, on this occasion to recommend to you, without delay, to break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquity by turning unto the Lord. Turn ye, turn ye, ye ungodly sinners, for why will you die? Repent, lest the Lord come and smite you with a curse. Our camp is filled with blasphemers and resounds with a language to the infernal regions.

"Oh, that officers and men might fear to take the holy and tremendous name of God in vain. Oh, that you would now return to

the Lord, lest destruction come upon you, lest vengeance overtake you. Oh, that you were wise, that you understood your latter end. I must recommend to you the strictest attention to your duty and the most punctual obedience to your officers. Discipline, order, and regularity are the strength of the army."

“Valiant soldiers, should our enemy attack us, listen, I exhort you and conjure you to play the man. Let no danger appear too great. Let no suffering appear too severe for you to encounter for your bleeding country. God's grace assisting me, I am determined to fight and to die by your side, rather than flee before our enemies or resign myself to them. Prefer death to captivity. Ever remember your unhappy brethren made prisoners at Fort Washington, whose blood now crieth to heaven for vengeance, and shakes the pillars of the world, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?’ Rather than quit this ground with infamy and disgrace, I should prefer leaving this body of mine a corpse on the spot.

“I must finally recommend it to you and urge it on you again and again in time of action. Keep silence. Let all be hushed and calm, serene and tranquil, that the word of command may be distinctly heard and resolutely obeyed. And may the God of heaven take all under His protection and cover our heads in the day of battle and grant us His salvation.” That was only a part of his sermon.

Did you hear what that pastor said? He was determined to fight and die by their side rather than flee before their enemies or resign himself to them. Rather than quit that ground with infamy and disgrace, he preferred leaving his body a corpse on the spot. Unhappily, the military leaders decided to retreat, and Pastor Allen was visibly upset. Later, as he was leading the Berkshire Militia, the militia was called again, on August the 16th, to assist General Stark. This time, Pastor Allen took his men directly to General Stark and said, “General Stark, the Berkshire militia have often been summoned to the field without being allowed to fight.

“If you don't give them a chance this time, they will never turn out again.” Stark, a hero himself, loved to hear the ring of true metal, and he was amused rather than offended at the outspoken pastor. He replied to the young clergyman, “Do you wish to march against the

enemy now while it's dark and raining, or would you prefer to wait until tomorrow?" Pastor Allen replied, "No, I prefer to wait until tomorrow." General Stark smiled and said, "Well, sir, if the Lord will give us sunshine tomorrow, and if I do not give you fighting enough, I will never ask you to come out again."

The next day the Lord did indeed give sunshine. The Berkshire militia was drawn up with the other soldiers under General Stark. Before the battle, one of Pastor Allen's men came to him and said, "We will do our own fighting today." "Yes," said Pastor Allen, "we shall have a good time at the enemy, but we're not quite ready. First, we must join in prayer." There, under the August sky, he lifted up an earnest prayer that God would give them victory. He had no intention of merely praying, however, for he joined the fighting himself.

When the battle commenced, Pastor Allen, in his long, flowing black robe, stood upon a rock in plain sight of the enemy. "I call upon you to surrender and to save this effusion of blood," he said, promising generous treatment if they would surrender. His answer was a volley of shots, one of which pierced his hat. He descended from the stump and joined his men in the battle. Seeing one of his men beside him who was not very good at hitting his targets, he said, "Joe, you load and I'll fire." Side by side, while his brother loaded, the pastor fired into the enemy.

When it was obvious that the battle was on the colonists' side, Pastor Allen led his men in a charge against the enemy and was the first man over the breastworks. After the American patriots had won the day, while others were exalting and rejoicing, Pastor Allen went from soldier to soldier, comforting the sick, the wounded, and the dying, including enemy soldiers. When he found two panniers of wine from a German Hessian's horse, he took them and gave the wine to the men as they lay dying. Afterward, Pastor Allen rushed back so that he could preach to his congregation the next Lord's Day morning.

By the time Pastor Allen had returned, the role he had played in the battle was known throughout the country and his community. One of his parishioners was exceedingly upset that the pastor would

fight as a common soldier. He came to Pastor Allen and asked, "Pastor, did you fight like a common soldier?"

"Yes, I did. It was a very hot, close battle, and it became every patriot to do his duty."

"Pastor Allen, did you kill anybody?"

"No," he replied. "I don't know that I killed anybody, but I happened to notice a frequent flash from behind a certain bush. Every time I saw that flash, one of our men fell. I took careful aim at the bush and fired. I don't know whether I killed anybody, but I put out that flash."

Very obviously, it was this type of pastor who helped put out the flashes of the English guns all over the country. Pastor Allen lived until 1810, when he died of natural causes at the age of sixty-eight.

Naphtali Daggett and John Witherspoon

Let me tell you another one about old Naphtali Daggett. Dr. Daggett was a pastor and a scholar, and the president of Yale University. We have already had Princeton; now here is the president of Yale University. This godly pastor and professor instructed his young men not only in their duty to God, but also in their duty to their country. He taught resistance to tyranny.

In 1779, General Tryon, with 2,500 British soldiers, landed only five miles from West Haven and the little college. Obviously, the few people who lived in that area and the little college were unable to fight against such great odds. It was therefore determined that most of the students should flee with the few townspeople, while a hundred young volunteers would go out and hold the enemy back as the other college students and townspeople escaped.

Confusion reigned in the streets as everyone tried to get out whatever few goods they could. Panic and pandemonium were everywhere. Soon, however, this little company of one hundred young preacher boys assembled, and with fife and drum they marched off to meet 2,500 British soldiers. As they went down the road, they heard the clatter of horses' hooves behind them. They parted so the horse and its passenger could pass through. Riding among them was the Reverend Professor himself, in his long,

flowing black robe, with his old fowling piece—one of those old, long flintlock musket pistols—in his hand.

Instead of stopping, he rushed right on past them and went right through them to their cheers. While he went to reconnoiter the enemy, he placed himself upon a hill where he saw the enemy would be advancing. These young 100 preacher boys began firing at the advance of the British soldiers. So powerful and effective was their fire that they drove the British advance back into the main body of the army. Before these young 100 volunteers realized it, they were face to face with 2,500 British soldiers, except the few that they had killed.

They realized they had best turn now and get out of there as best they could. As they began to run and disperse among the hills, some of them noticed that up on one hill was the Reverend Professor himself. All of a sudden, shots began to be fired into the British ranks. At first they ignored the shots, but then they realized that British soldiers were falling on a regular basis.

The commanding officer took a troop and said, “Go up to that hill and find out what’s going on.” When they got to the top of the hill, there was old Dr. Daggett, patiently and peacefully aiming his fowling piece into the British ranks and firing at them. He heard them coming. His old black mare was standing by his side. He could have gotten away, but he did not. He simply kept firing.

Pretty soon the officer looked at the old man and said, “What are you doing there, you old fool, firing on his majesty’s troops?” Dr. Daggett never even looked up or flustered; he just kept reloading his old fowling piece and said, “Exercising the rights of war.” The young officer was rather amused. “If I let you go this time, you old rascal, would you ever fire on his majesty’s troops again?”

As he cocked the old fowling piece, he responded, “Nothing more likely, sir, nothing more likely.” They then captured Dr. Daggett, drug him forcefully down the hill, placed him in front of the soldiers, and put him on a forced march of a number of miles. By the time they finally got to West Haven, the old doctor was nearly dead because of exhaustion. Someone recognizing him said, “That’s Dr. Daggett.”

"Please allow me to attend to him." And they did so. Dr. Daggett recovered, but the shock to his system was so tremendous that sixteen months later he died in agony and pain, basically from what he had endured in that forced march.

There was John Witherspoon, Dr. John Witherspoon, who was not only a pastor, a patriot, and a congressman, but also the president of Princeton. We have had a president of Yale, a president of Harvard, and a president of Princeton, all fighting for the colonies.

I want you to understand something about John Witherspoon. He and Roger Sherman were responsible for the hard-money clauses in our Constitution. They placed in it, "No state shall make anything but gold and silver a legal tender." They also placed in it, "Congress shall have the power to coin money and to regulate the value thereof." These men understood not only scriptural truth but economic truth as well.

When the Declaration of Independence was about to be signed, a number of patriots were timid, nervous, and fearful because they realized that the step they were taking was one of great magnitude. When Dr. John Witherspoon saw their timidity and reticence to sign the Declaration, he stood up in Congress and said, "Mr. President, that noble instrument on your table, which ensures immortality to its author, should be subscribed this very morning by every pen in the house. He who will not respond to its accents and strain every nerve to carry into effect its provisions, is unworthy of the name of free man. Although these gray hairs must descend into the sepulchre, I would infinitely rather they should descend thither by the hand of the executioner than desert at this crisis the sacred cause of my country."

One man said, "Sir, I'm afraid this country is not ripe for such a declaration." Witherspoon bounded back to his feet and said, "In my judgment, sir, we're not only ripe, but we're rotten." And every hand signed the Declaration of Independence.

Jonas Clark and the Battle of Lexington

Now let me tell you two more. These are two of my favorites. Dr. Jonas Clark was the pastor and leader of the men who fell at

Lexington Green. Pastor Clark had trained and taught his people in the right of civil disobedience. He had taught them to resist tyranny and love liberty. His people had become so thoroughly indoctrinated in his views, and so animated by his appeals from the pulpit and in public meetings, that they took his instructions and had them embodied in the provincial legislature as an expression of their wishes and determinations. Those instructions are still there today in the town record.

When two British soldiers were seen in the area, a number of Patriots were dispatched to follow them and see what they were up to. It happened that Adams and Hancock were at Pastor Jonas Clark's home. Guards were stationed around the house to protect John Hancock, Sam Adams, and Pastor Jonas Clark. The men held a conference, and they knew something was up. At two o'clock in the morning, the bell began to peal from the church bell frame, and the men began to assemble on the church green. The green at Lexington was the church green. When the roll was called, a hundred and fifty answered to their names. Their pastor, Jonas Clark, had gotten there before them. Picture this: two or three o'clock in the morning, with the moon and stars shining down upon the scene—150 men with their pastor, waiting for instructions so they would know what to do.

The big question with Hancock and Adams was this: Would the men fight? Would they be willing to shed their blood for the liberty and freedom of their country? Pastor Jonas Clark told Hancock and Adams, "Oh, they'll fight. For this very cause and for this very hour, I've preached and I've trained them." A little after daylight, when the British soldiers arrived, the order came from the British: "Throw down your arms. Throw down your arms! Disperse, you rebels!" But the men refused to throw down their arms, and they refused to disperse.

Shortly thereafter, shots were fired. When the smoke cleared, seven of Pastor Clark’s men lay dead on the church green. Jonas Parker, the strongest wrestler in Lexington, still held his musket, but had been pierced by ball and bayonet from the enemy. He had determined that he would never run from the British, and he did not. He died on the spot. Old Caleb Monroe lay nearby, his gray hairs dabbled with blood. And nearby him, listen carefully, lay Caleb

Harrington, fallen on the doorsteps of the church of God, into which he had gone for powder. These men gave their lives for this country. Pastor Jonas Clark looked upon them with tears of sympathy, but there were no tears of regret. After regaining his composure, Pastor Clark said, “From this day will be dated the liberty of the world.”

Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg: From Pulpit to Battlefield

Everybody knows April 19, 1776, and he was right: “From this day will be dated the liberty of the world.” Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg was pastor of a Protestant Episcopal Church in Dunmore County, Virginia. He had preached that morning and told his people that afternoon he was going to preach a message on the duty that men owe to God and to their country. That afternoon the church building was packed, with people standing outside. Pastor Muhlenberg took his text from Ecclesiastes chapter 3: “There is a time to fight.” He preached a tremendous sermon, animated with patriotic fire and fervor. At its end he shouted, “The time to preach is past and the time to fight has come.”

With that, he threw off his black clerical robe, and there he stood in full military uniform. He pointed to a young man whom he had previously appointed, and that young man began drumming for recruits. Three hundred men volunteered that day, and Pastor Muhlenberg marched at the head of his three-hundred-man militia to help Washington defeat Cornwallis at Yorktown. Later, Muhlenberg defended his action in leaving the pulpit to fight: “I’m a clergyman, it is true, but I’m also a member of society as well as the poorest layman, and my liberty is as dear to me as to any man.

“Shall I then sit still and enjoy myself at home while the best blood in the continent is spilling? Heaven forbid it! Do you think if America should be conquered, I should be safe? Far from it! And would you not rather fight like a man than die like a dog? The cause is just and noble. Were I a bishop, even a Lutheran one, I should obey without hesitation. And so far from thinking that I am wrong, I am convinced it is my duty to do so, a duty I owe to my God and my country.”

Application: Praying for Modern Preachers

Why did America receive liberty and freedom in 1776? I'll tell you why: because God had pastors who knew truth, loved liberty, and were not only unafraid to preach it and pray it, but also to fight and die for it.

Why are we in the mess we are in America today? Because there are no preachers, or very few, who know truth, love freedom, and are willing to die for it.

I believe with all my heart that one of the greatest ministries of this church is that God has used me and you to stir up other preachers to preach and teach the Word of God. We cannot reclaim our country by ourselves. We need the people awakened. But before the people are ever awakened, the pastors must be awakened.

I urge and exhort you to covenant with God: pray that God will wake up preachers all across this country. Pray that God will use me, this church, and this ministry to wake up men all across this country.

You remember that text in the book of Amos, chapter 3, verse 7, I believe it is: "And the Lord God will do nothing, but surely He revealeth His secrets to His servants." When God begins to move, God will move through His men and through His preachers. We need to pray that God would give us men like Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg, Jonas Clark, Thomas Allen, and Moses Allen, who, as Paul said, having done all, would stand.

Father, we ask for Your help, grace, and mercy today. Lord, how desperate we are for help, for preachers, and for men who will lift their voices and cry out for righteousness, holiness, liberty, and freedom. Forgive us for our cowardice and lack of courage, our lack of dedication and faithfulness, and our murmuring and complaining. May we pray not only that God would raise up men, but that Thou would raise up each one of us and give us what we need to fight.

Enable us to love Thee with all our hearts and souls. Encourage and inspire us. Enable us not to give in, give up, or give out, but to keep on keeping on. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 25

In Defense Of Violence Or Defensive Violence

Introduction: The Biblical Definition of Violence

Jeremiah 22 begins: “Thus saith the Lord, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou and thy servants and thy people that enter in by these gates. Thus saith the Lord, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he and his servants and his people.”

First, this is spoken to the king of Judah. Notice especially the middle of verse 3: “and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.”

We are strangers to violence. We were not brought up in violence, nor have we lived in or around violence. Basically, we have no desire or tendencies to be violent toward anyone. We have been taught all our lives that all violence is wrong, and consequently we shun violence like the plague.

In all probability, most people could not give a good, clear definition of violence. Unhappily, most Christian people cannot give a biblical definition of violence either.

When we think of violence, we think of one person drawing back and beating up another, and we say, "He's a violent man." If he is attacking someone, that is what we would say. But we often misunderstand how the word "violence" is used in Scripture. As I pointed out in verse 1, this passage is addressed to the king of Judah. God tells him to do no violence. In the middle of verse 3, He says, "and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow." Violence in this context can be done to the stranger or the fatherless—that is, an orphan. If it is wrong, wicked, and vile to do violence to a stranger, how much worse is it to do violence to a brother?

Violence as Injustice and Oppression

Jeremiah further links violence to a failure to do judgment and justice because of the greed and covetousness of the heart. Beginning with verse 13, he says: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; that saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion."

Then he says: "Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it." The interesting thing is that verses 15 and 16 together are the opposite of doing violence. When He says to do

judgment and justice, and, in verse 16, “He judged the cause of the poor and the needy,” He says, “Then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord.”

The very first time the word “violence” occurs in the Bible is Genesis chapter 6 and verse 11: “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” In hermeneutics, the art or science of Bible interpretation, there is a principle known as the Law of First Mention. It simply says that when a word is used for the first time in Scripture, that is usually how the word will be used throughout Scripture unless the context dictates otherwise. The word used in Genesis 6:11, and used mostly throughout the Old Testament, is the Hebrew word “chamas,” which literally means to be unjust, cruel, unrighteous, false, to oppress, and to be violent.

When we are talking about violence, most people never consider that fraud and injustice are violence. They are a specific form of violence—violence against God and God’s law, and consequently against God’s people and against man in general. Psalm 89:14 says, “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.” Judgment and justice are the habitation of God’s throne; God is surrounded by judgment and justice. Proverbs 21:3 says, “To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.” God said, in effect, that He would rather have judgment and justice than all the sacrifice in the world.

That is why, in Jeremiah 22:13-17, He says that the fathers did judgment and justice, and that it was well with them because they knew Him. But now, He says, you are not doing that; therefore, what you are doing is violence.

If judgment and justice are the habitation of His throne, and God prefers justice and judgment to sacrifice, then when you do not do judgment and justice, you become violent and sin against God and His law. It is something to cry out against. In Habakkuk 1:2, the prophet said, “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence!” Violence, then, is something against which we should cry out.

Violence Condemned: Abuse of Authority

Now let me give you a good illustration. I want you to think about this, and I'm going to make this statement several times and I'm going to show it to you from Scripture. When we talk about violence, do you realize that violence is most usually performed by people who are in positions of power and authority? Now stop and think about that. Here's an excellent illustration of violence.

In Proverbs 17 and verse 15, the Word of God says this: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." Now who can condemn the just and justify the wicked? A judge. So when a judge then justifies the wicked, or when he condemns the righteous, he is becoming violent. He is a violent man. That's why in Jeremiah 22 and verse 1, God said, you speak this to the king, that he do no violence, that you do not oppress the stranger, widow, or the orphan. So, usually those who commit violence are individuals who are in positions of authority. Now, today I want to show you two points from the Word of God, just two. Don't have three points and a poem today, David, just two points. I want you to see violence condemned, and then secondly violence commended. So let's consider first of all violence condemned. Violence most frequently is condemned in Scripture. Violence is usually directed at individuals who are innocent

and deserve kindness and respect. That's why God said, do no violence to the stranger or to the fatherless or to the widow. So these are individuals that usually deserve respect and love and understanding and not necessarily violence. Moreover, those who commit violence are those who are in positions of authority. You have to remember that David was a great and mighty warrior. But even David himself prayed to be delivered from the violent man. Let me show you.

In Psalm 18:48, David said, "He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man." Notice the distinction. "Thou delivered me from mine enemies" is plural. "Thou lifted me up above those that rise up against me" is also plural. But, "Thou hast delivered me from the violent man" is singular. There was a specific violent man whom David had in mind.

In Psalm 140:1, David prays, "Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; Which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah. Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings."

Who was the violent man who purposely tried to overthrow David? Saul, King Saul. He was someone in a position of power and authority. Of course, Doeg the Edomite later on consorted with King Saul to overthrow David. There were several others in the Bible, but David was praying to be delivered from this violent man.

The interesting thing is that violent men not only imagine mischiefs—it is another word for iniquities or sin in the Bible—they imagine a mischief in their heart, but they are always ready to commit violence in order to secure their ends. They lie, they deceive, and they seek to overthrow the righteous. They are continually gathered together for war, and they have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips.

Proverbs 16:29 says, "A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good." A violent man is not necessarily somebody who simply comes up and starts swinging and knocking you down. A violent man is one who entices or seduces his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not right.

And usually, it's sometimes an official that has the power to do that. Now, violence is promulgated in the assemblies of the violent. I want you to look in your Bible. Psalm 86—Lorraine, do you have a Strong's Concordance on your—I didn't look this up. I'd like to know what the Hebrew word is in Psalm 86 and verse 14. Psalm 86 verse 14. I only thought about this as I was driving to church this morning, so I didn't have time to check it out myself. But look what it says: Psalm 86 verse 14, "O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them." So he's talking about assemblies. I'd like to know what the word "assemblies" actually means in Psalm 86 and verse 14, and I'll tell you my thought. My thought was this: "O God, the proud are risen against me, and the courts of violent men have

sought after my soul." Whatever the word "assemblies" is there, it means that men have come together to seek him, and notice he says next, "and they have not set thee before them." So obviously the violence then is contrived in the assemblies of violent men. I don't have a word for "mob," but for violent men.

All right, say that for me, Steve, louder. "Powerful or tyrannical, mighty, oppressor." OK. "Great power, strong." Powerful, tyrannical, great power. Well, obviously of the assemblies, that's what you're having there. And then it could be any governmental assembly, that is for sure. Let me give you an excellent illustration of this. You remember this passage in Luke chapter 18 where our Lord speaks about the unjust judge? Here is what He said: "There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." So here is a judge that had a responsibility, had a duty, had an obligation to give forth judgment and justice. And he refused to do it. He was a violent man. Finally he did give her justice, but only because she was wearing him out.

That was it. He said, "I'm going to do what's right just to get her off my back." Isn't that amazing? Every man understands that. Oh, I'm laughing.

You understand, unhappily, the truth of the matter is this: most authorities do not know how to do right; they will not do right, and they store up violence for themselves and others. Let me give you a quotation from the book of Amos, chapter 3 and verse 10. I want you to listen: “For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.” Where do they store up violence and robbery? In their palaces.

So what are we talking about? We are talking about kings, princes, those in authority, and those who have positions of power. Look around in our land today at the judges, rulers, and bureaucrats who have absolutely no idea of justice, judgment, law, or mercy. Consider the judges in this country, as well as our politicians and bureaucrats, who vainly and falsely believe that they are the law, and that justice

is whatever they decree and decide, regardless of how they live and what they do.

Years ago, I had a friend who is now dead. He got a traffic ticket and thought, “Wow, this is an opportunity for me to learn. I am going to take this thing to court, and I am going to argue the Constitution.” He did. He knew a good bit of material, and he went into court loaded for bear. It was Constitution this and Constitution that. He so tied up the judge that finally the judge said, “If you mention the word ‘Constitution’ one more time, I will find you in contempt of court.” Henry looked at the judge and said, “Judge, if you did, that would be the only honest thing that you have done all day long. For all I have for this court is contempt.” Pow! A hundred bucks. But Henry understood that the judge was doing everything unlawfully. The judge could care less. He was there simply for the money, that is for sure.

Biblical Examples of Righteous Authority

Now let me show you what Samuel said. In 1 Samuel chapter 12, verse 1: “And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.” Remember, Israel wanted a man for a king, and they had God for a king. Verse 2: “And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken?”

“Or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.” And they said, “Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.”

When Samuel asked, “Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?” the word “defrauded” literally means to press upon, to oppress, to violate, to defraud, to do violence to, to get deceitfully, to do wrong, and to extort. Samuel was asking which of them could testify that he had abused his office and authority. They answered, “You haven't done a thing, not one thing.” It is like our Lord in John 8, when He looked around at His enemies

and said, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” Which of you can point to anything I have done that is wicked and wrong? Samuel had not abused his office or defrauded anyone.

Nehemiah was another man who took his office and authority very seriously. In Nehemiah 5:15, he said, “But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.” The word “Tirshatha,” found in Nehemiah, simply means “the governor.”

Nehemiah said, “I'm the governor now. These former governors demanded that the people give them bread and wine. Moreover, they received forty shekels of silver, and their servants even bore rule over the people. But so did not I, for I feared God.”

It is only the fear of God that keeps a man honest, keeps a man in line, and keeps a man humble. If there is no fear of God, those in positions of power and authority will end up being violent men. Let me give you an illustration. I am going to read this word for word. When you do not have a man who fears God, here is what will happen: Harnett County, North Carolina.

Modern Illustration of Authoritarian Violence

The sheriff's deputies kicked a man's door down at 3:30 a.m. this past Sunday and killed him after he told them they could not search his home without a search warrant. After John Livingston, 33, shut his door in the deputies' faces with his demand for a warrant, his roommate says police kicked in the door, got on top of him, started slinging him around, and beat him. Then they sprayed mace in his face and began to tase the unarmed father of three, who was described as a hard-working, very loving family man and a very talented carpenter who actually built the deck on the small home the deputies were invading. When Livingston attempted to remove the taser from the hands of the officer who was shocking him, the deputies executed him, claiming he got hold of their weapon.

Tasers are said to be non-lethal. Yet the cops evidently feared for their lives at the mere prospect that one of their victims could maybe

possibly turn it on them. As it turns out, the deputies were looking for a man who no longer lived in that house. The Harnett County Sheriff's Department is stonewalling on the case and have failed to release the names of the deputies involved in the killing.

No doubt, after a routine investigation, the state goons will exonerate themselves. Obviously, some believe that disrespecting imagined authority deserves the death penalty. Can you imagine what in the world would so excite deputies to kick a door in and actually execute a man who simply said, "Go get a search warrant"? And they had the wrong man.

Usually the violence that is condemned in Scripture comes from those who are in positions of authority and power.

John the Baptist's Instruction on Violence

In Luke, John the Baptist has been preaching the biblical doctrine of repentance. Several groups come to him and ask, "What must we do?" By that they mean, "What must we do to demonstrate that our repentance is real and genuine?" He answers the groups, and he answers each group differently. Let us begin reading with Luke chapter 3, verse 10.

Each group had a different prevailing sin. In Luke 3:10, the people asked, "What shall we do then?"—that is, what shall we do to demonstrate that our repentance is real? John answered, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." Their prevailing sin was greed and covetousness, so genuine repentance required them to become more selfless, generous, and giving.

"Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?" He answered, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." The prevailing sin of the publicans was thievery. If the Roman government said that a man owed a hundred dollars, they would take two hundred, pocket a hundred, and then take their ten percent from the other hundred. They were told to stop stealing.

The soldiers likewise asked, "And what shall we do?" He said, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with

your wages." The word "violence" here literally means to agitate, terrify, cause alarm, cause to tremble, extort from, and be violent. If the soldiers wanted to demonstrate genuine repentance, they were not to do violence to anyone. Only those in positions of authority and power really have the opportunity to do violence in this sense.

That is totally and absolutely condemned in the Bible. Usually, we define violence as fighting, knife-cutting, shooting, killing, and similar acts. We do not stop to think that injustice, fraud, oppression, and tyranny are violence. They are violence against God, God's law, God's people, and mankind in general. That is violence condemned. I want to spend the rest of my time on violence commended. Today, we normally use "violence" to mean simply doing physical harm.

Using the term in the parlance of the day, and since the word brings with it an evil connotation, we have been taught even as children that all fighting is wrong. Alice and I got tickled watching Claiborne and Bedford play on the floor, the two pups fighting, growling, jumping on each other, twirling around, and knocking each other down. I watched them, bemused, and said to Alice with a smile, "You know, these puppies are so much more fun than children." She said, "Yeah, if they were children, we'd have to separate them by now."

When we stop and think about such things, we have been brought up to believe that all fighting is wrong, period, because it is a form of violence. That is what we have been taught. That is humanism, by the way. We must understand that there is a biblical violence that is commended and an unbiblical violence that is condemned, which I have just shown you. We must be able to discern the difference between those two things.

Violence Commended: God's Use of Violence

Let me begin by asking a simple question, and I know you know the answer: Is God holy, just, and true? The answer is yes. Deuteronomy 32:4 says, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." We know, therefore, that God is true, without iniquity, just, and right.

Now let us take the humanist position and assume that all violence is inherently wrong, regardless of its shade, stripe, or color. Since God is holy, just, and true, and if all physical violence is inherently wrong, how could God have justly and righteously destroyed the antediluvians, the old world, when He sent the flood upon them?

If all violence is wicked, wrong, and vile, how could God have justly and righteously destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by raining fire and brimstone upon them, as well as the cities of the plain? I would tend to think either being drowned or being burned to death—incinerated, charcoal—would be a little bit violent. Try to say that all violence is wrong and evil, when here God is destroying wicked individuals.

Moreover, if all violence is wicked and evil, how could God raise up judges to defend His people by fighting against their enemies? Judges 2:16 says, "Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." Note specifically that the Bible says the Lord raised up these judges.

Verse 18 says, "And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them." So God not only raised the judge up; God was with the judge when the judge fought against the enemies of Israel. If all violence is wrong and wicked in and of itself, how could God have justly and righteously raised up men to fight?

Moreover, if all violence is wicked and wrong and to be abhorred, how could God leave certain pagan people in the land so that He could teach the children of those who came into Canaan to fight and to be warriors? Judges 3:1 says, "Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan;"

Here are some people alive at that time who had not fought with Joshua and Caleb and those who conquered the land. So what did God do? Verse 2 says, "Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before

knew nothing thereof;" Here are some of the people God left to teach them war: "Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath." God said, in effect, "Here are some enemies I am going to leave. I am going to leave them so your children can learn the art of war."

War is violence. If all violence is to be abhorred, and if God is holy, just, and true, how could He have left these people in the land so that He could teach His people to fight? Moreover, if all violence is to be unilaterally condemned, how could God righteously and justly teach David to fight?

Remember that David was a shepherd. He was not a warrior. When David went out to face Goliath, he volunteered. Saul looked at him and asked, "How can you fight this man?" He said, "This man has been a warrior since he was a youth, and you are about a youth." David was probably fifteen to seventeen years of age when he fought Goliath. That is what Saul meant: "How can you fight? This man has been a warrior since he was a youth, and you are about a youth." Yet David said in Psalm 144, verse 1, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." Where did David learn to fight? Where did he learn to make war? From God Himself. If all violence is wicked and wrong, how could God have justly and righteously taught David how to fight?

Let me go further. If all violence is wicked and wrong, how could God have justly and righteously defended Jerusalem? In Isaiah 38, verse 6, God said, "And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city." God said this five times in Scripture. He told Hezekiah, "I will defend this city." How did God defend that city? According to Isaiah 37, verses 35 and 36, He defended it by killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.

If all violence is condemned in Scripture, and it is evil and wrong in and of itself, how could God have defended Jerusalem and its people and slew 185,000 Assyrians? That sounds to me to be kind of violent. Here is another question: If all violence is to be condemned, do you remember what God did when He brought Israel out of Egypt?

He put a sword in their hand and said, "Slay all the Canaanites, kill them all." And Joshua 10 and verse 40 says, "So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded." So God commanded violence. If God is holy, just, and true, and the humanist position is all violence is wrong, then they have to condemn God.

Moreover, let me ask you another question. Think about this. If all violence is cruel, wicked, and wrong, have you ever asked yourself this question: How will God judge and punish the wicked? Revelation 18 verse 21 says, "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." He cast it down with violence.

Look what happens in Revelation chapter 19, beginning with verse 1: "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

That is violence. There is a distinction and a difference between a violence that is condemned and a violence that is commended.

I believe it is wicked and wrong and vile not to teach your children to fight. Your children and your spouses should know how to fight, biblically and scripturally. Has it ever dawned upon you, as you look around and examine today's society, that we have sired a whole generation of spineless, gutless, lily-livered sissies? They will not stand for truth or righteousness or anything. They do not know how to defend themselves, anyone else, or anything else. They are just sissies.

The Duty to Fight and Preserve Life

You remember the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." The positive is, "Thou shalt preserve life." We have a duty and an obligation to preserve our lives and the lives of others as well. I just saw a book advertised this week. I read the reviews, looked at the index, and ordered it. I have not read it yet, but the title is Team Honey Badger: Raising Fearless Kids in a Cowardly World, by Paul Markle. I thought, I'm going to get that book. If it is any good, I'm going to order a bunch of them and pass them around.

Obviously, we have raised a generation that will not stand for truth or righteousness or anything. They are afraid to fight. We fail to understand that we have been commanded to fight in the preservation of life, liberty, freedom, and property. We must fight even to protect and preserve the Kingdom of God.

Turn in your Bibles to Nehemiah chapter 4. We will begin reading with verse 11: "And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease." The adversaries were planning a surprise attack.

"And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you." They were saying, "You can't win. They are going to kill all of us." Verse 13 says: "Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows." Nehemiah was not attacking; Nehemiah was defending.

"And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were

behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." Nehemiah is defending; he is not attacking.

We are not Spanish conquistadors, nor are we Muslims. We do not run around with a sword in our hand saying, "Convert or die." But if we are attacked with weapons, then obviously we repel that attack with weapons. If we are attacked with words, our defense is with words. If we are attacked legally, then obviously we resort to lawful avenues to defend ourselves. Either way, we still fight. It may be verbal, legal, or with weapons, but still we fight.

There is a violence that is condemned in Scripture, but there is also a violence that is commended in Scripture. In reality, I would not necessarily call the latter violence, because it is done in submission to God and His law, and therefore it is obedience. It is obedience that happens to use violence. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 20.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Kings 20:31-36 (KJV)

Commanded Violence and Consequences of Disobedience

You will remember that Ahab was the wickedest king in the northern kingdom. God is going to allow Ahab to have victory over the Syrians. Ben-hadad happens to be the king of Syria, and God has ordained Ben-hadad and his armies to utter destruction. But what Ahab does in disobedience to God, he spares Ben-hadad and his servants, and even calls him his brother.

"And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? He is my brother. Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and

> did hastily catch it: and they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot. And Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away. And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the Lord, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him. Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him. Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee."

"And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him. So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face. And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it. And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets. And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people."

Now stop and think about what we just read. First, the prophet comes to one man and says, "Smite me." He says it in the name and power of the Lord, but the man refuses to hit the prophet. He refuses to be physically violent when God commands it. The prophet tells him that, as soon as he leaves, a lion will find him and slay him. The prophet finds another man, says, "Smite me," and the man smites and wounds him. Then he disguises himself and makes up this story when Ahab comes along. When Ahab gives his judgment—"Thou hast decided the judgment thyself: thy life for his life"—the prophet

removes the ashes and says, "Thus saith the Lord, I appointed Ben-hadad and his people to utter destruction, and you've let him go. Now thy life for his life, and thy people for his people." Here is commanded violence, and when that violence is not rendered, judgment comes upon those who refuse to render it.

There is a violence that is condemned, and there is a violence that is commended. Consider Jeremiah 48, where God is condemning Moab. Jeremiah 48:1 says, “Against Moab thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Woe unto Nebo! for it is spoiled: Kiriathaim is confounded and taken: Misgab is confounded and dismayed. There shall be no more praise of Moab: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from being a nation. Also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen; the sword shall pursue thee. A voice of crying shall be from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction. Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard.”

All of this concerns the destruction of Moab. Verse 11 says, “Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees,” and God has condemned them. Then, in verse 10, concerning the destruction of Moab, God says, “Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully,” and “cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.” Isn’t that amazing? When God says it is time to fight, if you do the work of God deceitfully, or if you keep back your sword from blood, He says it brings a curse upon yourself.

For instance, remember the story in Judges chapter 4 of Barak, who went after Sisera. Deborah told Barak—he said, “I’m not going to go to war unless you go with me.” She said, “All right, I’ll go with you. But because of that, your enemy is going to fall by the hands of a woman.” In other words, he would not get the honor.

Examples of Commended Violence: Jael and Samuel

After they were defeated, Sisera fled to the tent of Jael and asked for water. The Bible says she brought him milk in a lordly dish. He drank the milk, lay down on the tent floor, and said, “If any man comes around and asks if anybody’s here, say no.” She covered him with a blanket. When he was fast asleep, she took a hammer and a

tent nail, drove it through his temple, pinned him to the ground, and then cut off his head.

That sounds violent. Did you know that Jael was praised for that? When Barak got there, she said, “Come here, and I'll show you the man that you're seeking. He fell at the hands of a woman.” God honored Jael for that.

How about the passage in 1 Samuel chapter 15, where God sent King Saul on a journey and told him to slay utterly all of the Amalekites? Do you remember how he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen? Samuel reproached Saul for disobeying God and told him that God rejected him from being king because of his disobedience. Then there is this passage in 1 Samuel 15, verses 32 and 33: “Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately.”

I can see him prancing every time I read that. “And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.” He thought, “I am not going to die.” “And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.” He did not just stab him; he hewed him in pieces. He cut him in two. That sounds pretty violent.

But I want you to know what the Scripture says: “And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.” If you go back and check, the phrase “before the Lord” literally means as unto the Lord and in the presence of the Lord. In other words, Samuel did to Agag exactly that which God wanted done to Agag. The point is this: There is a time to be biblically violent, but we are never, ever to be unbiblically violent.

Practical Application: When Violence is the Answer

Let me give you an illustration and ask you to think about this. Everyone is aware of what happened in Paris a few months back. Whether that was a real, genuine attack, a false flag, or a real false flag, I have no idea. I do have my thoughts concerning it, but I am

just giving you an article that came up with an excellent illustration of what I am preaching. Here is the title of the article: “Pure Evil.”

ISIS gutted wounded victims at the French Concert Hall as they lay dying on the floor. They slit their stomachs and watched them die. ISIS gunmen used knives to torture their mortally wounded victims by slitting their stomachs as they lay on the floor, it has been claimed. An eyewitness who hid in the cellar for three hours as the armed murderers rampaged through the packed theater in Paris said she knew people were being tortured because she could hear their screams. Marisha Payne from Perthshire told the Daily Mail, “We knew people were being tortured in the theater because we heard people screaming and they were not being shot and these were singular screams. When we escaped, a man trapped on the level where it happened said to us that the terrorists were stabbing people in the stomach. We were told that they were throwing explosives at the people. It was a horrendous ordeal.”

So here is my question: If you were at that concert hall in Paris and you were armed, and you saw these men murdering other people, slitting their stomachs, and watching them die in agony, would you have just said, “Well, I’ll pray for those poor innocent victims”? Or would you have tried to defend them and save their lives? Let me ask it another way. What if that had been your husband, your wife, or your child? Would that have made a difference?

God commands us to preserve life, so we have to have an understanding. Violence is not always the answer. But when it is the answer, it is the only answer. Not one person in this room desires to be violent. We have no desire to hurt anyone. But if we are ever put in a situation where violence is the answer, at that point it is the only answer, and we must defend our lives and the lives of others in obedience to the Sixth Commandment.

Alice and I have some friends who were raised out in Washington State. It was a family of eleven boys and one girl. Anytime I want to really laugh, I reminisce with some of those men about their childhood and the things they went through. I have never laughed so hard in my life listening to them and the way they were raised and what they were taught. Several of them told me, “Look, we were

raised hard," and, "We were poor." They said, "Daddy told us"—and they feared their dad; he was a macho man—"if we ever started a fight, he'd whip us. And he told us if we ever got into a fight and lost, he'd whip us." Now I want you to stop and think about that.

There are biblical principles here. When a father says, "If you ever get into a fight, if you ever start a fight, I'll whip you," what is he saying? You are being a bully. You are being unrighteous, unjust, and unkind. If you start the fight, you are wrong. But if he says, "If you ever lose a fight, I'll whip you," what is he saying? If you are trying to protect yourself or someone else and you lose, obviously you are not fighting the way you should be fighting.

Your heart is not in it. You are not really fighting for your life. If you are fighting to defend someone or your life, you need to fight to the last nth of degree. If I had to fight seven or eight men at one time, I would probably lose. I understand that physically. But what he is saying is this: If you have to fight, you must have that combat mentality: "I'm not going to give in. I'm not going to give out. I'm not going to give up." I will win, or I will die trying.

That is exactly what the Scripture is teaching us. On the one hand, we should never be violent individuals—that is, unrighteously or unbiblically violent. On the other hand, if violence is the answer, it is the only answer, and we must defend our lives and the lives of others in obedience to God. If we start a fight, God is going to whip us. If we get into a fight and do not win it, He might whip us anyhow.

So we need to make sure that we are right with Him and do that which is right, holy, and godly. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We ask You, Father, to teach us and help us, Lord, to be biblical, holy, and godly. May we act, Lord, pleasing unto Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 26

What Will It Take

SCRIPTURE READING - Daniel 5:1-7 (KJV)

Introduction: The Question 'What Will It Take?'

"Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple, which was in Jerusalem, that the king and his princes, his wives, and his concubines might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God, which was in Jerusalem, and the king and his princes, his wives, and his concubines drank in them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass and iron, of wood and of stone."

"In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace. And the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosened and his knees smote one against another. Then the king cried aloud

> to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake and said to the wise men of Babylon, \"Whosoever shall read this writing and show me the interpretation thereof shall be clothed with scarlet and have a chain of gold about his neck and shall be"

“Third ruler in the kingdom.” Have you ever asked the question, “What will it take?” We have asked it many times and under differing circumstances: What will it take to purchase this item? What will it take to buy a new automobile, finish this job, restore our health, or get us out of the trouble that we’re in?

But how about considering this question: What will it take to bring us to our senses? What will it take to bring our country back to its senses, down on its knees, and back to the sovereign God of heaven and earth? We must not only ask what it will take, but also how it will be accomplished. The answers to these two questions can be answered very simply and very easily.

Biblical Foundation: Salvation or Judgment

It will either take salvation or the judgment of God. If you would hold Daniel chapter 5 but turn back very quickly to Isaiah chapter 26, Isaiah 26, beginning with verse 8 and through verse 11. Isaiah writes, “Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.”

“For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”

Now he shows a difference between the righteous and the wicked. He says in verse 10, “Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.” In other words, he is still blinded to God’s grace and mercy. But notice what he says in verse 11: “Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see,”

He is talking about a judgment that is certainly going to get their attention. The next time you read through the book of Ezekiel, take a

pen and underline the phrase, “and they shall know that I am the Lord,” every time you see it. You will be underlining it at least 73, 75 times just in the book of Ezekiel. Do not merely take note of the phrase; also note the context in which it occurs, because it usually takes place in the context of either judgment or salvation, or condemnation and deliverance. The truth of the matter is this: when you start underlining and counting, you will observe that the phrase, “and they shall know that I am the Lord,” occurs more often in the context of judgment than in salvation and deliverance.

The same truth is given to us in Philippians 2:5–11: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:5–11 teaches that every tongue is going to confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and every knee is going to bow. How is that possible? Every mouth will confess and every knee shall bow either in salvation or in condemnation, either in deliverance or in judgment; but they shall bow one way or the other. Men are going to confess and bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ. As you read the Scripture, you will see that God has often used either salvation or judgment to turn us back to Him.

It is true that He must actually do the turning. He may use judgment or He may use salvation, but still He must do the turning. David says in Psalm 80:3, “Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.” So God must turn us. When He smiles upon us and turns us, we shall be saved. In verse 7, David says, “Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.” In verse 19, he says, “Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.” Three times

in this Psalm, David is saying that God must turn us, and when He turns us, the result will be salvation.

In Psalm 85:4, the same truth is expressed just a little differently. David prays, “Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.” So when God turns us in grace and mercy, His anger does indeed cease toward us.

Isaiah 1:27 says, “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.” Zion shall be redeemed with judgment. God oftentimes uses judgment to awaken us to see the danger that we’re in. And then in grace and mercy, He turns us to Himself.

Now, I don’t know about you, but personally, I had rather turn to the Lord in grace and mercy, bow to Him and confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord, than be forced to do so by His power, His anger, and His wrath. But the truth of the matter is, every knee is going to bow, every tongue is going to confess, and God is going to be known either in salvation or in condemnation.

Ordinary Judgments Are Often Ignored

Oftentimes, it is not simply judgment that God uses to bring us to our knees; oftentimes, it is severe judgment. The reason I say severe judgment is that when God sends His ordinary judgments, most people do not pay attention. In fact, most people attribute ordinary judgments to nature or weather.

Look at Amos chapter 4, beginning in verse 6. Watch carefully, because God delineates judgments that the people never really paid attention to: “And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” Here were shortages and famine, but they did not get their attention.

“And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” Here

is drought. Look at the drought being faced in all parts of the country. Alice and I were just listening to the news, and they were talking about the West, where they are expecting another severe drought. Yet God said, “I've used famine, I've used drought, yet you've not returned unto me.”

In verse 9 He said, “I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” Here are crop failures, disasters, grasshoppers and palmerworms, fungi eating up gardens, and mildew; but it did not do any good. They did not listen to Him.

“I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” Pestilence and war did not get anybody’s attention. Then, in verse 11, He said, “I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,”

“And ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” So, He has used drought and famine and pestilence and plagues and insects and supernatural events, and none of it got their attention. Look in verse 12: “Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”

Now watch: “For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, The God of hosts, is his name.” In other words, you don’t know who you’re dealing with, saith the Lord. I have sent all these judgments, and you simply have not listened to me. So, it is not just these things.

If you turn in your Bibles to the book of Job, right before the book of Psalms, look in Job 37, beginning with verse 9. I have heard people say oftentimes, “Well, that’s just the weather.” Really? Here it is in Job 37, beginning with verse 9: “Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. By the breath of God frost is

given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud: and it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth."

Now look: "He causeth it to come," whatever weather it is, "whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy." Then, in the little book of Haggai, right before Zechariah and Malachi—the third book from the end of the Old Testament—look in Haggai chapter 2 and verse 17. Look what God said. Haggai 2, verse 17.

He said, "I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands: yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord." Here is weather being used as a judgment. So many of these judgments you and I would simply say are freaks of nature or weather. Well, no. Everything that comes to pass that I have just read about, God declares is His hand and His judgment.

Now, I want to begin showing you some things in Daniel chapter 5 that certainly relate to judgment, and ask this question: "What will it take?" There is a notable truth given to us in Daniel chapter 5. Belshazzar was in the prime of his life. Look at it in verse 1: "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple, which was in Jerusalem, that the king and his princes, his wives, and his concubines might drink therein." So, Nebuchadnezzar is on top of the world, so to speak.

Belshazzar's Sudden Judgment

Here he is, rich, powerful, proud, arrogant, and positioned to do as he pleased. That is exactly what he was doing, throwing this bodacious party for a thousand of his lords. It seemed as if he was on top of the world. It seemed as if nothing could hinder him and nothing could stop him. So here is the truth: oftentimes, when we least expect it, when we think we have the world by the tail and nothing can happen to us, judgment not only falls, but it comes with unmitigated haste.

On that day, when the handwriting came from God and wrote on the wall, the only warning Belshazzar received was Daniel's warning. Daniel read the writing. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." Wow! In that night.

There was no time to repair, rectify, reconcile, or make restitution. It was only a few hours after the warning that Belshazzar died. Many who die at twelve o'clock receive the news at 11:59, and it is too late. When men and women put off salvation and obedient, godly, righteous living, they are destroying their own souls. One warning should be sufficient, but the Word of God speaks of individuals who receive warning after warning and pay no attention.

Proverbs 29:1 says, "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." In other words, you have been told and warned, but you will not listen; you simply harden your neck. God says that such a person shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. On that day, Daniel told Belshazzar, "Look, your kingdom has been weighed in the balances and you've been weighed in the balances. And you've been found wanting."

Belshazzar Ignored Known Truth

That night, he died. Belshazzar had evidence of God's sovereignty, power, authority, and rule. He ignored the evidence, the warnings, history, and what had happened in his own immediate family. Daniel told him: "O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will."

"And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this." He could not plead ignorance. He ignored God's judgment, paid no attention to it, and God said, "You've been numbered. You've been found wanting. You will die." That very night, he died.

God Judges Rulers and Nations

One of the most notable things about God and His attributes is the attribute of immutability. He is unchangeable. That is why the Bible says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." God is unchangeable; He is immutable. The truth of the matter is that God does indeed judge rulers, empires, and nations. It is by Him that nations rise and fall, and by Him that rulers rise and fall.

In Daniel chapter 2, Daniel explained this to Nebuchadnezzar: "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him." It is God who puts up one and takes down another.

Daniel 4 teaches the same truth. Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." Daniel explained exactly what would happen and gave him biblical counsel. But verse 28 says, "All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar." He didn't listen.

He totally ignored the warnings. Of course, he had to learn the hard way that God was sovereign and that God ruled in the kingdoms of men.

Psalm 75:5-6 gives us the same exact truth: “Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” He said, “Speak not with a stiff neck.” Do not say, “I’m here, I earned it, I got here, this is my position, I’m the one that calls the shots.” No, you’re not. God put you where you are, and God can take you down as easily as He put you up.

That is what the Bible is saying. Men today, like Nebuchadnezzar, totally ignore God’s warnings, as quickly and easily as Belshazzar did. They tend to believe that nothing bad will ever happen to them, that they will be the exception, and that they will escape God’s wrath and judgment. They are deceived. We need to learn something.

When folks are on the high mountain, I think the Scripture says, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” You had better be careful, because God put you up and God can take you down. When you are in the high place and think you have the world by the tail, God says judgment will strike, and it will strike very quickly.

Capital Sins: Corruption in Centers of Power

Here is the second truth. Belshazzar made a great feast to a thousand of his lords and drank wine before them. While he tasted the wine, he commanded that the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, so that the king, his princes, wives, and concubines might drink from them.

Of course, they brought them. Where did this take place? The Bible tells us it was in the palace. Do you realize that Babylon was the capital of the Babylonian Empire?

In 2007, I preached a message from the book of Micah entitled “Capital Sins.” I am not going to preach that message again, but I do want to give you a quote from it. I would encourage you to listen to

it. Here is what I said in the introduction: “As we examine our text today, I’m sure that you will be simply amazed.

The thing that amazes me again and again is how applicable and timely Scripture is to current and modern-day situations. It seems that if we simply changed a few names, the Bible would read like a modern-day journal or newspaper. Micah's time was not much different from our time. Corruption, humanism, idolatry, and wickedness abounded. Further, I might add, it abounded from the same centers or locations as it does in our time.

When I speak of capital sins, first, I'm not speaking of capital, C-A-P-I-T-A-L, capitalism, or making money. Secondly, I'm not speaking about sins that merit capital punishment, although that could be easily incorporated in the message. In other words, I'm not talking about the death penalty. Third, the correct spelling for the title of this message is C-A-P-I-T-O-L, capitol sins. A capitol is the head of the state, the seat of government, and supposedly the seat of law and justice.

Nebuchadnezzar had ruled in Babylon. Now Belshazzar is. He is in the palace. He is at the capital. When you read through the Bible, you're going to find that a lot of capitals are condemned. Why? The answer is because usually they're the source of so many sins, corruption, and wickedness. When God sent Jonah to the Assyrian Empire, He sent him to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. When God sent Amos into Israel, He sent him to Samaria, the capital.

All I'm pointing out is this: you're going to find that capitals are the source of a lot of wickedness. Look in Micah chapter 1. The word of the Lord came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom. Jerusalem is the capital of the southern kingdom. “Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.” So God is going to testify against them. “For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him,”

"And the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place." For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem, the capital?

The flood of wickedness, idolatry, theft, greed, bribery, corruption, pollution, defilement, filth, perversion, and blasphemy proceeds from Washington, D.C. It also proceeds from Atlanta, Georgia; Tallahassee, Florida; and the capitals of the states. Is it not amazing that most of these capitals now have the highest crime rate and the most violence of any part of the state? They have the most corruption, greed, theft, and bribery. It is absolutely astounding.

There is a reason for that. Micah 2:1 says, "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds!" They devise iniquity; that is, they are planning it, thinking it, and scheming. "When the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand." They have the power. Verse 2 continues: "And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil."

Stop and think about our capitals. Eminent domain, confiscatory laws, unbiblical and unconstitutional taxation, and laws that enslave, deny liberty and freedom stem from those who have the power to devise iniquity and implement it, and they do so under the guise of legality. Look at Congress today. Look at the Equality Act. They are trying to disenfranchise the people. Here, one Republican was elected, I think it was in Iowa, by six votes, and now they are trying to overthrow the will of the people there and say we need a Democrat because of just six votes. Think about it.

Then ask yourself: What will it take to bring this country back to its knees? What will it take to bring us to our senses? Let me give you a quote from Mark R. Rushdoony, Rousas John Rushdoony's son, from an article in January of this year, "A Rise and Build." Listen to what he said:

“Our government has been busy from the beginning of the War of Northern Aggression in 1861. They have been busy misrepresenting the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, perverting history and rigging the system and covering up their tyranny. This misrepresentation provided a smokescreen for centralized government and the destruction of the Republic. There was a wholesale misrepresentation of the Republic which was advantageously morphed into a democracy.”

"Some think that a democratic coming together will solve human divisions. This faulty concept has proved itself inept repeatedly. No! Only submission to God and his righteous word will be productive." Then he gives this quote:

"After the American Civil War, public school textbooks began emphasizing the virtues of democracy. The process of democracy, not liberty under law, was presented as the process that made the American system work, the source of its greatness. At the same time, however, we have a great deal of historical and contemporary evidence that the democratic process has always been infected with, if not controlled by, blatant lies and fraud. The term politician early became synonymous with an opportunistic, self-serving fraud."

Mark Twain once said, "I can never think of Judas Iscariot without losing my temper. To my mind, Judas Iscariot was nothing but a low, mean, premature congressman."

He adds this statement: "Far from a refining process, our political system has been a method whereby men of the lowest character are elevated to positions of power." Scripture verifies this repeatedly.

The Bible says, "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest."

Consider the applications in this passage. The heads of the house of Jacob and the princes of the house of Israel abhor judgment, pervert all equity, and build up Zion with blood—abortion and wars—and Jerusalem with iniquity.

It is astounding to read about people's houses being confiscated because of a failure involving something like a buck twenty cents in property taxes. One man's house was recently stolen for a mere two or three bucks. It was not an oversight; it was a mistake on their part. Yet they stole his house. Thankfully, he finally got it back.

The heads thereof judge for reward. Look at the bribery. Look at the lobbyist. Years ago, a congressman wrote the book "To Harass Our People." He said that, back then, the going rate to get a bill passed was to put a bill on the congressman's desk and attach a $20 bill to it. He would sign it and take the $20 bill, and that's how it basically became law. That was nearly 40 years ago, 30 to 40 years ago. But I'm just supposed to say, look at it, because it's all here.

One of my favorite quotes is by President Theodore Roosevelt: "When they call the roll in the Senate, the senators do not know whether to answer 'present' or 'not guilty.'" Unhappily, that is much truer today than it was back then.

Now, here is the whole point of this. I want you to see the sin of Belshazzar. Here is the sin of Belshazzar. Listen carefully. Here is the sin of America. Here is the sin of Babylon. Here is the sin of Washington, D.C. Here is the sin of Atlanta, Georgia. Here is the sin of Tallahassee, Florida. Here is the sin of every state capital.

The Sin of Belshazzar and America

In Daniel chapter 5, verses 3 and 4, we read: "Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."

In verse 22, Daniel pins this sin upon Belshazzar very quickly: "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;" Lord, you were warned; you ignored it. "But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they

have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

The abuse and misuse of the temple vessels was bad enough in and of itself, because those things were reserved for the priest of the Lord. Think about what we do in our churches today and how we abuse and misuse the things of God. But the worst part of Belshazzar's sin was this: he took those vessels that belonged to the one true and living God, the sovereign God of heaven and earth, and with them praised the gods of gold and silver and wood and stone and iron. He totally ignored the one true and living God who held his life and his soul in His hand. Him he did not praise. Him he did not glorify.

This was not simply idolatry. It was more than idolatry. It was blasphemy. Belshazzar totally and completely ignored, refused, and failed to honor the one true and living God. He already knew what God had done to Nebuchadnezzar. That brings me back to the same quote I gave you for the last two weeks, when Congressman Jerry Nadler said, "The will of God is no concern to this Congress."

That is exactly where we are. Now you have to ask yourself this question: What will it take? What will it really take? The answer is that it will take either God's salvation or God's judgment.

Applications: Symptoms of a Deeper Sin

The evidence that we have turned our backs upon God, deserted Him, ignored Him, refused Him, and blasphemed Him is revealed in our politicians, our capitals, our laws, our rules, and our regulations. Obvious sins such as greed, bribery, corruption, theft, and pedophilia are wrong and wicked in and of themselves. But all these sins are mere symptoms. The real sin is that we have left God, ignored Him, deserted Him, become idolaters, and blasphemed Him. We are basically in the same position that Belshazzar was in.

That is why God said in Isaiah 42 and verse 8, "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." When we refuse to honor, glorify, and praise Him, we invite and incur His wrath and His judgment.

When we take that which God has given us, in which we are to praise and honor Him, and turn around and abuse and misuse it, dishonoring Him, it is a double sin. Look at Jeremiah chapter 5. We are talking about Judah and Jerusalem, the capital. In verse 1, God tells Jeremiah, “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.” God said that if Jeremiah could find just one man in that capital who did what was right, He would pardon the entire city and the land. Of course, he could not find one. In verse 7, God asks, “How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?”

What is He saying? You have taken what I have given you and perverted it. Instead of using it to honor Me, you have used it to sin against Me. In verse 21, He says, “Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not: Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season:”

“Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full

of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

You have taken everything I have given you and abused it. You have taken everything I have given you and rebelled against me with it. It was my corn, it was my wine, it was my land, it was my harvest, it was my rain. I have given you all of these things, and you take them and abuse them. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord?

So ask yourself this question: What will it take to bring America to her knees? Will it take the destruction of our political system? Will it take the defeat of our nation? Will it take the destruction of our cities? Will it take the loss of multitudinous lives? That is what it took to bring Babylon to its knees. That is what it took to bring Jerusalem to its knees. That is what it took to bring Samaria to its knees.

Conclusion: What Will It Take for You?

What will it take to wake you up? What will it take to make you obedient, to turn you around and cause you to seek repentance and faith? What will it take to turn you back to the Lord, and to turn your family back to the Lord? What will it take to restore character, honesty, and integrity to our lives? What will it take to open the eyes of our politicians? The answer to all these questions is that it will take either salvation or judgment.

Which will it be? We deserve justice. If God gave us exactly what we deserved, we would go down the tube so fast it would make your head swim. Although we deserve justice, what we prefer and want is mercy. But understand this: God may save us, or God may destroy us. We are in His hands. If we want His mercy, we need to turn to Him in repentance and faith and learn to obey His Word. If we do

not begin turning back to Him in repentance and faith and obeying His Word, as bad as it is now, you had better batten down the hatches, because it is going to get a thousand times worse. If God does not turn us in salvation, it will be judgment—severe judgment needed to get our attention.

What will it take individually? That is where we have to start. What will it take familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally? Either salvation or judgment.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth, and we know, Lord, we are in Thy hand. Just like Belshazzar, he praised false gods and totally ignored and blasphemed the God who held his life in His hand. Lord, may we not do that. May we honor Thee and glorify Thee, seek repentance and faith, and seek You, Lord, to turn us and to quicken us that we may call upon Thy name. We ask You for mercy for Thy people, and, Lord, that Thou wouldst be pleased to turn us back to Thyself, by Your grace and salvation that is in Jesus Christ, our Lord, and in whose name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 27

Three Reasons For Our Destruction

Isaiah 24:5 says, “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.”

Introduction: Times and People Change

It has been said that times change. In one sense, that is a true statement, and in another sense, it is not true. Times do change, but the reason they change is because people change. If you look back upon your childhood, your youth, and early adulthood, you may ask yourself two questions: Have times changed in my life? And have people changed in my lifetime?

While it is true that there has never been a time in history when men were not sinners, except for the brief period in the Garden of Eden, it seems that our depravity has become more and more open, aggressive, and without shame. I am old enough to remember that in times past, when people had sinned, they were ashamed and endeavored to hide their sin. But not anymore. It is now open. Not

only is it open, but Senators now brag concerning their sins, their rebellion, and their wickedness. They even count it as a badge of honor.

The Shamefulness of Modern Sin

We are talking about people changing as well as times. Have you noticed how many libraries across this country are hosting drag queen story hours? That was unheard of when I was growing up, and, I believe, when most of you were growing up as well. What about all the parades where sodomites are openly marching, chanting, and carrying all kinds of banners? That had never happened in my lifetime. Today we also have people advertising wife-swapping clubs. They call themselves swingers.

Of course, it seems that nobody is ashamed of their sins, their rebellion, or their wickedness. Let me give you an illustration. If you have not seen this, you really do not want to see it. It was sent to me; I looked at it and read the article. I saw the pictures. I am only reading part of the article. Listen to this.

The Biden administration's latest Department of Energy hire is a queer activist who brags about his kink of leading other gay men who are pretending to be dogs around on leashes before having sex with them. Sam Brenton was recently hired by the Department of Energy as the spent fuel and waste disposition deputy. If you don't recognize Sam's name, perhaps you know them, not him, by their drag queen alter ego named Sister Radioactive. You can take comfort in Sister Radioactive's technical credential, and I'm reading it like it is: a master's degree from MIT, a dual master's degree in engineering systems and nuclear science and engineering.

A Metro Weekly article contains some illuminating details about Brenton's lifestyle as a handler in the pup community. And yes, it's every bit as degenerate as you might think. There were pictures of him, her, or them—whatever the case may be, he, she, or it. They looked very, very degenerate, and certainly they were. Just stop and think that Biden hired this man.

This is what we are talking about: how people have changed. God says concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in Isaiah chapter 3,

beginning in verses 8 and 9, “For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen, because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory.” Note that He said their tongue and their doings, so it was their talk as well as their conduct. Then look at verse 9: “The show of their countenance doth witness against them.”

Biblical Precedent: Judah's Apostasy

In other words, even their looks demonstrate sin, wickedness, and degeneracy. “The show of their countenance doth witness against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom. They hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.” Here was a people proud of their wickedness. Their countenance showed their wickedness, and they were not at all ashamed to hide it. They declared their sin openly, and God pronounced woe upon their souls because they had rewarded evil unto themselves.

Now it appears to me an amazing fact that those whom God leaves for destruction always glory in their wickedness. The Apostle Paul said in the book of Philippians, chapter 3, verses 18 and 19, “For many walk, whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and who glory in their shame, and who mind earthly things.” Notice that they glory in their shame. It is a badge of honor to them. That is why in the book of Zephaniah, chapter 3 and verse 5, the Bible says that the unjust knoweth no shame.

Principles do not change. God does not change. His Word does not change. His judgment does not change. Sinners do not change except by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and they are brought to repentance, faith, and obedience. The only way that sinners change other than that is that they continue to revel and glory more and more in their sins and in their disobedience.

Here is a good question, because I want to answer it from the Bible: Why are we witnessing the destruction of our lives, our families, our society, our communities, and our nation on every hand? I remember when I was a boy, disturbances, not only in our community but even in our town and county, were rare and occasional. They were counted as the exception and not the rule. Yet

today, when you look around, chaos, turmoil, riots, plunder, destruction, arson, and even murder are not the exception. They are seemingly the rule.

What has happened, and why has it happened? The answer is given to us in Isaiah chapter 24. In order to set up this message and show the reasons for our destruction, we must consider some of the principles and truths that have been given to us in the Word of God. Before we consider those principles and truths, observe this: the same thing happened in Judah and Jerusalem, and it happened for exactly the same reasons that are happening here in America today.

So look back in your Bibles to the book of Isaiah, chapter 1, at verses 7 and 8, and think about these verses in light of America. God says to Judah and Jerusalem, "Your country is desolate."

"Your cities are burned with fire." Look at Minneapolis. Look at Detroit. Look at all these major cities. Look at Oregon. Look at Portland. Look at Seattle, Washington. Isaiah says, "Your country's desolate, your cities are burned with fire, your land, strangers devoured in your presence, and it is desolate, is overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, just a small little area, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city." In other words, there is very little breathing room; everything else around you is besieged. Look, if you would, in Isaiah chapter 1, skipping down to verse 21 and reading through verse 24.

Here again, think about what America used to be and what it is now. Here is what Judah and Jerusalem used to be and what it became. Isaiah 1, beginning with verse 21, says, "How is the faithful city become a harlot? It was faithful, but now it's a harlot. It was full of judgment at one time."

"Righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers." Their silver had become dross, and their wine was mixed with water. "Thy princes are rebellious." We could change that to congressmen. Let's do that and watch it: "Thy congressmen are rebellious and companions of thieves. Everyone loveth gifts and followeth after rewards. They judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the

mighty one of Israel, Ah, I will ease me in mine adversaries, I will avenge me of mine enemies."

Judah and Jerusalem had forsaken God and His law, exactly as Samaria and the northern kingdom had earlier. Judah and Jerusalem stayed faithful a little longer than the Northern Kingdom did. The Northern Kingdom was destroyed in 722 BC, and the Southern Kingdom in 586 and 587 BC. But the interesting thing is this: God refers to both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms as sisters in whoredom in Ezekiel chapter 16. He refers to these countries as harlots, adulterers, and whores. Why does He do that? The answer is because they had forsaken Him for another. They had forsaken His law and turned their backs upon Him.

Now think with me about what America used to be fifty years ago. Most of us can do this. If you cannot think back that long, think ten or twenty years ago. Think about what America used to be and compare it with what America is now.

When you stop and think about these things, it is enough literally to blow your mind, because everything is totally and absolutely different and corrupt. America has now apostatized exactly as Judah and Jerusalem apostatized.

The Necessity of Law: God's Rule vs. Man's Rule

It is impossible to have a life, a family, a church, a society, a communion, or a nation without law. Every individual, society, and nation must have law. The question is not whether you will have law, but whose law you will have. The only choice is between the law of God and the law of man. We will either be ruled by God or by man. It will either be theism or humanism, the rule of God or the rule of man. It may be the rule of men in general or the rule of man in particular, when speaking of autonomy, which is self-law. Autonomy, or self-law, is humanistic because it recognizes no law above itself.

A preacher was recently interviewed by a radio host and said, "We're not interested in a theocracy. All we want is for God's people to be salt and light." Theos is the Greek word for God, and kratos is the Greek word for power. A theocracy is nothing more than the rule

of God by His power. Yet he said they did not want a theocracy; all they wanted was for Christians to be salt and light.

How can Christians be salt and light without the power of God? He said in John 15 and verse 5, "Without Me you can do nothing." Absolutely nothing. It is true that God rules by His power, and I will show you that from the Bible. You may not like it, delight in it, want it, or may resist it, but you cannot stop it. God is God.

I had rather be ruled by a holy, righteous, loving, kind, merciful God than by a bunch of depraved, wicked, rebellious sinners who hate everything that is holy and right.

When you deny the rule of God, when you deny the rule of God by His power, the only thing left is the rule of man. You may have a plutocracy, which is rule by the rich and wealthy. Think about George Soros, Zuckerberg, Bezos, and the billionaires in the tech movement who hate God and hate America and are calling the shots. That is a plutocracy; there are plutocrats. You can have an aristocracy, where another elite rules and reigns. You can have a monarchy, where you have one king, one man in control. Or you can have an autocracy, where people do whatever they want because they recognize themselves as law.

Whether you are talking about a plutocracy, an aristocracy, a monarchy, or an autocracy, all of these lead to totalitarianism, tyranny, and despotism. You cannot have either of those without having tyranny.

In 1 Samuel chapter 8, Israel demanded a king when God Almighty was their king. Beginning with verse 6, they asked Samuel for a man, for a king: "But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

"According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me and served other gods, so do they also unto thee." Now God said to Samuel, "They've not rejected thee, but they rejected me, that I should not reign over them." In 1 Samuel 12:12,

Samuel repeats this truth: “And when you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said unto me, Nay, but a king shall reign over us when the Lord your God was your king.” So what they did in 1 Samuel 8 is that they traded God for a man. That is exactly what we have done.

The impact of this truth should be understood in the context of Biblical law. It is impossible to have a life, a family, a church, a society, a community, or a nation without law. The question is not whether you will have law, but whose law you will have. We will either be ruled over and governed by God, or ruled over and governed by man.

Since you are in 1 Samuel, go back to chapter 8 and observe this: a king rules by his law. That is true with God, and it is true of any king or any person in power. When Donald Trump was president, he made a number of executive orders. When Joe Biden was supposedly inaugurated as president, what did he do? He immediately canceled Trump’s executive orders and issued executive orders of his own. I understand that an executive order is not law. But each of these men was showing, “This is the direction that I want you to go. I want the nation to go. This is what we are going to do.” So a king rules by his law.

The Consequences of Rejecting God's Rule

In 1 Samuel 8, Israel rejected God as its king and chose a man. Look, beginning with verse 10: “And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that ask of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you.”

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

take your men's servants, and your maid's servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. And he will take the tenth of your sheep, and you shall be his servants."

"And you shall cry out in that day, because of your king, which you shall have chosen you, and the LORD will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said, Nay, that we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles."

In other words, we do not want the responsibility of defending ourselves, confronting evil and wickedness, or ruling our own lives. We want somebody else to do it. Notice the word take, and how many times he will take a tenth of this, a tenth of that, and a tenth of something else. Wouldn't it be a wonderful day if our government only took a tenth?

Now you have to work until July before you can begin working for yourself, because the first six months of the year is given basically to all kinds of taxes. What do you think concerning the Great Reset and the New World Order? Obviously, those are not Christian reform movements. They are nothing but a diabolical totalitarian grab for money, power, and control.

It is humanism, communism, and Satanism, plain and simple. Carol sent me a quote earlier in the week from Alexander Truchtenberg's book, America's Betrayal, American Betrayal: "When we get ready to take the United States, we will not take it under the label of Communism. We will not take it under the label of Socialism. Those labels are unpleasant to the American people."

“They have been smeared too much. We will take the United States under the labels we have made very lovable. We will take it under liberalism and progressivism, under democracy, but take it we will.” That ought to tell you something about liberalism, progressivism, and democracy. Those are key words for Marxism and communism. You say, “But we have a democracy.”

No. We have a Republic. The Republic has been destroyed and turned into a democracy. The word democracy simply means mob power, or mob rule. The rule of God or the rule of man is the only

choice that we have, and the rule of man is God's judgment against us for rejecting the rule of His law.

It should be obvious as you read through the book of Isaiah that God's judgment is upon those who follow the rule of man. Let me bring you up to speed concerning Isaiah 24. Isaiah pronounces God's judgment upon the nations. In chapter 15, he pronounces God's judgment against Moab; in chapter 16, against Damascus; and in chapter 17, against Egypt. In chapter 18, he pronounces God's judgment against Ethiopia. In chapters 19 and 20, he again speaks of His judgments against Egypt and Ethiopia and assures them that the Assyrian will take care of them.

God's Judgment on the Nations and the Land

In chapter 21, his judgments are against the desert of the sea, including Seir and Edom. In chapter 22, his judgment is against Judah and Jerusalem. In chapter 23, His judgment is against Tyre. In Isaiah 24, where we are, His judgment is against the whole land. It is not just these individual countries; it is now the whole land.

Look in Isaiah 24, beginning with verse 1: "Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof." Here is judgment wiping the board clean. "And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him." "The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word."

You need to ask yourself this question: Why were these countries, and why was this land, judged so strenuously? What did they do to merit such judgment and destruction? I was talking about theocracy a little bit earlier. The word means God's power, God's rule by His power. Do you realize that God's judgment is a demonstration of His rule by His power?

In Romans, chapter 1, verses 18 through 20, we read: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness,

because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has showed it unto them. The invisible things of the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." When you read from Isaiah 15 to chapter 24, that is God's power. That is God ruling. God is either going to rule in salvation or He is going to rule in condemnation.

Look at Isaiah 40, verse 10: "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand and his arm shall rule for him because his reward is with him and his work before him." The Hebrew word for rule means to reign, to exercise dominion, and to rule.

Here is what he is saying: "Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand and His arm will exercise dominion. His arm will control. His arm will rule for Him. His reward is with Him." It is either going to be in grace or in condemnation. In verse 11, here is grace: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom and shall gently lead those that are with young."

Isaiah chapter 63, verse 5, shows both mentioned together: "And I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold." Then God says, "Therefore mine own arm brought salvation to me, and my fury it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth."

His arm either brings salvation or condemnation. When you look back in Isaiah 24:2, no one escaped. He said, “As it is with the people, so with the priest; as it is with the servant, so with the master; as it is with the maid, so with the mistress; as it is with the buyer, so with the seller; as it is with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so is the giver of usury.” No one escaped.

The Declaration and Explanation of Defilement (Isaiah 24:5)

Now look at verse 5. This is the text I want to reach: “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have

transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant." There are two points to consider in verse 5. First, there is a declaration: "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof." Secondly, there is an explanation—that is, an explanation for the judgment mentioned in verses 1 through 4: "because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." So let us consider, first of all, the declaration in verse 5. He says, "The earth also was defiled under the inhabitants thereof." Notice: the earth is defiled under the inhabitants thereof.

The defilement is nothing less than sin, transgression, iniquity, and lawlessness. Everything was defiled. A fallen man can only do one thing and do it well: he can defile, pollute, corrupt, and destroy. That is exactly what God is saying.

Since we are talking about defilement and pollution, hold Isaiah 24, but turn back in your Bibles to Leviticus 18. Let us begin reading with verse 24 through verse 27. God is talking to His people: "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things," meaning the preceding verses in this chapter, "for in all these the nations are defiled, which I cast out before you." It was because of these things that God cast out all the other nations. Then He says, "And the land is defiled, therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it. And the land itself vomited out her inhabitants." In other words, the people were so wicked, so vile, and so corrupt that the land could not even stand them. Therefore God tells His people, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, neither any of your own nation nor any stranger that sojourneth among you."

"For all these abominations have the men of the land done which were before you, and the land is defiled." Then verse 28: "That the land spew not you out also when you defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you." He warns, "The land will spew you out if you get these abominations." Why? Because they defile you and the land. What are some of those abominations?

If you will take the time to read Leviticus 18:1–23, you will find that it speaks of defiling sins such as adultery, fornication, incest,

bestiality, sodomy, idolatry, and a host of other unclean and defiling sins. This is defilement in the personal arena, or personal area.

Defilement Through Bloodshed and Idolatry

Now look in your Bibles at Numbers 35, because we are still talking about defilement and pollution. He said, "The earth is defiled under the inhabitants thereof." Beginning with verse 30, he says, "Whosoever killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses. But one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die." There must be at least two witnesses for a person to be put to death. Verse 31 says, "Moreover, ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer which is guilty of death, but he shall be surely put to death."

God demands the execution of a murderer. There is to be no satisfaction. What does that mean? It means he does not receive a lifetime sentence in jail; he is to be executed.

Verse 32 says, "And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the high priest." If a man killed another accidentally, without malice aforethought, deliberation, or purpose, he would flee to the city of refuge and remain there until the death of the high priest. He could not come home or return to his place. If the high priest lived one year, he could go home after the high priest died; if he lived twenty years, the man had to remain in that city twenty years.

Then verse 33 says, "So ye shall not pollute the land where ye are: for blood it defileth the land." "And the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel." God says blood defiles the land.

What God is saying is this: when you have a murderer, and that murderer is duly convicted, he is to be executed. He is to be put to death. If you do not execute the murderer, then the land is defiled. I can sum up this principle very easily: If the murderer dies, society lives. If the murderer lives, society dies.

Think about all the murderers who have been let out of prison and committed more murders. Society dies when the murderer is not executed. If a failure to execute murderers defiles and pollutes the land, and God says the blood cannot be cleansed except by the blood of him that shed it, if not putting a murderer to death defiles the land, how much more defilement is there when you murder and execute innocent, helpless individuals, like 60 million babies since 1973?

We are talking about defilement and pollution. In Jeremiah chapter 7, beginning with verse 30, he says: “For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord. They have set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to pollute it. They have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.”

Notice that the valley of the son of Hinnom is also called Tophet. The word Tophet means to roll like a drum. Why? Because when they were offering their babies in sacrifice to Moloch, Moloch was a big brass statue with his arms extended and his mouth open. In the bottom of this statue, a roaring fire was built. Since he was normally made out of brass, the brass heated up and turned red. The baby that was going to be sacrificed was placed in his hand and then rolled down his arms into his belly to be consumed. When you put a baby on those hot, red, burning arms, he screamed. Therefore, they rolled the drums to cover the screams of the child being sacrificed.

I don't know if you've ever watched any of the sonograms of a baby being aborted. You better have a hard heart and a good stomach to watch it, because it will disturb you and tear you to pieces if you're normal, I can assure you. But this is what he is talking about. He said in verse 32, "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that shall be no more called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter; shall bury in Topheth till there be no place. And the carcasses of this people, that is those who are doing all this murdering, shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth, and none shall fray them away." No one is going to take their bodies away; they'll lie there and rot. "Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah,

and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, and the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, for the land shall be desolate."

In Jeremiah 32, beginning with verse 30, the Lord says, "For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth. For the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD. For this city hath been to me as a provocation in mine anger, and of my fury from the day that they built it, even unto this day, that I should remove it from before my face. Because all the evil of the children of Israel, and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they and their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, now watch, and they have turned unto me the back, and not the face."

This is where we are in our land: we have turned our backs upon God. If Gary is talking to me and really trying to convey a point to me, and I just turn my back to him and walk off, would he consider that an insult? He should, because it would be. What in the world do you think it would be like to turn your back on a holy, righteous God who has spoken, and you refuse to hear his word?

This is what he is saying in Jeremiah 32:33: “And they have turned unto me the back and not the face. Though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. But they set their abomination in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which were in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.”

“And now, therefore, thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword and by the famine and by the pestilence.” Yes, he said, I am going to destroy it.

In 2 Kings chapter 21, you have the truth about Manasseh. King Manasseh was the most wicked, vile king in the southern kingdom.

Ahab was the most wicked, vile king in the northern kingdom. Concerning Manasseh, the Lord spoke by his servants the prophets, saying: “Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, hath done wickedly, above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.

“And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become prey and a spoil to their enemies, because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger since the day of their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even to this day. Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, beside his sin, wherewith he made Judah to sin, and doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.” So here is a king who shed all kind of innocent blood, and it was not just adults.

It was children that were being sacrificed. In 2 Kings chapter 24, beginning with verse 1, we read: “In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up and Jehoiakim became his servant three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him. And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, bands of the Syrians, bands of the Moabites, bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it according to the word of the Lord which he spake by his servants the prophets.” Now watch: “Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did, and also for the innocent blood that he shed, for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the Lord would not pardon.”

I do not know if he reached 60 million or not, but he surely did a good job of it. You know what the Bible says in Jeremiah chapter 2 and verse 34? “Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents. I have not found it by secret search, but upon all

these saith the Lord." God said, "I didn't have to search. It was there." In Jeremiah 19 and verse 4: "because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and burned incense to other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents."

The point is very simple. Just as Judah and Jerusalem defiled, polluted, and corrupted their land, which God judged, so here in America we also have defiled, polluted, and corrupted this land. We have sinned and rebelled against God's lawful authority.

Now go back to Isaiah 24 and look at verse 5. Here is the declaration: "the earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof." Here is the explanation: "because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." How did our land, our society, our nation, and our government become so corrupt, so polluted, and so defiled?

The Three Reasons Explained

Three reasons are given here: we have transgressed God's law, changed the ordinance, and broken the everlasting covenant. There are three Hebrew words here that reveal exactly where we are today, I believe. The first is Torah, which is plural. In verse 5, "because they have transgressed the laws" means we have gone over, above, and beyond what God has said. We have basically denied God's law.

One proper application of God's law is restraint. For instance, when God says, "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not murder," what is the penalty for murder? Death. If murderers were executed, that would certainly be a deterrent to anyone. Thus, the law has an application of restraint. What happens when you cast off restraint—when you cast off the punishment?

Then, therefore, you have more and more violence and more and more wickedness. That is why Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." So the quicker one is executed, obviously the more impact it is going to make.

That is why, in days gone by, hangings used to be public. Anyone could see them, and everyone would know, This is going to be the

result if I commit murder as well. The Bible says in 1 John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law." God is telling us very clearly that when we transgress His law, we are going to face a penalty and a punishment.

Here are three paragraphs from John Calvin, because he is going to tie this together. Here he is talking about Isaiah: "Here Isaiah peculiarly holds up to shame the revolt of this nation because it was baser and less excusable than all the transgressions of those that had never been taught in the school of God."

"The word Torah is applied to the law because it denotes instruction, but here plural number, Torah, it denotes all the instruction that is contained in the law. But as the law contains both commandments and promises, he adds two parts for the purpose of explanation."

The word Torah usually refers at least to the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses. Sometimes it is applied to the entire Old Testament. You will read in the New Testament where our Lord Himself spoke about the Law and the Prophets. That was a division. It would include not just the major and minor prophets, but also the poetical and historical books. They would be labeled under the Law and the Prophets. The word Torah itself means instruction. It means authoritative instruction.

So here is what God is saying: They have transgressed the commandments—that is, the laws and this authoritative instruction that I have given them. They have not listened. They have disobeyed. They are lawless, wicked, and wrong. They have changed the ordinance. The Hebrew word choke means an ordinance; some think that it denotes ceremonies and others that it denotes morals. We may render it commandments. I understand it to mean not only ceremonies, but everything that belongs to a rule of a holy life.

He said they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, and changed the commandments. Who can change the ordinance? Who can change the commandments? Only those who are in positions of authority and power. Psalm 94:20 asks, “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?” The throne speaks of government and power; it is called

the throne of iniquity, that is, a wicked civil government. Shall a wicked civil government have fellowship with God when that wicked civil government frames mischief by a law? Mischief in the Bible is another word for sin.

In other words, shall a wicked civil government have fellowship with God when it makes sin legal? It is legal to be a sodomite in America. It is legal to murder, as long as you do it before the baby is born. It is legal to be a thief, as long as you are a politician. The laws have been changed. The ordinance has been changed. The commandments have been changed. No longer is adultery considered a sin or a crime; now it is just considered an affair.

Psalm 94:20–21 continues: "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood." Who are they? They are the throne, the power, the government. Instead of punishing the sinner, they punish the righteous and the godly. Thus, they have changed the ordinance.

Here is the third one: They have broken the everlasting covenant. The third term employed is Berith, by which he means a covenant and contract. "This word is limited to those contracts by which the Lord, who adopted His people, promised that He would be their God. He therefore charges them with ingratitude, because when the Lord revealed Himself by all these methods, and gave proofs of His love, they were disobedient and rebellious, transgressed the laws, and broke the holy covenant."

God does rule. He is a theocracy. He rules by His power, and His power is manifested either in grace and mercy, which leads us to repentance, faith, and obedience, or it is expressed and manifested in wrath and anger, which brings us into judgment and destruction.

In Jeremiah chapter 9, verses 13–16, God says, "And the LORD said, Because they have forsaken My law, which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, neither walk therein, but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them

also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them." Why? Because they had forsaken God's law and refused to listen; therefore they would be destroyed.

The Call to Repentance

Isaiah chapter 30 illustrates Isaiah 24:5. Here we see the difference between theonomy and humanism, and how these people left a theocracy and went to an autocracy—from trusting in God to trusting in man, with the resulting judgment. Verse 1 says, "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me, that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin." They did not want God's Word or truth. They wanted protection, but not God's protection. Verse 2 continues: "That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt, your confusion." God says, You reject Me for humanism, for man, and you will suffer. Now look in the same chapter, beginning with verse 8: Isaiah 30, verse 8.

"Now, go write it before them in a table, and note it in the book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever. For this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord, which say to the seers, See not, and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits, get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." We do not want God. "Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon, therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach, ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly in an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces. He shall not spare, so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water out of a pit."

God says, You have despised me and my word, and you are going to fall. The reason for our defilement, pollution, and corruption is

that we have sinned against God, violated His law, turned our backs upon Him, and brought destruction upon ourselves.

Nevin Holmberg wrote: "Over the last 60 years, our society has abandoned its customs, morals, traditions, and self-restraint to limit bad behavior, including criminality. Many of our politicians, clergy, and educators avoid condemning the worst among us and the atrocities they commit. It has become commonplace for teachers to be threatened with violence or to actually suffer violence. Much of our art is little more than filth that in many circles is celebrated and defended. Much of this is aimed directly at our children. Our language too has become debased. Terrorist acts and other criminal mass murders commonly are referred to tragedies, when in fact they are atrocities. Those committing such violence are referred to as extremists, militants, depressed, angry, or other euphemisms."

Moreover, when responsible parties are caught, they are rarely executed. Nicholas Cruz murdered over a score of students at Douglas High School in Florida, yet for twenty months he was provided three hots and a cot at taxpayer expense. Why has he not been hung? We have become inured to behavior our parents and grandparents would never have tolerated.

“Our violence problem is not caused by guns. It's cultural degeneration and deviancy. These are incredibly complex issues and not amenable to any quick fixes. However, until those matters are addressed and dealt with, the past is but a prelude to the future. It will not be affected by limiting the rights of the citizenry, limiting the kinds of firearms we can own, or the number of cartridges they can hold.” Such proposals come from fools or charlatans and will do nothing to cure our nation.

Conclusion: Treating the Cause, Not the Symptoms

Suppose you have cancer and are in pain, so you go to the doctor. The doctor says, “I will give you something that will alleviate the pain.” You thank him, take it, and the pain temporarily disappears. What has the doctor just done for you? He has treated your symptom; he has not treated the cause. If you want the pain gone, the cancer needs to be removed.

What we are seeing in our land are symptoms. The cause of all these symptoms is that we have turned our backs upon God, transgressed His laws, changed the ordinance, and broken the covenant. Until we repent, come back, and learn to submit and obey, we will continue to have destruction. It will get worse and worse and worse unless God sovereignly, graciously, and mercifully intervenes.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your word, Your truth, and Your warnings. We thank You also for Your judgments, for they are for our admonition and learning. We pray, Lord, that You will open our eyes, speak to our hearts, grant us understanding, and be pleased to give us repentance and faith. Turn us, and we shall be turned. Quicken us, and we shall call upon Thy name. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 28

A Fighting Spirit

Introduction: The Need for a Fighting Spirit

In Zechariah 10:3–5, God says:

"Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle. Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them. And the riders on horses shall be confounded."

Note that phrase: "and they shall fight because the Lord is with them." It seems as if we live today in a day of what I would simply call pansies, sissies, and mediocre men. I heard this morning about one man who said he did not know what he would do if his wife was being attacked. I thought to myself, I'm just thankful I'm not his wife. Most today do not have a fighting spirit.

That fighting spirit is applicable in many areas. What is a fighting spirit? According to, I think, a summary of the Word of God, it would

be courage and determination expressed in a willingness to fight and to struggle. It is a determination to hold fast to that which is true and right and just, and also a determination not to put up with that which is wicked, evil, and ungodly.

It is closely related to what we would call a combat mentality. If you have never heard, or have not heard in a long time, the message I preached many years ago on Captain Jonathan Davis and a combat mentality, I would encourage you to listen to it. To show you where we are today, there is a hymn that used to be sung regularly but is never heard in the average church today: “Onward, Christian Soldiers.” Listen to the words: “Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before.”

"Christ, the royal master, leads against the foe. Forward into battle, see his banners go." The second stanza says, "At the sign of triumph, Satan's host doth flee. On, then, Christian soldiers, on to victory. Hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise. Brothers, lift your voices loud, your anthems raise." The third says, "Like a mighty army, moves the church of God. Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod. We're not divided. All one body. We, one in hope and doctrine, one in charity."

"Onward then, ye people, join our happy throng. Blend with ours, your voices in the triumph song. Glory, laud, and honor unto Christ the King. This through countless ages, men and angels sing." This is absolutely appropriate when you stop and think, "Like a mighty army moves the church of God." Then he says, "We're not divided, all one body. We one in hope and doctrine." Wouldn't it be absolutely wonderful if we really were one in hope and in doctrine as well?

There are many Scriptures in the Bible that describe Christians as soldiers. In 2 Timothy chapter 2, verses 3 and 4, Paul told Timothy, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." He said that "no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." The truth of the matter is, most Christians have basically gone AWOL. We've deserted our post, discarded our military equipment, thrown away our swords, and settled down in a bed of ease.

The Church at Ease: A Curse from Amos

We have thus brought upon ourselves the curse of God. Amos chapter 6 and verse 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!" First, he says, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." In other words, we've settled back and done that which is easy, relaxing, and comfortable for us. He also tells us why: they trust in the mountain of Samaria. The mountain of Samaria refers to the capital of Samaria; in other words, it refers to the civil government in Israel.

In other words, they did not trust in the arm of the Lord. They were trusting in the arm of the flesh. Jeremiah 17:5 says, "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." You cannot trust in your own flesh, in your own power, or in your own strength without departing from the Lord. Here is the curse that will be upon him: "For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

Now here is the contrast: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh. But her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

In other words, when God in Amos chapter 6 places the curse upon those who trust in the mountain of Samaria, they are actually trusting in what government can do for them. That is exactly where we are today. We have all kinds of governmental subsidies and benefits and that kind of thing. The reason so many people do not speak out against the wickedness and tyranny of our own government is that they certainly do not want to upset or offend their god. You have to remember, it was Jeroboam I in 1 Kings chapter 12 who built those two golden calves.

The Example of Jeroboam: Trusting in Man

Jeroboam was the one who said, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” He wanted everyone to worship those two gods. The reason he made those golden calves was very simple: “If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.”

He was basically interested in himself—his kingdom, his power, and his position. Interestingly enough, God had promised Jeroboam that, if he would be faithful and obey Him, God would establish his kingdom. But Jeroboam did not wish to trust in the Lord. He could care less about the promises of God and, in reality, he could care less about the people of God. He simply wanted to establish his kingdom and prolong it. When you read the Scripture, you find that many people in the northern kingdom left and went to Rehoboam in the southern kingdom. So Jeroboam said, “There’s no need to go down to Jerusalem. There’s no need to worship at the temple as God demanded. There’s no need to have the priests, the Levites. No, no. I’ve got it all right here. You don’t even have to worry. Just worship here now.”

The Condition of Modern Christendom

Some of these people had fled down to Solomon, and now Jeroboam was saying that the people in the northern kingdom were at ease. Amos describes them as those who “put far away the evil day,” as though no evil would come upon them, and who “cause the seat of violence to come near.” They could care less about how they acquired what they acquired.

Those who were at ease “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; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David.” They had nothing else to do. They “drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments.”

“But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” That is basically where we are as Christendom today. We have become so materialistic-minded, so engulfed in satisfying the flesh, so selfish and luxury-loving, that we have basically forgotten God and His people. We are interested only in ourselves and our own comfort. We want ease and not excitement, calmness and not contention, peace and not war, comfort and not fighting.

In fact, we do not wish to upset anyone or confront anyone about anything. Isaac Watts, the great hymn writer, wrote a hymn titled “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?” We should listen to its words: “Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb, and shall I fear to own His cause, or blush to speak His name?”

I love the second stanza: “Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize, and sailed through bloody seas? Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God? Sure I must fight if I would reign; increase my courage, Lord. I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy word.”

And listen to the fifth stanza: “Thy saints in all this glorious war shall conquer, though they die; they see the triumph from afar, by faith's discerning eye.” The truth is that we no longer really want to fight for anything, not even for the Lord Jesus Christ. We are being overwhelmed with deception, wickedness, and evil of all kinds, and we do nothing. We do not even moan, groan, or sigh. As Christians, and as the Christian church in this country, we have come to the place where we not only tolerate evil and wickedness; we condone it.

Certainly, we are not praying those imprecatory prayers. David prayed many times, “Break their teeth in their mouth, O Lord; break their arm; cast them down, that they rise not up again.” He would say, “Arise, O Lord, and show Thyself; make bare Thine arm. Let them know that Thou alone art God, and they are but mere men.” But we are not even praying against the wicked or against those bent on evil. Think about Klaus Schwab. Think about Yuval Noah Harari, whom I mentioned before. He said the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a myth and that Jesus Christ is not God.

In other words, his faith is in artificial intelligence. He has also pronounced most people useless eaters. They do not need us any longer because artificial intelligence will do their bidding. We are finding ourselves surrounded by evil. We are also helpless and powerless. It looks as if the enemy has the upper hand: they are the head, and we are the tail. We do not know where to turn or what to do.

God Raises a Standard: Isaiah 59

Someone says, "What we need is a leader." That is true, but we need a leader who is more than mere man. Let me show you what I am talking about.

Look in your Bibles at Isaiah 59, beginning with verse 12. Do you want a good picture of where we are today in America? Isaiah 59 pretty well describes it. In fact, it pretty well describes where most countries in the world are. "For our transgressions are multiplied before Thee," and certainly ours are; "and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them." Just look at the gay pride parades, transgenderism, and the forcing of all kinds of things upon our children. Our transgressions are with us, and our iniquities we know. Verse 13 says, "In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood." What is the result of all these sins? Verse 14 says, "And judgment is turned away backward."

"And justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." That which is right cannot enter. "Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." If you stand for righteousness, leave wickedness, and refuse to stand with the wicked, you make yourself a prey.

"And the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment." "And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor." In other words, there is wickedness, sin, and evil, yet no one is concerned. "Therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for

clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak." "According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the islands He will repay recompense."

"So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." This portion of Scripture accurately describes where we are today.

Biblical justice is far off. Truth is falling in the streets. As citizens and Christians, we have become prey. The enemy, the adversary, has flooded every area of our lives—our homes, churches, families, schools, and government. We need to think about this. It is time for God to work. Psalm 119:126 says, "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void Thy law." When God's law is being despised, it is time for God to work.

God as Warrior: He Fights for His People

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." The picture is that of a bedraggled, disarrayed, disoriented, defeated army. Suddenly, someone looks around, sees the army standard on the ground, picks it up, and hollers back to the men, "Follow me, boys." The men rise, follow him, go head on against the enemy, overcome the enemy, and win. That is the picture given here when the enemy comes in like a flood: the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.

The Hebrew word for standard literally means to put to flight, to drive away hastily, and to cause to disappear. When God fights, when the Holy Spirit picks up His standard, He puts all of His enemies to flight.

There are several truths to note from verse 19: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." The first is that God is a warrior. We have forgotten that truth, but the Bible says in Exodus 15:3, "The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name." If you read Deuteronomy chapter 4, you will find that one way God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt was by means of war. God made war against Egypt and

against the false gods. That is why Isaiah 42:13 says, “The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war. He shall cry, yea, roar; He shall prevail against His enemies.” God is indeed a man of war. He not only fights, but also equips and leads His people in the fight. David, the man after God’s own heart, was also a man of war; in fact, he was a man of war from his youth.

David was a mere teenager when he killed Goliath. When he was being recommended to King Saul, this was the recommendation in 1 Samuel 16:18: “Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.” This was even before David was the man who led in and out the armies of Israel. He was already being recognized as a man of war.

So let me ask a few questions for you to consider. Since David was a man after God's own heart, and David was a man of war, from where did David learn his martial skills? Who taught David to fight? We know that he killed a bear and a lion when they came for the flock. Why was David always victorious? Why was he always successful in his battles?

You have the answer in Psalm 144:1–2: “Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: my goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and He in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.” David said that it was God who taught his hands to fight and his fingers to war. It was God who subdued the people under him.

The very first implication is that God is indeed a man of war. The second implication is this: When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Holy Spirit will lift up a standard against the enemy. That means that you and I are obligated to follow the Lord even into battle. Who would not want to follow the Lord into battle? If the Lord is leading a battle, obviously the outcome is going to be victorious, because He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.

He's the sovereign God of heaven and earth. So, when it comes time, the Bible says, when the Spirit of the Lord raises up that standard against the enemy, and God is leading His people, we

cannot hold back, even in the day of battle—not only physical fighting, but spiritual fighting as well. We cannot hold back.

Jeremiah 48:10 says, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood." This is the battle. In other words, once there is fighting, God says you cannot do the work of God deceitfully, whatever that work is. If it is fighting, you are cursed if you hold back your sword from blood.

In other words, God leads His people. I understand that we are to be merciful, and I understand that we are to exercise pity, but there is a time when mercy is over and pity is ended. There is a time when you can no longer be merciful. You can no longer be piteous.

Before I get telephone calls and emails and letters, I will show you the Scripture, because I did not make that up. That is in the Word of God. Deuteronomy 20:10 says, "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it." That is merciful; that is exercising pity.

"And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee." In other words, you have offered the mercy, you have offered them pity, and they open and say, yes, we want that mercy; we will take that pity. But verse 12 says, "And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: and when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee."

God is all for mercy and all for peace. But if they do not want the mercy, if they do not want the peace, and if they want to fight, God says you do not turn back. This is not just one passage. Deuteronomy 7:2 speaks of the seven nations that were greater than Israel: “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.” Verse 16 says, “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."

Zechariah 11:6 says, "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord." The person with the most pity is God. The person with the most mercy is God. Yet God says, "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord. But, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them." Even God Himself says there is a time when there is no more mercy and no more pity.

James 2:13 says, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoeth against judgment." If you and I want mercy, we should be merciful ourselves. God taught His people to be merciful. However, there does indeed come a time when that mercy and that pity are over. When mercy is rejected, when it is refused, it is over.

In the time of battle, God does protect us. David understood that, and David said in Psalm 140:7, "O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." So we must understand that God is indeed a warrior. Yes, He does lead us into battle.

There are three truths I want you to see. First of all, the Bible does indeed teach us very clearly that God fights for His people. I could give you scripture after scripture, but look in your Bibles. Start with Exodus chapter 14 and verse 14. Here is a clear statement: "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." The Lord shall fight for you. God is going to do the fighting. Just sit still, be quiet, and let Him do it.

Look in Deuteronomy chapter 1 and verse 30: "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." Look in Deuteronomy chapter 3 and verse 22. Again He says, "Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God He shall fight for you." Then, in Deuteronomy chapter 20 and verse 4, He says, "For the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

And then, of course, in 2 Chronicles 20 and verse 17, God says, "Ye shall not need to fight in 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; to morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you." God simply destroyed all the enemies. They did not need to fight.

So, in light of this truth, let me emphasize one thing. Since Scripture teaches over and over and over—and I have selected only a few verses—that God does fight for His people, do you see the absolute insanity as well as the absolute wickedness in Israel in 1 Samuel chapter 8 when they wanted a king to rule over them, a man to rule over them instead of God? Here is why they said in verse 20: "That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." Scripture teaches repeatedly that God fights for His people, yet Israel wanted a human king to go before them and fight their battles.

When Sisera and the host came against the people of God, the Bible says that the stars in heaven fought against Sisera. God used creation against him. Many times, when the children of Israel were fighting against their enemies, God sent great hailstones, and the Bible says that more people were killed by the hailstones than by the sword. I would much rather have the sovereign, omnipotent God of heaven and earth fighting for me than some man. Yet they were willing to trade God for a man. God does indeed fight for His people.

God Fights with and through His People

Here is the second truth: God also fights with His people. I do not mean merely God and the people, but that God is with the people when they are fighting.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 13, Abijah is king of Judah, and Jeroboam is king of Israel; they are about to fight. Abijah is coming against Jeroboam with 400,000 men, while Jeroboam has 800,000 men. They are outnumbered two to one. Moreover, Jeroboam is very devious. While Abijah is offering peace and mercy, Jeroboam is causing an ambushment to come out behind them.

Beginning with verse 12, Abijah has basically offered peace to Israel. He says, “And, behold, God Himself is with us for our captain. And His priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.” Here is the mercy and the pity: “O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.” Do not do this, he is asking.

“But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them. And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle was before and behind: and they cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men. Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed.”

Why? "Because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers." So God was fighting with Judah, with those who were proclaiming His Word and offering peace and mercy. He fought with them.

If you look back in your Bibles to 2 Samuel 23, you have a listing of David's mighty men. Beginning with verse 8, we read, "These be the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains." "The same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time." That does not mean he slung his spear once and it went through eight hundred men. It meant he killed eight hundred men in battle with that spear. The Lord had to be with him, obviously.

Verse 9 says, "And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: he arose, and smote the Philistines," until, as the passage says, "his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword."

The next verse says, "And the Lord wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil." Eleazar fought until his hand was weary and clave to the sword. They had to prise his thumb and fingers away from it; he could not even turn it loose. Yet the Bible says that "the Lord wrought a great victory that day." How did God work such a great victory? Eleazar was fighting, but who enabled and strengthened him and gave him power? It was God.

Verse 11 gives another illustration: "And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines. But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the Lord wrought a great victory."

Here was another man fighting, and God giving him a tremendous victory, working in and through and with him. God not only fights for His people; God fights with His people when they are fighting against God's enemies.

May I remind you of Joshua chapter 10? Joshua and Israel defeated five kings in one battle. It was a tremendous, hard-fought battle. But when they defeated these five kings, Joshua called his men together and said unto them, "Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight."

In other words, God has done this. God gave us the victory. God fought with us. So God not only fights for his people; he fights with his people. Here is the third one: God also fights through his people. He not only fights for us and with us, but also through us.

Let me put it to you this way. Here are two words that you should know how they are used theologically. When we use them in the English language, generally, they have a different meaning, but in theology, they have a special meaning. Those two words are immediately and mediately. When we say that God works immediately, that means God does something without the use of means. If there were a lot of God's enemies standing out in the yard, and God sent a bolt of lightning and wiped them all out, that would be God working immediately. But when God works mediately, he

works through the use of means. Sometimes God does indeed work through his people. Usually that is the way God works—not all the time, but usually.

Isaiah 41:13 says, "For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee." That is pretty good: God holds our hand and encourages us. Then he says, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel." What did God say?

"I'm going to make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth, and you're going to thresh the kingdoms for me. You're going to beat them small. You're going to make them as chaff." God says to his people in Jeremiah 51:19-20, "The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the Lord of hosts is his name. Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms; and with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider."

So God says, "Thou art my battle axe, and thou art my weapons of war." He is talking to his people. Many times God does indeed not only fight for his people and with his people, but also through his people. You are going to say, "But these promises were given to Jacob. These promises were given to Israel." We are the Israel of God. That is what the Bible says. Galatians 3:29 says, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

But if that is not plain enough, look at Psalm 149, beginning with verse 5: "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand." If we are praising God, why do we need a two-edged sword in our hand? Here is why: "To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to

bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord." This honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord.

It is true that down through the ages, Christians have suffered. Christians have been persecuted, prosecuted, and martyred. I am certainly not denigrating any suffering that God's people have endured. But do not overlook the fact that many times God did indeed give absolute victory to His people in the direst of circumstances.

Look in Hebrews chapter 11, beginning with verse 32. Here is a multitude of illustrations wrapped up in these few verses: “And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon,” remember how Gideon won a victory? “and of Barak,” who won a victory, “and of Samson,” who won many victories, “and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.” He said he would run out of time if he continued telling of all the victories God gave these men.

What did some of these men do? “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

All of these are great and glorious victories. It is not merely that God's people have been persecuted down through the ages. That is true. But God's people have also been given victory after victory after victory.

The Call to a Fighting Spirit

What would be an application of having a fighting spirit? I do not think any of you would disagree with what I am about to say. If you do, you have not been looking around. The Church of Jesus Christ is anemic, weak, fearful, and despised. Why? One reason is that we have lost our fighting spirit. We do not fight against sin or

wickedness. We do not lift up our voice anymore. We do not march on City Hall or against the County Council meeting. We do nothing. We have not only tolerated evil and wickedness; we have actually condoned it. We do not even cry out against governmental tyranny. Most Christians do not cry out because they do not know the limitations God has placed upon government. How can you recognize tyranny if you do not know what the limitations of government are?

How can you cry out against something concerning which you are absolutely, totally ignorant? What we have developed into in this day and time is sissy, gutless, spineless, backboneless characters. We think somehow that we are to be merciful to everyone.

Do you realize that when someone is hungry, the first question is, Why is he hungry? I do not mind helping anyone who is hungry because he cannot find work or because he is sick and unable to work. But when someone is absolutely lazy and will not work, the Word of God says, “If any would not work, neither should he eat.” I am not going to have pity on someone who will not work if he has the ability to work.

The problem is that we have developed the attitude that all God demands of us all the time is that we be merciful and pitiful. We are pitiful, that is for sure. Piteous might be the better word. In other words, all we are supposed to do is have pity and mercy upon people—and that is it.

You cannot be more merciful or more piteous than God. In Proverbs chapter 1, He says, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: 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; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer." Proverbs 29:1 says, "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

There is a time when God's mercy ceases, when He is no longer pitiful upon people. We cannot be more merciful than God. We have to understand that there are some people you cannot help, and some

people who will not be helped. But we must still maintain a fighting spirit.

How is it possible not to have a fighting spirit when you understand that God is a man of war, King of kings, Lord of lords, and God of gods? He is omniscient, all-knowing. You cannot slip up on His blind side, because He does not have a blind side. You cannot surprise Him.

The Scripture says He knows our thoughts even before they come into our minds. You cannot defeat Him; He is omnipotent. You cannot hide from Him, because He is omnipresent, everywhere at once in the totality of His being. He is eternal, infinite, and immense. Why would we not have a fighting spirit when we understand that God is absolutely sovereign? He is our captain and our leader.

The Bible does not teach pacifism in any way whatsoever. We are not to be pacifists. Usually, those who are unwilling to fight even physically for themselves, their families, or their neighbors are violating the law of God, because God commands us to defend. Those unwilling to defend and fight for friends, family, and themselves probably will not fight spiritually either.

The Christian life and the Christian walk are a battle. That is why Paul told Timothy, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” If God did not intend for us to fight, why would He give us all the armor in Ephesians chapter 6? He gives us battle garments, all the encouragement, and all the help: “I’ll hold your hand. You just stand.”

So how have we fallen? We have lost that fighting spirit. We have given up, given in, given out, and settled down on our couches, and God says, “Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion.” A fighting spirit is a determination that we are not going to give in, give up, give out, quit, or back down. Sin is still sin. I do not care how legal sodomy is; it is still wrong. I do not care how legal theft is; it is still wrong. I do not care how legal murder is; it is still wrong.

And we have to say so. We have to do more than simply say so. A fighting spirit means that we continue with courage and determination, standing for that which is right and holy and true. Whether the world likes it or not, and whether Christians like it or

not, Jesus Christ is still King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and God of Gods, and He comes with His army. Read Revelation 19. We are supposed to be His army here on earth. We are the ones supposed to be standing. “Like a mighty army moves the church of God.” If that were so, the world would be a different place. America would be a different place. Each state would be a different place.

We must understand that one reason we are so despised by the world is our cowardice and impotence. I will show you, Lord willing, next week, one of the main reasons why we are so absolutely powerless. What we need is to ask God to give us a fighting spirit, so that we can fight for truth and righteousness in our own lives, our own families, our own churches, and our own communities. We must not give in, give up, or give out. Truth is truth. Right is right. Wrong is wrong. And God says, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.”

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help us to understand that our Lord does have an army. An army consists of fighting men. We must know how to fight, when to fight, where to fight, against whom to fight, and with what weapons, because Thou and Thou alone art our leader, our captain. As Thou didst say to Joshua, when he asked, “Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries?” He said, “Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. Take thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.” Thou art not simply the captain of our salvation, but the captain of our lives and, Lord, of Your host, which is Your army.

Give us grace, Lord, that we may indeed have the attitude of “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” because Christ, the royal master, leads us against the foe. Give us Your grace, we pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

CHAPTER 29

Does It Matter Who Runs The Nation?

Introduction and Scripture Reading

Turn with me to 2 Samuel, chapter 23. We will read verses 1 through 4. I am not going to expound these four verses, but I am going to use them to launch into the truth they teach.

I did not plan the messages I preached last week, this week, and, Lord willing, will preach next week as a connected series. I prepared one, then the second, and then the third, and it simply seems that the Lord fit everything together like hand and glove. Last week I preached, “Does America Have a Father or Is America a Bastard Nation?” Today I am bringing the message, “Does It Matter Who Runs the Nation?” Next week, Lord willing, I want to bring “When God Arises,” or “When God Rises Up.”

Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said,

the rock of Israel spake unto me, he that ruleth over men must be just ruling in the fear of God.

I have pointed this out before, but I call it to your attention again. It is amazing that David, in verses 2 and 3, claims direct inspiration four times for one simple truth. “The Spirit of the Lord spake to me”—that is once. “His word was in my tongue”—that is twice. “The God of Israel said”—that is three times. “The rock of Israel spake to me”—that is four times. And here is what God said: “he that ruleth over men must be just ruling in the fear of God.” These four verses actually answer the question: Does it matter who runs the nation?

Contrasting Godly and Ungodly Kings

There is an excellent way to observe and learn valuable lessons from the Bible when it comes to politics, government, and justice. One way to learn very easily is to consider the lives and reigns of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah and Jerusalem. Compare and contrast those who loved the Lord and obeyed Him with those who did not love the Lord and disobeyed Him. As you make that comparison and contrast, consider not only their reigns, but also the results of their reigns. Consider their wars or their times of peace, their prosperity or their economic failure, their conquests or their subjugation, as well as their religion.

Let us begin with a very obvious truth. When we are talking about Israel, we must remember that it was divided into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom with the ten tribes and the southern kingdom with the two tribes. Very pointedly, at the very beginning, there were no godly kings in the northern kingdom—not one. In the southern kingdom, there were some godly kings, and there were some very ungodly kings as well. But in the northern kingdom, it started out wrong and ended up wrong.

Jeroboam I was the first king of the northern kingdom. It was Jeroboam who took counsel and made two golden calves. He put one in Dan and one in Bethel. The interesting thing is the reason why he came up with that idolatry. The Bible says in 1 Kings 12:26: “And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return unto the house of David. If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto

their Lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel and made two calves of gold and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem."

"Behold, I God so Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and he put the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan." He made priests of the lowest of the order, who were not of the sons of Levi. He set up a day of feasting and a day of worship out of his own heart, out of his own imagination.

He made these golden calves for one simple reason. If the people continued to go down to Jerusalem, where the temple was, where the priests were, and where God said sacrifices were to be made, their hearts would turn again to Rehoboam, and they would slay him. In other words, it was simply for his own personal protection and for the personal continuance of his kingdom that he seduced the people and put them into idolatry.

Especially when you read through the book of Kings, you will find that whenever a king was a godly man and obeyed the Lord, you will usually find this statement: "he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father." Whenever you find a king who did not do that which was right, and was ungodly and wicked, you will find this: "...he did not that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father." There is a glaring difference between the rulers who were godly and the rulers who were ungodly. There is a glaring difference between those who were obedient and those who were disobedient.

Since we are talking about Jeroboam, consider 2 Kings 17:21. The Bible says, "For he rent Israel from the house of David, that is, God did, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord and made them sin a great sin." There is a practical application we can see. In other words, Jeroboam actually drove the people away from God. Why? What did he say? "It's too much for you." It was raining; it was too much trouble. It was too far and too much trouble. They did not have to go to Jerusalem. He actually drove them into idolatry. Basically, not

only through his own laws, but through comfort, he drove them. That is exactly what the Bible says.

If I were to ask you who the most wicked king in the northern kingdom was, I would hope you would say Ahab, because that is correct. If I were to ask you who the most wicked king in the southern kingdom was, I would hope you would say Manasseh, because that is correct. But there was not too much difference between Jeroboam and Manasseh in their rule and reign. God had sent His prophets to warn them, but they refused to hear. Second Kings 21:9 says, “But they hearkened not, And Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel.”

Jeroboam drove the people, but Manasseh seduced them. In fact, he seduced them to be more wicked and vile than the kingdoms God had kicked out to allow His people to come there.

We need to observe this: people may be driven to do that which is wrong, and people may be seduced to do that which is wrong. You can be driven by all kinds of pressure, just as we have had with masking and with the vaccine: “You either have to do this or lose your job.” That is pressure.

Modern America Mirrors Ancient Apostasy

There was a Peanuts cartoon in which one character said, “The Pope said, if you love your neighbor, you'll take the vaccine.” The other replied, “But forced love is rape.” Stop and think about that. People can be driven, but people can also be seduced. Think of all the propaganda being given to the American people on television and radio. It is there.

We need to observe that people may be driven and people may be seduced. If you are observant, as I believe most of you are, you will discern that America, as well as most other countries now, has fallen into the side of ungodly and disobedient rulers.

We have become a corrupt, ungodly, violent, blasphemous, unjust, wicked, and haughty nation, parading our sins openly, brazenly, and defiantly in the face of God, thumbing our noses in His face and mocking Him. If you turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 3,

you will see exactly what is happening in this country, because it happened in Judah and Jerusalem.

Isaiah chapter 3, verses 8 and 9, says, "For Jerusalem is ruined." That was the capital. "And Judah is fallen." That was the nation. "Because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of glory." They were provoking God, defying God, and daring God. He said they had fallen because they were provoking Him.

Then verse 9 says, "The show of their countenance doth witness against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom, and they hide it not." That is, they were proud of it. "Woe unto their soul, for they have rewarded evil unto themselves." The truth of the matter is, we have become just like Judah and Jerusalem, because we are proud of our pride days, our transgender days, and all of this, including the parades that we are going to, praising all of the wickedness and ungodliness as well.

Stop and think about this. Not only have we become proud of it, but our own government now promotes it, subsidizes it, legalizes it, and punishes anyone who is opposed to it.

Amos 5, beginning with verse 10, says, "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly." Here is why: "For as much, therefore, as your treading is upon the poor, and you take from him burdens of wheat, you have built houses of hewn stone, you're riding off the backs of the poor and the common folks, but you shall not dwell in them. You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine of them." God says, "for I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins. They afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right."

When the Bible says, "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly," remember that in Bible times the seat of government was basically at the gate. It was open. The king sat in the gate, and the ruler sat in the gate. If anyone had anything to say, they came to the assembly at the gate. This is why the Bible says, "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate."

God goes on to speak of their bribery, pride, theft, and stealing from the poor. They hate anyone who speaks against their sins, and they abhor him "that speaketh uprightly." All of the government in the Old Testament particularly was in the gate.

The Uniparty System and Elite Corruption

When we come to the government we have today, we do not really have a two-party system. It is not truly Democrats and Republicans; we have a uniparty system—a single party in which Democrats and Republicans collude. Someone has said, "Is there no difference?" Yes, there is a difference. The Democrats will take us over the cliff at one hundred miles an hour, and the Republicans will do it only at ninety miles an hour. But we are still going over the cliff.

I hope you remember 1968, when George Wallace was running for president. He said, and I quote, "there's not a dime's worth of difference between the Democrats and the Republicans." Do you remember that? That was back in 1968.

Charles Hugh Smith is an economist. He is an extremely conservative economist and well worth reading. Anytime you see anything by Charles Hugh Smith, read it. Here is what he said in an article: “This is how America works now. In your face, corruption is not just accepted, it’s glorified. Let’s score America’s wealth and power elites regardless of party or political persuasion.”

Here is his scoring for everyone, regardless of party or persuasion: integrity, zero; austerity, zero; restraint, zero; humility, zero; responsibility, zero; accountability, zero; sacrifice for the common good, zero; thrift, zero. He then says, “A society whose elites are so self-serving, corrupt, unaccountable, and devoid of any sense of good and evil, is doomed. What all the entrenched insiders in America’s parasitic, predatory elites and institutions don’t dare admit is that to protect themselves from consequence, we’ve had to sacrifice everything else. Having stripped the nation of the essential foundation of a just, enduring social order—accountability, consequence, rule of law, and a grasp of difference between good and evil—there’s nothing left but sound and fury, as if they’re hoping the endless political circuses and trails of breadcrumbs will forever distract us from their plunder and the injustice of the irredeemable,

corrupt America they fashion to protect their wealth and their power."

And that is right. All I can say is, straight on, Charles Hugh Smith. Someone says that times have changed, but the truth of the matter is, times really have not changed. Consequently, wicked people have not really changed as well. What was done in olden times, especially in the time of Jeroboam and in the time of Manasseh, is still being done today in America as well.

Proverbs on Wicked and Righteous Rulers

Depraved men operate the same way as they have always operated throughout the ages. We are given a particular truth in the book of Proverbs that demonstrates this: "When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase." When the wicked rise, men hide themselves. Why do men hide themselves? Because they are not only trying to protect their lives and the lives of their family, but everything that they have.

I get tickled every time I read through the book of Judges, especially when the angel came to Gideon. Gideon was hiding, threshing wheat, and the angel said, "Hail thou mighty man of valor." If he was a mighty man of valor, why was he hiding? Because he had common sense. He knew they would steal the wheat that he was threshing if they found it.

That is exactly what the Bible means: "When the wicked rise, men hide themselves. But when they perish, the righteous increase"—not only in population, but also in power and positions of authority. Proverbs 29:2 gives another verse that goes along with this: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Why do the people rejoice when the righteous are in authority? Because of truth, righteousness, and justice. And why do they mourn when the wicked beareth rule? Look around, and you can see why we are mourning. There is no justice.

I have said this before, and I think about it every time I talk about justice. I am not a communist, and I have no sympathy with communism. But there was one communist who said one thing with

which I totally agree. That was Gus Hall. Gus Hall said, "The reason we refer to our judicial system as the halls of justice is because the only place you can get any justice is out in the halls." And that is the truth. Nobody is going to have justice in a courtroom today.

The truth of our devastation in this country is clearly evidenced by our corruption, injustice, and theft by our own government on every hand. As you study the lives of the kings of Judah and Israel, comparing and contrasting them, you will find that oftentimes a godly king will produce an ungodly son who follows him. You will also find that an ungodly, reprobate king will produce a godly son. Solomon produced foolish Rehoboam. Wicked Abijah produced godly Asa. Godly Jehoshaphat produced ungodly Joram. Apostate Amaziah was the father of godly Uzziah. Wicked Ahaz produced godly Hezekiah. Godly Hezekiah produced wicked Manasseh, whom we read about earlier. Wicked Amnon produced godly Josiah.

The Example of King Amaziah

Grace does not run in families; depravity does. Blessings, prosperity, righteousness, and justice are not in bloodlines. All of that is from God Himself.

Does it matter if a ruler professes Christianity and then acts contrary to Christianity's principles and precepts? Does it matter if a ruler is a little righteous and a lot wicked? Does it really matter what you say if how you live contradicts what you have said? Let me ask these questions before I show you some Scripture.

Should it concern most Americans that Roman Catholics in Congress are mostly pro-abortion, support the LGBT lifestyle, and seek to persecute and prosecute anyone who does not agree with them? Should it concern you that most Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and other religious denominations in Congress continually violate the Word of God and their oaths to the Constitution? Should it concern you that Congress constantly passes laws that violate not only the Word of God, but the Constitution? In passing those laws, they are destroying liberty and freedom and seeking to bring us into complete subjection and captivity to a Marxist agenda.

Should it concern us that the president, as well as others, often speaks of the power and authority they believe they possess over and above the Bible and the Constitution? I remember Joe Biden saying that when he became president, he would use all of his power to do certain things, which, of course, were unconstitutional. May I remind you that no one has any power or authority except that which God ordains, and with every ordination of power or authority, there is always a limitation? The Constitution of the United States is a limited-powers document. The only power that any president, Congress, or judge has is that which is limited in the Constitution. Sometimes it is called an express-powers document, meaning that the only power they have is expressed in the Constitution itself. When a congressman or president talks about the power he has, he has no power except that which is expressed in the Constitution and in the Word of God.

Some claim unlimited power, which they do not have. Only God has unlimited power. I am simply pointing out the fact that we have a Congress, a president, and a judicial system that is absolutely and totally corrupt. Should you be concerned about the unwise and unjust wars into which our politicians get us? They enter those wars so that they may prosper, increase their power, or increase the power, position, and authority of their particular party.

Look at everything we have sent to Ukraine. Did you know that Ukraine was bombing the Donbass region, their own country where the Russians resided, and killing Russian citizens for eight years before Putin invaded? That is true. Of course, it was the prime minister who came out when the war began and said, “We are fighting for the new world order.” So my question is, should all of this concern us?

The answer, obviously, is yes. I want to show you a politician, a king who was a little righteous and a lot wicked, and I want you to see how God dealt with him. Turn to 2 Chronicles, chapter 25. We will be talking about King Amaziah, who had a nickname: he was known as the Thistle King. The reason was that he tried to start a war with Israel.

Amaziah was in the southern kingdom, and he sent to Joash, saying, “Let’s look each other in the face. I want to fight.” Joash

answered him in verse 18: “And Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife. And there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon and trod down the thistle.”

A thistle is nothing. A good, strong wind will break a thistle plant. You can snap it with two fingers or push it over with one finger. Even if it is on the ground, stepping on it usually does nothing, because it goes straight into the ground and hardly does any harm. Thus Amaziah has been known down through the ages as the Thistle King.

Amaziah was an apostate, one who had a little righteousness and a lot of wickedness. He was a compromiser. He had no character, no conviction, and no courage. He had just a little righteousness, not much, because his wickedness certainly outweighed his righteousness.

Look at 2 Chronicles 25:1–2: “And Amaziah was 25 years old when he began to reign. And he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jehoiadan of Jerusalem. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.” Note the phrase, “not with a perfect heart.” He had an imperfect heart—a heart of disobedience, a double heart, a divided heart, a compromising and apostate heart. Did he do some things that were good and right? The answer is yes. Look in verse 3.

When the kingdom was established to him, he slew his servants that had killed or murdered the king, his father, which was the right thing to do. The murderer is to be put to death. But he slew not their children, but did as is written in the law in the book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, saying, The father shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sins. He put to death the murderers of his father, but spared the children because they had not done anything wrong.

Moab and Amazigh gathered Judah together and made them captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, according to the house of their fathers throughout all Judah and Benjamin. He numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them

three hundred thousand choice men able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield. He knew how many fighting men he had and was preparing for war. He was going to fight the Edomites.

Here he did something wrong: He hired also a hundred thousand mighty men of valor out of Israel for a hundred talents of silver. Israel was apostate; they worshipped the golden calves. But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee. For the Lord is not with Israel to wit with all the children of Ephraim.

But if thou wilt go, do it. Be strong for the battle. God shall make thee fall before the enemy. For God hath power to help and to cast down. He could send the Israelite soldiers back home, or keep them and lose the battle.

Amaziah's great concern was this: What shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? The man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this. Then Amaziah separated the army that was come to him out of Ephraim and sent them home again. Their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger. Amaziah strengthened himself, led forth his people, went to the Valley of Salt, and smote the children of Seir ten thousand.

Amaziah had hired Israelite mercenaries, but the man of God told him to send them home: God would not bless him while he worked with them. Amaziah asked about the money already paid. The prophet answered, “Oh, don't worry about that. God is able to give you much more than that.” Interestingly, Amaziah obeyed.

Amaziah made war with the Edomites and won. But consider his absolute stupidity. After he had come from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought the gods of the children of Seir, set them up to be his gods, bowed down before them, and burned incense unto them.

The gods of the Edomites could not even protect them, yet he brought their gods and worshiped them. “Wherefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, Isaiah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods

of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?"

Now watch his arrogance: "And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that the king said to him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? Forbear! Why shouldst thou be smitten?" In other words, "You keep on, I'll have you killed. Don't talk to me like this. Don't rebuke me." Then the prophet forbear and said, "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel."

Here is a man who is an idolater, and so foolish that he takes the idols of the nation he defeated to be his gods. God reveals his stupidity, rebellion, and wickedness by sending him a prophet, yet he refuses to listen to the Word of God and to the man of God.

There is always a consequence to pay for refusing to listen to God. Look in verse 17: "Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Joash the son of Jehoias, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us see one another in the face." He wanted to face him down and fight him, to see who was stronger. Joash answered, "The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife. And there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle."

"Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites, and thine heart lifted thee up to boast. Abide now at home. Why shouldst thou meddle to thine hurt, that thou shouldst fall, even thou and Judah with thee? But Amaziah would not hear. For it came of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they sought after the gods of Edom."

Now, here is what I want you to consider. Look back at verse 20: "But Amaziah would not hear." He was the king. "For it came of God that he might deliver"—what is the next word? "them," plural, "into the hand of their enemies," also plural, "because they," son of the gods of Edom. So it was not simply Amaziah. Others followed him in that idolatry. Here is the principle: Amaziah's sin did not just affect himself. It affected the nation as well.

Watch verse 21: "So Joash the king of Israel went up, and they saw one another in the face, both he and Amaziah king of Judah at Beth

Shemesh, which belonged to Judah. And Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every man to his tent. Joash the king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah the son of Joash the son of Jehoias of Beth Shemesh and brought him to Jerusalem and break down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate 400 cubits." He also took "all the gold and silver and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-Edom and the treasures of the king's house and hostages and returned to Samaria."

Here was a ruler so proud and arrogant that he began a war, although the one he wanted to fight said, Look, just stay at home. Glory in what you have done. Do not destroy yourself. Do not destroy your nation. But he would not have it. He took all the people to battle, and they were defeated. How many were killed, we are not told, but they fled every man to his own tent. The wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and all the silver and gold was stolen from the temple as well as from the king. So understand this: our sins affect others. The Bible says in Romans 14:7, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

The Covenantal Nature of Government

You cannot escape this simple truth: whatever you do affects someone else. If I want to get drunk, I may say, “It’s just hurting me.” But until, in my drunken state, I get in my car, drive head-on into a family, and kill the entire family, it has affected somebody else. If I have an affair with a woman, it hurts my wife, my children, my testimony, my ministry, her family, and her family’s testimony. You cannot escape this simple fact: our lives affect other people, either through our obedience and righteousness or through our sins and disobedience.

When David was confessing his sin in Psalm 51, he said to God, “Against thee and against thee only have I done this evil and this wickedness in my sight.” Really? I know what he was saying: his sin was primarily against God. I understand that. But did he not sin against Bathsheba? Yes. Did he not sin against Uriah? Yes. Did he not sin against Ahithophel? Yes. Did he not sin against their

families? Did he not sin against the nation? Yes. It always affects someone else.

When I taught through Romans 13, I enunciated this principle, and I want to remind you of it. When a king or ruler sins privately and individually, only he, or his family, whoever is involved, is judged for that sin. But when a king or ruler sins openly and publicly, the nation is judged with the ruler. Why?

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, David and his family were judged, which was right. The nation was not judged. But when David numbered Israel, Joab said, "Why doth my lord want to do this thing?" Even Joab, as wicked as he was, knew that David was wrong. Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed. They numbered Israel, and God judged. Was it eighty to eighty-five thousand valiant men who died because of David's sin? David said, "I am the one that has sinned, but what have these men done?" Why did God destroy those people? Because everyone knew what David was doing was wrong, and no one lifted a finger to stop him. Joab said, "Don't do it," but he went ahead and obeyed. I want to show you a principle. I want you to think about this.

Anytime you are talking about any type of government, government is covenantal in nature. I do not care whether you are talking about family government, ecclesiastical government, or civil government. Government is covenantal in nature. Alice and I are in a covenant. We are a family. I am her head, and I am her husband; she is my wife. We have children, and we both raised those children. But it is a covenant. You go to most churches, or a lot of churches, and on their walls they will have a church covenant. Civil government is just as equally a covenant.

If you look in your Bibles to 2 Kings 11, verse 17, Johadiah the priest is making a covenant. He is making the covenant between the king, God, and the people, and between the king and the people. Here it is: "And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people," and then, "between the king also and the people."

In the first covenant, the king agreed to be God's king, and the people agreed to be God's people. God, according to His law, agreed

to bless them as long as they were obedient to Him. That is a covenant. Then he says, secondly, "between the king and the people." The king agreed to rule godly, biblically, rightly, and justly, and the people agreed to obey him as long as he did.

That is simple enough. When one party violates the covenant, the other party is loosed from obedience to that covenant. I am obligated to take care of Alice, but if she ran off and left me and ran off with another man, I would no longer be obligated to take care of her. If I am the pastor of the church and the people say, "We are not going to do what you are saying. We are not going to believe that Bible, and we are not going to obey, and we are not coming back," I am no longer bound to be their pastor. They do not want to obey. I can go somewhere else. The same thing is true of our own government. We have a covenant.

Now, first and primarily, we have the law of God, but secondly, we have the Constitution. The Constitution is a covenant. That is why every officer in government—whether a police officer, governor, senator, representative, or president—puts a hand on the Bible and swears to uphold and follow the Constitution of the United States.

As long as we are citizens, if our rulers obey the Constitution, we have a duty to obey the laws. But when they go contrary to the Constitution, we have no obligation to obey them. You say, "You're making that up." No, I'm not making it up. Read the United States Constitution, Article 6, Paragraphs 2 and 3. This is from American Jurisprudence, Second Edition, Volume 16, Conflict of Laws to Constitutional Laws, Paragraph 195:

"The general rule is that an unconstitutional statute, whether federal or state, though having the form and name of law, is in reality no law, but is wholly void and ineffective for any purpose. Since unconstitutionality dates from the time of its enactment, and not merely from the date of the decision so branding it, an unconstitutional law in legal contemplation is as inoperative as if it had never been passed and never existed. That is, it is void ab initio, that is, from the beginning. Such a statute leaves the question that it proposes to settle just as if the statute had not been enacted. Since an unconstitutional law is void, it follows that generally the statute imposes no duties, confers no rights, creates no office or liabilities,

bestows no power or authority on anyone, affords no protection, is incapable of creating any rights or obligations, does not allow for the granting of any relief, and justifies no acts performed under it. Once a statute is determined to be unconstitutional, no private citizen or division of the state may take any further action pursuant to its provisions.

"A contract that rests on an unconstitutional statute creates no obligation to be impaired by subsequent legislation. No one is bound to obey an unconstitutional law, and no courts are bound to enforce it. A law contrary to the United States Constitution may not be enforced. Once a statute has been declared unconstitutional, courts, therefore, and thereafter, have no jurisdiction over alleged violations. Persons convicted and fined under statutes subsequently held unconstitutional may recover their fines paid."

Who determines whether or not a law is unconstitutional? We, the people. That's why you should know your Constitution, and that's why you should know the Word of God. I don't have to wait for a court to say, "This is unconstitutional." It doesn't matter if the court says it is constitutional. If it is plainly unconstitutional, I'm still not going to obey it, because it converts no power, and it converts no authority; therefore, there is no obligation for me to obey whatsoever.

I want to show you a passage and have you remember what I am trying to show you. When a king or ruler sins individually and personally, he alone suffers. But when he sins openly and publicly, and no one tries to stop him, the people suffer with him. The people have no obligation to obey an ungodly rule or statute or law.

If you will turn in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 15, and look, if you would please, at verse 4, Jeremiah 15 and verse 4. There are plenty of passages that teach this same principle, but this one is the clearest, and I think the simplest and easiest to grasp. Jeremiah chapter 15, verse 4, we are reading about Manasseh, who is the most wicked king in the southern kingdom. And the Bible says in verse 4, God says, "and I will cause them," that is the people, "to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem."

God was going to send the people into captivity because of what Manasseh did. Manasseh seduced the people, and they joined him in sins of the flesh, fornication, and idolatry. Nobody tried to stop him. God said, “I’m going to judge him, but I’m going to judge them with him.” Listen to me: God judges covenant and oath breakers and the people that support them.

The Fate of Tyrants and Application

Now, go back in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 25, because we are not through. Whatever happened to Amaziah, the Thistle King? Let me show you. 2 Chronicles 25, verse 26. Of course, he was defeated by Joash, and the Bible says in verse—well, let us read verse 25: “And Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, lived after the death of Joash, king of Jehoias, king of Israel, fifteen years.” So he outlived Joash fifteen years. “Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, are they not written in the books of the kings of Judah and Israel? Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Laish. But they sent to Laish after him and slew him there. And they brought him upon horses and buried him with his father in the city of Judah.” Death is the usual fate of tyrants and idolaters.

If you have not done this, I challenge you to do it. When you get home and get on your computer, type in “picture of the state flag of Virginia,” or “picture of the state seal of Virginia.” You will find that on the flag and on the seal there is a woman portraying virtue. She is dressed as an Amazon, wears a helmet, and holds a sword and a spear. Above her is written, “Sic Semper Tyrannis,” thus always to tyrants.

She is standing with one foot upon the prostrate figure of a fallen king. His crown is lying to the side, carrying out the theme of victory over tyranny. The whip and chain that the king used are lying helplessly by his side because he has been defeated. Let me tell you something: I think you are going to see this next week in a much clearer light.

But sooner or later, in God's time, those who oppose Him, blaspheme Him, refuse Him, and reject Him will perish. Their time

will come to die, and they will die. But here is a sad, sad truth: look how many people will die because of their sins and rebellion. Think of all the young athletes and people who are dropping dead instantly and suddenly. Why?

Because tyranny said, “If you don't take the jab, you can't keep your job.” I hope you notice that American Airlines and even the FAA have now said that most pilots have a horrible EKG test and are not able really to fly. And did you know that those who went to Davos, Switzerland, for the Great Reset requested and required non-vaccinated pilots and non-vaccinated stewardesses?

Stop and think about it. Think of all the people who have died because of seduction, being driven, and propaganda. That is the sad thing. These people will pay, but look how many are going to suffer before they do pay.

Now let me make a couple of applications. The answer to the title of this message, “Does It Matter Who Rules the Nation?” is an astounding yes. It does matter to God, and it should matter to His people, because truth and righteousness are at stake; liberty and freedom are at stake. It is a matter of life and death, prosperity or economic disaster. It does matter who rules and whose law is upheld.

Do you trust the federal government? Do you trust the state government? Do you believe that politicians have your best interest in mind? Do you believe that their ungodly, unlawful, and unrighteous legislation is in line with the Constitution? Do you not know that, according to Romans 13, the power of government is to punish the wicked and protect the righteous? If that is so, what in the world has happened in our country? What has happened in our nation?

Here is my strong advice, whether you like it or receive it: Do not trust the government. Do not trust your federal government, and do not even trust the state government. You are responsible for your own life, your own health, and your own prosperity. You must do your own research and study and come to your own conclusions. Do not trust them. If you think somehow that tyrants will escape the judgment of God, you are mistaken.

Deuteronomy 32:34–35 says, “Is not this stored up with me, and sealed among my treasures? To me belong vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time, for the day of their calamity is in, and the things that make haste shall come upon them.” God said, Their foot shall slide in due time, and it will.

It does matter who rules the nation and what law is upheld. It matters whether we do that which is right and godly and rebuke the ungodly, even in the gate. None of us has the power of a magic wand; none of us can correct everything, and I understand that. But when it is our time to stand, we must stand and rebuke in the gate whenever we can. It does matter who rules the nation, and even more importantly, whose law is upheld.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, open our eyes, open our ears, and open our hearts. Help us to receive truth and to do what we can do: stand where we can stand, rebuke where we can rebuke, and correct where we can correct. Father, give us Your Spirit. Quicken us, O Lord. Turn us, lead us, guide us, and direct us. Help us to honor Thee in all that we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 30

A Perfect Picture Of Tyranny

Introduction: Defining Tyranny

Isaiah 36:5 says, “I say, sayest thou, but they are but vain words: I have counsel and strength for war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?”

Tyranny is the most despised word among free men and men who think in terms of freedom. We normally recognize tyranny when it comes in the form of despotism or totalitarianism. We can think of tyrants down through history, but we must also understand that tyranny is a shape-shifter: it can come in various and many different forms. It does not always come to us under the form of despotism. Tyranny can also be bureaucratic in nature.

It is not always proceeding from a despotic ruler, but may also come in the form of regulations and determinations from bureaucrats and their agencies that actually possess no real authority. Tacitus, who died in 117 A.D., said, “The more corrupt the state, the more numerous the laws.” Laws may be plentiful, but the regulations that apply the laws are horrendously multitudinous. Consequently, that is why today usually nothing can be done

immediately because of all the bureaucratic bumbling of the bureaucrats and all the red tape that someone has to go through.

One man told me just yesterday that it took him five days to get the power turned on at his place. Even the pole was already in the ground. Everything was there. It took him five days. So we are talking about tyranny.

Judge Andrew Napolitano said, "All power in the federal government comes from the Constitution and from no other source." Congress, however, "has managed to extend its reach beyond the confines of the Constitution domestically by spending money in areas that it cannot regulate and purchasing compliance from the states by bribery."

Here is the second one: "Does the Congress uphold the Constitution? Does the president? The answers are obvious. We have reposed the Constitution for safekeeping into the hands of those who ignore it. The consequences are death, debt, and the loss of personal liberty." Death, debt, and the loss of personal liberty.

Democracy as a Form of Tyranny

Democracy itself is a form of tyranny. How can that be true, since we normally equate freedom with democracy? In a democracy, the majority rules over a minority. Why should my rights, liberties, and freedoms be determined by a majority? What right does anyone have to say, "We are the majority, and therefore you must do exactly what we agree upon"?

Ayn Rand, whom I do not recommend for theological reasons—in fact, I think she was an out-and-out atheist—was nevertheless spot on concerning many political matters. She said, "Individual rights are not subject to a public vote. A majority has no right to vote away the rights of a minority. The political function of rights is precisely to protect the minorities from the oppression by majorities, and the smallest minority on earth is an individual."

That certainly is true. We live in a republic, not a democracy. The truth is that a republic is ruled by law, while a democracy is ruled by a mob. The word democracy comes from demos and kratos, basically meaning "people power." H. L. Mencken, who died at the age of

seventy-five in 1956, said of democracy, “As democracy is perfected, the office of president represents more and more clearly the inner soul of the people. On some great and glorious day, the plain folks of the land will reach their heart’s desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.”

Of course, there have been a number of morons in the White House, but the one there now is indeed a moron. Modern politicians always talk about democracy, about “our democracy.” The founders of this nation, however, were totally against democracy.

Historical Warnings Against Democracy

Everyone knows the story of the lady who asked Benjamin Franklin after the Constitutional Convention, “What kind of government did you give us?” His response was, “A republic, if you can keep it.” In 1787, Elbridge Gerry argued that democracy allowed self-interest, maliciousness, and especially malicious men, to mislead the masses under the guise of patriotism. Consider how many politicians claim to be patriots, while everything they do is contrary not only to the Word of God but to the Constitution. Gerry stated, “The evils we experience flow from the excess of democracy. The people do not want virtue, but are the dupes of pretended patriots.” John Adams said, “Remember, democracy never lasts long.”

A Perfect Picture of Tyranny

It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There is never a democracy that did not commit suicide. James Madison, who is known as the father of the Constitution because he was secretary at the Constitutional Convention, said this: "Where a majority are united by a common sentiment and have an opportunity, the rights of the minor party become insecure." He continued: "Democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths." It should therefore be obvious that what we are seeing in America today is the outcome and result of what we call a democracy.

We have actually developed into a tyrannical form of government. No longer is government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Isaiah chapter 36 gives us what I call a perfect picture of tyranny. The background is this: when we come to Isaiah chapter 36, Sennacherib has invaded Judah, the southern kingdom. He has taken some of the defense, or fortified, cities and captured them. Before coming to Judah, he had already conquered the northern kingdom and other kingdoms as well. Now he comes down, thinking that Jerusalem is going to fall into his hands like an overripe fig.

Background of Isaiah 36: Sennacherib's Invasion

Isaiah 36:1-2 says: "Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field."

Observe the principle enunciated in verses 1 and 2 before going any further. It is applicable today; all you have to do is look around and observe it, and you will see that it is true. Easy and opportunistic successes always encourage those who desire power and control to increase their efforts to subjugate others. Sennacherib had already subjugated the northern kingdom and other lands. He had won some of these fortified cities, and now he aimed for Jerusalem. These successes encouraged him. Therefore, he sent his lieutenant, Rabshakeh, to defy King Hezekiah, Jerusalem, and, in essence, the God of Israel and the God of Jerusalem.

In fact, when you read through the book of Isaiah, as well as 2 Kings 18, you find this: God takes it personally when Rabshakeh blasphemes Him, and He counts it as from Sennacherib, because Sennacherib is the man who sent him.

Notice the attitude of Rabshakeh in verse 4: “And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah…” “Them” refers to the elders of the city. Hezekiah was not there. He had sent the elders out there, and on the wall they were talking with Rabshakeh. So he says, “Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou

trustest?" We will come back to that passage momentarily, but notice in verse 4: "And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah"—not to King Hezekiah, but to Hezekiah. Yet notice what else he says: "Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria."

He leaves off the title of king for Hezekiah, adds it for the king of Assyria, and then declares that he is the great king. It was a matter of contempt to speak to a king by his first name without using the title of honor, "king." Rabshakeh was showing the contempt that both he and Sennacherib had for Hezekiah, for Jerusalem, and for the people who were there as well.

The principle seen in verse 4 and in verses 1 and 2 is that easy and opportunistic successes always encourage those who are seeking to dominate others and empower themselves over others to continue their efforts.

Consider the warning given again by Rabshakeh in verse 18. Notice that he simply refers to Hezekiah: "Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us." Now watch the question: "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" Look at what he is saying.

"We have been successful over all of these countries, over all of these cities. No one has stopped us." The truth of the matter is that the campaign of Sennacherib had been undoubtedly extremely successful. These despised cities had fallen to him one right after the other, and the lands had been conquered one right after the other. He now expected Jerusalem to capitulate and Hezekiah to surrender because he had accomplished all of this and was indeed what he was calling the great king.

At this particular point, we can see his pride, his arrogance, and his confidence. Look again at verse 4: "And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?" This

question was in reality a reproach and a slam against King Hezekiah. Rabshakeh was saying, in effect, “Look at all of our victories. There is absolutely no city, no land, no country, and no one that has been able to stop us. What makes you think that you can defend this city against us?”

In other words, here is what he was saying: “Are you insane? Why have you not already surrendered? Why have you not already submitted? Why have you not already come out and bowed before the great king? What is the confidence? What makes you think that you can win over the great king of Assyria?” This is exactly what he was posing in that particular verse.

Rabshakeh was going to follow five themes that would demonstrate to Hezekiah that it was absolutely useless and worthless to fight against Sennacherib. All five of these themes have been used against the American people—every one of them. The first theme emphasizes that Hezekiah could not successfully resist or fight against Sennacherib. Look at verse 5: “I say, sayest thou, but they are but vain words.”

The Five Arguments of the Tyrant

The word “vain” means that which is useless, fruitless, powerless, or worthless. It was worthless, he said, for Hezekiah to claim, “I have counsel and strength for war.” Then he asks, “On whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?” Notice that he acknowledged Hezekiah’s claim to have counsel and strength for war, but denied that he possessed either. In effect, he was saying, “I know you said you have counsel and strength for war, but you do not. On whom do you trust?”

What are you doing? You are going to fight against me? You are absolutely powerless and worthless. You do not have the ability to fight against me, and there is no way that you can possibly win. Joe Biden said, “If you want to fight against the government, you better have an F-15.” That was his message: You cannot fight against us; you cannot win. It is worthless and stupid to fight against us. That is exactly what Sennacherib was telling Hezekiah: There is no way that you can fight.

Why in the world are you rebelling against me? Why do you not submit to me and do what I ask? It's that simple.

In verse 6, here is a second theme. He says, "Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pier it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him." In other words, Hezekiah, if you think your allies are going to help you, especially Egypt, you are mistaken. They are not going to help you. Look at the allies of the American people. Think about all the money, all the welfare, all the materials, and all the goods that we have sent to other countries when they have had catastrophes and tragedies. Then ask how many of these countries have sent anything to us when we have had catastrophes and tragedies.

This is exactly what he is saying: You think Egypt is going to help you? Egypt is not going to help you. If you lean upon Egypt, it is going to pierce your hand. You are going to come out hurt. Your allies are not going to help you. You cannot fight against me.

Verse 7 gives the third thing. He said, "But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?" Sennacherib did not know that Hezekiah's destruction of the high places was the destruction of idolatry. What Hezekiah did was in obedience to God.

In 2 Kings 18, beginning with verse 1, we read: "Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did."

He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

Sennacherib certainly did not know the Word of God. He did not have the Word of God. He thought that when Hezekiah was tearing down all of these altars, he was merely alienating God against himself. In other words, God's going to be against you because look what you've done to His altars. They were not His altars. God's not going to help you. You're in this by yourself. Don't think God is going to help you.

How many times have we heard something like that? How many times have we said and heard people say, "We'll have to do it ourselves." Well, this is exactly the argument that he is giving here.

He mocks Hezekiah and points out that Hezekiah does not have the manpower to fight against Sennacherib. He says, "Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?"

He is saying, You're not able to fight. You're not able to resist. You certainly can't fight against this great army that we have assembled. In fact, to demonstrate that for you, if you will give me some pledges, if you will give me some hostages, I'll give you—ha!—2,000 horses.

The horse was a modern tank in those days. I'll give you 2,000 horses if you can set riders upon them. What he's saying is this: you can't fight. You don't have the equipment. You don't have the manpower. You might as well give in. You might as well give up. You might as well give out. Because there's just absolutely no way that you can fight against us and win.

In verse 10, Sennacherib claims divine authority: “And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? The LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.” Thus, Sennacherib claims divine authority to subjugate and destroy Jerusalem.

Have you ever noticed how the wicked always claim divine authority for their wicked acts? Those who desire to act contrary to God and His law always claim authority for their actions, even when those actions are blatantly unbiblical. Witness Washington, D.C., the

Democrats, and our state capitals. Listen to their words and watch their actions, and you will see how they contradict each other.

Out of the five arguments Rabshakeh brings against Hezekiah and Jerusalem, these arguments have been used against Americans: We cannot fight. We cannot resist. We are helpless. In fact, they claim divine authority. That is like Nancy Pelosi, who said, “God is on our side.” If you think that God is on the side of the abortionists, of aborticide, bribery, theft, lying, and murder, you are mistaken. God is not on the side of those who violate His law, yet they claim divine right. And when Joe Biden said that you need an F-15 to fight against the government, really?

The last I checked, there were approximately 338 million people living in America. There are 1.3 million active military personnel and 800,000 reservists—about 2 million altogether, not even 1 percent of 338 million. Can you imagine 10 percent?

There is a group called the Three Percenters. They are called that because, during the American Revolution—the War for Independence—3 percent of Americans fought for liberty and freedom. Three percent fought, and 3 percent outfought and defeated the greatest military power on earth at that time, England. I am simply pointing out the fact that 2 million people could stand against 10 million, 5 million, or 3 million. These arguments have not only been used against Hezekiah; they have been used against the American people.

The Nature of Rebellion vs. Resistance

In verse 5, Sennacherib says, "I say, sayest thou, but they are but vain words: I have counsel and strength for war." Then he asks, "Now on whom dost thou trust"—"that thou rebellest against me?" Sennacherib is accusing Hezekiah of rebelling against him.

Consider this: Sennacherib was never given any authority over Hezekiah or Jerusalem. He had no authority except that which he stole, except that which he usurped.

Rebellion can only be against lawful authority. If there is no lawful authority, it is not rebellion; it is resistance. Every individual has an absolute right to question authority, and you had better learn to

exercise that right. Just because someone demands something of you does not mean that he has the authority to demand it. If you do not learn to question authority, you are going to end up enslaved, indebted, and destroyed.

I could go to Clay and say, "Clay, write me a check today for $10,000." Why should he do that? I might say, "Clay, I have authority over you." Really? Where? If he did not question my authority and wrote me a check for $10,000, I would be back tomorrow for another check, and then again the day after. If he does not find out that I really have no authority or right to demand that, I could destroy him very easily and very quickly.

The point is that you must learn not only to question authority, but also to resist and reject unlawful and illegitimate authority—authority that has absolutely no basis or foundation.

Sennacherib did not have divine authority. God did not send him against Judah and Jerusalem. He did send him against the northern kingdom, but not against Judah and Jerusalem. Moreover, Sennacherib was not in the lineage of David, and he never received a popular vote. No one in Jerusalem voted Hezekiah out as king and Sennacherib in as king. No one chose him to be the great king. The authority he claimed was unlawful and illegitimate. Since he believed he was the great king, he believed everyone should submit to him. That is like some preachers who believe they are the great preachers.

They claim the right to tell everybody—even every other preacher—what to preach, how to preach, what to do, and what not to do. That is nothing but pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. That is what you have here.

Sennacherib did not have authority, but he did have power. He had this great, vast, and mighty army behind him. I may not have the authority to steal your money, but if I have a pistol to your head, I have the power to steal your money. There is a vast difference between authority and power, that is for sure. What Sennacherib had was not authority, but he had power.

Hezekiah messed up royally at the beginning. He tried to do something that should never have been done: he tried to buy off

Sennacherib and appease him. You cannot appease a tyrant. The more you give in to him, the more he demands; and the more you submit to him, the more submission he wants and demands. It is not just simple control that a tyrant wants. It is absolute, complete control, and he wants you to give him voluntary submission.

The Folly of Appeasement

Turn back in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 18. Remember, Hezekiah was a godly king, and yet he did something here that is exceedingly ungodly. Beginning with verse 11, we read: "And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes: because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them." They refused to obey God.

So God said, "I'll show you what the wicked servitude is really like," and He sent Sennacherib. Verse 13 says: "Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them." This happened right after Sennacherib took those cities and before he came demanding Jerusalem's surrender. Verse 14 says: "And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me."

"That which thou puttest on me will I bear." In other words, I'm trying to buy you off. "And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold." So basically, the king of Assyria, Sennacherib, said, "I'll leave you alone for so much silver and so much gold." And of course, Hezekiah provided it. But I want you to see what he did.

Look at it in verse 15: "And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD." What? Where did he get any authority to steal out of that temple? Where did he get any authority to take God's silver? Now watch it. "At the same time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria."

He could give all of his money that he wanted. Verse 16 continues with the consequence: “And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem.”

After he pays him, he sends the horsemen and the army: “And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field.” The point is this: you cannot appease a tyrant. You cannot buy him off. Hezekiah stole from the temple in order to buy off Sennacherib.

Hiram Mann put it like this: “No man survives when freedom fails. The best men rot in filthy jails, and those who cry, ‘Appease, appease,’ are hanged by those they try to please.” That is true. Appeasement does not work, will not work, cannot work; the only avenue that is open is resistance.

Unhappily, most Americans have been propagandized, brainwashed, and broken to the extent that they cannot think for themselves. Public education, or better stated, government education, has succeeded in dumbing down Americans. We no longer have a spirit to fight or resist. We refuse to study, research, and learn. Most Americans believe everything that comes on the boob tube. They soak it in and fall to the tyranny of the experts. We have heard men say, “Listen to me. I am science.” Or, “Do as I say. I’m Dr. So-and-so. I have all these letters behind my name. Therefore you must do as I say. I’m an expert in this field.”

Dan Whelan said it like this: “The sad truth is that the human animal has been domesticated to the point where it actually fears liberty.” Why does the average American fear liberty? Because liberty brings responsibility, determination, and self-control, and these things are lacking in the average American today.

We have no work ethic, no faith ethic; we have nothing. We have been handed everything on a silver platter, and that is how we want to continue. Ben Franklin said it like this: “A nation of well-informed men who've been taught to know and to prize the rights which God has given them cannot be enslaved. It is in the region of ignorance that tyranny begins.” The truth is that real, true American history is

not even being taught in our schools. Let me give you a good illustration of how we have changed.

When Abraham Lincoln required the states to send him 75,000 men for three months to make war on the seven seceded cotton states, he sent a requisition to Missouri. The governor, Claiborne Fox Jackson, replied: "Your requisition is illegal, unconstitutional, revolutionary, inhuman, and diabolical, and cannot be complied with."

There were men who knew truth, righteousness, and principles. He said, "We're not sending you anybody. Everything you're doing is wicked and wrong." Think about how we have been scammed. Think about the COVID debacle. What if, when the WHO and the CDC said there was a pandemic, the American people had said, "We understand that the WHO is backed by cultural Marxists, and that the CDC is not what it should be. We'll do our own research, study for ourselves, and come to the truth. We will base our actions upon the truth, and if our actions are not based upon truth, we will not comply.

"We will not take the jabs. We will not wear masks. We will not close our businesses. We will not cease visiting our loved ones in the hospital and nursing home. We are going to base our actions upon truth that we have researched, know, and understand to be true. Until then, you can kiss my foot, because we are not going to do one thing that you say."

Now, here's my question: What in the world could they do against all the people who refused to obey? Absolutely nothing. They would, in essence, be backing down.

Aristotle, the philosopher, said years ago: "It is also in the interest of a tyrant to keep his people poor, so that they may not be able to afford the cost of protecting themselves by arms and be so occupied with their daily task that they have no time for rebellion." Think about this for a moment.

I hope you're beginning to see why our economy must be destroyed. I understand that there are more arms in America than you can shake a stick at. Most Americans are armed, but most do not have the ammunition supply they need to keep up those arms. When

our economy is destroyed, you cannot afford to buy those arms, especially when you understand inflation. Inflation is not the rise of prices; inflation is the value of your money decreasing.

Therefore, it takes more and more to purchase one thing. When you are trying to purchase something to defend yourself with, and it costs thousands upon thousands of bucks, you do not have those bucks. When everything is so expensive and exorbitant that you are having to work almost eighteen hours a day just to keep your head above water and keep food on your table, you do not have time to think about problems. You do not have time to think about resistance. You do not have time to think, “I’m being enslaved.” All you are trying to do is survive.

I mentioned earlier that when Alice and I were children and teenagers, most wives stayed at home and kept the homes. My mother never worked outside the home. Most of the ladies I knew as a child and teenager worked in the home and stayed in the home. Today, it takes both husband and wife, and almost all the children too, working just to provide food.

You’ve heard me say this—I laugh, though it is not funny—but when Alice and I got married sixty years ago, I would give her ten bucks a week to buy groceries. I would fuss at her if she did not bring two or three of it back. She could buy meat, bread, milk, and everything we needed for a week on six or seven bucks. Today, you cannot even walk out of the grocery store with enough for a week for under 250 or 300 bucks.

I'm simply saying you understand why the economy must be destroyed, because now your time is going to be spent just trying to exist. What they are trying to do is drive us to despair and into poverty, to the extent that we will come to them and say, “Would you please help us? Would you please save us? All I want is a little peace.” And they will say, “Yes, we will take care of you. You will own nothing and you will be happy.”

I want to show you the ultimate goal. You may think I'm insane, but no, I'm not. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 19 and 20. The Apostle Paul says to these Corinthian Christians, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you,

which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

So here's my question: If you're a child of God, how much of you belongs to Him? The answer is everything you have. If you have been bought with a price, what does that mean? You are a slave. The truth is everybody's a slave. We're either a slave to Jesus Christ, or we're a slave to sin, or a slave to man. Everybody's a slave. As Christians, we recognize that we're the bondslaves of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul loved to call himself "Paul, an apostle, a servant"—which means doulos, a bondslave of Jesus Christ. He loved to call himself a bondslave of Jesus Christ.

The point I am trying to make is this: when you understand the global reset, Davos, and the new world order, you see that they will redeem you and purchase you for your reverence and worship. You will belong to them. You will own nothing and be happy, because they will take care of you, as long as you worship them, serve them, and are a good, obedient slave. That is a fact.

Now go back to Isaiah 36. If you think I am making this up, you are mistaken. Look at verses 16 and 17. Rabshakeh is still speaking: "Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present"—that is, make a covenant with me by a present—"and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards."

Consider what he said: Make an agreement with me; submit to me; covenant with me; give me a present; come out, and I will take you away to a land like your own. You will eat every one of his own vine—that is, a grape—and every one of his own fig tree, and drink water out of your own cisterns.

The Ultimate Goal of Tyranny: Worship

This offer that Sennacherib made is absolutely blasphemous. You can find the same offer in 2 Kings 18:31. Why is it blasphemous? If you read your Bible, you will understand. Turn to 1 Kings 4 and

notice verses 24 and 25. Something happened under the reign of King Solomon. Solomon and his reign were a type of Jesus Christ and His reign. We read: “For he”—that is, Solomon—“had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphsah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon.”

The picture of everyone living under his own vine and under his own fig tree denotes a happy, safe, quiet, full, and peaceable enjoyment of all the blessings of God. It was not necessary to live in fortified cities or cities with walls. Why? Because there was peace in the land. No one was offending anyone. No one was murdering. No one was stealing. Everything was peaceful and safe: comfort, security, and protection. All of this was from the Lord.

Solomon's reign pictured that of Jesus Christ. I'm not making that up either. Look in Micah chapter 4, beginning with verse 1: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains"—that's His kingdom—"and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

"And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks. Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it."

This is why I said it is blasphemous when Sennacherib said, "You come to me. You make a covenant with me. You agree with me. You submit to me. I'll take care of you, and you can dwell under your own vine, under your own fig tree. I'll give you peace. I'll give you

protection." In other words, the rule of man is trying to replace the rule of God and do what God and God alone can do.

The ultimate goal of a tyrant is worship. In order to have it, he must subdue, subjugate, and dominate; he must prove that he is a god by his power: “You will obey me or else. I’ll demonstrate I’m God. If you don’t bow to me, I will slap you down.” Tyranny is idolatry, because it seeks to dethrone God and overthrow Him. In practical application, it does so by denying and disobeying Him. Here is a perfect picture of idolatry: people claim authority when they have absolutely none and make demands of others when they have absolutely no right to make those demands.

Applications for Today

The first application is this: under our Constitution, we are the rulers, and the politicians are the servants. Yet we look around today at American people begging and beseeching Washington or the state capitol for something. No. We should be demanding and commanding. If politicians do not respond, they should be fired immediately, dispossessed of their office and their monetary retirement as well, because they are basically traitors. They have betrayed the Constitution and their constituency.

We must have an objective standard. It must be the Word of God or, at the very minimum, the Constitution. The truth is that there is no objective standard. When Alcee Hastings, the Democratic representative from Florida, was asked, “What are the rules in Congress?” he said, “We don’t have any rules. We make them up as we go.”

John Adams, one of our nation’s founders, said it like this: “Rulers are no more than trustees for the people. And if the trust is insidiously betrayed or wantonly trifled away, the people have a right to revoke the authority and to constitute abler and better trustees.” That is a fact, and that is where we have failed in so many areas.

The second application is this: we must cease trusting government. Government is not God. We place ourselves under a curse when we trust in man. Jeremiah 17:5 says, “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.” We must trust in

the Lord and learn to fulfill our responsibilities and obligations as best we can for God's honor and glory, trusting Him and His divine providence to supply our needs and work everything out. We need to do everything we can to be independent of government. We should be self-sufficient.

We should have our own garden, our own non-hybrid seeds, and our own animals. We should know how to treat our own medical conditions. That does not mean we have to be doctors. There are books like "Where There Is No Doctor" and "Where There Is No Dentist," along with other books written by doctors showing you how to survive in the wilderness and take care of yourself.

If you do not trust in God and fulfill your own responsibility, inevitably someone will come around and say, "I want you to make a covenant with me. You submit to me and I will take care of you, but you have got to do what I am telling you to do. You have got to obey me." We are either going to be the slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ or the slaves of man. It is just that simple.

Patrick Henry said it like this: "Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect everyone who approaches that jewel. Unfortunately, nothing will preserve it but downright force. Whenever you give up that force, you are inevitably ruined." When you give up your spirit of resistance, your fighting abilities, and your determination to remain free, you have already capitulated and bowed. You cannot give in, give up, or give out. If you want true liberty, the only way you can have it is where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Our Lord said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."

Conclusion: The End of Tyrants

Freedom is found in obedience to God and His Word. Without that, there is no true freedom. When you think about tyranny, do not think about a despot sitting on a throne, hammering down with a scepter and saying, "You will do this." It takes only someone telling you what to do who has no authority to tell you, while you unquestioningly obey and submit.

Look how that has happened in all of our lives. We must learn to question authority. I wish there had been a chapter where Hezekiah said to Sennacherib, "Who are you? Do I know you? Who are you to give me orders?" Hezekiah did pray to the Lord, and the Lord said, "I will defend Jerusalem." God came one night and slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Sennacherib went back shamefaced, and while he was worshiping his fallen god, his idol, his two sons murdered him and fled to the land of Armenia.

The truth of the matter is this: every tyrant will sooner or later meet his demise. Usually it will be at the hand of God, and it will be in such a way that everyone will know that God had His hand in it. It does not pay to be a tyrant. Tyranny is simply trying to rule over someone without the authority to do so.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth, and we ask, Lord, that You would indeed teach us. Help us, Lord. May we recognize tyranny by recognizing Thy sovereignty, Thy truth, and Thy Word. We ask, Lord, that You would guide us and direct us. Keep us free, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Give us, Lord, Your grace and Your mercy, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 31

Are You In The Shade?

Introduction to Psalm 121 and the Songs of Degrees

Psalm 121. David says, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." The title of the message is "Are You in the Shade?" You'll understand just a little bit later, and I will ask you that question again.

Psalm 121 is a Psalm of degrees. The title "Psalm of degrees" is given to Psalm 120 through Psalm 134. Four of these Psalms are attributed to David, one to Solomon, and the other ten are anonymous. The word "degrees" has been thought of and translated as steps, ascending, pilgrims, goings-up, and even graduals. Various Bible scholars have tried to discern exactly why this little group of 15 Psalms are here and why they are called a song of degrees. Some

have suggested that these Psalms were sung as the pilgrims were going up to Jerusalem for those three annual gatherings for the feast there.

You can find that in Deuteronomy 16:16. Some say these feasts were national anthems, so to speak, or these Psalms were national anthems sung as they went to the feast. Still others think these Psalms were sung after the captivity, based upon Ezra 7:7. Others would simply say this psalm, or these psalms, were sung as they ascended the steps to the temple to worship God. Then there are scholars who say these psalms correspond to Isaiah 38, where King Hezekiah was told by Isaiah, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." Hezekiah turned himself to the wall and cried and prayed. Before Isaiah got out of the palace, God sent him back and said, "You tell Hezekiah that I'm going to add 15 years to his life." So some would say these 15 Psalms are connected with the 15 years God gave King Hezekiah. And of course there are others who would say these Psalms are more what you and I would call the ascent of the soul in thanking God, going from the bottom to the top.

Let me give you a quote and try to tie these together for you. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, talking about the song of degrees as a whole, makes this statement: "This little Psalter is within the Psalter." Of course, all 150 Psalms are referred to as the Psalter, but he's calling these 15 Psalms a little Psalter. So he says, "This little Psalter within the Psalter consists of 15 brief songs. Why they are grouped together and what is meant by their generic name it would be hard to tell. The conjectures are very many, but they are mere suppositions. Out of them all, the conjecture of Dr. Jebb best commends itself to my own mind, though it would be quite consistent with the suggestion to believe that the series of songs arranged by David became the pilgrim Psalms of after ages and were chanted by the Lord's people as they went up to the temple. They are songs of goings up, as some read the word."

Those who delight to spiritualize everything find the essence of the soul or the language fitted to describe the rising of the heart from the deepest grief to the highest delight. I thought it well to indicate the methods by which learned men have tried to explain the term "songs of degrees," but the reader must select his own interpretation.

Even Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "I don't know which is correct," but he believed they were sung as you went up the steps to the temple. Whatever the meanings of the word "degrees," and however this little group of Psalms were collected and put as a song of degrees, at least we know this: they are the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God, and therefore for our benefit and blessing as well as for application.

Now, this particular song refers to a shade. That is what caught my eye. This entire psalm actually involves protection and preservation. In verses 1 and 2 David said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." In verse 5 he said, "The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand."

The Significance of a Shade

We read scripture often and read words we are very familiar with, and consequently many times we do not look at those words to see what they actually mean or how they are used in the Bible. This word "shade" is one of them. He said, "The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." So you would stop and ask yourself, why in the world would you ever consider the word "shade"? We see shades everywhere and every day. Every tree has a shade. Every monument has a shade. Every person has a shade. And so you would just pause and say, "Well, what in the world is special about a shade?" Now, the truth is that everyone enjoys a shade on a very hot day. In fact, in South Georgia, we normally say a shade, iced tea, and/or lemonade. In other words, you want to just sit back on a hot day and enjoy a nice shade, cool, and then of course a glass of tea or a lemonade as well. Many times we are very pleased when we

Find a shade, especially in extremely hot weather. I have been conscious of shades all my life, because when I was a boy, I had to work on a farm. I used to hoe cotton and chop cotton as well as hoe peanuts. There is a difference between hoeing cotton and chopping cotton, and many people do not know the difference. When you hoe cotton, you simply take the weeds out from between the plants. But when you chop cotton, sometimes the planter would plant a number of plants too close, and they cannot grow. So you have to go in and

chop the cotton out, and it will let you thin it out so it will grow. We did the same thing with peanuts. As a boy working on the farm, the only thing I wore was a pair of blue jeans. I did not wear a shirt or shoes. When it is July and August and you are out there hoeing cotton or hoeing peanuts or pulling weeds, and you are barefooted and that ground is scorching, you want to step in every shade that you can step in. I used to jump just to make sure I got in the next shade. I do not remember whether it was really cool or not; it had to be just a shade or a tad. But it was probably more psychological than anything else, that I just knew that I was stepping in a shade. Things have changed so much in the last seventy years, but in one sense they have not really changed that much that quickly, although we think of technology and we think it is really advanced. When I was a boy, I actually plowed mules and drove mules, and tractors were just coming in. I know there were steam tractors before I was ever born, but even those little Ford Fergusons were just coming in, and I can remember driving those. I can remember as a young boy, probably about six years old, driving one of the biggest and first John Deeres that ever came out. The clutch was a big, big handle, and you would sit on it and push the clutch forward to go, pull it back to stop. I could not sit on the seat and do that. I would have to jump up, push it forward, sit back and drive it. And when I got to the end of the road, I would have to jump up and pull it back and then ease it forward after I picked up the harrow to turn around.

It's crazy. When I was seven years old, my father took me to a building that is still standing in Fitzgerald. As you went in at seven years old, on the left-hand side you could buy mules and horses, and on the right-hand side you could buy tractors and cars and trucks. They kept the horses and mules and the cars and trucks all in the same building. So I'm simply saying here, shades have had a psychological effect on a lot of people for years and years. When we think of a shade, sometimes we just take it for granted.

Jonah's Misplaced Priorities

Let me show you the importance of it. Turn in your Bibles, if you would please, to the book of Jonah, chapter 4, right before the little book of Micah and right after the little book of Obadiah. You know that God had sent Jonah to Nineveh to preach to that great city, and

I want you to notice the connection of a shade with Jonah. Let's begin reading there with verse 5: "So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city." So he's made him a little booth. He's got a little shadow, a little shade that he is sitting under. Now look at verse 6: "And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief." And so Jonah was exceedingly glad for the gourd. So notice, if you would, now this gourd is an additional shade, and it's protecting Jonah. Watch verse 7: "But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, and it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did rise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished."

God says, "Jonah, listen to me. You're concerned about this gourd, about your shade, but you're not concerned about the 120,000 children that are not even able to tell the difference between their right hand and their left hand, as well as much cattle." So here's the point: Jonah was more concerned about his comfort than he was the 120,000 children in the city of Nineveh. We have to be thankful for our shades, for the small things and what you and I might even call the insignificant things. But yet, on the other hand, we cannot make our comforts the priorities in our lives. Most people today are more concerned with their own comfort, with their own personal happiness, than they are anything else. They could care less about people around them that are dying, people that are lost, anyone in need. In other words, people have become so absolutely self-centered, they never think about anyone else or anything else. So the danger is not in our comforts, but in embracing our comforts and making those comforts the priorities of our lives.

Comforts as a Curse

Now, in Amos chapter 6 and verse 1, God says this: "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!" Listen to what he said: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." So here are people who are at ease. They've got their comforts. They've got everything that they need. They could care less about anything else. And listen to this next phrase: "and trust in the mountain of Samaria." Isn't that interesting? Samaria was the capital in the Northern Kingdom. The mountain then speaks of the government. In other words, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, who are trusting in the government to take care of them and supply all of their needs."

That's exactly where we are today. That's why so many people are at ease, because of an unbiblical, ungodly welfare system. And people no longer need to work. So many were at ease in Zion, and many have taken our rest. We've taken our comforts when there's much work to be done. And the truth of the matter is this: our comforts can only be a blessing to us. They can also be a curse to us. If you look very quickly in your Bibles to the book of Hosea—Daniel, Hosea—look at Hosea chapter 4, and let me show you what I'm talking about. Look at Hosea chapter 4, and let's begin reading there with verse 11. We see the children of Israel had fallen into idolatry. So verse 11, God says: "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart. My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from their God. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery." In other words, God says, "You're committing adultery against me; now your family's going to be committing adultery against you." That is the lex talionis, the law of retribution. But notice, if you would, they wanted all of their sins in comfort. So our comforts may be a blessing, but they can also be a curse as well. I've often thought about this. Years ago, Alice and I were in Indiana. I was there preaching, and while I was there for that week, we stayed in the home of a couple that had been missionaries

to Russia. And they were not full-time missionaries, but they would go every year over there and minister and come back. And so while we were there, they were showing us some pictures that were taken of a Russian baptism, because a number of people had been converted. And here were a bunch of Russians. Listen to me: standing on the river with pickaxes and axes, breaking the ice so they could baptize. And you could see in the pictures, the ice was six and eight inches thick. And I thought to myself, "Lord, have mercy. There's no American Christian under the sun that would get in water like that." No. And in fact, very few Christians today, if the air conditioner went out in the building, would even attend.

When you stop and think of all the old brush arbor meetings, where they would throw a little temporary structure and cover it with brush, people would sit on benches and on the ground and on dirt, sometimes for an entire day listening to the preaching and teaching the Word of God—but no more. So the point I'm trying to make is this: many times our comforts become a curse.

Shade as Protection and Preservation

Now, I want you to go back in your Bibles to Psalm 121. Clearly this passage deals with our protection and with our preservation. I'm going to emphasize this with my mouth, with my tone, but look at it beginning with verse 3: "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." Notice what else he says: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. He shall preserve thy soul." So here we're talking about protection. And when you look back at verse 5, he says, "The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." Now you should be asking yourself a question at this point: what in the world does a shade have to do with preservation and protection?

It may surprise you to learn that the Hebrew word for "shade" is translated in our Bibles as "shadow" 45 times, as "shade" one time, and as "defense" three times. So your shade then can be a blessing, but it can also be a defense. A shade or a shadow—those two items

are synonymous—there are very grave implications on this when he says, "The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand."

Before I get started explaining some of this, I want to just show you a number of passages. Since we're in the book of Psalms, let's begin there. Turn back to Psalm 36, and be connecting in your mind protection and preservation with a shade or a shadow. Notice Psalm 36 and verse 7. Look what the Bible says.

David proclaims, "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." That's amazing: under the shadow of thy wings. Does God have wings? Of course not; God is spirit. What is he talking about? Remember the Ark of the Covenant in the most holy place. On top of it were cherubims with wings that touched each other. That's where the Passover blood was applied, and God said, "There will I meet with thee." Those cherubims are guardians of God's justice, showing that God is just and a protector of those who trust in him.

Now turn to Psalm 57, verse 1: "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast." David is experiencing great troubles and calamities, and he's saying, "I'm going to trust in thee. You're going to be my rock and my defense until this is taken care of." In Psalm 63, verse 7, he says, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

Turn to Psalm 91, verse 1: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Stop and think about that. I told you earlier there were some implications concerning a shade or a shadow. Pay close attention: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Let me give you a couple of implications. Suppose Joshua and I step outside, and I stand in front of him with my back to the sun. That means he's in front of me and he's

Standing in my shadow or in my shade means nothing can strike him from the front without striking me. In other words, I am his shade. I'm his shadow. I am, at that point, his protector as well. But

now here's the good thing. Look in Psalm 91, verse 1: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Hang on. So if Joshua and I are standing out there and he is standing in my shadow, what does that mean? It means I'm right there. I am there. If I were not there, there would not be a shadow. I am there presently, in presence. I am there. And that means this: if we are in God's shadow, it means God is there with us. It means he is real. Only reality can cast a shadow. So he is there and he is our protector. Now look in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 25 and verse 4. Here it is again. Isaiah 25, verse 4: "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." Actually, the terrible ones are the armies of the enemy. In other words, God is our defense. God is our protector. Look, if you would, in Isaiah 32, verse 2. Again, he says it like this. In fact, let's read with verse 1 so you can see we're talking about the Lord: "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." So the shadow or the shade of the great rock, of course, is our Lord. Then if you would turn in your Bibles, please, to Isaiah 49 and look at verse 2. The Lord God says this: "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me." Note now.

He said, "He hath hid me in the shadow of his hand." Wow. Now that's going to be obvious just a few minutes later. So look now in Hosea chapter 14, verse 7: "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." So if you are dwelling in him and you are dwelling in his shadow, you're dwelling in his shade. You're next to him. You're close to him. You're under his protection and under his provision. Now here's a question as you go back and look in your Bibles, please. As you go back and look in your Bibles at Psalm 121, verse 5, here's another question that you should be asking. He says, "The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand."

The Right Hand Significance

Why does the scripture say that the Lord is a shade upon our right hand? Is he not also a shade upon our left hand? Is he not also a shade upon our entire body? Why then does the scripture say that he is our shade upon our right hand? The answer is very simple, and that is because most men are right-handed. That is not a throw-off, and that is not a put-down on anyone who is left-handed. My father and my mother were both left-handed. My sister and I are both right-handed. So I'm just simply saying most men are indeed right-handed, and there are more right-handed men than there are left-handed men.

And we use this term frequently in reference to our sons and our grandsons. I've said it in reference to my grandson, especially when they were smaller, I would say, "He's my right-hand man." And when I would say, "He's my right-hand man," it means he has the place of prominence, the place of importance. I can't do without him. I'm just simply saying he is number one in my book. That's all I'm saying. Now, this may shock you, but do you realize that Jesus Christ is God's right-hand man? I want you to look in your Bibles to Psalm 21, and I'm going to show you several verses. Look in Psalm 21. This, of course, is a psalm of Jesus Christ. Notice, if you would, in verse 8. Psalm 21, verse 8. David says concerning God, "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee." That's interesting: "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies," and then he specifies by saying, "Thy right hand shall find out all of thine enemies." Now I'm going to show you

In a few minutes we will see Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of God the Father. But do you realize our Lord said in John 5:22–23, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son"? Why does Jesus Christ have all judgment? The next verse answers: "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father." When the Bible says all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father, "even as" means equal to. Just as God is God, Jesus Christ is God. And our Father said in Isaiah 42:8, "My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

So Jesus Christ has to be God incarnate, because he wants Jesus Christ praised equally as he is praised and honored.

Now turn in your Bibles to Psalm 110, the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. It is the psalm of the Messiah, the psalm of the Lord Jesus Christ. Beginning with verse 1: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Jesus Christ is God's right-hand man, seated at the right hand of God the Father. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Now look at this: "The Lord at thy right hand"—that's the Lord Jesus—"shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath."

He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

Now with that in mind, turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, and begin reading with verse 7. Remember, the Lord at his right hand is going to strike through kings and princes, and wound the head of many countries. Notice what the Bible says in 2 Thessalonians 1:7: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." That is the Lord on his right hand. Since most men are right-handed, the right hand is viewed as absolutely necessary. The right hand is the fighting hand. If Joshua and I are going out to fight, I'm going to have my support side hand, my left hand, in front to block, and I'm holding this one back to hit him with. That's the powerful hand, more powerful than the support side or the left side. So it is the right hand that holds the sword, pulls

the string on the bow, throws a spear, and in our day presses the trigger. In other words, it is absolutely necessary.

Now turn to Psalm 140, because I made a statement earlier and I said I wanted you to see it. Remember, the Word of God said that you would be under the shadow of his hands. So look at Psalm 140, note what David said in verse 7: "O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." How did God cover David's head? He placed the shadow of his hands over David's head. No harm can come to David as long as David is under the shadow of God's hands.

God's Defense in Daily Life and Spiritual Battle

One does not need armor when God is protecting him; if God is not protecting him, all the armor in the world will not help. It is just that simple. We are still talking about a shade or shadow being protection, preservation, being where you and I are defended by God. If we fight in any battle, skirmish, or war, the truth is he is our protection and preservation. Even in ordinary everyday events, he is our protection and preservation.

Years ago, I was carrying a trailer loaded with lumber on the back of a pickup truck that was also loaded with lumber. I had a friend with me to help with that lumber. We were driving not more than 20 or 25 miles an hour because the load was heavy. Somehow that trailer jackknifed and started pushing me right off the highway into a ditch, with a whole lot of trees right on the other side. Brakes would not help, and the only thing I could say was, "Help, Lord, help." Immediately the truck stopped right in the ditch. Just as I got out to survey the damage, here came a neighbor with a four-wheel drive pickup and a chain, and pulled me right out and got me back on the road. So I am simply saying the Lord is our defense even in these ordinary things that you and I go through every day and do not even realize it.

Now let me show you a verse. Look in your Bibles at Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 31. I can quote it, but I want you to see it. Young people, this is a good verse to memorize—short but very good. "The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord."

But safety is of the Lord. Let me give you a quote from Matthew Henry. Listen to what he says concerning God's preservation.

He says, "God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we've had of his power and care in dangers of one kind may encourage us to trust in him and depend upon him in dangers of another kind; for nothing can shorten the Lord's hand." So when we see how God has delivered us and protected us and defended us in one area, it ought to be building a foundation of trust for the Lord to continue to protect us in other areas as well. Now when God is our shade and when we are in the shadow of his hand, we are not going to be moved. David said it like this in Psalm 16, verse 8: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." I'm here. I'm not going to leave. I cannot be moved. So when God is at our right hand, it means we're hemmed in, we're hedged in with the power of God against present evils and dangers and any that shall come as well.

Now, let me give you two other verses. I want you to look in your Bibles, first of all, to Psalm 109, and then we're going to go to the book of Zechariah. Zechariah is right before the book of Malachi, next to the last book in the Bible, but notice in the Old Testament. So notice, if you would please, in Psalm 109. Look, if you would please, at verse 31. Psalm 109 and verse 31, look what the Bible says: "For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul." Now let that sink in, because I'm going to show you a good illustration. "For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul." Now if you would turn in your Bibles to the book of Zechariah, right before the book of Malachi, next to the last book in the Old Testament. Notice, if you would, in Zechariah chapter 3. Zechariah chapter 3, and let's begin reading there with verse 1. Look at this: "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." Now there's an old song

There used to be a song—I hadn't heard it in years—that said, "There were seen when the weakest saint is upon his knees, then old Satan flees." Excuse my grammar, but that ain't so. Here's Joshua

the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing right there to resist him. But look at verse 2: "And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Someone else was at Joshua's right hand. J.C. Philpot said concerning this verse: "This expression implies, first, that he—the angel of the Lord, the Lord Jesus—appears there as a friend. How cheering, how comforting it is to have a friend to stand by us when we're in trouble! Such a friend is Jesus. In the hour of necessity, he comes as a friend to stand by the right hand of the poor creature whose soul is condemned by guilt and accusation. But he stands in a far higher relation than that of a friend. He stands, too, as surety and a deliverer." You could say advocate. He goes, as it were, into the court. When the prisoner stands at the bar, he comes forward and stands at the right hand as his surety and bondsman. He brings out of his bosom the acquittance, the debt signed and sealed with his own blood. He produces it to the eyes of the court and claims and demands the acquittal and absolution of the prisoner at whose right hand he stands. He stands there, then, that the prisoner may be fully and freely

Pardoned and completely justified from those accusations that condemn his soul—oh, sweet standing, blessed appearance! So it doesn't matter who accuses us; there's someone else standing at our right hand as well. Now turn over to Romans chapter 8. Verse 1 is another good verse to memorize: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." No condemnation. Now skip down to verses 33 and 34: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." No one can charge us with anything that will stick as long as our Lord is the justifier. He asks in verse 34, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." So there can be no condemnation because our great advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ, is at the right hand of God, and he is the one who either justifies or condemns, and he is not going to condemn those whom he has justified.

Conclusion: Are You in the Shade?

Now look at Psalm 121. This excited me when I read through this song. Verse 5: "The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." Just ask yourself this one simple question: what are the implications of God being the shade upon my right hand? Here's the answer in verses 6, 7, and 8: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." So I can ask you this question after I've explained this: are you in the shade? Are you under the shadow of his wings? Are you protected and preserved by him? Does his defense rest upon you? Are you trusting in him, and are you ready and able and willing to give him the honor and the glory, recognizing that without him you are nothing and can do nothing? Are you in the shade? The shade is not only a place of coolness, it's not only a place of blessing and delight, it's a place of defense.

Now let me make an application. The fact that his shade is upon our right hand indicates that it does not matter what evil befalls us, what situations we sink into, or what circumstances attend unto us. If he is our shade, he is our protector. Nothing evil against us is going to prosper; it is going to fall and fail. So I have news for Mr. Klaus Schwab and the Great Reset and the New World Order crowd: you are not going to succeed. You are going to fall flat upon your face, because Jesus Christ is on the throne, and he is the sovereign God who either justifies or condemns. If you understand this principle, there is no need to be discouraged, downhearted, or downtrodden. The child of God need not have any fear. What did David say? "I will fear no evil." Why? "For thou art with me." It is astounding how many times the Word of God says, "Fear not," and yet many times we disobey and are fearful. We have no reason to be fearful, for he is our shadow, our shade, our protector. Now I want you to turn in your Bibles to one last passage, Psalm 46. Psalm 46 may not mean anything to you—I hope it does—but one of my favorite hymns was written by Martin Luther: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, a Bulwark Never Failing." Psalm 46 is the psalm from which Luther drew the inspiration to write that hymn.

David begins: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

What did he say? "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, even though the earth be removed and the mountains cast into the depths of the sea. We will fear not." To have faith and to rest in the shadow of his wings puts us in the shade: the place of rest, blessing, and defense. The Lord is our defense. We shall not be moved.

Let's pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we're thankful for your protection and preservation. You have protected and preserved us so multitudinous times we do not even know or realize it. May we trust in thee and rest in thee, and may we fear not, for thou art with us. Give us your grace and mercy. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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