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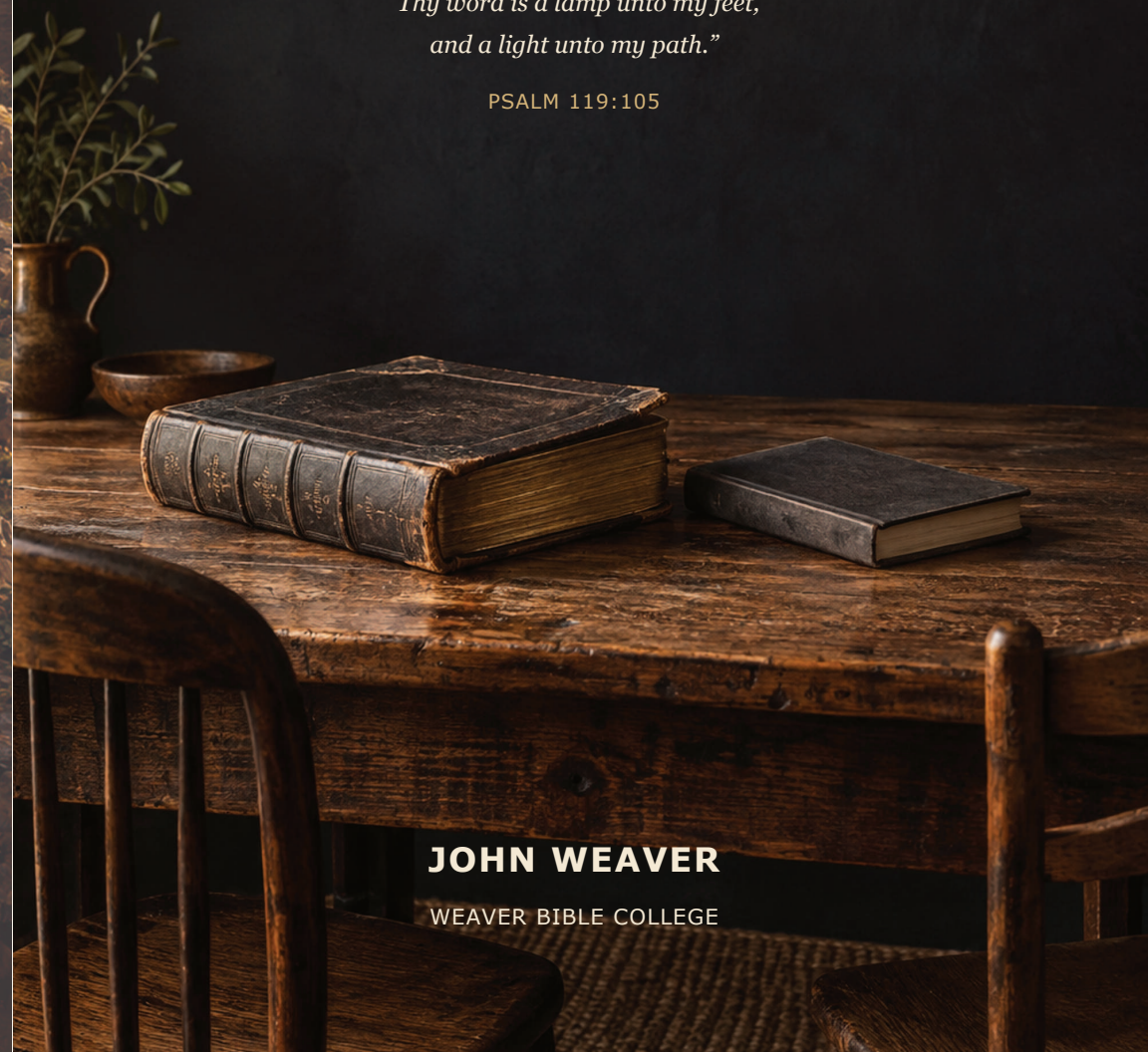
BIBLICAL STUDIES

The Christian Family:

Children, Fatherhood, and Generational Faithfulness

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

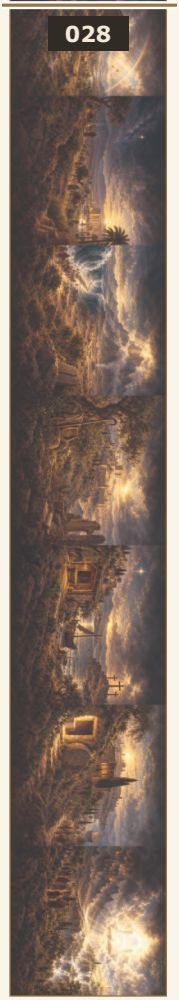
PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE





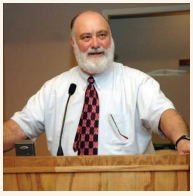
We will not hide them from their children.

PSALM 78:4, EXCERPT

Family life joins responsibility, instruction, and the transmission of faith across generations. This collection brings together sermons on children, fatherhood, grace, and the duties of the household, alongside historical illustrations and conference material. Readers are invited to consider these teachings in the light of Scripture. Conference contributions and speaker boundaries are identified in the review edition.

“I can teach my children to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but I cannot believe in Him for them.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons and separately identified conference contributions are presented here by Weaver Bible College.

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The Christian Family: Children, Fatherhood, and Generational Faithfulness

Family Government

John Weaver

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The Christian Family: Children, Fatherhood, and Generational Faithfulness

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

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CHAPTER 1

Moloch Worship

May 13, 2001

Introduction and Scripture Reading

I am going to be dealing with what is known as Moloch worship. That is a good Mother's Day sermon, isn't it? We are thankful for our mothers, but those of you who have known me for years know that I never let special days get in my way. I keep preaching whatever I have been preaching.

I laughed when I spoke with a fellow preacher this past week. I was preaching in West Virginia on Easter Sunday morning. There were perhaps three or four hundred people at the church, and the pastor leaned over to me and said, “Well, Brother Weaver, there are probably fifty or sixty folks here at this church today who have not been here all year long.” I said, “Well, they are in for a surprise.” On Easter Sunday morning, I preached on hell for an hour and a half. Needless to say, he said they probably would not come back for another year.

Today we are going to look first at Deuteronomy chapter 18, dealing with the subject of Moloch worship, and then make the application. Deuteronomy chapter 18, beginning with verse 9:

"When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abomination of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination of the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations which thou shalt possess hearken unto observers of times and unto diviners. But as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee to do so."

Now turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 12. Hold chapter 18, that is our main text, but look in Deuteronomy chapter 12, beginning with verse 29: "When the Lord thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land, take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods?"

"Even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God. For every abomination of the Lord which he hated have they done unto their gods. For even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

Leviticus 18:21 says, "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech. Neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord." Note the command: "thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire unto Molech."

Leviticus 20, beginning with verse 1, says: "Now, the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Again thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that

sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech. He shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones, and I will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary and to profane my holy name. If the people of the land do in any way hide their eyes from the man when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not, then I will set my face against that man, against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a-whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech from among their people. And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards that go a-whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people."

These passages show that the main sin condemned in the Old Testament was what was known as Moloch worship. It is easy to assume that this belonged only to the Old Testament: the heathen did it, and God's people became involved in some of it.

Some may think, "That is all in the past. It has nothing to do with me today." You are absolutely, totally wrong. Since God is sovereign, the Lord of heaven and earth, and the maker of heaven and earth, any attempt to know or control the future outside of God is nothing less than contempt of the Lord. That is why, in Deuteronomy chapter 18, every one of these things is condemned. Look at verse 10: "There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire or that useth divination."

What in the world is divination? The word divination is from deus, which is God, or divus, which literally means pertaining to God. Divination is supposedly information obtained from deity. In other words, its underlying assumption is that certain supernatural spirits know things and are willing to allow you to have that information based upon certain conditions.

That is why you have fortune tellers. For the last several weeks, I have seen a woman who refers to herself as Sister Cleo, I think it is, sitting there with tarot cards and claiming that she will tell all of your future. That is divination. She is saying that certain spirits possess this knowledge and that she can obtain the information

based upon certain conditions. Divination is condemned in the Bible.

God says there is not to be a diviner among you. Then notice that he says, “or an observer of times.” The word for observer of times there is augury, literally the practice of foretelling the future based upon signs or omens, like the horoscope. That is why I never read the horoscope. Your life is not controlled by stars or the movement of the planets. Your life is controlled by a sovereign God.

God says there is not to be any divination, any observer of times, nor an enchanter. An enchanter was a whisperer or a snake charmer, so to speak—someone supposedly able to whisper magical things to you. Nor an enchanter, nor a witch. A witch was simply someone who uses charms or spells.

Usually we refer to witches as anyone who does that, but the male is normally referred to as a warlock. But the warlock or the witch—it would all be the same thing. Scripture says, “or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits,” referring to someone dealing with séances and that kind of thing. Then it says, “or a necromancer.” What is a necromancer? It has to do with the dead. Necros is the Greek word for dead. A necromancer is someone who claims that he can talk to the dead. That is like these spiritualists who try to call people back. A wizard, of course, is someone who claims to reveal the secrets of another world.

All of these things are condemned here in the Scripture. But notice what he says in verse 10: “There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire.” That phrase refers to Moloch worship. The key evil in the Old Testament was Moloch worship.

The Meaning of Moloch and Its Introduction into Israel

The word Moloch is used several different ways in our Bibles. There is the word Moloch, the word Melech, the word Malcham, and the word Milcom. All of these are variations and different spellings of the word Moloch. In Jeremiah, chapter 49, beginning

with verse 1, God says concerning the Ammonites, “Thus saith the Lord, Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? Why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities?” In the Hebrew, the word king there is Moloch. The word Moloch simply means king. In verse 3, the word Moloch means king or kingship. Moloch worship is an extension of Baal worship.

The worshipper of Moloch was also a worshipper of Baal. Moloch worship was given by the children of Ammon, but it was not limited to the children of Ammon. In 1 Kings 11:1, we see how Moloch worship got into the land of Israel, and how many of the Israelites became involved in it.

“But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods. Solomon clave unto these in love.” God had forbidden this intermarriage, and yet Solomon intermarried. Then, in verse 4, we read:

“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.”

Then, in verse 7: “Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.” Here is Solomon introducing Moloch worship into Israel. In verse 33 of the same chapter, the Lord says: “Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father.”

King Solomon introduced Moloch worship to the children of Israel. God said that none of their children were to pass through

the fire. What does passing through the fire mean? First of all, there are two illustrations of passing through the fire. Jeremiah 32:35 shows how prevalent Moloch worship became even in Judah and Jerusalem.

Two Aspects of 'Passing Through the Fire'

Jeremiah 32:35 says, “And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.” Remember that Moloch worship was an aspect of Baal worship. Here we see the connection between Baal worship and Moloch worship, as they caused their children to pass through the fire.

In 2 Kings 3, we see one aspect of this practice. There was a war: “And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall.”

“And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.” Certainly, causing your children to pass through the fire means, in one sense, offering them as a physical sacrifice to a false god. You say, “Brother Weaver, nobody in America would ever do that.” What do you think abortion is? It is offering your children to the god of expediency—or, basically, to the god of selfishness.

But there is that aspect: some of these people literally put their children on the sacrifice. There is also another aspect. If you look in 2 Kings 23:10, we read: “And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.”

Not everybody sacrificed their children to Molech in the sense that the children were killed. But they would pass their children through the fire, pass them over the fire, or have them in their

hands and very quickly run them over the fire. That was known as lustration, or what you and I would call dedication.

Although the child was a living child and continued to live, all that meant was that the child was now dedicated to the service of Moloch. It is just like we parents, many times as Christians, when we are blessed with a newborn, come before the church and say we want to dedicate this child to the Lord. What we are saying in reality is that we want to dedicate ourselves to raise this child for the Lord Jesus Christ. You see what I am saying? These people did the same thing, except they were saying, "I'm giving this child unto Moloch." So, not every child that was passed through the fire was killed. Some were just presented as a living sacrifice to Moloch.

That is basically what we do to our children when we educate them in humanism, let the world educate them, and let them learn to think like heathen. Listen carefully: we are dedicating our children, basically, to Moloch.

Moloch Worship as a Political Religion

I want to show you several things today. First of all, I want you to understand that Moloch is a political religion. We are living in a day when, if you are not politically correct, you are really frowned upon and persecuted. Moloch worship is a political religion first. I will take these one at a time. Let me show you that Moloch worship is a political religion. Now, let us take the word politics. Everybody talks about politics. They say, "Politics, boy, that's dirty." Do you know what the word politics means? The Greek word polis is the word city.

We talk about a metropolis. That is a great city. Anytime you see the word polis, it means city. Politics simply means "of a citizen." That is all. How can I say, and why does the Bible teach, that Moloch worship is a political religion? I told you that I would give you a little philosophy and a little history, so listen carefully. I am going to tie it together, show it to you from the Bible, and then show it to you practically.

The Bible teaches that between God and man there is a discontinuity. Man is not God, neither does he become God. But

heathen have always believed that God and man were one stuff. They were one ooze. The philosophical term is monism, which comes from mono, meaning one.

Here is a pyramid. I have drawn this picture, and I am going to use it several times. Everybody is familiar with the pyramids of Egypt. Why did they build those pyramids? You say they were just graves. No, there was more than tombs and graves, and more than astrological observatories. There was a philosophy behind them.

If you were to put earth and grass on the bottom, animals above them, men and women above the animals, the priest above men and women, and the king above the priest, all the pyramid teaches is this: We are all one stuff. The only reason the king is higher than we are is that he has more stuff than we do. He has more ooze. God—the only reason He is God—is that He has more ooze than we have. In other words, every one of us has the potential of becoming gods.

That was the pagan philosophy. Anytime you saw a pyramid—and it did not matter whether it was an Egyptian pyramid, an Assyrian or Mesopotamian obelisk, or anything else—it all expressed the same philosophy. The pyramids showed man ascending up the scale of being. Man was becoming God. Numerous cults today teach that man actually becomes God. The heathen taught that there is a continuity of being, but the Bible says there is a discontinuity of being, because man is a creature, and that is all he ever can be.

Whenever the heathen wanted to show that God was coming down to man, they drew an inverted pyramid. When the two pyramids touched, that was the position of the king. The king was the divine ruler, the God-man, and the one who held heaven and earth in balance. That is why Pharaoh was worshipped as a god.

That is also why God struck the firstborn in the land of Egypt. Every one of the ten plagues was directed at a false god of Egypt. Finally, when the firstborn of every family in Egypt died, it was a strike at the king. The king claimed to be God, yet he could not preserve alive his own child, much less the children of his people.

It demonstrated that he was not God. Nevertheless, he claimed to be the go-between between God and man.

The king tried to balance what we would call chaos and order. You cannot read or understand much of our history unless you understand much of the pagan philosophy. Everyone has heard of the twelve days of Christmas. Did you know that the twelve days of Christmas is absolutely, totally pagan? It came from Bacchanalia and Saturnalia, when these ancient empires allowed utter chaos and confusion to reign for twelve days. The vilest criminal was released from his dungeon and placed on the throne for twelve days. He could do whatever he wanted, including sleeping with the queen, but he could not pardon himself. After twelve days, the king returned, executed him, and restored order. Thus the king was the divine ruler who brought order out of chaos.

When man is ascending to God, he goes up and builds the pyramid. When the gods come down, the pyramid is inverted and touches. What do you have when the two pyramids intersect, when the divine comes down and man goes up? Do you see how this is not a godly emblem at all? It is a pagan emblem that teaches that man and God intertwine and intermix as man ascends to deity and Godhead.

I have said that Moloch worship is a political religion. In the Bible, those heathen kings held absolute sway and absolute rulership. If that heathen king said, “Steve, die,” he died. If he said, “Daniel, live,” he lived. The king had absolute power. In other words, to the degree that the king manifested absolute power, to that degree he was saying, “I am God. I control things.”

The Moloch State and Apostasy

Have you ever wondered why, in our country, the people are losing more and more liberties and freedom, while the government is becoming more powerful, controlling, and controlling? Do you know why? Because there is a biblical answer: we live in a Moloch state. We live in a time when government does not recognize God’s sovereignty or His law. It recognizes only its own law and is basically claiming to be God.

For a state to claim total jurisdiction is to claim to be God itself. Only God is sovereign. Only God has total control. What we have today is government wanting and demanding total control from the womb to the tomb, from the cradle to the grave. Only the power who is to be worshipped can ordain the means by which he is to be worshipped. Only the one who is worshipped can be the source of law.

What we are having in this country, as well as other countries, is not simply the persecution of Christians. There is a philosophy behind it, a biblical principle behind it. Man is claiming to be God, and it is expressing itself in a political arena.

Moloch worship can only come to pass as a product of apostasy. As men turn from God, the only other place they can turn is to man. You are either a worshipper of God or a worshipper of man; you are either obeying God's law or man's law. It is that simple.

Look closely at 1 Samuel 8, beginning with verse 7. The Lord said unto Samuel, “Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee.” Then He explained, “For they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” The people wanted a king so that they might be like other nations. God said, “Samuel, they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” Verse 8 continues: “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.” Because the people had rejected God, their King, and wanted a man to be their king, God said, “I'm going to let you have what you want.” But He warned them what they would receive: “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.”

You want a man? Here is what you are going to get. “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."

Now, I want you to see what God is saying. You can only have a Moloch state, a government that claims to be God, as you apostatize and leave the one true and living God.

There are several things to understand here. First, he talks about compulsory labor battalions. He talks about a draft, constricting young men and sending them off to war. He talks about expropriating property—eminent domain, taking property from you. He talks about taking the tithe, taking the taxes.

By the way, do you realize that the Levitical tithe in the Bible was 10 percent? Do you know what your combined taxes today in America are? Over 50 percent. You have to work from January to July just to pay taxes, and then from July to December for yourself and your family. Why are taxes so astoundingly high?

And why is it that every politician promises to lower taxes, but they always raise them? Because we are in a Moloch state: a state claiming to be God, a state that is simply going to take everything.

Let me give you an illustration. Perhaps you have seen the beautiful castles in England. Some of these castles had been in families for hundreds of years. Do you know who owns all of the castles in England now? The government. The people who live in the castles, whose families had owned them for hundreds of years, are allowed to stay only as caretakers, and only if they will open the doors to tourists and obtain money for the state.

How did the government come into possession of all these castles? It is easy: the taxes were 110 percent. If I am making $100,000 a year and my taxes are $110,000 a year, how am I to live? I cannot afford it. And so they gave the castles to England and made a deal: "We'll just live here and be caretakers."

Moloch Worship as an Attempt to Control the Future

This is exactly what he is talking about. You cannot have what we have without there being an apostasy. We say, "Brother Weaver, I remember when they kicked prayer out of the school back in 1963. I remember when they stopped letting the Bible be read. I remember when you could not mention God." Yes, you remember that, but understand: those were not the cause of where we are right now. They were only the symptoms, the manifestations. The truth is that the mentality of the Moloch state already existed, and therefore it evidenced itself in those areas.

Here is the third thing this morning: Moloch worship is the supreme effort of man to command the future, to predestinate the world. The pagans always talk about what they call the "brute facts," and we use their words. But the brute facts come from a pagan philosophy of brute factuality: "The facts are what we are saying, and that is it." May I tell you something? Reality is not what man says it is. Reality is what God says it is.

What is fortune telling? What is the tarot card? What is witchcraft? What is magic? It is nothing more than an attempt to know or control the future by some means other than that which God has ordained. Do you remember that King Saul himself abolished witchcraft in 1 Samuel chapter 15? But when Saul got into problems, instead of turning to God, he turned back to a witch in 1 Samuel chapter 28, and God killed him for it. All this is an attempt to know and control the future without God.

I've told our people this before, but I'm going to tell you again because it's so funny to me. When my mother and father were first married, they went to a county fair. Being newlyweds, they were holding hands and strolling down when they passed the fortune teller's booth. The fortune teller saw them and said, "Come on in, come on in, and I'll tell you when you're going to get married." My

father looked at her and said, "If you knew anything at all, you'd know we already were," and just kept on walking. What is this? It is an attempt to know and control the future.

Let's take a little word that a lot of people hate: predestination. Yet the word predestination is in the Bible. Everyone believes in predestination. There is no fight over the doctrine of predestination. Everybody believes in it. The only fight is over who does the predestinating. Is it God or is it man? That's where the fight comes in. Everybody wants to say, "I am the captain of my fate. I am the master of my soul."

No, no. It is a Moloch government that tries to control or predestinate the future through means other than those that are biblical and scriptural. I don't have to talk to you anymore about Hitler's master race, so to speak. What was he doing? He was trying to control the future. But before you condemn him, may I remind you that this is what population control is all about by the socialistic planners. It is a means of controlling the future. What do you think media control is all about? What do you think the chemical control is all about in this country? There are more cities attempting to control people and more states attempting to control criminals through chemicals. You've heard of chemical castration for pedophiles. What is that? We will control you through chemicals. Well, God's got a better way of controlling them.

God says they are to be put to death. That is the final control, the ultimate control. But they are going to deny God's predestination, and then man is going to try to predestinate himself. You cannot have an argument over predestination. You have to say, it is either God who does it or man who does it. I prefer God over man any day of the week.

Non-Biblical Salvation and the Death Penalty for Subversion

Moloch worship always seeks a non-biblical way of salvation. What is happening in our land today? What is happening worldwide? Has anyone ever heard of the New World Order? Have you ever heard anyone speak about a global citizen? Whenever there is a social problem, have you heard someone say, "Well, they ought to

do something about that"? Who is the they? We are referring to the government, to the state. What we are saying in essence is that salvation is of the state.

Government schools were initially started for this very same purpose. The founders of the public school movement said that everybody would be taught the same; therefore, we would have a world of peace and order, and there would not be any class warfare. It was basically a socialistic effort, the effort of man to predestinate and control the future by manipulating the present. That is what it all amounted to.

In Deuteronomy 13, God demands the death penalty for those who are going to subvert His social order. Verses 1-5 demand the death of a false prophet; verses 6-11 demand the death of a private individual; and verses 12-18 demand the death of a city. Verse 1 says, "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

“Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.”

Here is a false prophet. What is the false prophet doing? He is showing you a sign or a wonder, and that sign or wonder comes to pass. He has the power to perform it, but he is doing it just to get you away from the one true and living God.

You have got to remember this: the devil does have power. It is limited power, but he does have some power. He can give signs; he

can give wonders. But God says that if it draws you away from the Word of God, then you are wrong. You had better understand that there is an enemy, and that enemy is seeking to subvert you from the one true and living God, and does it.

If there is a false prophet, that false prophet is to be put to death. If he tries to subvert society, if he tries to get society to worship anyone other than the one true and living God, he is to be put to death.

“ If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die.” Why?

"Because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." The death penalty is here demanded for an individual who even seeks to seduce his family away from the service and worship of the one true and living God.

"If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the Lord thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with

fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the Lord thy God: and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again."

Is God demanding the death penalty, first of all, for a false prophet who seeks to subvert society, a family member who seeks to subvert the family, or an entire city that seeks to subvert others? Why is God demanding the death penalty?

Here is a fellow by the name of Hanson, who was a CI or FBI? I forget. FBI? And he's now alleged to be a spy. He has compromised America. He's given our secrets to our enemies. He may have been the cause of numerous secret agents being exposed and executed in foreign countries. If Hanson is tried and found guilty, and the judge sentences him to death, how many of you are going to be upset about that? You know what you're going to say? "Well, they ought to die." Because he tried to sell out our country. He tried to put you and I in harm, and he put other people in harm. And he's responsible for the death of other people. He ought to die.

We understand that treason merits a death penalty. We at least understand it when it's applied to man. But here in Deuteronomy chapter 13, the treason is applied to God. You see, you are not put to death in Deuteronomy chapter 13 for having a private belief. What does that mean? That means if a pagan came into this country, if we're a Christian country, and he was a Mohammedan or he was a Buddhist, we don't put him to death because he's a Buddhist. He has private belief. But if that Buddhist tries to subvert our society into idolatry, then that's a horse of a different color, according to Deuteronomy chapter 13. Why? Because that is treason against God and against God's society. That's why the death penalty is demanded.

Now, let me tie it together for you. Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 18. Here's what God says, verse 18. Moses is speaking and he says, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." So Moses is prophesying of Christ, and these words are applied directly to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. So he says in verse 19, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of

him." God said, "I'm going to raise me up a prophet." And that's Jesus Christ. God said, "I'm going to put my words in his mouth. He's going to speak my words. And the man that will not hear Jesus Christ, God says, I am going to require it of him." What is God telling us?

Christ as the Only Prophet and Source of Life

God is telling us that He is the Sovereign, His law order is supreme, and we are to obey Him. He has given us His full and final revelation in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is the chief prophet.

In our land today, the land of the free and the home of the brave, anarchism is our personal creed. Anarchy is basically the absence of law. Why is the average American citizen an anarchist? Because his government is an anarchist. They do not even obey their own law, and the American citizen says, “Well, if they do not obey it, why should I?” Stop and think about that. Our personal creed is anarchy, while our social creed is statism.

Let the state take care of it. We are not interested in caring for our elderly; we want the government to do it. We are not interested in caring for our infants; we want the government to do it. We are not interested in teaching our own children; we want the government to do it. We are not interested in providing our own recreation; we want the government to do it.

We have come to the realization that just about the only thing that can bind us together now is coercion. Therefore, we understand force, and force is what the government uses. That is what is holding us together right now. Samuel Adams, one of the founders of our country, said he did not want a country pinned together by bayonets. He said this country was established upon the law of God, for people able to discipline themselves according to God's law. He recognized that when people left God and God's law, the only thing that would hold them together would be bayonets.

We are now trying to develop a global citizen, a New World Order individual, someone who is politically correct in every

avenue, area, and sphere, and thus save ourselves and our country. We are being taught that unless we change, the country cannot be saved. Toleration is being rammed down Christians' throats until those in power have all the power they want, and then we will be intolerable unto them. We tolerated them until they gained power, and now they will no longer tolerate us. That is why there is so much persecution, not only in this country but in other countries as well.

Now let me show you the ultimate, final solution. Remember what God said: "I'm going to raise me up a prophet." That is Jesus Christ. "I'll put my words in His mouth. You must listen to Him. Whoever refuses to listen to Him, I'll require of him."

In Proverbs 8, verse 35, Jesus Christ is personified, and here is what He says: "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." Whoever finds Jesus Christ finds life and obtains favour of the Lord. But verse 36 is equally true: "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death."

Do you realize that, without Christ, all this world can give us is a society of death? I have told you before about the communist utopia, the socialist utopia, and the New World Order utopia. I took Greek for three years, and during my first or second year I found the word utopia. I laughed then, and I still laugh about it. Utopia is made up of two Greek words: topos, which means place, and U, which is a negative, meaning no. Utopos is "no place." There is no such place as a communistic or socialistic utopia. The only place a utopia exists is in the minds of individuals. It is not real. The New World Order is a utopia; it is not real. It is only in the deceived brains and minds of tyrants and those who are fighting against God.

Reality is not what man says it is. Reality is what Christ says it is. Our Lord said, "He that findeth Me findeth life and shall obtain favor with God. But he that hateth me sinneth against his own soul. All they that hate me," says Christ, "love death."

Let me spell it out for you: The salvation of our homes is in Christ. The salvation of our family is in Christ. The salvation of our

soul is in Christ. The salvation of our city is in Christ. The salvation of our state is in Christ. The salvation of our nation is in Christ.

We do not want a Moloch society. We want a theonomic society, one where God rules through His Word and through His Law. Salvation is of the Lord. No individual, family, church, state, or nation will ever be saved without Christ and His Word. What we are faced with today is this: Whose society will we live by? Whose law will we live under?

Conclusion and Prayer

Will we choose life or death? Everything against Jesus Christ is death; everything in Christ and for Christ is life. Let us serve Him.

Father, in Jesus Christ's name, teach us the importance of Your Word. Just because something is in the past does not mean it is not in the present. Just because Moloch was a false god in the Old Testament does not mean there is not a Moloch principle today. Help us see that we are either for Christ and life, or against Him and for death. As our Lord said, he that gathers not with me scatters abroad, and he that is not for me is against me.

May we be for Thee and stand for Thee. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Divine Sovereignty Applied

February 8, 2004

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 4:16–30 (KJV)

"And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah, and when he opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And he closed the book and he gave it again to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

Luke 4, verse 21. "And he began to say to them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bear him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. For they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said of them, You will surely say to me this proverb, Physician,

> heal thyself. Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say to you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth. Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land. But none of them was Elias sent, save unto Zarephath, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was clean, saving Naaman the Syrian."

Divine Sovereignty Applied

Introduction: The Difficulty of Grasping Divine Sovereignty

"And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them, went his way."

One of the most difficult concepts to grasp is the concept of God's sovereignty. It is difficult not only because we do not understand the nature and person of God, but moreover because man by nature does not want God to be sovereign. Yet the truth remains: there can only be one sovereign. There can only be one ultimate; there can only be one absolute. That one ultimate, sovereign, and absolute is God, and not man.

When I talk about God's sovereignty, I mean simply this: God sits upon His throne. He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases. God is subject to none, influenced by none, and absolutely independent. The sovereignty of God means that God is God in fact, and not just in name only. God is on the throne of His universe, directing, controlling, and working everything out according to the counsel of His own will. The sovereignty of God is the supremacy of God in exercise.

Numerous Scriptures teach us this truth. Psalm 115:3 says, "But our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever He hath

pleased." Daniel 4:35 says, "But He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven and in the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest thou?"

The truth of God's sovereignty is distasteful to fallen man because fallen man wishes to be God himself. Men will always admire gracious words, especially concerning God's sovereignty, until that sovereignty is applied. Then they become irritated and angry with the messenger giving the truth of God's sovereignty. So long as the gospel is preached with sweet words, the godless will always put up with it.

As soon as the application was made, the people who had heard Jesus were filled with anger. Luke 4:22 says, “And all bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?” All had to bear witness of the gracious words that proceeded out of the mouth of Jesus Christ.

After He told them two simple stories, however, “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath and rose up and thrust him out of the city and led him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.” On the one hand, they had to admit there were gracious words; but when they began to see the application of those gracious words, there was anger. Regardless of the anger and cruelty of men, this one fact still stands: God is still sovereign.

Background: Jesus Returns to Nazareth

Our Lord returns to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. Luke 4:16 says, “And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for to read.” Matthew chapter 2, verses 22 through 23, tells us that after Joseph and Mary came out of Egypt, they dwelt in Nazareth. The people of Nazareth considered Jesus Christ their hometown boy. They knew Him; they knew His family. In all practicality, they raised Him. He was their hometown boy.

Christ already had a reputation for being an excellent preacher. Luke 4:14 says, “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about, and He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.” He already had this tremendous testimony of being an excellent speaker and preacher. Matthew 7:29 tells us, they taught the people with authority and not as the scribes and the Pharisees.

His hometown friends, relatives, and sentimentality did not stop Him from doing His duty or fulfilling His responsibility. When the Sabbath day came, He went into the synagogue to read and to preach as He always did. In the sovereign providence of God, when He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, there was delivered unto Him the scroll of Isaiah. He read from the passage in Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2, quoted for us in Luke 4, verses 18 and 19: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.”

“He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of the sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Our Lord went a little further: “And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

At first, all eyes were upon Christ and all ears were open unto His words. They had to concede that out of His mouth proceeded gracious words. They were temporarily spellbound, even when Christ stated that He was the personification of Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2. But as they sat there with their eyes fastened upon Christ and their ears opened, something suddenly clicked in their minds, and they asked, “Is not this Joseph’s son?”

What in the world was the implication of that question? They were sitting there, spellbound, confessing and admitting that gracious words were proceeding forth from His lips. Then, all of a sudden, this question came into their minds: “Is not this Joseph’s son?” Let me show you what that question implies. Matthew 13 gives the fuller implication. When He was coming to His own

country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished and said, “Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas, and his sisters?”

Matthew records their questions: “Are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

They asked, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” and, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” They knew his family: his brothers and sisters were with them. Where did this man get all these things? Where did he get this knowledge and authority? They were offended in him.

Mark records the same truth: “And he went out from thence and came into his own country, and his disciples followed him. And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many hearing him were astonished, saying, For whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph of Judah, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.”

“But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick, and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went around about the villages teaching.”

To be offended, in the sense of Matthew 13 and Mark 6, means that you see in one something you disapprove of and cannot submit to or acknowledge as his authority.

Notice what they were doing: “We know this boy. This is the son of Joseph. His father was a carpenter. We know Mary. We know his brothers. We know his sisters. We know the whole thing. Where did this boy get all this knowledge? Where did he get this

wisdom? Where did he get this power? Who does he think he is? I could never submit to someone that I practically helped raise."

Bluntly stated, they could not acknowledge, nor could they imagine, that their hometown boy could have the power and authority Christ was wielding. It simply could not be. Their unbelief exposed their ignorance of Christ and refused to allow them to acknowledge His authority. Christ had come to His own hometown, and they said, "He's our hometown boy. I just can't believe the authority and power that he's claiming."

The Demand: 'Physician, Heal Thyself'

Secondly, another attitude developed among the hometown people. Note verse 23 and look at the demand: "And he said unto them, You will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself. Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country." He explained the proverb by saying, "Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country."

Our Lord understood exactly where the people of Nazareth were coming from. They not only refused to acknowledge His authority; because He was their hometown boy, they also expected more from Him on their behalf. Whatever He had done elsewhere, they thought, certainly ought to be done for them, and even more. Why? After all, He owed it to them. They had helped raise Him. He was one of them, one of their own. Therefore, the people of Nazareth believed they had an irrefutable claim upon Christ. Our Lord said, "What you're going to tell me is this: You're going to tell me, Physician, heal thyself, or heal thy lameness."

What that means is this: if you are a physician, then you ought at least to look after yourself, your family, and your friends. If I am a doctor, I ought to look after my own family and my intimate friends, if I have that ability. So this is what they were saying: "You're going to say to me, Physician, heal thyself." In other words, look after yourself and your home, because we belong to you.

The people of Nazareth were expecting Jesus Christ to make good on His claims of Messiahship by doing in Nazareth what He

had done in Capernaum and other places. Christ did a great deal in Capernaum. He cured the centurion's servant of the palsy, Peter's wife's mother of a fever, and another man of the palsy. He healed a woman with a bloody issue and a man with a withered hand, and He raised Jairus's daughter from the dead.

So they were saying, "All right, Christ, whatsoever You have done in Capernaum, You do here in Your own country. We expect more of You because You are our hometown boy, and we are Your hometown people."

Now look in verse 24, because our Lord answers that proverb with another proverb: "And He said, Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country." Evidently, this proverb was a comment on their question in verse 22: "Is not this Joseph's son?" or "Is not this the son of Joseph?" Their attitude was, "What? God acting in a son of Joseph? God speaking in such a familiar voice and disguising Himself as such a common man? Why, this seems impossible, self-contradictory, and startling—bringing God so near."

The thought was irrational, unwelcome, and disturbing to them. Our Lord was saying, "A prophet never has honor in his own country, among his own family, among his own kin."

John Calvin explains the proverb in verse 24, when our Lord says, "No prophet is accepted in his own country": "He that is Christ reproaches them with the blame of preventing him from exerting his power among them as he did in other places by working miracles. For the unbelief of men presents an obstruction to God and hinders him from working as might be desired for their salvation. Christ could not perform any miracle among them because they did not believe on him. Not that it is in the power of men to abide in the hands of God, but that he withholds the advantage of his works from those who are rendered unworthy of them by their own infidelity or unbelief. The answer given by Christ amounts to this. If you wish to have a share in miracles, why do you not give place to God?"

"Or rather, why do you proudly reject the minister of his power? You receive therefore a just reward for your contempt when I pass

you by and give a preference to other places for proving by miracles that I am the Messiah of God." In other words, it is not that you bind the hands of God; but because of your unbelief and unsubmissiveness, he will bypass you. I do not owe you anything.

Our Lord backs up this proverb in verses 25 through 27: "But I tell you the truth. Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land. But unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Zarephath the city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian."

Jesus' Response: Two Old Testament Illustrations

The phrase "But I tell you of a truth" was often used by Hebrew writers. It signifies a tradition of Moses from Mount Sinai, so that which is spoken is most true, sure, absolute, firm, and to be depended upon. When our Lord uses this phrase, it is really in the form of an oath. Whatever follows is a strong observation and amounts to a solemn oath based upon what our Lord gives them.

Now He says, "But I tell you of a truth." In other words, I am going to tell you how it actually is.

Jesus Christ gives the people two historical incidents that they had heard and known all their lives. They knew these stories from childhood. It was not the story that upset the people, nor was it the truth. It was the application of the truth. Many people will listen to truth as long as it is not applied. But once you start applying truth, then that is a horse of a different color.

First, He tells them that many widows were in the land of Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up for three and a half years and no moisture fell. There were many widows in Israel, but Elijah was sent to none of them, except to a widow of Zarephath, a city of Sidon.

You will find this story in 1 Kings chapter 17. The point of the illustration is that Elijah, the man and minister of God, was sent to a widow outside the bounds of Israel—to a foreigner, a Sidonian,

the widow woman of Zarephath, or Zarephath as it is in the Old Testament. The children of Israel did without while God sovereignly sent Elijah to a stranger and foreigner to be helped and blessed.

The second illustration is Elisha healing Naaman, found in 2 Kings chapter 5. Out of all the lepers in Israel during Elisha's time, none were healed. The only leper healed by Elisha was Naaman, a Syrian—not an Israelite, but a Syrian. God sovereignly sent His mercy to a foreigner and not to an Israelite.

Calvin said concerning our Lord's two stories: "Though his reproofs strike through the inhabitants of Nazareth with peculiar severity, yet he charges the whole nation with ingratitude because for a long period almost all of them had proceeded to more shameful contempt of the Lord in proportion as he approached near to them."

For how did it come about that a woman who was a foreigner was preferred by God to all the Israelites, but because the prophet had been rejected by them and compelled to seek refuge in a heathen land? And why did God choose that Naaman, a Syrian, should be healed by Elisha, but to put a disgrace upon the nation of Israel? The meaning, therefore, is that the same thing happens now as in former times, when God sends His power a great distance among foreigners because He is rejected by the inhabitants of the country.

Christ intimates, "Though he is despised by his countrymen, his glory is in no degree diminished, because God will still be able, to their shame and confusion, to dignify and exalt his son, as he formerly gave honor to his prophets in the midst of the Gentiles." God was bringing disgrace and contempt upon the Israelites because of their refusal and rejection of the man of God.

It was true in the day of Elijah. It was true in the days of Elisha. It was true in the days of Christ, and it is still true today. But here is what upset these people so. It was not just the fact that God was sovereign. Most people are going to admit that. They may not understand it or like it, but they pretty well know that God is

sovereign; God is God. It is the implication and application of that truth that upsets so many people.

Christ returns to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. Everybody takes the attitude, "Well, that's our hometown boy. We helped raise Him." They were offended by the fact that He had wisdom, power, and authority. It is difficult. It was difficult in my life for my father to bow to my teaching and preaching. Why? Because he was my father. He had authority over me all of my life. And now, when I preach and teach, I have authority over Him. That is difficult.

This was their hometown boy. They knew Him. They had helped raise Him. Now He comes back with all this power and authority and this great reputation as a preacher, teacher, and miracle worker.

How in the world can we submit to Him when we have known Him since He was a child? But then they say, "Ah, but since He is our hometown boy, He will do more for us than just for anybody else. Why? He owes us." Our Lord tells them these two little stories: There were many widows in the days of Elijah, but none of them were blessed or helped save a widow of Zarephath in Sidon. There were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha, but none of them were healed except Naaman, a Syrian. Here is the implication that really bent them out of shape: God does not owe anyone anything.

Implication 1: God Owes No One Anything

They believed that Christ owed them. Anything we get from God is pure grace. We do not earn it, merit it, or deserve anything but judgment from God. We cannot bring God into debt to ourselves. Romans 11 asks, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord?" The answer is no one. "Or who hath been his counselor?" The answer is no one. Then verse 35 asks, "Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" Who has first given to God? No one.

Everything we have is from God. You say, "Well, I tithe." Yes, but God gave you the money to begin with. God gave you the

strength to work, the mind by which you can work, the body, and the air to breathe. God gave you everything. You cannot bring God into your debt or obligate God in any way whatsoever.

Anything we receive outside of God's judgment is pure, undiluted, and unmerited grace. God does not owe anyone anything. Furthermore, God, as the sovereign God of the universe, has the sovereign right to do with His own as He wills.

Now, let me ask you a question. Suppose you worked hard and, with the blessing of God, became a multimillionaire. If I came to you one day and said, "Let me tell you what you must do with your money. You must do this and that," you would look at me and say, "Preacher, have you lost your mind? What are you standing there telling me what I must do with my money? I earned that. I worked for that."

"I'll do with it as I please." Well, if you lawfully earned and worked for that money, do you not have the inherent right to do with it as you please? Of course you do. You are a steward unto God; you are responsible. You would be upset if I came to you and told you how you must spend your money.

Matthew 20 gives us an interesting story. "For the kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard."

Here are people who made an agreement with the husbandman. They agreed to a penny a day, the standard wage in that time, and he sent them to work in the vineyard. "He went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the marketplace, and he said to them, Go ye in the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, I will give to you. And they went their way." Again he went out at the sixth hour, about noon, and the ninth hour, three o'clock, and did likewise. About the eleventh hour, five o'clock, he found others standing idle and said, "Why stand ye here idle all the day?"

In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, those who had not been hired said, "Because no man hath hired us." The householder told them, "Go ye also in the vineyard, and whatsoever is right,

that shall you receive." When evening came, the lord of the vineyard told his steward to call the laborers and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. Those hired at the eleventh hour—that is, five o'clock—received every man a penny. When the first workers came, they supposed that they should receive more, but they likewise received every man a penny. They murmured against the good man of the house: "These lasts have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day."

But he answered, "Friend, I do thee no wrong. Dost not thou agree with me for a penny?" They did. "Take that thine is, and go thy way. I will give unto this last, even to thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?" What does our Lord say? "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" Is it not lawful for God to do what He will with His own?

We claim that right for ourselves. Would we withhold that right from God Himself? The fact that God has mercy on anyone is nothing less than a miracle. Some of you have been sitting under my ministry for years, but how many of you can say, "I deserve God's blessings"? None. How many blessings does God owe you? None.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans 9:29, quoting from Isaiah, said, "As Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been a Sodom and been made like unto Gomorrah." If God had mercy on some of us, all of us would have been destroyed. God does not owe us anything. The mere fact that He has mercy on us is His grace.

Now let me show you how particular this is. Look in your Bibles to John chapter 5, beginning with verse 1. There are a number of questions that need to be asked to stimulate your thinking. "After this, there was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now, there's a Jerusalem by the sheep market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches."

In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went

down in a certain season in the pool, and troubled the water. Whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he said of him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled to put me in the pool. But while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked. And on the same day was the Sabbath.

Let me ask you a question. How many people were lying around this pool? The Bible says a great multitude of impotent, blind, halt, and withered people. How many of these people needed healing? All of them. Did not Jesus Christ have the power to heal every last one of them? Yes. How many did He heal? One. Why did our Lord single out one man and heal him when all the people needed healing and Jesus certainly had the power to heal everyone?

I will give you the answer. After the Pharisees reproached Him for healing on the Sabbath, He says, "For as the Father raises up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. For the Father judgeth no man, but that he committeth all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son even as or equally as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father who had sent him." Here is the answer: "For as the Father raises up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will."

What is the one thing that marks God out as God? He is absolutely sovereign. Our Lord said, "As the Father raises up the dead and quickeneth them, even so equally, the Son is also sovereign. Therefore, He quickeneth whom He wills." He got the one man to demonstrate that He was sovereign. He did not owe anything to anybody, and what He did was pure grace. The miracle in John chapter 5 reveals that whatever Christ gives us is in grace, because we do not merit it, earn it, or deserve it, and He certainly does not owe it to us.

Implication 2: The Freeness of God's Distinguishing Grace

The very first implication of God's sovereignty is this: God does not owe us anything. The second implication is that we must understand the freeness of God's distinguishing grace. God is not obligated to give all the same aid, blessings, or means of grace that He gives to others. This is a doctrine the world was never, ever patient to hear.

What do most people do? They take a phrase out of context. They say, "Well, God is no respecter of persons. What He does for Ed, He'll do for me." God may do for me what He does for Ed, but if He does, it is because of His grace, not because He has done something for Ed and is therefore required to do something for me. Stop and think. God gave this country the gospel. He never gave it to China. He never gave it to Egypt.

God is not obligated to give the same people the same blessings. I could say, "I know several Christians who are multimillionaires now, God. You have to give me several million dollars." No. When the Bible says that God is no respecter of persons, all that means is this: no goodness can commend us to God, and no evilness in us can detract from or stop God's blessings. It is not anything in us that affects God. God can do to whomever He pleases, whenever He pleases, however He pleases.

If you look in your Bibles to Romans chapter 9, I will show you what God says in black and white, and I hope you understand this. Romans chapter 9 states God's position very clearly. This is an explanation of the freeness of God's grace. Romans 9, verse 15: "For he saith to Moses," what did God tell Moses?

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion, so that it is not him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my powers in thee, that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore, have ye mercy on whom ye will have mercy, and whom ye will. Be hard." You know what God does? Exactly as he pleases.

His mercy is his, and he is free to give it or withhold it. His grace is his, and he is free to give it or withhold it. We would try to make God our debtor, as did the people of Nazareth. They thought they had as good, if not a better, right to Christ's miracles than the people of Capernaum.

Our Lord said, "Let me tell you something. I'm free to bless whom I will bless, to curse whom I will curse. For my grace is free. I'm under no obligations. I'm under no constraints. I'm under no influences." So the very first thing we have to learn is that God does not owe us anything.

Secondly, in God's freeness in his distinguishing grace, he is free to bless one and not another. He is free to heal one and not another. He is free to save one and not another. He is free to do whatever he pleases, for he is God.

Implication 3: God Owes No Explanations

Here's the third thing, and listen: what we're doing this morning is plowing some difficult ground. God does not owe us any explanation for what he does. Our Lord said, "There are many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, but in none of them was he sent except to the widow where Zarephath, the city of Sidon." He did not explain why God sent Elijah there; he simply stated the fact. He said there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, but none of them were healed except Naaman the Syrian. He did not explain why. He just said, "That's the way it is." God does not owe us an explanation for what he does. It does us no good to wonder, guess, postulate, or try to conclude why God does what he does. That's God's business.

The Bible says, “Why dost thou strive against him?” That is, why are you fighting against God? “For he giveth not account of any of his matters.” God does not owe us an explanation. “Lord, why did you allow my child to die?” It is sufficient for us to know that God was in control. “Lord, why did you allow me to be such a poor man?” It is satisfactory simply to know that this is the way God allowed it. “Lord, why did you save me and not someone else?” God does not owe you an explanation. He giveth not account of any of his matters. That is his business.

Deuteronomy 29:29 teaches the same truth: “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed,” that is, in his Word, “belong to us and our children forever that we may do all the words of this law.” How many of God’s secret things has He shared with us? None. They belong to Him. What belongs to us? The Word of God, that which He has revealed. And why has He revealed it? That we should obey Him.

Can we ever know the secret things of God? Sure. We may know them when they come to pass in time and history. But until then, they are His business, not ours. We think somehow that God owes us an explanation, but He does not. After our Lord had spoken of things God had done, He said in Matthew 11:26, “So Father, for it seemed good in thy sight.” Why did God do what He did? It was good in God’s sight. Other than that, He owes us no explanation.

Sometimes God graciously and kindly allows us to understand some things, and sometimes He explains some things to us. But God does not owe us any explanations. His private business is His private business, and you believe the same way and certainly claim that for yourself. Here is what our Lord is telling these people: Number one, I do not owe you anything. Number two, I am free to bless one and not to bless another. Number three, I do not owe you any explanation for what I do. Number four, He shows us something else out of Luke 4.

Implication 4: Human Unbelief Hinders Reception of Grace

God's sovereignty is indeed a fact. Yet a parallel truth is that the fault, sin, and unbelief of men hinder them from receiving the benefits of divine grace. Had the Israelites submitted to Elijah's teaching and received him as the man of God, some of their widows may have been blessed as well. If the people of Israel had submitted to Elisha's authority and to the teaching of God's Word, some of their lepers may have been healed as well. Their refusal to bow to God's appointed authority kept them from blessings that sovereign grace could have bestowed.

They did not, but it is still our responsibility. It is our duty, it is our obligation as creatures to seek after the Lord. Isaiah 55:6–7

says, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord. For he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for our God will abundantly pardon.” Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. None of these folks sought after Elijah, Elisha, the truth they preached, or the God they represented. It is true that God is sovereign, but it is equally true that man is responsible.

Consider the wonderful illustration in 2 Kings 7. The Syrians had surrounded the city; a pagan army was besieging the city walls, while starvation stalked the people inside. The city was so without food that they were eating dung. That is how bad starvation was in the city. Also, women were killing, cooking, and eating their own children. If you stayed inside the city, you starved; if you went outside, the Syrians would kill you.

There happened to be four lepers sitting at the city wall. Remember, lepers could not enter the city. How did lepers live? They couldn't work most of the time, and no one could get near them, because they had to cry, “Unclean, unclean,” to make sure everyone stayed away from them. People would throw garbage over the wall. And that's how they would live: they would get the garbage. So here are these four lepers, seated at the wall of the city. If these four men went inside the city, they would starve. If they sat outside the wall, they would starve. If they went to the Syrians, they would be killed.

Now look at what happens. 2 Kings 7:3 says, “And there were four leprous men at the entering into the gate, and they said one to another, Why sit we here till we die? If we say we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now, therefore, come and let us fall in the host of the Syrians. If they save us alive, we shall live. If they kill us, we shall but die.”

Consider the reasoning of the four lepers. If they went into the city, they were dead meat. If they sat where they were, they were dead meat. If they fell to the Syrians, they might be dead meat, but the Syrians might let them live. Therefore, they decided to go and fall to the Syrians. If the Syrians killed them, they could not be any

more dead than they would be by sitting there or dying in the city. Dead is dead, isn't it? It does not matter whether a man starves to death or has his head cut off by a sword; he is still dead.

Here is an unsaved man who says, “I understand. Christ is sovereign. He is not obligated to give me repentance. He is not obligated to give me faith. He is not obligated to do anything for me. But I am going to go to Christ.” He will beg Him for mercy, repentance, and faith. Suppose Christ turned that unsaved man down. The man would not be any more dead or any more damned than he already was. But our Lord has never turned anyone away who sought Him in repentance and faith.

John 6:37 puts together God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Our Lord said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me.” That is divine sovereignty; that is divine election. He repeated, “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me.” The latter part of the verse says, “And he that cometh unto me I'll in no wise cast out.” That is responsibility. Although God is sovereign and divine election is clear and taught very plainly in the Bible, it does not cancel out, nullify, abrogate, or do away with our responsibility to come to Christ. In fact, divine election ensures that some will come to Christ.

What our Lord does in Luke chapter 4 is rightly and righteously cast the blame for the lack of miracles back upon His own people. He says it is their unbelief, their unwillingness to submit to Him, and their unwillingness to bow to His authority. They are cutting their own throat.

Here is the first truth: God does not owe us anything. Second, just because God does something for one person does not mean He is obligated to do it for another. Third, God does not owe us an explanation. Fourth, when people are not blessed by God, it is basically their fault because of their unbelief and unsubmissiveness to the Word of God. And here is the fifth truth: God's sovereignty extends far beyond the bounds of Palestine.

Implication 5: God's Sovereignty Is Universal

Those people thought that God was exclusively theirs. No, the Bible teaches that He is sovereign in any and every country and nation. The one who fears God is accepted of Him. God has no respect for this country or that country. He sent Elijah to a Sidonian and Elisha to a Syrian, while neglecting the ungrateful and disobedient Israelites. Peter stated this plainly in Acts chapter 10, when he witnessed the conversion of Cornelius: God is no respecter of persons; he that doeth righteousness and fears God is accepted of him.

Paul said the same thing in Romans 10:19–21 and Romans 11:11. God's sovereignty is universal. God does as He wills, whenever He wills, and to whomever He wills.

Now let us see the response to this message. Go back to Luke chapter 4 and look at verses 28 and 29. When our Lord finished giving them those two simple stories—stories they had heard since childhood—the gracious words that proceeded out of their mouths had become wrath: “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.”

The Response: Anger and Rejection

The response, humanly speaking, was anger so vicious that the outcome would have been murder had not the Lord withdrawn Himself.

Now, I know that Christ could not have died until the appointed time. I understand that. But if these people, humanly speaking, could have gotten their hands upon Christ and done with Him what they wanted to do, they would have killed Him. Men hate the simple truth that God is not under their control, that they are under God's control.

You want me to tell you what is wrong in this country? You want me to tell you what is happening? Listen carefully. All is well when you preach a sweet, effeminate, emasculated God who does not engage in sin himself, but leniently weeps at the indiscretions and

sins of people. All is well when they believe that God is too loving to bring them to judgment and hold them accountable for their sins. All is well when God is viewed as their little servant boy who exists for their service, benefit, and blessings. All is well as long as man is presented as the center of the universe and everything revolves around him.

But begin to preach an enthroned, sovereign, holy, righteous, and just God, who does as He pleases, always as He pleases, and only as He pleases, and who demands that men bow to Him, and then you have trouble. People do not want that kind of God. The God they want is the God they can control, the God they can put their little finger on, press a button, and have at their demand. Man by nature does not want the God of the Bible. The only God that exists is the God of the Bible. All others are nothing more than figments of a depraved imagination.

God is absolutely sovereign. God is on the throne. God is in control, the ruler over everything and everyone, at all times and in all places. Everyone will bow to God's sovereignty until you begin making applications of that sovereignty. Then men do not like it when they understand that God does not owe them anything, is not obligated to do for one what He does for another, and does not owe them an explanation. They do not like the fact that God is free to go to one country or another. God can do whatever He pleases. And here is the bad thing: We cannot stop Him, manipulate Him, or control Him. He is God.

Applications: Truth Embitters or Converts; Familiarity Breeds Contempt

Truth embitters those whom it does not enlighten and convert. These people were amazed at the gracious words that proceeded from His mouth. But when He began making the applications, they became angry and vicious; they would have killed Him. Those who have only tasted the Word of God, but have not really eaten or assimilated it, and who have tasted and rejected it, can be the most bitter, angry, and hateful people you will ever meet.

You will hear them say, “I’ve tried Christianity; it doesn’t work. Don’t talk to me about the Bible. Don’t talk to me about being a

Christian." When you are embittered at the truth, you have problems.

A second application is how apt we are to despise the highest privileges and blessings because we are too familiar with them. Are men so depraved, wicked, rebellious, and hateful that they would refuse to listen to and submit to the preaching of Jesus Christ Himself? The answer is yes.

Is it any wonder that people despise God's other true preachers? Is it any wonder that we count the open Bible, the freedom to assemble, and the preaching of the Word of God lightly? Most people in this country would count it a waste of time. We do not value what God has given us. How many would love to have sat at the feet of Jesus Christ? I would love to have sat at the feet of the Apostle Paul. We do that when the Word of God is preached and taught, because this is His Word.

So many times we take it for granted and treat it lightly and flippantly because we receive it continually. God is God. We need to thank Him and bow to Him for His sovereignty, His blessings, and His grace.

Ask yourself: Who am I to know the truth? Who am I to have had the length of life that I now possess? Who am I to have the health that I now have? Who am I? It is only the grace of God. We need to bow to Him and worship.

Father, we do ask and pray that You would help us to bow before Thy divine sovereignty. Thou art God.

And besides Thee, there is none else. We thank You. We worship Thee. We adore Thee for Your greatness and Your mercy. Thou art the one true and living God. Give us hearts to worship and praise and to be thankful unto Thee. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Confederate Sacrifices

December 17, 2006

Introduction and Scripture Reading

We will not be here next Sunday, and the message I prepared for the following Sunday would have been in two messages. Rather than divide it by missing a Sunday, I wanted to bring it today. The message is entitled “Confederate Sacrifices.”

Romans 12:1–2 says: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Several years ago, I spoke in Savannah, Georgia, at the Monument on Confederate Memorial Day, and brought about a fifteen-minute message on Confederate sacrifices.

This past week, or over the last several weeks, I have been reading several excellent, wonderful books, which I am going to recommend to you shortly. My heart was so moved and touched

that I went back and looked at that message. I reworked it and added a great deal to it, because there are things in it that I believe all of us need.

The Lost Art of Sacrifice

Do you realize that the word sacrifice occurs over and over in the Bible? We use that term regularly. Sacrifice is a word that is very easily pronounced. It is frequently used, but it is hardly ever exercised. I am going to be absolutely honest with you: as I have been reading some of these history books, I have become absolutely convinced that we know absolutely nothing about sacrifice. We know nothing about sacrificial living. We know nothing about suffering. We know nothing about doing without for standing for truth, righteousness, and principle.

We live in a day and age where everyone gets what they want when they want it. That is why most people are in debt over their eyeballs. They have no idea what it means to wait. We want it, and we want it now. Everything in this day and age is instant. We have instant banking, instant coffee, and, God forbid, instant grits. Stop and think how inclined we are to getting everything we want when we want it.

The truth is, most of us probably do not even know the definition of the word sacrifice, even from a secular standpoint. Webster's Dictionary says: sacrifice, “destruction, surrender or loss incurred for gaining some object.” I think that is interesting: destruction, surrender, or loss incurred for gaining some object. I believe, really and truly, the last group of people to understand sacrifice and suffering were our Confederate ancestors—those people who lived during the War of Northern Aggression here in the South. They understood sacrificial living and sacrificial giving because, to them, it was a way of life. They were willing to cheerfully sacrifice in order that they might have their independence and stand for principle and truth.

Sacrificial Examples of Southern Leaders

Sacrifice did not begin nor end with the Southern leaders. I could name Southern leader after Southern leader, and you would

understand that they were men and women of sacrificial living. For instance, General Robert E. Lee sacrificed his home and his wealth. Everyone knows Arlington National Cemetery, but many people do not know that it was Robert E. Lee's home. It was stolen from him by the North, and then they buried federal troops on it so he would not want it back. He not only sacrificed his home and wealth; he lived sacrificially on a daily basis.

One day, when General Ewell was visiting Robert E. Lee, Lee asked him to stay and have supper. General Ewell said that he would love to, but he could not and did not have time; he had to leave and get back to his men. General Lee insisted that General Ewell take his supper. General Ewell graciously received it, and as he rode away, he unwrapped the supper and found it to be two small, cold, sweet potatoes.

That happened to be one of General Lee's favorite foods, but it was all he had, and he gave it to General Ewell. During the siege of Petersburg, General Lee was invited to a very wealthy home for Thanksgiving dinner. He became embarrassed when his hostess observed him hoarding his piece of turkey, not eating it, and trying to keep everything separate from the turkey. When she asked what he was doing, he said, “Well, the truth was, he wanted to save his portion of the turkey so he could carry it to one of his sick staff officers who had had nothing but sweet potato coffee and cornbread for several days.” Here was a man who would not even eat turkey in order that he might give it to one of his staff officers.

Shortly thereafter, when General Lee returned to camp, a whole barrel of turkeys was sent to him by the same gracious host and hostess. There was a turkey in the barrel for himself and each of his staff officers. When the barrel was opened, General Lee said, “Well, I'm thankful for the turkey, but I'd rather mine be sent to the hospital so those wounded men will have something good to eat.” When the other staff officers saw the graciousness and generosity of General Lee, they said, “Well, ours too.” So the whole barrel of turkeys was packed back up and sent to the hospital.

Here were individuals who knew what it meant to sacrifice. General Nathan Bedford Forrest, when he entered the war, was worth over a million and a half dollars. Remember, back in that

time, it was a million and a half gold dollars. Compared to our worthless Federal Reserve notes today, Nathan Bedford Forrest would have been a multi-millionaire many times over. What many people do not know is that when General Forrest raised his brigade, his own unit, he equipped those men with horses, saddles, and weapons out of his own pocket. When the war ended, Nathan Bedford Forrest was basically a pauper. He was penniless.

There were multitudes of individuals who sacrificed and were willing to sacrifice. There is a Francis Bartow camp in Savannah, and I think Roy is a member of that camp. It is one of the largest SCV camps in the state. It was named after Francis Bartow of Savannah, a Georgia congressman. When a measure was introduced into the legislature that would compromise and allow the Port of Savannah to stay open, Francis Bartow arose and said, "Let desolation come if it must upon Savannah. Let every ship liner port in rot. Let commerce go to ruin for a season that he, Francis Bartow, would never give a vote that compromised the dignity and the fair fame and the honor of the state of Georgia."

Needless to say, he was not a modern-day politician, nor was he a member of the Better Business Bureau. He said, "I'm willing for everything to rot and go to pieces before we will compromise our honor and our principles."

Sacrifice Among the Common People

It was not simply the rich who sacrificed. Everyone sacrificed. The little man sacrificed just like the wealthy. Sometimes today we stand amazed at individuals who give millions of dollars for humanitarian purposes. But giving millions of dollars is not much if you have millions left. If I had $30 or $40 million, I could afford to give away $2 or $3 million.

But remember what our Lord said as He watched the people who cast their money into the treasury in the temple. All of these wealthy people came in, and the Bible says that they cast in of their abundance. Along came this little widow woman, and she cast in two mites—not even a penny. Our Lord said, "Verily, this woman hath cast in more than all the rest because they cast in of their abundance, but she cast in of her penury and her want."

She gave everything that she had, so her sacrifice was far greater than those who had given far more than her. When you remember the war, it was referred to as a rich man's war and a poor man's fight because it affected the poor and the middle man a whole lot more than it did the rich man. It was usually the poor, or the common men and women, who suffered.

I am going to give you several illustrations to show you the condition of the Confederate soldier later in the war and what some of these men went through. I hope these illustrations will touch your heart and encourage you to do some reading.

The Hardships of Confederate Soldiers

Reverend, or Pastor, Robert J. Burdette was a Union chaplain and a federal soldier. This incident occurred at the Battle of Corinth, after the battle was over. He wrote concerning the battle, especially this incident, which demonstrates the physical condition of the Confederate soldiers who fought for independence.

He said, "We found a dead Confederate soldier lying on his back, his outstretched fingers stretched across the stock of the rifle lying by his side. He was one of Rogers' Texans. Fifty-seven of them we had found lying in the ditch at Fort Robinette."

"I covered his face with a slouch hat and took off the haversack that was slung to his neck that it might not swing as we carried him to his sleeping chamber so cool, quiet, and dark after the savage tumult and dust and smoke after that day of horror."

As he took the haversack off the Confederate soldier, the gentleman helping him asked, "Empty, isn't it?"

"I put my hand in it and drew forth a handful of roasted acorns. I showed them to my comrade. 'That's all,' I said. 'And he's been fighting like a tiger for two days on that forage.' We gazed at the face of the dead soldier with new feelings. By and by, my comrade said, 'I hate this war and the things that caused it. I was taught to hate slavery before I was taught to hate sin.'

"'I love the Union and I love my mother better. I think that this is the wickedest war that was ever waged in modern times, but this,' and he took some of the acorns from my hand, 'this,' he says,

'is what I call patriotism. Comrade, I'm going to send these acorns to the Peoria Transcript. I want them to tell the editor that this war won't be ended until there's a total failure of the acorn crop. I want the folks at home to know what manner of men that we and they are fighting.'"

He writes, “This was my early experience as a soldier, and it never changed my opinion of the cause of the Confederacy. I was more and more devoted to the Union as the war went on, but I never questioned the sincerity of the men in the Confederacy again. I realized how dearly a man must love his own state, who would fight for it on parched acorns. I wish that his love and patriotism had been broader, reaching from the Gulf to the lakes, a love for the Union rather than for the state. But I understood him. I hated his attitude toward the Union as much as I admired the man. And after Corinth,” the pastor says, “I could never get a prisoner halfway to the rear and have anything left in my haversack.”

In other words, he had to feed them. Then he says, “Oh, I too have suffered the pains of hunger for my dear country, as all soldiers have done now and then, but not as that Confederate soldier did. We went hungry at times when rain and mud, or the interference of the enemy, detained our supply train. But that man was half starved. That’s different. Other haversacks we found that night on Corinth field had a slight ration in them. Sometimes it was a chunk of corn pone. I used to think that hardtack filled the order for concrete breakfast slab, but corn pone a week old reconciled me to soft food. Hardtack for mine. So the Southern people loved the states for which they suffered and fought.” Signed, Reverend Robert J. Burdett, a Union soldier.

We cannot even conceive of living on roasted acorns or going hungry for several days. It was not only that Southern men fought on empty stomachs; many times they rode and marched on empty stomachs as well. Oftentimes, sheer exhaustion claimed the lives of these men.

The Toll of Sleep Deprivation and Exhaustion

I am reading a book now that I would highly recommend, though I did not bring it to show you this morning. The book was written by John Newman Edwards, editor of the Kansas City Star. He was a Southern man and also adjutant to General Joe Shelby. His book, Shelby and His Men, recounts the exploits of General Joe Shelby, the battles they fought, the men he had, and what they endured. John Newman Edwards was there, so this is an eyewitness, a firsthand account. I want you to consider what our forefathers went through.

Shelby is chasing a Union officer named Cockrell. A battle has already taken place; Cockrell has been defeated, withdrawn his troops, and is on the run. Shelby is trying to parallel him and get in front of him in order to destroy the enemy. Edwards writes: "While this pursuit was fiercest, Captain Shelby gathered up his raw recruits and followed after Cockrell on a parallel and lower line with speed as great and anxiety as heavy."

"Though cohesive power of danger is probably stronger than any other. And in all that long line of undisciplined horsemen, fresh from the balmy breezes and downy beds, not one faltered, not one missed answer in the constant roll calls." Shelby had many raw recruits, and they continued giving roll calls to determine who was alive and who had fallen out as they pursued Cockrell.

Remember, "rest and refuge were almost gained. Crazy and blinded from eight days and nights of uninterrupted watching, riding, and marching, the command staggered into camp on the little stream at Coon Creek." After eight days of uninterrupted riding, marching, and watching, they staggered into camp on that little stream at Coon Creek in Jasper County to snatch a few hours' sleep before nightfall, before the march resumed. Captain Shelby had wisely determined to leave nothing to chance that might be accomplished by energy.

"To those unacquainted with the effects produced by loss of sleep, the sensations would be novel and almost incredible. Now listen, about the third night," that is, the third night without sleep,

when all they did was march, ride, and watch: “About the third night, an indescribable feeling settles down upon the brain.”

“Every sound is distinct and painfully acute. The air seems filled with exquisite music. Cities and towns rise up on every hand, crowned with spires and radiated with ten thousand beacons.” What is he talking about? He is hallucinating, seeing things that are not there. He says, “…long lines of armed men are on every side, while the sounds of bugles and harsh words of command are incessantly repeated.” He is hearing things over and over that are not there.

“ Often upon almost boundless prairies, destitute of tree or brush, the tormented dozer”—the man sleeping while riding his horse—“turns suddenly from some fancied oak or mechanically lowers his head to avoid some sweeping and limbless branches which are not there. Beyond the third night, stolid stupor generally prevails and an almost total insensibility to pain.” Soldiers in Shelby’s division were known to go incurably mad, and not a few cases of hopeless idiocy resulted from his terrible raids.

“On the march, men have dropped from the saddle, unawakened by the fall, while more than on a dozen occasions his rear guard has pricked the lagging sleeper with saber until the blood spurted without changing a muscle from their bloated, blotched, sleeping faces.” Can you imagine going three days and three nights without sleep? What about four, five, or eight? Can you imagine being so sleepy that you fall from a horse and the fall does not awaken you, while someone pricks you with a saber until the blood spurts?

The privations, suffering, and sacrifices these people made for independence, liberty, and freedom were absolutely phenomenal. Most of these men and women did so willingly, without complaining; they were ready to make the sacrifices. One of the best books I can recommend, especially to our ladies—and you men would benefit from it as well—is Life in Dixie During the War. You need to read this book.

The Suffering of Southern Women and Children

It was written by Mary A. H. Gay, who lived in Decatur, Georgia, and suffered during Sherman's March. Reading what some of these dear ladies and children endured would blow your socks off. It was absolute horror. On page 207, while trying to provide food for her mother, herself, and other starving neighbors, she writes: "What is it, Ma? Has anything happened?" "No. Only Maggie Benedict has been crying as if her heart would break, saying that her children are begging her for bread, but she has none to give them."

"Give me a little of the meal or hominy that you have, that we may not starve until we get something else to eat, and then take the remainder to her, that she may cook it as quickly as possible for her suffering children."

"We had spent the preceding day in picking out grains of corn from cracks and crevices in bureau drawers and other improvised troughs for federal horses, as well as gathering up that which was scattered upon the ground. That which was scattered upon the ground was that which had passed through the horses, undigested. In this way, by diligent and persevering work, about a half a bushel was obtained from the now deserted camping ground of Gerard's cavalry. This corn was thoroughly washed and dried, carried by means of a cart to a poor little mill that had escaped conflagration because too humble to attract attention, and ground into coarse meal."

Returning from the mill and carrying a portion of the meal, she saw in the distance her mother coming to meet her, apprehensive of evil. She ran to meet her. "What is it, Ma? Has anything happened?" Her mother told her about Maggie Benedict and the children. They cooked the corn in advance because they knew the children would be too impatient to wait. They made mush and corn pone and carried it to this starving little widow woman and her children before they ate themselves.

She then undertook a trip of probably 100 to 200 miles round trip to take this little widow woman and her two children to a family up in Tennessee from Decatur, Georgia. She had a black

servant fix some type of wagon out of what was available. She went to the cane breaks and rescued a United States Cavalry horse that had been turned loose because of sores on his back and was almost emaciated. She fed him a little, helped him regain some energy, hooked him to the wagon, and walked beside him while the widow woman and her children rode with their few pieces of luggage. When they arrived, she turned around and walked back, not riding the horse because he was too emaciated.

She and the horse became really good friends, and she got to keep him. She named him Yankee because he was a U.S. horse. Later, she said he was so loving, kind, and faithful to her and to the Southern cause that she confessed he was not a Yankee.

He was a rebel after all, and she changed his name to Johnny Reb. But just to read what these ladies went through is unbelievable, and how they were willing to share. Let me read one other article here:

"After meanly renewed vows of allegiance to our cause and expression of a willing submission to the consequences of defeat, privations and evil diet, if need be, with my morning orison, yet I could not be oblivious to the fact that I was hungry, very hungry."

"And there was another whose footsteps were becoming more and more feeble day by day," that is, your mother, "and whose voice when heard at all was full of the pathos of despair. I needed nourishment that could not be obtained in consolation which it seemed a mockery to offer."

To read of their faith and trust in the Lord in this is unbelievable. But she says, "In vain did I look around for relief."

Remember, Sherman had come through. Chimneys standing alone, the houses having been burned, were known as Sherman's Sentinels. When Sherman came through Georgia, he killed every horse, every cow, every pig, every chicken—anything that he and his men could not eat, they mutilated and killed so that no Southerners could eat them.

I did not bring the quote with me, but you remember when I preached that message on the Union's war against women and children. It was General Sherman who wrote to Secretary of War

Edwin Stanton and said, “There is a class of people, men, women, and children who must be killed if this war is to be won and this land is to be confiscated.” Stanton wrote him back and said, “Your letter of such and such date has reached me and I concur.” So Sherman knew what he was doing. He purposely slaughtered everything so that no one could live in the South.

She writes, “In vain did I look around for relief. There was nothing left in the country to eat, yea, a crow flying over it would have failed to discover a morsel with which to appease its hunger. For Sheridan, General Sheridan, by another name, that is Sherman, had been there with his minions of destruction, and had ruthlessly destroyed every vestige of food and every means of support. Every larder was empty, and those with thousands and ten thousands of dollars were as poor as the poorest men and hungry too. Packing trunks in every house of which refugees had returned contained large amounts of Confederate money. We had invested all we possessed except our home in land and Negroes, in Confederate bonds, and these now were insufficient for purposes of purchasing.”

"Gold and silver had we none. A few more favored had little more desirable mediums of purchase, and sent great distances for supplies, but they offered no relief to those who had stayed at home and borne the brunt of the battle and saved their property from the destroyer's torch. What was I to do? Sit down and wait for the inevitable starvation? No. I was not made of such stuff."

"I had heard that there had been a provision store open in Atlanta for the purposes of bartering provisions for munitions of war, anything that could be utilized in warfare. Minie balls were particularly desirable. I therefore took Talitha," her little black servant girl, "by the apron and had a little talk with her. And when I was through, she understood that something was up that would bring relief to certain organs that had become quite troublesome in their demands, and she was anxious to take part in the performance, whatever that might be.

"I went also to my mother and imparted to her my plans of operation, and she took that pathetic little backward step peculiar to herself on occasions which tried her soul, and with quivering

lips she ascended in approving, though almost inaudible, words. With a basket in either hand and a competent Talitha who carried one that would hold about a peck, and two old dull table knives, I started to the battlefields around Atlanta to pick up the former missiles of death to exchange for food to keep us from starving.

"It was a cold day. The wind was sharp and over the ground denuded of forest trees and undergrowth. The wind was blowing a miniature gale. Our wraps were inadequate, and how chilled we became in that rude November blast. Mark you, it was the 30th of November, 1864, but the colder we were, the faster we walked, and in an incredible short time, we were upon the battlefield searching for lead.

"I made it a point to keep very near the road in the direction of Atlanta, and soon found myself on the very spot where the Confederate magazine stood, the blowing up of which, by Confederate orders, shook the very earth and was distantly and distinctly heard 35 or 40 miles distant. An exclamation of glad surprise from Talitha carried me to her. She had found a bonanza and was rapidly filling her basket with that which was more valuable to us than gold."

In a marshy place, encrusted with ice, innumerable bullets, Minie balls, and lead seemed to have been left by the irony of fate to supply sustenance to hungry ones and employment to the poor all the winter. Those without money to send more favored and disappoints found sure rewards for this lead mine.

It was so cold. Our feet were almost frozen. Our hands began to bleed, and handling cold, rough lead cramped them so badly I feared we would have to desist before filling the baskets. Lead, blood, tears—how suggestive! Lead, blood, and tears mingled and commingled. I tried to dash the tears away; they would assert themselves and fall upon the lead stained with blood. “God of mercy, if this be thy holy will, give me fortitude to bear it uncomplainingly,” was the heartfelt invocation that went up to the throne of grace over and over that fearful day. For relief, tears did not suffice.

I wanted to cry aloud. Nature would not be satisfied with less, and I cried like a baby, long and loud. Talitha caught the spirit of grief and cried too. This emulation of feelings on her part brought me to a realization of my duty to her, as well as to my poor, patient mother, to whom the day must seem very long, and I tried to stifle my sobs and lamentations.

I wondered if she had the forebodings of coming bereavement that were lacerating my own heart. I did not doubt that she had, and I cried in sympathy for her. At length our baskets were filled, and we took our line of march to the desolated city. There were no labyrinths to tread, no streets to follow, and an occasional question secured information that enabled us to find the commissary without delay.

Talitha was very ambitious that I should appear a lady, and wanted me to deposit my load of lead behind some place of concealment while we went on to deliver hers, and then let her come back for mine. But I was too much of a Confederate soldier for that, and walked bravely in with my heavy, precious load. A courteous gentleman in faded gray uniform, evidently discharged because of wounds received in battle, approached and asked what he could do for me.

"I have heard that you give provisions for lead," I replied, "and I have brought some to exchange." What seemed to be an interminable silence ensued, and I felt without seeing that I was undergoing a sympathetic scrutiny, and that I was recognized as a lady to the manner born.

"What would you like in exchange?" he asked. "If you have some sugar and coffee and meal, and a little of each, if you please," I timidly said. "I left nothing to eat at home." The baskets of lead were removed to the rear and weighed in due time, returned to me filled to the brim with sugar, coffee, flour, meal, lard, and the nicest meat I had ever seen in a long time.

"Oh sir," I said, "I did not expect so much." "You have not yet received what is due you," this good man replied, and handed me a certificate which assured me would secure as much more on my presentation. Joy had gone out of my life, and I felt no thrill of that

kind. But I can never describe the satisfaction I experienced as I lifted two of those baskets and saw Talitha grasp the other one and turn my face homeward.

Some of the ladies who went on to dig for minie balls and in a lead mine lost their fingers to frostbite. Yet they were doing it simply to keep themselves and their neighbors alive. There is a Confederate song that is one of my favorites, "The Homespun Dress." The first time I ever heard that song, I cried. I wept like a baby, because when you look at the Southern ladies during that time, you could see character, honor, and determination. You look around today and see how we have deteriorated, and it will break your heart.

The Homespun Dress and the Spirit of Sacrifice

"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 ladies in the South during this time did not have anything; they simply made whatever they could make:

"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 send the bravest of our land to battle with the foe, and we will lend a helping hand. We love the South, you know. Hurrah, hurrah for the sunny South so dear. Three cheers for the homespun dress that Southern ladies wear."

Sacrificial living, sacrificial giving, and sacrificial efforts were put forth to preserve the independence, freedom, and liberty enjoyed under the Constitution back in the 1860s. It is sacrificial living, sacrificial giving, and sacrificing efforts that are needed today to restore that same independence.

We live in a day of plenty. We have never gone hungry, never done without, and never suffered like these people. Most of us are unwilling to sacrifice the way they did. Liberty, freedom,

independence, honor, character, and integrity meant far more to the people of the 1860s than they do to us today in 2006 and 2007. We will never regain what we have lost until we learn to sacrifice.

Modern Apathy and the Cost of Liberty

Let me give you an illustration. I was visiting in Illinois, where I was preaching, and the pastor of the church said, "Oh, by the way, there's been a new church building built about 20 or 30 miles from here. It is really exquisite. I'd like to take you to see it and introduce you to the pastor." I said, "Sure, I'd like to go." When we drove up, there was this exquisite brick building. It was an eye opener—a knockout building. Inside was the prettiest carpet you've ever laid eyes on, very beautiful furniture, padded oak pews, stained glass windows, and a new pulpit. It was simply top of the line.

The pastor came out, and I was introduced to him. I said, "I want to tell you that I really like your building. It is indeed beautiful." The pastor looked at me and said, "It's the worst thing that ever happened to us. It's one of the biggest curses that's ever been placed upon us."

I said, "What are you talking about? Are you in debt?"

"Oh, no. We paid cash for this building. We don't owe a penny to anybody. We pay cash for everything."

I said, "Explain to me how this building and paying cash for everything turns out to be the biggest curse and the worst thing that ever happened to this church."

He said, "You see, we had a widow lady in this church who died. She left us about 20 million dollars. Part of that money built this beautiful building and everything that you see. We've got money in banks, money in CDs, and money stacked everywhere, coming out of our ears."

I said, "Now go ahead and explain the curse."

He said, "Before she left us that money, we had a little building. We met together and prayed together. Everybody tithed. Everybody gave. If we needed something, everybody sacrificed. If

something needed to be done, we had a work day, and everyone came and did it. Now nobody gives, nobody tithes. If something tears up or we need something done, the people say, 'Hire somebody to do it. We got the money.' We have the building, but we lost the church."

You stop and think about that, folks. We've got more in 2006 and 2007 than our ancestors could ever dream of having in the 1860s. But we've lost what they had. We don't understand sacrifice.

There is a book in my library entitled Cry Heart. It contains stories and incidents that came out of this war. One of the most touching and revealing is the story of Edward Cooper, a young artilleryman court-martialed for desertion in the winter of 1862 to 1863. Colonel A. C. Battle and several other officers were holding the court-martial. Case after case was called and disposed of quickly until they came to young Edward Cooper's case.

When Colonel Battle asked who his counsel was, Edward Cooper said, "I have no counsel, sir."

The Court-Martial of Edward Cooper

"All right then, son. If you're going to represent yourself, call your witnesses."

Young Edward Cooper said, "I have no witnesses, sir."

Colonel Battle became upset. "Have you no defense at all? Is it possible that you abandoned your comrades and deserted your colors without any reason?"

Young Edward Cooper replied, "There was a reason, but it will not avail me in a military court."

"Well, you may be mistaken," replied Colonel Battle.

Young Edward Cooper trembled. Tears filled his eyes. He took a piece of paper from his pocket and handed it to Colonel Battle. "Here, sir. This is what did it. This is what prompted me to desert my comrades."

Colonel Battle read the paper and soon was weeping. He passed it to each officer on the court-martial board, and tears soon filled their eyes. It was a letter from Edward Cooper's wife, Mary:

"My dear Edward, I've always been proud of you since your connection with the Confederate Army. And I've been prouder of you than ever before. And I would not have you do anything wrong for the world, but before God, Edward, unless you come home, we must die.

"Last night, I was roused by little Eddie crying, and I called and said, 'What's the matter, Eddie?' And he said, 'Oh, mama, I'm so hungry. I'm so hungry.' And Lucy, your darling Lucy, she never complains, but she's growing thinner every day. And I repeat, Edward, unless you come home, we must all die."

"What did you do when you received this letter?" asked Colonel Battle.

Young Cooper said, "I applied for a furlough, sir."

"And what was the answer?"

"Furlough denied."

"What did you do then?"

"I applied for another furlough."

"What was the answer?"

"Furlough denied."

"And what then did you do, sir?"

"I applied for another furlough, and the answer came back, 'Furlough denied.' And then, sir, one night as I was walking back and forth among the tents, I could hear Mary's words resounding in my brain."

"Before God, Edward, unless you come home, we must all die." I could hear my son begging for food. I could see my daughter dying. All of a sudden, I was no longer a Confederate soldier. I was the husband of Mary and the father of Eddie and Lucy, and if every gun in the Confederate Army had been trained on me, I still would have gone home.

"Well," he said, "what brought you back?"

Young Edward Cooper said, "When I went home, Mary ran out to meet me. As she threw her arms around me, she whispered, 'Oh, Edward, I'm so happy you got your furlough.' She must have felt me shudder. She turned pale as death, and, catching her breath at every word, she said, 'O Edward, go back, go back. Let me and the children go down to the grave, but save the honor of your name.' And here I am, not brought back by the military powers, but obedient to Mary's command to abide the decision of your court martial."

As moved as all the officers were, they did their duty and pronounced Governor Edward Cooper guilty of desertion. I hope you know that desertion carries the death penalty. Thankfully, the proceedings of the court were sent to and reviewed by General Robert E. Lee. He endorsed the record and then sent back these words: "Headquarters of Northern Virginia, the finding of this court is approved. The prisoner is pardoned and report to his company." Signed, General Robert E. Lee.

Many sacrificed. Some sacrificed all. Jeff Davis was thrown in prison for two years without trial. He suffered immensely and had to send his family to Canada to avoid persecution. President Jefferson Davis said after everything was over, "Nothing fills me with deeper sadness than to see a Southern man apologizing for the defense that we made of our inheritance. Our cause was so just, so sacred, that had I known all that had come to pass, had I known what was to be inflicted upon me, and all that my country was to suffer, all that our posterity was to endure, I would do it all over again."

"Our cause was so just and so sacred. Had I known that all that I had to endure and what our country had to endure and our posterity, I would do it all over again."

We have lost the spirit of sacrifice. We've put comfort and pleasure above everything else. Those few remaining Confederates in the South, unhappily most of the time, have become country club Confederates. By that I mean this: we want the spoils of socialism and statism and fascism, and at the same time we want

states' rights and independence, and those things just do not go together. When someone comes along with backbone, courage, and determination to do what's right, unhappily, we won't support him. Why? We have lost the spirit of sacrifice.

The Biblical Foundation of the Confederate Cause

We don't understand what it's going to take to regain our independence, liberty, and freedom. What were the causes of that war? You can say, "Brother Weaver, one of the causes was states' rights or limited government." That's right. But I can take my Bible and show you where limited government, limited civil government, is taught clearly and distinctly in the Word of God. You say, "Brother Weaver, another cause of that war was self-defense."

We did not invade the North; the North invaded us. I can take you to the Word of God and show you the biblical right of self-defense. You say, “There was another cause of that war: economics, tariffs, and taxes.” I can take you to the Bible and show you what God has to say about tariffs and taxes. You say, “But it was a religious war.” Yes, it was a religious war because the North was trying to impose its theology upon the South. The South was more Christian, more Calvinistic, and more biblical, while the North was willing to introduce its Unitarianism. I can take you to the Bible and show you where we must stand against wickedness, even in the area of religion.

Everything that our forefathers fought for, everything that they stood for, and everything that they believed came straight out of this book. We will never regain our history, heritage, independence, liberty, and freedom until we come back to this book, find the spirit of sacrifice, and give all to restore what we lost. The greatest sacrifice ever given was when God the Father sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Because of His sacrifice, we may now stand with Him and sacrifice for truth, liberty, and freedom.

Conclusion and Prayer

I cannot read these firsthand accounts without feeling ashamed and humiliated, because I have done so little. When you read

them, they ought to bring you to your knees before God. Mary Gay tells how she walks into her house and sees her saintly, godly mother wasting away. The commissary where they had traded lead for food had been closed. There was nothing left in the land and nothing to eat. Mary looks at her mother and says, “Oh, mother, the commissary is closed. What shall we do?” The old saintly mother says, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

May God give us faith and character.

Father, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us to understand the spirit of sacrifice, not only in Christ, but in Scripture and in the saints who have gone before us. Give us grace, dear Lord, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Jack Jouette - Patriot, Hero

July 1, 2007

Other Little Ships

Introduction: The Importance of 'Other'

In light of the fact that this is the week of the Fourth of July, I am going to bring a message entitled “Jack Jouette, Patriot Hero, or the Southern Paul Revere.” Most of you have never heard of him, but I hope that you will today.

Mark chapter 4, verse 36, says, “And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him, that is Jesus Christ, they took him even as he was in the ship, and there were also with him other little ships.” I want to begin this message with this statement: Every schoolchild in America knows the poem from the pen of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Then I got to thinking about that and said, Maybe I need to change that sentence to every older schoolchild in America knows the poem penned by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that begins like this: “Listen my children and you shall hear of the midnight ride of Paul Revere.”

"On the 18th of April, 75, hardly a man is now alive who remembers that famous day and year. He said to his friend, if the British march by land or sea from the town tonight, hang a lantern in the loft of the Belfry Arch of the North Church Tower as a signal light. One if by land, two if by sea, and I on the opposite shore shall be ready to ride and spread the alarm through every Middlesex village and farm for the country folk to be up and arm." And that is only two paragraphs. It is a very long poem and a very wonderful poem, but all of us are aware of it. The ride of Paul Revere not only made history, but it was immortalized by Longfellow.

But what about the other rides? The little word other is really very important. Look again at Mark 4. In verse 35, our Lord says, "In the same day when the evening was come, He said unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side." Then verse 36 says, "And when He had sent away the multitude, they took Him, that is Jesus Christ, even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships."

Would it not have been spectacular and a blessing to have been in the ship with our Lord as He sailed across the sea? Certainly it would have been. But the truth is that not everyone could have ridden in that little ship. Therefore, there were other little ships that followed. Had I not been able to be in the ship with the Lord Jesus Christ, I certainly would have preferred to be in one of the other little ships that simply stayed close to Him.

In Hebrews chapter 11, we read about Abel, Abraham, Noah, and some other wonderful men. Then we come to this verse and others. Not everyone can be listed by name among the heroes of faith in Hebrews chapter 11, but they are indeed included in this little word other. Hebrews 11:35 says, "Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Verse 36 continues, "...and others had trial of cruel mockings, and scourging, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with a sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy.

The word other is important because these faithful people could not all be listed by name, yet they were included among the heroes of faith. My name may not be in the Word of God, but I can be satisfied simply being classified with the others who were faithful as well. In Matthew chapter 20 and verse 6, we see again the impact and importance of the word other. Our Lord goes into the vineyard and hires people at different times of the day. About the eleventh hour, that is, only one more hour in the day to work, he went out and found others standing idle and said to them, “Why stand ye here all the day idle?” They said to him, “Because no man hath hired us.” He said, “Then go ye also in the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that ye shall receive.”

Certainly, there were some who were called by our Lord at the first hour, some at the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth hour, and finally those who were called at the eleventh hour. You and I may not be one of the original twelve apostles. We may not be one of the initial seventy that he sent out before him, but we may be one of the others that he is called to the work late in the day. We may not have been called at the first hour, or at the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, or ninth hour, but we may be among those called at the eleventh hour.

In Acts 17, the Apostle Paul has been preaching on Mars Hill. At the conclusion of the sermon, the Bible says, “Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.”

My name may not appear in Scripture as a believer like Dionysius and Damaris, but there were others. Although my name may not appear literally in Scripture as a believer, I can be satisfied to be classified with the true, genuine believers under the heading of others.

The Famous Ride of Paul Revere and the Forgotten Rides

I begin this message with a lesson my children and you shall hear of the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere. Most of us have heard that. But how many have heard about the other rides? Listen, my children, and you shall hear of the midnight ride of Dr. Samuel

Prescott. Or, listen, my children, and you shall hear of the midnight ride of William Dawes, Jr. Or, listen, my children, you shall hear the midnight ride of Israel Bissell.

Probably no one in this congregation has ever heard this: Listen, my children, and you shall hear of the midnight ride of Jack Jouette. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of American history instantly recalls the ride of Paul Revere, when he mounted his Narragansett Pacer and made that famous ride on April 18, 1775. They especially remember it if they hear the opening lines of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous poem. But hardly anyone remembers Revere's equally heroic accomplices.

The Other Riders of April 1775

There was William Dawes, Jr., and the man who actually completed the trip, Dr. Samuel Prescott. William Dawes took a different route from Boston to Lexington, and there he rejoined Paul Revere. Dr. Prescott joined them at Lexington, but he was the one who succeeded in reaching Concord with the message that the British were coming, after Paul Revere was captured by the Redcoats and William Dawes got lost in the dark. The day after Paul Revere's ride, a postal rider named Israel Bissell was ordered to take news of the attack on Lexington to the Patriots in Connecticut. After a two-hour ride, he arrived at his destination, and his horse died under him.

Acquiring a fresh mount, he proceeded on to Manhattan, arriving four days later. Finally, on April the 25th, Bissell delivered the news in Philadelphia, ending a 320-mile marathon horse ride.

Anyone who has ever ridden horses can testify of the inherent dangers in horse riding. Even a trail ride can be exceedingly hazardous under the best circumstances. I can personally testify to having been thrown by a horse, stepped on by a horse, bitten by a horse, and lost and scared on horse rides. I have had limbs knock me from a horse. Have you ever been knocked off a horse by a limb? I have.

The Dangers of Horse Riding and the Context of Tarleton's Pursuit

I was training a horse and riding with other people who were riding other horses. I was last. This horse would ride beautifully, but she did not know her left from her right. You could put the reins on her neck, and she would not turn. All the horses started running, and she wanted to run, so she came up behind the last horse. There was plenty of room on the left to pass, and I laid the reins that way, but instead she went to the right under a bunch of little pines. I was ducking limbs as she ran, and then I looked up and saw a limb so low that there was no possible way to duck it. Since I was riding bareback, I opened my legs to catch the limb and let the horse ride out from under me. Guess what? The limb broke. Just because you think you are smart does not keep you from falling—at least I thought I was smart.

I have even had horses get their hooves tangled in vines, panic, back up, and fall. Trip and I went hunting in Idaho one time, riding horses up a mountain. The trail was about twelve inches wide; on the right was the mountain, and on the left was about a thousand-foot drop straight down. Rebecca, his mother, and my daughter said, “I don't want to hear about it. Just don't even tell it to me.” Under the best circumstances, simply riding horses can be very dangerous.

Now that I have you thinking about dangerous horse rides, I want to throw in a few more items: pitch-black night, adverse weather, extreme fatigue, and a few thousand soldiers chasing you, ready to kill you.

That ought to make for an exciting trip. It certainly will be a test of one's will, courage, and stamina. The man leading the soldiers, seeking not only all patriots but especially patriot leaders, had a couple of nicknames. He was often called Bloody Ban or Ban the Butcher, and he did not get those names innocently.

His real name was Banastre Tarleton, the infamous colonel of the Green Dragoons during the American Revolution.

Tarleton's nemesis in South Carolina was Francis Marion, who was nicknamed the Swamp Fox, because Tarleton could never

capture or neutralize him. Marion was very popular with the South Carolinians and with all patriots because he was honest, upright, and good, and because he sought to defend the colonials. Tarleton, on the other hand, alienated the citizens through his numerous acts of cruelty toward the civilian population.

Those who remember Mel Gibson's The Patriot will recall that Colonel Tavington was modeled on the real Colonel Tarleton. Tavington was just as cruel, mean, and wicked in the movie as the real Tarleton. For example, General Richardson, an American patriot, had died, and Colonel Tarleton came to his plantation. He required that the dead General Richardson be dug up and that his widow serve him a meal.

Let me give you the full account. One of Marion's men wrote this account on November 17, 1780: “On one expedition, Nelson's Ferry, Tarleton burnt the house and outhouses, corn and fodder, and a great part of the cattle, hogs, and poultry of the estate of General Richardson. The General had been active with the Americans but was now dead, and the British leader in civilized times made his widow and children suffer for the deeds of the husband and parent after the manner of the East and the Coast of Barbary.”

What added to the cruelty of the act was that Tarleton had first dined in the house and helped himself to its abundant good cheer. Yet we have seen before how he requited hospitality. It was generally observed of Tarleton and his corps that they not only exercised more acts of cruelty than anyone in the British Army, but also carried further the spirit of depredation. After Tarleton had dined in the house, he ordered General Richardson's body dug up and made the widow serve him a meal. Tarleton was traditionally seen as a butcher.

But matters became even worse when Commander Buford and the Americans, having been overcome, were trying to surrender. Tarleton refused to call off his men and continued killing those who were surrendering. Thus the famous phrase “Tarleton’s quarter” came to mean no quarter: expect neither mercy nor the opportunity to surrender when Tarleton is near, because he will kill you regardless.

W. R. Wilson's assessment of Tarleton's childhood, in his chapter "The Sword to Settle," contained in the historical narratives of early Canada, says this about him. Wilson reports that Tarleton's name inspired dread and loathing because of his rage. Though feared and hated throughout the Carolina countryside, at twenty-five Tarleton was an able and audacious leader—brave, cruel, cunning, vain, argumentative, and well deserving of the negative comments concerning his nefarious character and activities.

He was unmatched on either side for alertness, dash, daring, and vigor of attack. He was also cold-hearted, vindictive, and utterly ruthless, and wrote his name in letters of blood all across the history of the war in the South. Butcher Tarleton's victories came in devastating succession. Tarleton was one merciless man. To give you an example, here are Tarleton's own words in a letter to General Cornwallis on August 5, 1780: "If warfare allows me, I shall give these disturbers of the peace no quarter. If humanity obliges me to spare their lives, I shall convey them close prisoners to Camden. I must discriminate with severity."

Tarleton boasts of having butchered more men and laid with more women than anyone else in the army. He had no regard for man or woman. He was ruthless, an adulterer, a fornicator, and a murderer, and he commanded the dragoons seeking the leaders of the patriots during the American Revolution.

Tarleton's Mission and Jack Jouette's Discovery

The timeline of the message begins on June 1, 1781. General Cornwallis learned from a captured dispatch that the Virginia Assembly was in Charlottesville and that Thomas Jefferson, then governor of Virginia, was at home at Monticello. Cornwallis selected Colonel Tarleton to pursue these patriot leaders and destroy them, hoping thereby to destroy the government of Virginia. On June 3, Tarleton's force left Cornwallis's camp on the North Anna River.

He stopped at midday to rest his horses. Sometime that night, around nine or ten o'clock, he stopped at the Cuckoo Tavern in Louisa County, Virginia. This was an important stop. On June 4,

1781, Tarleton captured twelve wagons and burned them. He then split his forces: one group rode to Castle Hill, and the other rode to Belvoir, where they caught some assemblymen and took them prisoner. They then had to pause to rest their horses.

A legend says that Dr. Thomas Walker, when he saw the British, understood exactly what they were doing and whom they were after. He prepared them a large breakfast to stall them, keep them there, and deter them from their activity. After breakfast, Tarleton's men left and soon brushed aside some American men who were trying to defend an area.

They captured several assemblymen, and one of those captured was Daniel Boone from Kentucky. Isn't that amazing? Tarleton then sent a group led by Captain Kenneth McLeod to climb the mountain and secure Thomas Jefferson, who was then the governor of Virginia.

Tarleton's big mistake was stopping at the Cuckoo Tavern. When you read, you find two different accounts of history. Some say that he just stopped; others say that he was merely riding by. Whether he stopped or merely rode by, he made too much noise. There was a man at the Cuckoo Tavern who happened to know who Tarleton was. The hero of this story was a man named Jack Jouette. His last name is spelled J-O-U-E-T-T, but it is pronounced Jouette, like through—the ooh in through—so it is Jack Jouette. Jack Jouette was the hero of this story: 6'4", 220 pounds.

He was quite handsome and quite muscular. He was also an expert marksman, as well as an expert and accomplished horseman. Jack and his father, probably with other members of his family as well, had signed the Albemarle Declaration, a renunciation of King George III. Jack's father and his brother Matthew were captains in the Virginia militia, and his brother Robert was also an officer in the Continental Army. Jack and his father had signed the Albemarle Declaration, and here is the declaration: We whose names are here under subscribed do swear that we renounce and refuse all allegiance to George III, King of Great Britain, his heirs and successors, and that I will be faithful

and bear true allegiance to the Commonwealth of Virginia as a free and independent state, and that I will not at any

The oath declared that “we will not at any time do or cause to be done any manner or anything that will be prejudicial or injurious to the freedom and independence thereof as declared by Congress, and also that we will discover and make known to some one justice of the peace for the said state all treasons or traitorous conspiracies which I know or hereafter shall know to be formed against this or any other of the United States of America.” When you put your name to something like that—to renouncing George III and all of his heirs and successors, declaring your allegiance to the free and independent state of Virginia, and agreeing to turn in any treasonous or traitorous individuals against the freedom and independence of Virginia—you were very obviously putting your life on the line.

On the night of June 3, when Tarleton came to the Cuckoo Tavern in Louisa, Virginia, Jack Jouette either heard him or saw him. He saw that Colonel Tarleton was heading toward Charlottesville. Jack himself was a captain in the 16th Virginia State Regiment, so he knew what was happening. He knew that Tarleton was going there to capture the Patriot leaders. There were Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Benjamin Harrison, Henry Lee, and Thomas Nelson. Most of these men had signed the Declaration of Independence, and all were members of the Virginia legislature. They had originally gathered at Charlottesville and then were meeting at Monticello, Jefferson’s home, because they had fled Richmond at the approach of General Cornwallis. So Jack knew what he had to do.

Jack Jouette's Midnight Ride

He had to warn them, because there would be absolutely no one else to do it. Jack’s famous ride began on June 3, 1781, at ten o’clock at night. He saddled and bridled his bay mare, Sally, and rode the forty miles from Cuckoo to Charlottesville.

He could not take the road because Tarleton and his men were all over it. Instead, he had to cross meadows, thickets, woods, and footpaths. The only light by which he could travel was what little

moonlight there was. Branches tore his skin and clothing. Briars ripped him to pieces, but he did not stop; he kept going.

Virginius Dabney wrote in his June 1928 version in Scribner's Magazine concerning Jack Jouette's ride: "The unfrequented pathway over which this horseman set out on his all-night journey can only be imagined. His progress was greatly impeded by matted undergrowth, tangled bush, overhanging vines and gullies."

His face was cruelly lashed by tree limbs as he rode forward, and scars said to have remained the rest of his life were the result of the laceration sustained from those low-hanging branches. Here was a man who was cut up very severely, with scars remaining on him for the rest of his life.

The one advantage Jack Jouette had was that Tarleton's troops did not know Jack had seen them. Or, at least, if they knew it, they did not understand who he was. On their way to capture the Virginia Assemblymen, they stopped three times: once to rest their horses, next to burn an American wagon train, and the third time at Castle Hill, where two state legislators were sleeping. There they arrested them in their nightshirts.

Jack literally rode all night and arrived at Monticello just before dawn. He pounded on the door, awoke everyone there, and told them that Tarleton was right behind him and was coming to arrest them. At Monticello that night were Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Richard Lee, Benjamin Harrison, Patrick Henry, and Edmund Randolph. Can you imagine what would have happened if Tarleton had caught all of those men? Before they fled, Jefferson was able to hide most of the imported state papers. Tarleton arrived a mere two hours after Jack Jouette, only to find that his quarry had slipped away.

Before the assemblymen left, they voted to reconvene on June the 7th at Staunton, Virginia. After Jefferson received the warning, he dispatched his family, gathered all the important papers, hid them, took with him what he could, and then left as well. But he did not get far before realizing that he had dropped his light walking sword. Wanting it, he went back to retrieve it and nearly was captured. Henry Randall, in his book, The Life and Times of

Thomas Jefferson, reported that while Jefferson was on the lawn at Monticello, the captain of the Dragoons, McLeod, was actually in the house looking for him. Jefferson found his sword, got on his horse, and rode away.

Jouette's Further Heroics and Recognition

But that was not the end. After Jack had ridden all night, warned Jefferson and the others, and they had escaped, he rode on to his father's inn, The Swan, where some other assemblymen were staying. He warned them as well. There were also some American militia there, and they went out to the river to impede or hold off the British while the assemblymen escaped.

At The Swan was an American general named Stevens, who had been wounded and was too weak to outrun the Tories, the English. Jack and his family dressed General Stevens in an old coat and helped him onto an old nag that could barely walk. Thus the general, in the old coat and on the old nag, ambled away. They took the general's nice, fresh uniform, put it on Jack Jouette, and gave Jack the fastest horse from his father's stable.

When the English appeared, Jack made sure they saw him riding ahead in the bright red coat, with all its braid and epaulettes. They assumed he was an important British general and chased after him. Meanwhile, General Stevens continued away on the old nag in the old coat, and they never caught Jack Jouette. Jack had plainly saved many lives. When the legislature of Virginia reconvened at Staunton, it promptly voted to give him an elegant sword and a pair of pistols in appreciation of his activity and enterprise.

Stuart Gibboney, president of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, said in 1926 that but for Captain Jouette's historic and heroic ride, there would have been no Yorktown, and the revolutionaries would have been known only as unsuccessful rebels. Armistead C. Gordon, Jr., a University of Virginia professor, wrote in a 1925 Commonwealth magazine that, had Jack Jouette not frustrated Tarleton's foray, a disheartening and even fatal blow might have resulted from the simultaneous capture of Jefferson, Henry, and three signers of the Declaration of

Independence, at a time when the Continental fortunes were at a critical ebb.

Another author said that, stripping away all romanticism, Jouette was still consequential and deserving of recognition for his courage, sagacity, and patriotism. He understood that the British were up to something, figured it out, and rode all night on a very dangerous mission to warn the Virginia assemblymen. He acted without regard for his own safety, on behalf of others and for the best interest of Virginia. Any way you cut it, Jack Jouette was a hero.

Jouette's Later Life and Legacy

The following year, he moved to Kentucky and married Sally Robards. He became a close friend of President Andrew Jackson and helped Kentucky achieve statehood. He served four terms in the state legislature and prospered as a planter and horse breeder. Sally, the famous horse that carried Jack Jouette to warn Jefferson, Henry, and others, became the ancestor of a long line of thoroughbred racehorses. After the war, Jack Jouette continued to import fine horses and cattle from England. He basically established the livestock industry in Kentucky. Captain Jack Jouette died March 1, 1822, at his daughter's home in Bath County, Kentucky.

His exact burial place is unknown, but a historical marker now stands in Versailles, Kentucky, right outside Lexington. Historical marker number 1451 in Woodford County reads: "Jack Jouette, 1764 to 1822, hero of the revolution. Famed for torturous all-night ride to save Virginia legislators, including Governor Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and three signers of the Declaration of Capture. Member of the Kentucky Separation Convention of Virginia and Kentucky, General Assembly's distinguished early leader, father of Matthew Jouette, famous portrait painter."

The house where he lived is still there as well. I hope you understand now why Jack Jouette is called the Paul Revere of the South. There were indeed others. Would it not be interesting? Alice and I do this from time to time: when we come to an old cemetery, we look at the names and epitaphs on the tombstones.

On this past trip, we stopped at Lexington and again at the place where Stonewall Jackson's family is buried, where Governor Letcher of Virginia is buried.

Biblical Application: The 'Others' in Scripture

We saw the grave of William Nelson Pendleton, the famed Episcopal pastor and artillery man. His four famous cannons were named Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. General Pendleton would always say when the Yankees were coming, "Aim low, boys. And may God have mercy on their misguided souls." It is amazing to read the epitaphs and know that here were others who never made it into the history books. Had it not been for the others, the ones we know about may never have made the history books.

Turn in your Bibles to First Kings, chapter 19. The word others, as I pointed out in the beginning of this message, is important. We are not only to think of others; we are obligated to understand that we are not the only Christians and the only patriots on the face of the earth.

One of the greatest problems Christians have—and men who hold to a strict interpretation of the Constitution have—is that we tend to think, "It's us four and no more." There is no one else who believes as we believe, no one else who is fed up with the junk that is going on, and no one else who despises the empire. We tend to think there are very few who truly want our country back. But that is a mistake. If you want to be disheartened and discouraged, adopt the mentality that it is us four and no more.

Elijah fell into that mentality. Look in 1 Kings chapter 19, verses 9 and 10. Elijah had experienced great success at Mount Carmel, but Jezebel threatened to kill him, and he ran. He came to a cave and lodged there. Then "the word of the Lord came unto him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?" What are you doing in this cave, up on this mountain, Elijah? Didn't I call you to preach and prophesy? What are you doing up here?

"And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts. For the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with a sword. And I, even

I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." God, I am the only one left who is standing for anything, who believes You and trusts You. I am the only one.

Look down to verse 18, where God answers Elijah: "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth which hath not kissed him." What did God tell Elijah? You are not the only one. You might not see them, know where they are, or have been around them lately, but they are there. There are others. God still has His elect and His remnant. They may have been scattered all over Israel, but they were there. Our group may be scattered all over America, but it is there. Just because we do not run into them, see them, or meet them does not mean that they are not there.

Application: Contentment in Being One of the Others

Are you listening? Those others will stand and succeed, like others in Hebrews 11 and throughout the Bible. The second application is this: We may never be a Thomas Jefferson, a Patrick Henry, or an Edmund Randolph. Although we may never be famous, we may be content with being one of the others. I can be content allowing God's handpicked men to be in the limelight. God does not make all of us Patrick Henrys.

Not all of us are the Apostle Paul. Not all of us are Robert E. Lees, and not all of us are Stonewall Jacksons. We cannot be or want to be, although we want to emulate their virtues. We must understand that there are men whom God singles out in His providence, raises up, places in the limelight, and gives responsibility, power, duty, and obligation.

We may never be as important or as famous, but we can be just as faithful and content in being the others. If you look at Hebrews 11 and read those names—Abraham, Joseph, Noah, Abel—your name and my name do not appear there. Plenty of real, faithful, genuine Bible believers never appeared in Hebrews 11 and never will. But when you get to Hebrews 11, verses 35 and 36, you read about others: "Others had trial of cruel mockings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. Others were tortured, not accepting

deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Are you listening? The others there were just as faithful, godly, and blessed as the ones who were named. I may not know who those others are, but God does. I can assure you: they will not lose their reward.

They will not go unblessed or unrecognized in eternity. Hebrews 6:10 says, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and your labor of love, which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister." God is not unrighteous to forget your work and your labor of love. You may be one of the others, but even if you are, God is not going to forget it.

I may not ever be a Paul Revere, but I can be content with being a Jack Jouette, whom most people have never even heard of. He, too, was used providentially by the hand of God. The word others is vitally important. Let's not forget the others.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ for Your grace and Your mercy. Lord, help us understand in this day and time that there is indeed a call and a need for real, genuine men—men who are willing to stand, and yet men willing to stand even outside the limelight without recognition; men willing simply to stand, be faithful and true, and wait until eternity to receive their reward for their work and labor of love. Help us, Lord, to live for Thee. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

The Sufficiency of Grace

March 16, 2008

The Sufficiency of God's Grace

Introduction: Paul's Thorn and God's Sufficient Grace

Turn to Genesis 37, beginning with verse one: "And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren, and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him and could not speak peaceably unto him."

In 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 9, the Apostle Paul speaks of the thorn in his flesh. He besought the Lord three times to remove it, and God said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for

my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Notice the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The message is entitled, "The Sufficiency of God's Grace."

The Nature of God's Grace Beyond Salvation

Think for a moment about the wondrous statement the Apostle Paul heard from God: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Sufficient for what, you ask? The answer is, sufficient for whatever may come our way in the providence of God. God's grace is sufficient.

Have you ever taken time to consider the greatness, magnificence, beauty, and wonder of the grace of God? Have you ever been cast solely, totally, and completely upon the sustaining, preserving grace of God? When I speak of God's grace today, I am not necessarily referring to what would be known as salvation grace. Each of us understands the truth of Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Certainly, we are saved solely, totally, and completely by grace. We should be keenly aware of the necessity of grace in salvation, but are we just as keenly aware of our need for His grace in our daily lives?

Or do we simply rely upon His grace only in times of an emergency? You see, the Apostle Paul had a thorn in his flesh, and the Bible says it was a messenger of Satan to buffet him. The question is often asked, What in the world was Paul's thorn in the flesh? Some have suggested it might have been a mother-in-law. I do not know. I am teasing when I say that, because my mother-in-law is sitting here.

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh: Speculation and Purpose

But if you look in your Bibles to the book of Galatians, Galatians chapter 6, and notice, if you would please, verse 11, this may be a hint as to what Paul's thorn in the flesh really was. In Galatians chapter 6 and verse 11, writing to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul makes this statement. He says, "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand." Now the word "large" is

the Greek word "pelikos," which has a material reference denoting geometrical magnitude as distinguished from arithmetical.

In other words, when Paul says, "You see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand," he is not talking about the length of the book of Galatians, but the height of the letters with which he wrote. Certainly, Romans is much larger than the book of Galatians. He wrote many books that were larger than its six little chapters. But this is a book that he wrote with his own hand.

For the other books, he had secretaries, or an amanuensis, as we would say. But he wrote the book of Galatians with his own hand. So he says, "You see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand."

Some have suggested, then, that this thorn was ophthalmia, which is a horrible eye disease. If you look in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 10, there is another hint that would give credence to that thought. In 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 10, the enemies of the Apostle Paul said this concerning him: "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible." Some have therefore described the Apostle Paul as a small, squatty man with eye problems that made him very contemptible to look at in his person. If his thorn in the flesh was ophthalmia, certainly that would render him not necessarily easy to look at.

But whether or not the Apostle had ophthalmia is really not the point. If the Apostle Paul had been the most handsome man in the entire empire, his enemies would have used that against him as well. They were simply saying, "His letters are weighty and powerful, but he is weak and his speech is contemptible."

There is really no reason to guess at what the thorn in the flesh really was. Some try to say it was demonic activity. Others say it was ophthalmia. Some say various other maladies. But the point is, it really does not matter what the thorn was, because no one can prove dogmatically, one way or the other, what the thorn really was. The point that must be maintained is this: whatever it was, God said, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” I suppose if we knew

exactly what Paul's thorn in the flesh was, we would probably try to limit that statement to whatever that malady was. But since no one knows, then very obviously, that statement, "My grace is sufficient for thee," is unlimited. So you ask, how sufficient is God's grace? I answer again, God's grace is sufficient for whatever the providence of God allows to come your way.

1 Corinthians 10:13: God's Faithfulness in Trials

First Corinthians 10:13 is a verse that everyone needs to memorize. You not only need to memorize it; you need to make sure it is laid up in your heart and call upon it on a regular basis: "There is no temptation" or no test "taken you, but such as is common to man." "But God is faithful, who will not allow you," or will not suffer you, "to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation," or the test, "also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

Notice first of all that every trial or every testing is that which is common to man. None of us ever goes through an extraordinary trial. People have said, "Oh, but pastor, you do not know what I am going through." Yes, I do. And so does everybody else. You are not unique, and you do not have tests or trials that no one else has. Whatever we are going through, it is common to man. The very first thing God tells us is that whatever we are going through, it is common to man.

Joseph as a Hostage

Secondly, according to 1 Corinthians 10:13, you may rest assured that God will never place more upon you than you are able to stand. If the providence of God allows a trial to come your way, He will give you grace and strength; He will uphold you in that test and trial. He will never put more on you than you are able to stand. If God sends it your way, mark it down: by the grace of God, you can take it, whatever it is.

Thirdly, this verse teaches us that whatever test or trial comes our way, there is always a way of escape. There is a way to get out of it, and that way is always through obedience and submission to

God in His Word. It is not through rebellion or pretending that the trial does not exist. It is always through obedience.

I use the Apostle Paul only as an introduction. It is not his life that I want to discuss today, but the life of Joseph. Yet it was the Apostle Paul who said, or who heard from God, "my grace is sufficient for thee." I want to take that truth and show you how applicable it was even in the life of Joseph. Turn back to Genesis 37, and we will begin there.

Joseph as a Hostage: Betrayal by His Brothers

Think about this question, but do not answer aloud: If I were to ask you what the three most terrifying, horrible, and difficult trials for a man to bear are, what would be your answer? I am not speaking about the loss of a loved one or financial losses, though I know both are terrible. I am speaking of the three most horrible and difficult physical tests and trials that anyone could endure. I submit that these are found in Joseph's life, because Joseph was consecutively a hostage, a slave, and a prisoner. First, let us consider Joseph as a hostage.

In Genesis 37, we have read verses 1 through 4. Skip down to verse 18. Joseph has his coat of many colors, which I will explain later, and he is dreaming dreams in which his brethren, even his father and mother, bow down to him. Genesis 37:18 begins: "And when they saw him," his brethren, "when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him."

"And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit. And we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben the eldest heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him, that he might rid him out of their hand, to deliver him to his father again. And it came to pass, when Joseph was coming to his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of

many colors, that was upon him, and they took him, and cast him into a pit, and the pit was empty, there was no water in it."

"And they sat down to eat bread, and lifted up their eyes, and behold, and looked, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh going down and going to carry it down to Egypt." The brothers of Joseph saw him coming, conspired against him, captured him, and threw him into the pit.

Joseph, of course, was the son of Jacob's old age. When we are talking about being held hostage, it would be extremely difficult if your enemies caught you and held you as a hostage. But it would be even more difficult if your own family, who professed to love you and be your brethren, captured you and held you as a hostage, intending to destroy you.

Genesis 37 teaches us about Joseph's integrity: "These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being 17 years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought unto his father their evil report."

Joseph was not a tattletale. Whatever his brethren were doing was exceedingly wicked and wrong. Since Joseph was the youngest, since Joseph was a child, he did not have the authority to deal with whatever they were doing. Therefore, he reported their wickedness to his father, who did have the power and authority to deal with it.

Again, it is useless for us to sit around and guess what those boys were doing. Some have suggested uncleanness; others, theft of animals or misuse or abuse of animals. Who knows? Whatever they were doing was wicked and wrong. Joseph said, "I can't stop them, but my father can." He was not being a tattletale; he was dealing with sin the only way he could, based upon his age and position. Secondly, Jacob was ninety years of age when Joseph was born. Everyone knows that the youngest child is usually doted upon, especially when that child is a child of old age.

I had a good friend when I lived in Thomasville, Georgia, who was born—hope you are sitting down for this one, but it is the

absolute truth—when his father was seventy-five and his mother was in her sixties. Yes, she had him in her sixties. I can give you his name; he is probably still alive, and you can check with him. But surely he was spoiled? Yes. He was the youngest and a child of old age. We understand that concept and accept it.

Now, let me ask you: Was Jacob's love for Joseph wicked or wrong? If it was, why did they excuse it in their father? Why did they not accuse him of partiality? No, they did not do that. Why did Joseph get the beautiful coat? It was not merely because he was the youngest child and Jacob thought, "I will show him something special over and above his brothers."

No, that was not it at all. The coat of many colors had to do with elevating Joseph to be the administrator of the estate. Here is what Jacob saw: one of his sons had integrity, honesty, and character—someone he could trust. Joseph had reported the abuse of his brethren because he wanted it corrected. Therefore Jacob would elevate him and make him administrator of the estate.

Remember, Joseph was indeed the firstborn of Rachel, although Reuben was literally Jacob's firstborn. Reuben lost his birthright because he defiled his father's couch. Thus, when Joseph received the beautiful coat, it was a sign of Jacob's special favor toward him.

Thirdly, that coat created problems. Look at verse 3: "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his brethren," or all his children, "because he was the son of an old age, and he made him a coat of many colors." When his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren—that is, had elevated him over them—they hated him and could not speak peaceably toward him. Their hatred stemmed from envy of Joseph and from Jacob's elevating him above them. Listen carefully: the Bible says they could not speak peaceably toward him.

It was not that they had a physical inability; they had a moral inability. They had the physical ability to say, "Good morning, Joseph. How are you today?" or, "The Lord bless you, Joseph," but they had a moral inability to say those things because they hated him so. Fourthly, Jacob was correct in singling Joseph out, giving him the coat of many colors, elevating him to administer the

estate, and giving him the position of the firstborn. Joseph received that position even spiritually. To show that Joseph was correct, God gave him dreams that all his brethren would bow down before him, and even his father and mother would bow down before him.

When his brethren saw him coming, they said, “Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now, therefore let us slay him and cast him into some pit, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.” They did not like the hand of God upon Joseph. They knew that his father had elevated him, and now they were afraid that God was going to elevate him. It is amazing how people hate God’s election and His choices. But that does not stop God from choosing whomever He will. The brethren would never have exalted Joseph, but God did.

There was indeed a conspiracy among the brethren. “And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near to them, they conspired against him to slay him.” “Con” is a preposition meaning “with,” and “spire” means to breathe. Thus, a conspiracy is when you breathe together with someone. They breathed together this plan to murder their brother.

But Reuben, the oldest, thought that he would deliver Joseph out of their hand. “And Reuben heard of it. And he delivered him out of their hands and said, Let us not kill him.” Reuben said, “Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness and lay no hand upon him,” so that he might deliver Joseph to his father again. Reuben intended to talk them out of killing Joseph, then return, get him out of the pit, and deliver him safely to his father. Verse 24 tells us that they took him and cast him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water there.

They put him, therefore, in a deep pit, one deep enough that he could not climb out of it. Let me show you the utter contempt and hatred that they had for Joseph. They had thrown him into this pit and planned to murder him. He was a child, crying and begging for his life. How could they enjoy their meal after doing this? Verse 25 says, “And they sat down to eat bread.”

You say, “The Bible does not say that he cried right there.” There are more pages in the Bible than one. Look at Genesis 42:21. By this point, Joseph had been elevated to second in command in Egypt. “And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear. Therefore, behold, also his blood is required.” Then verse 21 says, “And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear. Therefore is this distress come upon us.”

What was Joseph doing? He was crying: “Come on, men, do not do this. Come on, boys. I am your brother.” Was he scared? Yes, he was scared. He besought them, and the word “anguish” in the Hebrew is literally translated as trouble, distress, affliction, adversity, anguish, and tribulation. Mark it down: Joseph was scared. He did not know what his brothers were going to do.

Their plans to murder him now turned into a plan for profit. Verse 25 tells us that they sat down to eat bread, lifted up their eyes, and looked, and behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels. They said, “What good is it going to do for us to murder him? We want to get rid of him. Let us make some money off of him. Let us sell him into slavery.”

Joseph as a Slave: Suffering and False Accusation

Thus, the second horrific experience is not merely being a hostage, but being a slave. There might have been a small amount of relief in Joseph when he discovered that he was not to be murdered. However, I am sure that relief soon turned to fear when he realized that he was going to be sold into slavery by his brethren.

Before going further, let me cover one other thing that is often asked. In Genesis 37:27, Joseph's brother said, “Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.” The brethren agreed, and Midianite merchantmen passed by. They drew Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, bringing him into Egypt. Did they sell him to the Midianites or to

the Ishmaelites? Which was it? Some people read this passage and say they probably sold him twice.

No, that is not the answer. They sold him to the Ishmaelites and the Midianites at one time, because the Ishmaelites and the Midianites were one and the same. They were called Ishmaelites because they were descendants of Ishmael, and they were called Midianites because they dwelt in the land of Midian. It is just like I am a Weaverite and a Georgiaite: I descend from the Weaver clan, but I live in Georgia.

The book of Judges bears this out. In Judges 8:1, the Ishmaelites lived in Midian and were also called Midianites: “And the men of Ephraim said of them, Why hast thou served us thus? That thou callest us not when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide him sharply.” In verse 1 they are called Midianites. Now look at verse 24, speaking of the same people: “And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give every man the earrings of his prey. For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.” Verse 28 says, “Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel.” Who were they fighting—the Midianites or the Ishmaelites? Both, for they were one and the same: Ishmaelites who lived in the land of Midian.

Joseph was sold into slavery. When we think of Joseph's slavery, we automatically think of Genesis 39, where Joseph was sold into Potiphar's house, and we think that Joseph had it good as a slave. In one sense of the word, he did have it good. He was still a slave.

Genesis 39 tells us, "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, brought him at the hands of the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down thither. And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man, and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him, and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand."

It came to pass from the time that he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptians' house for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field. He left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he knew not all that he had, save the bread which he did eat. Joseph was a goodly person and well favored.

What did this Egyptian do? He turned everything over to Joseph. In verse 9, Joseph himself admitted that he had it good in Potiphar's house: "There is none greater in this house than I. Neither hath he kept anything from me but thee," because thou art his wife. Joseph continued, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" So yes, in one sense of the word, he did indeed have it good.

However, I am sure that the very fact that his brothers had sold him into captivity still crossed his mind. Just because Joseph seemingly had it good in Potiphar's house does not mean that he always had it good as a slave. Hold Genesis 39, and look in your Bibles to Psalm 105, verses 17 and 18.

Psalm 105:17 says, “He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant” or a slave, “whose feet they hurt with fetters. He was laid in iron.” Joseph was treated like any other slave. He had it good in Potiphar’s house, but before he arrived there, and perhaps even at times while he was there, he suffered and endured everything a slave suffers and endures. The fact that he prospered in Potiphar’s house does not negate that he was still a slave. Moreover, as a slave, he lost all his rights and his ability to defend himself.

Remember when Potiphar’s wife repeatedly attempted to seduce Joseph? Finally, she grabbed his garment and said, “Come lie with me.” He answered, “I will not do this wickedness and sin against God. There’s none greater than me in this house, and the only thing my master has withheld from me is you, because you are his wife. I will not do this thing.” He left his coat and fled. When Potiphar came home, she told him that Joseph had come in to mock her, and the servants confirmed that she had Joseph’s robe and accused “this Hebrew that you brought.”

"He tried to rape me." Genesis 39:17 records her accusation: "The Hebrew servant which thou hast brought unto us came in to mock me. And it came to pass as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out." When Potiphar heard his wife's words, "his wrath was kindled." Isn't it interesting that Potiphar instantly believed his wife?

Joseph may not have been allowed to say anything, defend himself, or contradict the charges laid against him. He was a slave. Moreover, she had his garment, which, according to her, was positive proof that the accusation was just.

It seems to me, looking back with hindsight, that anyone with one eye and half sense would have stopped and asked, Has Joseph been faithful all these years? Has the Lord blessed him? Has the Lord prospered me because of him? Has he ever done wrong before, or attempted to do wrong before? Let's think this thing through. But there was no thinking it through.

It must be exceedingly frustrating when one is not allowed to defend himself, offer evidence that would exonerate him, or even conduct a lawful defense. It is more frustrating when the authority who should be impartial is blatantly partial and will not protect, listen to, or be concerned with the rights of the accused.

When it looked as if Joseph might have a decent life, even as a slave, a false accuser came along and destroyed everything around him. Joseph was a hostage and a slave, and Potiphar was so enraged that he had him thrown into prison. Genesis 39:20 says, "And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison."

Joseph as a Prisoner: Dungeon and Despair

What a reward for integrity, character, innocence, honesty, wholeness, righteousness, and obedience. Though Moses does not state how severely Joseph was afflicted at the beginning of his imprisonment, I can assure you that he was not allowed any liberty. He was thrust into some obscure dungeon. Potiphar's

authority was paramount; he had the keeper of the prison under his power and at his disposal.

What clemency could be hoped for from a man who was so jealous and so carried away with the vehemence of his anger? Joseph was placed where the king's prisoners were bound. What were the king's prisoners? Those who were guilty of high crimes and treason. The king's prisoners were treated as traitors and treasers. There was no hope for those individuals. I can assure you that Joseph was not thrown into what you and I would describe as a lovely place.

I've been in several jails preaching from time to time. I've even had to go into some cells and be locked in as I counseled and talked with prisoners who requested counsel. You're talking about filth: floor, toilet, washbasin, filth. In this day and age, I've often said—and I hope God does not allow it, though He may—that if I ever get thrown in jail or to prison, I hope by the grace of God somebody will give me a broom, a mop, and some Ajax, because I want to clean everything before I sleep in that place.

Look in Genesis 40, verse 15, to see that Joseph did not have it easy. Joseph says, “For indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews. And there also have I done nothing that they should put me here in this” dungeon. Not in some jail cell, but in this dungeon. Joseph was in the dungeon again; it is called the dungeon a second time. The interesting thing is that twice Joseph says he was in a dungeon.

Now go back in your Bibles to Psalm 105, verse 18. Notice what the Scripture says: “whose feet they hurt with fetters, he was laid in iron.” Some scholars relate verse 18 to the prison experience rather than the slavery experience. However, verse 18 could indeed relate to both experiences. Joseph could have been laid in fetters and in iron not only as a slave, but also as a prisoner.

Look at verse 18 again: “whose feet they hurt with fetters, he was laid in iron.” This phrase, “he was laid in iron,” is very significant. Actually, you could translate it, “his soul entered into iron,” or “iron entered into his soul.” The phrase is exactly the same.

Joseph was so galled with fetters that it seemed as if his entire life had been given over to the sword and to suffering, with no hope of escape. He was not merely laid in fetters and iron as a slave and prisoner; that iron entered into his soul. He was one given over to suffering.

Psalm 107:10 says, "Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron." There it is together: being bound in affliction and iron. These two things go together. What are we talking about? We are talking about the fact that it seemed as if every glimmer of hope was dashed.

In Genesis 40, Joseph is in prison, and the butler and baker are thrown into prison as well. Each one dreams a dream, and it troubles them because they do not know how to interpret it. Joseph tells them not to worry and interprets their dreams. He tells the butler that Pharaoh will restore him to his butlership, and the baker that Pharaoh will hang him. He tells the butler, "When you stand before Pharaoh, you remember me because I've done nothing wrong to be in this dungeon."

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph. They brought him hastily out of the dungeon, and he shaved himself, changed his raiment, and came unto Pharaoh. Pharaoh said unto Joseph, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it."

How did Joseph finally get in front of Pharaoh? The butler remembered him and said, "I have heard say of it, thou canst understand it, a dream can interpret it." The butler said, "Oh boy, I'm going to remember you." Do you know how long it was before the butler remembered Joseph? Two full years. Time passes quickly for us—too quickly. But if you are sitting in a dungeon, two years is a long time. So for two years, he sat in that dungeon longer because the chief butler forgot him.

Now watch this. Joseph was a hostage. He was a slave. He was a prisoner. Do you know how many years Joseph suffered wrongly? How many years was he mistreated, insulted, wronged, deprived, and denied justice? Hold Genesis 41, but turn back to Genesis 37. Look at Genesis 37 and verse 2: "These are the generations of Jacob, Joseph being" how old? "17 years old." Now look in Genesis

41. Joseph was a full thirty years old when he appeared before Pharaoh. Seventeen to thirty—what is that? Thirteen years. Thirteen years.

Thirteen Years of Trial and the Refining Word of God

For thirteen years, Joseph suffered injustice and suffered wrongfully. And I might add that he suffered greatly. Thirteen years.

Do you remember what Job went through? After he had lost everything, including his ten children in one day, Job bowed himself to the ground in worship and said, "Naked came I from the womb. Naked shall I return. The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Then Job was smitten. Do you remember what his wife asked him in Job 2:9? "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die." Job, just go ahead and curse God for everything that fell upon you, and let Him kill you, and get it over with.

Job answered her, "Now speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this, Job did not sin with his lips. God, the Lord gave and the Lord takes away. The Lord has been good to me.

The Lord can send evil to me if He wants to. I am not going to sin against God. Like Job, Joseph maintained his integrity for thirteen years. He did not curse God; he did not become bitter and vindictive.

Psalm 105:17–19 says, "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold as 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." For thirteen years, God was purifying, intensifying, and strengthening Joseph's character by His all-sufficient grace. It was God's grace that allowed Joseph to endure as a hostage and as a slave. It was God's grace that allowed Joseph to endure prison with integrity and honor. Joseph had

been condemned unjustly. He had received unmerited, undeserved slavery and punishment, yet the grace of God sustained and preserved him through every ordeal.

Joseph was nothing more than a man. There may have been times when he thought like his father, Jacob. Joseph had been sold into Egypt and had become second in Egypt, though Jacob did not know that. Simeon had been kept in prison in Egypt by Joseph as a ploy, and Joseph told the brethren that they would not see his face again unless they brought Benjamin, his younger brother, down to see him.

Finally, when it was time for them to return for more food, they said, “Dad, there’s no reason to go unless you send Benjamin with us.” He said, “Why in the world did you even tell the man that you had a brother?” They answered, “He asked. How could we know that he would demand to see him?” Then Jacob their father said, “Me have ye bereaved of my children? Joseph is not.”

Jacob thought everything was working against him. Joseph being sold into Egypt was for Jacob’s good. Simeon being held in Egypt was for Jacob’s good. Benjamin being taken back to see his brother was for Jacob’s good. Everything was for his good, and yet Jacob thought it was all working against him. All things were working together for good for Jacob as well as for Joseph. I can assure you there were times in Joseph’s life when he probably said, “I don’t understand this. Why is this happening to me? What have I done? Lord, what’s going on?” Yet, although he was dealt with unjustly and wickedly, he still maintained his integrity.

You and I have a definite advantage over Joseph. We have the total, complete, and final Word of God. We have 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.” We can see this now in Joseph’s life. We can see it in Jacob’s life. We can see it in Paul’s life. Why can’t we see it in our own lives?

Joseph's Victory Over Bitterness and Revenge

Let me make some applications. Joseph overcame bitterness, resentment, and a desire for revenge. When he had the

opportunity to really get his brothers back, he did not do it. He could have made them pay. But look in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 43. Beginning at verse 3: “And Judas spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, You shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food. But if I will not send him, we will not go down. For the man said unto us, You shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. And Israel said, Wherefore hast thou dealt so ill with me, as to tell the man whether or not you had yet a brother? And they said, the man asked us straightly of our state and our kindred, saying, is your father yet alive?”

“Have you yet another brother?” And we told him, according to tenor of these words, could we certainly know that he would say, “Bring your brother down?”

In Genesis 50, beginning with verse 15, Jacob is now gone: “And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.” They sent a messenger unto Joseph, asking him to forgive the trespass and sin of his brethren. Joseph wept when they spoke to him, and his brethren fell down before his face, saying, “Behold, we be thy servants.” Joseph said, “Fear not. For am I in the place of God? But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is to save much people alive.”

“Now therefore, fear you not, I will nourish you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spake kindly to them. Wow! The ones who put the ball rolling that brought about his being a hostage, a slave, and a prisoner—did the Word of God ever try him? Did it ever intensify him? Did it ever give him character and integrity? Yes! He looked at those men and said, “Fear not. I'll take care of you. Don't worry.”

There is another area that demonstrates that Joseph overcame bitterness and resentment, not only toward his brethren, but toward his enemies. Have you ever thought about this? If Potiphar had lived, and he may have, long enough to see Joseph second in command in Egypt, Potiphar would have had more reason to fear

than his brethren. Joseph could have said, “You threw me in unmercifully and unjustly. I'll let you see how you like it.”

When he could have done it, he didn't. Wow. God's grace is sufficient. What did Joseph say? In Genesis 50, verse 19, he asked his brethren, “For am I in the place of God?” He was not going to execute vengeance upon them. Vengeance belongs to God; God can do what He wants to do. As for Joseph, he was going to do right by them. He paid their evil deeds with kindness, love, and generosity. I can assure you that God can more effectively deal with our enemies than we can.

Application: God's Grace Sustains in All Trials

What I want you to see today is how the sufficiency of God's grace applies to every area of our life. It does not matter what our trials, troubles, or temptations are. God is able to sustain us. It does not matter whether you've lost a husband, a wife, or a child. It doesn't matter what the reversal reverses. It doesn't matter whether or not you've lost your health. It does not matter whether you've been unjustly and unrighteously accused, persecuted, convicted, and imprisoned. God is still able to sustain you, preserve you, and work His grace in your life.

I want to be honest with you. One of the things that sets me off very quickly is seeing people unjustly dealt with by those in authority. It ticks me off; I can't stand it. But I know one thing, and I'm thankful that God is able to give grace to those dealt with unjustly. Alice and I have a pastor friend and his wife who were both thrown into prison unjustly and wickedly. His wife was a sweet, beautiful woman. When I found out they had strip-searched that woman, not once but three times, it made my blood boil. He served three years; I think she served a year—unjustly condemned and unrighteously convicted. Yet when they came out, they were so humble, kind, and gracious. I thought, Lord, I don't understand how Your grace can work in people's hearts like that, but I know it can. God's grace is sufficient. 1 Peter 5:7 says, “Casting all our care upon him.” Why?

"For he careth for you." We need to remember our brethren who are in prison today, unjustly and unrighteously condemned, and

those who may be going through such condemnation. There is no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man. God will not suffer or allow you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

God can always sustain you and preserve you, and He will. If you lean upon Him and trust Him, He will take every trial, test, and temptation and perfect you, mature you, and build you up in the body of Christ. We need to learn to cast all our care upon Him, for He cares for us.

Don't we have a wonderful, precious, loving Heavenly Father? Has He not been so good and kind to us? We need to recognize His grace in our daily lives.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for the blessed truth that Your grace is sufficient. You sustain and preserve us. There are many trials, temptations, and deaths, with marital, health, and financial problems, corrupt officials, and injustice. But one thing we can depend upon is that You are sovereign and in control, and Your grace is sufficient. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 6

The Story of Horatio Gates Spafford

March 23, 2008

Introduction: A New Song of Deliverance (Psalm 40)

Let's open our Bibles today to Psalm 40. Psalm 40. And I did change messages today; I had intended on bringing another message, and for some reason, I just wanted to bring this study. So we're going to look today—listen carefully—at the story of Horatio Gates Spafford. You probably have never heard of the name. You have, you just don't remember it. But he was the man who wrote, "It Is Well with My Soul." So let's look in Psalm 40, beginning there with verse 1. David said, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry."

"He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." I want you to note, David says that the Lord had given him a new song. And then he defines that new song as even praise unto our God. This

new song happened to be a song of deliverance. Listen to what David said. He said, "I waited patiently for the Lord."

"And he inclined unto me." Notice, if you would, what God did for him. Look in verse two. He says, "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Well, what has God done? God has marvelously and miraculously delivered David. And therefore, David now has what he calls a new song or a praise of thanksgiving to the Lord.

Now, before we get involved with the message today, I want to point out several things concerning Psalm 40. First of all, Psalm 40 is a psalm that relates to the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, but the psalm was written by David. Yes, it was written by David, and certainly there are applications to David, but it is also applicable to the greater David, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. In fact, if you would skip down to Psalm 40 and look at verses 6 through 8, Psalm 40, verses 6 through 8, there the scripture says, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me."

Psalm 40 Applied to Christ and the Church

"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Now, if you were to go, and I'm not asking you to turn there, but if you were to go to Hebrews chapter 10, you would find that Psalm 40 is there applied directly to Jesus Christ.

The first five verses of this psalm celebrate the deliverance wrought by Christ for His body, the church. They celebrate His resurrection from the grave, in which He delivered us from the guilt and dominion of sin. When we look at verses 6 through 8, He declares the abolition and inefficacy of the legal sacrifices. That is when He says, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire.” In other words, it is not a new bull, a new goat, or a new lamb that God desires. No. In Psalm 40, verses 9 through 10, He declares His own intention and inclination to do the will of the Father. In Psalm 40, verses 11 through 13, there is His prayer while under the sufferings for our salvation. Verses 14 and 15 declare the confusion

of His enemies, while verse 16 presents the joy and thankfulness of His disciples. Finally, verse 17 offers a prayer or petition. Psalm 40 was not only written by David; it applies to the greater David, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The New Song in Revelation

If we were to take the time to go through the Bible and consider the references to a new song, we would be surprised at how many Scriptures there are that refer to one. Each of these verses that deal with a new song usually speaks of deliverance. For instance, Revelation chapter 5, verse 9, says, “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” They sang a new song, and that new song referred to the deliverance wrought by Jesus Christ. It dealt with redemption or deliverance.

The same truth appears in Revelation chapter 14, verse 3: “And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, before the four beasts and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.” Again, they sang a new song, and no man could learn that song except those who were redeemed from the earth.

When we talk about praising the Lord, it is easy to sing a new song when He has blessed us and everything is going just as we would describe it. But the question remains: Can we sing a new song and praise the Lord when it appears, humanly speaking, that everything is lost? "It Is Well with My Soul" is one of my favorite songs. Listen well to these stanzas, because they are important.

"When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul."

The Hymn 'It Is Well with My Soul'

The second stanza says, "Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blest assurance control, that Christ hath

regarded my helpless estate, and hath shed his own blood for my soul." The third stanza says, "My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—my sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!" The last stanza says, "And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled back as a scroll; the trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend, even so—it is well with my soul."

This hymn was written by Horatio Gates Spafford, Jr. Spafford was born on October the 20th, 1828, to a remarkable father of the same name, Sr. Horatio Gates Spafford Sr. was an inventor, an author, an editor, an entrepreneur, and he corresponded with Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Madison. Horatio Gates Spafford, Sr. may have also developed what came to be known as the Bessemer process of steel making. The correspondence between Spafford, Sr. and Thomas Jefferson is extensive. If you want to view some of the letters they wrote to each other, type Horatio Gates Spafford's name on the Internet, and you will see this correspondence.

But it is his son, Horatio Gates Spafford Jr., that I want to deal with. He was converted to Christ and joined the Presbyterian Church. He was a respected leader at the Fullerton Avenue Presbyterian Church. Spafford, in today's terminology, would be an anomaly because he happened to be both a Christian and a lawyer.

Horatio Spafford's Early Life and Faith

Today, “Christian lawyer” is almost an oxymoron, if you say it that way. I know there are some; I am just teasing. But I still think of the old joke about the black man walking across a cemetery and seeing a tombstone that said, “Here lies lawyer John, an honest man.” The old black man said, “Hmm, must be two men in that grave.” I am teasing; there are plenty of attorneys who are Christians, for which I am thankful.

Horatio Spafford was an attorney. He happened to be born unhappily in North Troy, New York, and was originally a New Yorker. But Horatio Spafford was not simply versed in what you

and I would call secular law. He was also versed in God's law, and he had a great love and appreciation for the law of God. He was a devoted student of the Word of God, appreciated God's Word, and taught Sunday school. He especially enjoyed teaching young people. In time, he became an elder, or presbyter, at the Fullerton Avenue Presbyterian Church in Chicago.

Horatio was admitted to the bar and traveled west in 1856. As a young Sunday school teacher, he met a beautiful Norwegian girl, Anna Larson or Lawson, who was fourteen years his junior. She was too young to marry when he met her, so he sponsored her through finishing school while he waited for her to become of marriageable age. They married in 1861 and moved to a new home in Lakeview, just twelve miles north of Chicago. Horatio's law practice was there, and his firm, Spafford, McDade & Wilson, was very successful.

He was also a friend of Dwight L. Moody, Ira Sankey, and numerous other Christian ministers of the time. He even helped in Moody's ministry. In fact, Moody invited him and his family to come to England and travel in Europe. They wanted to do so as a family vacation, and Horatio was invited to help in the evangelistic services Moody held. George Stebbins, a noted gospel musician, said of Horatio Gates Spafford Jr. that he was "a man of unusual intelligence and refinement, deeply spiritual, and a devoted student of Scripture." Here was a man who evidently loved the Lord and loved the Word of God. Horatio did very well financially.

He had money, prominence, ability, godly friends, influence, and, above all, a wonderful, loving family. He and his wife had five children, one boy and four girls. One of the great mysteries of life has always been, Why do bad things happen to good people? Please note how I use that word bad. It is a word upon which we always place our own perspective and interpretation. When we use bad, we refer to that which is disagreeable, tragic, or incomprehensible. In reality, there are no bad things that happen to Christians.

The Theology of Suffering as a Gift

How can you say that? Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” If all things work together for our good, how can they be bad? When we call something bad, we may not understand it, desire it, want it, or like it. But in reality, it is not really bad; it is good for us, or God would never have allowed it to come our way.

Think of what we call bad things: the sicknesses that have swept over the lives of the saints, the devastation of cancer, and the loss of our mates and children. Multitudes suffer and never know or understand the source or cause of their sufferings. Christians are persecuted on every hand and in many different ways. We consider all these sicknesses, losses, financial reverses, and persecution bad. But Romans 8:28 helps correct our misinterpretation.

Read the book of Acts when you want to talk about persecution. Our Lord told His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel, but everybody stayed around Jerusalem. So the Lord sent persecution. Acts 8:4 says that they went everywhere preaching the Word: “They that were scattered abroad.” What scattered them? Persecution. It may have been bad to them, but it was good for them because the Word of God was dispersed. When we think about bad things, we need to remember Romans 8:28.

Here is a verse that probably most of us can quote, but we have never really stopped to think about its implication. We must understand that suffering is a gift. If I were to ask you, Where does faith come from? What is the source of faith? you would say, It is the gift of God. You can go to Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” Of course, you know that passage. But do you know Philippians 1 and verse 29? Notice what the Scripture says: “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” Notice, “unto you it is given.” What is faith? It is a gift. So he says, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him”—faith is a gift—“but also to suffer for his sake.”

What is he telling us? He is telling us that suffering is a gift as well. Suffering is not a sign of being forsaken by God; it is a sign of being given a special gift by God.

You say, "But I don't want that gift. That's one gift I could live without." Well, I have news for you: you have no choice in the distribution of gifts. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 11, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Do you realize it is God, the sovereign God of the universe, who distributes the gifts severally as He wills? He can give you the gift of faith, ministry, discernment, or suffering. Suffering is a gift.

May I remind you what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12 and verse 9? God told Paul, when Paul besought Him three times for that thorn to be removed from his flesh, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Then Paul said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

What is Paul saying? He is saying, "I besought the Lord three times to take this away from me," and God said, "No, I am not going to do that, Paul. You are going to find that My grace is sufficient for you. I want to take care of you." Then Paul said, "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities."

The weakest and sickliest child always gets the most attention from the father. I remember when I was a little boy—before I had even started school—my sister had yellow jaundice. It was very infectious, but back then they treated yellow jaundice with candy and other sweet things. My sister would lie on that couch, getting all the candy she could eat. Of course, I could not get any because I was not sick. She would get up to go to the bathroom, and I would scrunch up on that couch and roll all around in it, trying to get yellow jaundice so I could get some candy. Mama and Dad were taking care of her and giving her everything she needed, but I did not get any of it.

Well, this is what the Apostle Paul is saying. Usually the weakest or the sickliest child is the one who gets the most attention from the Father. He is the one who experiences and understands the

presence and power of God. Horatio Spafford, Jr. was one child of God who was given the gift of suffering. Humanly speaking, we could say that things began to go wrong in his life, but the truth of the matter is that things were really going right, even though he may not have perceived it.

Spafford's Losses: Son, Fire, and Shipwreck

In 1870, he lost his only son to scarlet fever, so there would be no one to carry on the Spafford name. I am sure that he was still thankful and comforted by the fact that he had four daughters: Annie, Maggie, Bessie, and Tanetta. In 1871, another event happened that sorely tested his faith: the Great Chicago Fire. Over 300 people were killed, and over 100,000 were homeless. When that great fire swept through Chicago in October of 1871, Horatio and his partners had a lot of speculation property.

They had invested heavily in real estate, and the fire wiped them out. The Spaffords' own personal house was not touched by the fire, but all of the rental property and all the other houses he owned were totally destroyed. Here he was: he had just lost a son, and now he had lost practically all of his possessions. He was still suffering from shock, I am sure, as well as dismay and economic losses. For two full years after that fire, even though Horatio had lost economically, he did everything he could to assist the homeless, the impoverished, and those who were grief-stricken by their losses in the fire.

Such merciful acts toward his fellow men helped strengthen the testimony of why Horatio Spafford, Jr. was known throughout Chicago as a genuine, sincere, and devout Christian. After losing his only son and his possessions in the fire, Horatio and his family decided, in November of 1873, to take a vacation. As I said earlier, they were not only friends with Dwight L. Moody but also loyal supporters of him. Moody had invited them to come and help him in a meeting. They were going to England to meet Moody and Ira Sankey there, help with their evangelistic campaigns, and then leave to tour Europe.

They had booked passage on one of the finest French ships available, the Ville du Havre. It was a great ship, the finest of its

day. The family had planned to travel together and have a good time. But at the last moment, there was a snag in the business plans. Horatio was counting on the sale of a piece of property, and right before he could leave, the prospective buyer died. This meant he had to make other business arrangements. So, rather than disappoint his family, he was going to send them ahead and join them later. The ship was basically full—packed out.

Interestingly enough, five preachers were traveling on that ship. They had come from Europe to attend the Evangelical Alliance Conference in New York: Nathaniel Weiss, a Frenchman who later wrote a book about what I am telling you; Pastor Emil Cook, a Wesleyan pastor in Paris; Pastor Theophile Loray, also from Paris; Pastor Antonio Carrasco, returning to Madrid; and Dr. Cesar Prunay, also from Geneva.

Weiss, Cook, and Loray promised Horatio that they would help look after his family during the voyage, since Horatio had to stay behind. The ship left port after 2 p.m. on the afternoon of November 15th. Believe it or not, a Sunday school class was set up on that ship. Pastor Emil Cook established it so that all who would listen, including the children, would continue to be taught the Word of God. Little three-year-old Tanetta Spafford went all over the ship singing very loudly, "In the Sweet By and By," as most little children would do. During the first six days of the journey, the ship was buffeted by rough seas, followed by a dense fog.

However, on the seventh day, the passengers awakened to calm seas, beautiful weather, and elevated spirits. Anna Spafford was walking upon the deck with Pastor Weiss. In her musings, she said that it was almost impossible for a ship to cross this immense ocean without danger. Then she said, "When I think that a few planks are all that separate us and all these charming people from the depths of the sea."

The conversation trailed off. Early in the morning of November 22nd, just before 2 a.m., the passengers were awakened by what they thought were two terrific claps of thunder. They knew something was wrong and that an emergency was at hand. They put on their nightgowns, house coats, and slippers and came out to the main deck to see what was wrong.

To their surprise, they saw sparks shooting from the engine room. Those sparks revealed a hole forty feet in length and ten to twenty feet deep, torn into the belly of the ship. At first, they did not realize what had happened. The Scottish cargo vessel Loch Earn, an iron ship, had rammed the wooden ship. The passengers were stunned, hardly making a sound; some simply could not believe what was happening.

Others were disoriented because they had been awakened abruptly at two o'clock in the morning. When the crew struggled to free the lifeboats, they discovered that the boats had been painted into place. With great difficulty, they prepared them for launching. The few boats finally launched were later found to be filled with French crew members rather than passengers. Anna Spafford, her daughters, their governess, and the pastors were all huddled together in one small group.

Little Maggie Spafford assured her mother, saying, “Mama, God will take care of us.” Anna, the oldest girl, saw her mother struggling to hold up little three-year-old Tanetta. She came to help, reinforcing her mother’s arms, and then offered her own consolation. She quoted Psalm 95:5: “Don’t be afraid. The sea is his, and he made it.” Young Bessie sat silently, pale and frightened, clinging to her mother’s knees.

Then, in one terrifying instant, the dark sea overwhelmed the ship, plunging everyone into its frigid waters in just twelve minutes. The most luxurious ship afloat sent 226 people to their deaths. The ship broke in pieces like pressed lumber.

Anna Spafford was sucked violently downward. Baby Tanetta was torn from her arms when debris struck her arm so severely that it was almost broken and horribly bruised. She reached out and caught the baby’s nightgown, but another piece of debris struck her and knocked the baby from her arms. Reaching out again, she felt only a pair of corduroy trousers; she had caught a man’s leg.

Then she remembered being in a whirlpool. The next thing she knew, she heard an oar splashing. Crew members from the Loch Earn had picked her up, and she lay face down in the rowboat, her

hair matted with seawater and her gown torn. Pain wracked her body mercilessly. Yet I have no doubt that the pain in her mind was worse, as she realized that she had probably lost all four of her daughters.

A young passenger had found a piece of wood and was floating upon it when he came upon Maggie and Annie, the two oldest Spafford daughters. At his direction, each girl grasped one of his trouser pockets while he searched for a larger board that could support all three. After about thirty or forty minutes in the water, he found one and was about to hand it to them when he noticed that, as they grasped the board, their arms gave way. Their eyes closed, and they simply sank into the depths.

Those finally pulled from the water were given shelter aboard the Loch Earn, which later transferred them to another ship, the Tremountain, and they were taken to Cardiff. One account says there were only twenty-eight survivors; another says fifty-seven. Either way, the loss of life was tremendous.

When Anna Spafford's rescue ship arrived at Cardiff, she telegraphed her husband. This telegram has come to be known as a two-word telegram, although it actually contained twenty-nine words. Its first two words were, "Saved alone." The whole telegram said: "Saved alone, what shall I do? Mrs. Goodwin, children, Willie Culver lost, go with Loray until answer"—the French pastor's name—and then she gave the address.

The Writing of 'It Is Well with My Soul'

When Horatio received the telegram, he boarded the next available ship to be with his grieving wife. When he finally caught up with Dwight L. Moody, he said to him, "It is well. The will of God be done."

No one knows for certain what inspired the title of the hymn "It Is Well with My Soul." Even the phrase "all is well" was used by Pastor Emil Cook as he lay dying from his shipwreck injuries, and it is also a common phrase in the Bible. There are two accounts of where and how the hymn came to be written. Ira Sankey wrote, "In 1876, I was entertained at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Spafford for a

number of weeks. During that time, Mr. Spafford wrote the hymn, 'It Is Well with My Soul.'"

One account states that P.P. Bliss composed the music and sang it for the first time at a meeting in Farwell Hall. The other account is probably the most likely: Horatio was rushing to be by the side of his grieving wife when the ship he was on passed over almost the very spot where the former ship sank. The captain is said to have called him aside very quietly and said, "I believe we're now passing over the place where the ship went down." Spafford then went to his cabin and found it difficult to sleep. He said to himself, "It is well; the will of God be done." He later wrote the words to this famous hymn.

One author has given what I believe is a very logical explanation for the two accounts. What may have confused Sankey somewhat is that the music for this poem was not composed until 1876. The tune was written by Philip P. Bliss, and he gave it the name of the French ship that went down, having drowned all those people. The hymn was first sung in public by P.P. Bliss himself on November 24, 1876, at a large gathering of ministers hosted by Dwight L.

Moody in Chicago at Farwell Hall. The tune was not written until 1876, but the words may have been written before. Thus, the tune was not actually written until three years after the shipwreck. Spafford could have written the words any time before that, and, being a devout student of Scripture, he would certainly have known about the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings chapter 4.

God had given her a son, and when the son died, she took a donkey and ran to Elisha. Elisha asked her, “Is all well?” She said, “It is well.” Then she grabbed him by the ankles and would not let him go until he went and raised her son from the dead. The Spafford family website states: “Setting off to bring Anna home, he crossed the Atlantic, the watery grave of his four daughters, and he wrote a hymn, ‘It Is Well with My Soul,’ which expressed his faith. The first verse is an allusion to the shipwreck.” His own family’s website, therefore, says that is where the hymn was written.

Regardless of where or when that hymn came to be written, it is certainly a testimony to the grace and power of God in the lives of

His children. It is difficult to conceive of losing one's children—all of them—in one fell swoop. Job lost ten children in one day; Horatio lost his last four in one day. Yet Job said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." What was Horatio saying? "It is well; the will of God be done."

Spafford's Faith and Legacy

I am afraid that experiencing such a loss today would drive the average professing Christian absolutely insane. Why? Because in this country we have lost our theological underpinning. We do not have any theology today.

We have very few Christians who even read their Bibles, much less study them. We know nothing about the person, presence, power, and peace of God. It is only in times of trouble that we are driven to call upon, lean upon, trust in, and believe in the Almighty Sovereign God of heaven and earth. Only through such loss can we really find out who God is and the extent of His power, grace, and mercy.

Horatio's hymn reveals a man who was graced by God: a man who knew how to mourn without bitterness, sorrow without anger, trust without resentment, exercise faith without faltering, believe without doubt, and rest in the peace of God, which, according to Philippians 4:6, surpasses human understanding. Yet the Bible in 2 Peter 1:1 tells us it is a like precious faith. Each of us has this faith, and those who know the Word of God know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

When you sing that hymn again, listen to the words: "When peace like a river attendeth my way"—"when sorrows like sea billows roll," the loss of four children—"whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, It is well. It is well with my soul."

In spite of all their grief, sorrow, and heartache, the Spaffords continued to serve the Lord. They decided to go to Jerusalem, move there, and live there. Horatio wrote a friend, explaining, "Jerusalem is where our Lord lived, suffered and conquered, and I, too, wish to learn how to live, suffer and especially to conquer."

The Lord blessed the Spaffords with additional children: another son, born in 1876 and named Horatio, who lived only two years; then two daughters, Bertha in 1878 and Grace in 1880. In 1881 the Spaffords moved to Jerusalem, where they began charitable work with the Jews and the Arabs. Their descendants have continued that work. Horatio died in 1888, but Anna continued it until her death in 1923. Afterward, Bertha Spafford Vester carried on the work begun by her parents. In Jerusalem, their ministry still exists as the Spafford Children's Center, begun through their work with children.

Mrs. Spafford was traveling when she met a man whose wife was about to have a baby. The hospital was full and would not take her, and the woman was very sickly. Mrs. Spafford arranged for her to be cared for. The woman delivered the child and then died, and the man brought the child to Mrs. Spafford.

He said, “Look, if I go back to my village, the child’s going to die. I can’t take care of the child. Would you please take this child?” She said, “Yes, I’ll take the child.” That was the beginning of the Children’s Center, where they minister to the physical and mental needs of disadvantaged children in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

P.P. Bliss and His Tragic Death

I told you earlier that Horatio Spafford wrote the verses, “It Is Well with My Soul,” but P. P. Bliss wrote the melody. P. P. Bliss was a very talented Christian musician who wrote a number of songs and hymns we have sung all our lives, including “Almost Persuaded,” “Dare to Be a Daniel,” “Hallelujah, It Is Done,” “Hallelujah, What a Savior,” “Hold the Fort,” “Jesus Loves Even Me,” “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning,” “Once for All,” “The Light of the World Is Jesus,” “Whosoever Will,” and “Wonderful Words of Life.”

He also wrote the words for “My Redeemer,” and the music for “I Gave My Life for Thee,” as well as “My Soul, Precious Promise.” Other hymns he wrote include “Are Your Windows Open Toward Jerusalem?” “Only an Armor Bearer,” “More Holiness Give Me,” “Pull for the Shore,” and “Will You Meet Me at the Fountain?” He was a tremendous musician.

There is a reason I am telling you about P. P. Bliss. The last tune he wrote before his death used words written by Mary G. Brainerd. The music was found in his luggage. Her poem began: "I know not what awaits me, God kindly veils my eyes, and o'er each step on my onward way He makes new scenes to rise, and every joy He sends me comes a sweet and glad surprise. So on I go not knowing, I would not if I might, I'd rather walk in the dark with God than go alone in the light. I'd rather walk by faith with Him than go alone by sight."

"I know not what awaits me. God kindly veils my eyes." Bliss wrote the music for and sang "It Is Well with My Soul" for the first time on November 24, 1876. On December 29, 1876, just a little more than a month later, Philip Bliss and his wife were traveling on a train back to Chicago. When the train attempted to cross a railroad trestle near Ashtabula, Ohio, that Friday evening, the trestle collapsed. The train plunged seventy feet into a watery gulf. The wooden cars caught fire because the wood was being fed by the kerosene heating stoves on the train. The lead engine and the second engine made it across with two express cars, but the baggage car and the rest of the cars fell into the river. Of 159 passengers, 92 were killed or died later from injuries sustained in the crash.

Many others were severely injured. Philip Bliss was able to escape through a window, but his wife could not. Philip Bliss crawled back through the window to be with her, and both perished in the flames. One article I read said that Philip Bliss was heard singing, "It is well. It is well with my soul."

Conclusion: A New Song in Suffering

David said, "He put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." Can we, even in times of loss and great suffering, say, "It is well. It is well with my soul"? Many of the hymns we sing were written out of great suffering and heartache. This is just one of them. The next time you sing, "When sorrows like sea billows roll," be reminded of Annie, Maggie, Bessie, and Tanetta Spafford, who were drowned. Those sorrows like sea billows rolled over his soul, and yet he could say, "It is well. It is well with my soul."

Let's pray.

Father, we are thankful for the lives of Your saints. You did tell us in the book of James that we are to learn from the experiences of the saints. Lord, give us grace to trust Thee, to believe in Thee, to lean upon Thee, and always to know that You are too loving to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake. So many times, Lord, we have complained in our lives and said, like Jacob, "All these things be against me." Yet, Lord, all these things are for us. Help us to love Thee and to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

Feelings vs Commandments

June 15, 2008

Feelings versus Commandments

Introduction and Definitions

I want to bring a message today which is absolutely fundamental and necessary, a message concerning principles you need to be reminded of. You have heard me preach these principles before, but it has been a long time. After being asked a series of questions in the last week or two, I thought, Those questions need to be answered. So I want to bring a message entitled “Feelings versus Commandments.” Look at Ephesians chapter 4, beginning with verse 17.

Here is what the Lord says to these Ephesian Christians: “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.” Literally, he says, “Walk not as other heathen walk in the vanity of their minds.”

“Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the

blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

What the Apostle Paul is saying in verses 17 through 19 is that we are not to walk the way the unsaved walk or live the way they live. We are not to have their rule and standard in our lives. In verses 20 through 24, he lays down how we are to walk.

It is not my intent today to give an exposition of this passage, but I am going to enunciate the same principle. If I were to ask you the question, "What is the chief duty of man?" If you know the Westminster Confession of Faith or the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, you can answer that the chief duty of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

In order to glorify God, we must know how to live biblically. If we are to live biblically, we must know the difference between feeling, attitude, and behavior. Each of these differs. If we understand the difference between feeling, attitude, and behavior, we will be able to discern the root from the fruit, or the cause from the effect. Please understand that there is a difference between symptoms and causes. There is a difference between root and fruit. If we spend all our time fighting symptoms and dealing with symptoms, we will spend the entirety of our lives beating the air, wasting our time, and failing to glorify God.

If you had an apple tree in your backyard and hated apples, despised those apples, and every year you were out there pulling each apple off, saying, "I hate you, I hate you, I hate you," and throwing it on the ground—if you did that year after year—would it not be far wiser simply to take an axe and cut the thing down? Once you have cut it down, once you have destroyed the root, you will not have any more fruit.

Very obviously, there is a difference, and we need to learn the difference. There are basically only two lifestyles: the feeling-oriented life and the commandment-oriented life. Throughout each day, each of us as Christians either consciously or unconsciously follows one of those lifestyles. We either follow the feeling-oriented lifestyle or the commandment-oriented lifestyle. Each of these lifestyles involves patterns of either lust or love. They are either oriented toward the desires of self or the desires of God. They acknowledge two distinct sources of authority: the feeling-oriented life recognizes self as authority, while the commandment-oriented life recognizes the Bible as authority. They focus upon two separate goals: temporary pleasure or eternal joy. They acknowledge two different masters: Satan or God. They offer two different ways of handling problems: running, hiding, covering up, and pretending that things are not as they are, or confessing, forsaking, and speaking the truth. Each one brings about its own results.

There are two alternatives: the bondage of chaos in this life and eternal loss, or the freedom of structure and eternal joy. In a word, we have to choose between humanism and theism. Humanism is the worldview and philosophy that posits man as the center of life and the center of the universe. Everything is done for man. Everything is to glorify man, to elevate man, and in essence, it deifies man. On the other hand, you have theism, where God is placed at the center, and we elevate God to His proper place and proper position, which is on His throne.

We understand that He is the Sovereign, He is the Supreme, He is in control, and therefore we seek to bow to Him and subjugate everything in our lives to His dominion and His commands. If you and I are going to live biblically, if we are going to glorify God, we have to know the difference between feeling, attitude, and behavior.

Here is the definition of feeling: Feeling refers to a perception of a bodily state as pleasant or unpleasant. You and I say many times, “I feel tired,” or “I feel sick,” or “I feel bad,” or “I feel happy,” or “I feel good.” We are giving a statement concerning the perception of our bodily state.

Basically, there are only two kinds of feelings: pleasant or unpleasant, or good or bad. You also have visceral or muscular feelings. At the first of the week, I took a fall down some stairs and pulled a muscle in my leg. It did not feel good, and for several days it did not feel good. That is a muscular response, and I can say, "My leg feels bad. It hurts."

On the other hand, some feelings are the result of emotional responses. We have become so feeling-oriented that usually we cannot think straight. For instance, here is a problem: we are talking about it and trying to resolve it. I look at James and say, "Well, how do you feel about it?" Why should I not ask him, "James, what do you think about it?"

We substitute even feelings for thinking. For instance, "Why were you not in church last Sunday?" "Well, I just didn't feel like going." What? "Why did you hit that fellow?" "Well, I just felt like striking out." You see how feelings are dominating our entire life? I've heard people say, "Boy, I felt stupid," or "I feel inferior," or "I feel inadequate." Let me tell you something: stupidity, inadequacy, and inferiority are not feelings. If they are feelings, you're in trouble. In one sense of the word, you can't change your feelings. But if your inferiority complex, stupidity, and inadequacy are based upon judgments and thoughts concerning yourself, when you change those judgments and thoughts, you can change your quote-unquote feelings in that sense of the word, because you're thinking right and therefore not having those stupid responses.

You cannot change your feelings. That's why I said, if stupidity is a feeling, then you're in trouble. You say, "Well, I can change my feelings at will." No, you can't. Suppose you wake up in the morning with a temperature of 104. You're nauseated, vomiting, and have diarrhea. Change it. You can't. There's no way in the world you can change it. You can say, "I feel sick," but you can't change that if you're genuinely sick. On the other hand, if your quote-unquote feelings of stupidity, inadequacy, and inferiority come from bad judgments and thoughts about yourself, when you change the way you think, you change your life because you're changing what caused those feelings.

Now, let me deal with something very important. Someone mentioned this to me recently. A fine, upstanding individual and undoubtedly a Christian said to me, “Well, Pastor, I just don’t feel saved. I just don’t feel saved.” You know what my response was? “Well, of course you don’t. Salvation is not a feeling. Salvation is an accomplished fact. Salvation is something that Jesus Christ accomplished. It is finished. It is done.”

It is true that we may have emotional responses to God's salvation. But salvation is not a feeling, and you cannot feel facts. You cannot feel reality as such. For instance, do we live in the world? Yes. The world is a fact. Feel it. You cannot. Our Lord said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." Is that a fact? Yes, it is. Feel it. You cannot feel facts. We may have emotional responses to those facts, but salvation is not a feeling.

Feelings oftentimes change, but facts and reality do not change. First of all, feeling is nothing more than a perception of a bodily state, whether good or bad. Secondly, attitude. An attitude is that combination of presuppositions, beliefs, opinions, and convictions that make up one's habitual stance toward a subject or a person. A presupposition is something that you supposed to be true beforehand.

Every one of us has said, after meeting someone and leaving his presence, "I didn't like his attitude." Your attitude is that combination of presuppositions, beliefs, and opinions that make up your habitual stance toward a subject, a person, or an act. Listen carefully: an attitude is a mindset that strongly affects behavior. Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

Let me illustrate how your attitude affects your behavior. One of my favorite cartoons showed a church building. The pastor was walking down the hall with another pastor, and they looked into a room where two men were rolling on the floor, fighting. Each had a black eye; their clothes were torn and their hair was messed up. The pastor said to his visiting friend, "Oh, don't pay any attention to them. They're just having their weekly discussion on the doctrine of election."

Very obviously, your attitude strongly affects your behavior. Now, what is behavior? Very simply, behavior is the activities of a whole person.

Sin and a Desire-Oriented Life

Behavior is the activity of a whole person, not a gland. It is not your gland that makes you do something. Behavior is the activity of a whole person that may be judged by the law of God. Your behavior may be responsible or irresponsible, but that is beside the point. Your activity is still conduct that may be judged by the law of God. You are always accountable to God and always answerable to God. Your conduct and behavior may always be judged in light of God's law.

Having given you those definitions, let me begin by pointing out that sin makes us, by nature, a desire-oriented people. That is the desire-oriented lifestyle. That is why I am saying, feelings versus commandment.

The Desire-Oriented Life in the Fall

Look in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 2. Note what God did when He created Adam and placed him in the garden. Genesis 2:16 says, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Let me show you what God did when He created Adam. He created him and placed him under a commandment-oriented life. He said, "Adam, you're in my garden. Here's the command. My command is this: Out of all these trees you may freely eat. I give you responsibility. I give you authority. I give you the privilege of eating out of all of these fruits and all of these trees. But this one tree is mine. You don't eat of it. If you eat of this one, you're going to die."

SCRIPTURE READING - Genesis 3:1-6 (KJV)

In verse 16, when the Bible says that the Lord God commanded the man, the word “commanded” literally means

to put under a charge or to put under an oath. So what God did was this: When God put Adam in the garden, He put him under an oath and Adam swore that he would obey God. So Adam was created and placed then under a commandment-oriented life.

Genesis 3, verse 1: "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Notice, "hath God said"—in other words, here's a reference to a commandment. And the woman said unto the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Notice "God hath said." Now watch verse 4: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Now watch verse 6 very carefully: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Now note, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired—when you look at verse 6, where is the word "commandment" in verse 6? It is not there. Where is "God said" in verse 6? It is not there. You know why?

Because when you get down to verse 6, it is no longer about God's commandments. It's no longer about what God said and what God did not say. When you get down to verse 6, it's now all about Eve, her thoughts, her feelings, her desires. She wanted it. She took it. She disobeyed. She ate and she gave it to Adam.

There are a multitude of sins involved in Genesis 3 and verse 6. But one of the greater sins that Adam and Eve committed is this: They set themselves above God and above His Word. They gave priority to themselves—to their feelings and desires. It did not

matter what God commanded or what God had said. They were looking after themselves. Feelings, desires, emotions must reign down with the commandments of God. Their attitude was, "Who is God to tell us what to do?"

"We're going to do what feels good to us." Their sin, first and foremost, was that they chose to satisfy their desires rather than obey the command of God. Consequently, since that time, their posterity has been born into this world with a desire- or a feeling-oriented lifestyle.

Consider the impact of feelings in the Fall. Feelings became all-important to Adam and Eve. In order to preserve their feelings, when they saw that they were naked, they ran and hid themselves and made aprons of fig leaves. Thus, in order to preserve their feelings and avoid discomfort, they began to run, hide, and cover their sin.

Confessing, acknowledging, and forsaking your sins might make you uncomfortable. It might hurt your feelings. So Adam and Eve said, "We'll run, we'll hide, we'll pretend like we did not do it."

Another aspect of this feelings-oriented life is that they began to blame-shift. When God came to Adam, He said, "Adam, where art thou? Adam, what have you done?" And Adam said, "It was the woman which thou gavest to be with me." Her fault. When God asked Eve what she had done, she said, "Well, it was the serpent." Neither one wanted to accept responsibility for their actions because it would make them extremely uncomfortable. Their feelings were a priority. They wanted to make sure that they were not hurt. They feared becoming upset or being unable to function properly if their feelings were hurt.

Biblical Examples of Desire-Oriented Living

Now, when you see Genesis 3 and verse 6, you can see there the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Let me show you how this is developed throughout Scripture. Turn to Joshua chapter 6. Here you have another illustration. The children of Israel are going to conquer Jericho, and Jericho, of course, is

put under a ban. It is put under a curse. Everything in Jericho is to be destroyed. What is not to be destroyed is to be given to God.

God says, “And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.”

Before they went into Jericho, the whole city was cursed. Everything in it was cursed. The only people who were to live were Rahab and her family. Everything else was cursed as well. They were not to touch it, lest they die.

You know the story, and we are going to look at some of it in Joshua chapter 7. The men told Joshua, “Don’t make all the people work because Ai up there is just a small city. Just send a few of us up there.” So 3,000 Israelites went up to take Ai, and the men of Ai defeated the Israelites, killed 36 of them, and sent them back defeated. Joshua fell on his face and said, “Lord, what in the world is going on when Israel turns her back to her enemies?”

God said, “Get up from off your face. There’s sin in the camp. Neither will I be with you anymore till ye put away the sin.” God then began to take an account. Every tribe was brought, then the tribe of Judah, then the families of that tribe, and finally the family of Achan. Joshua 7:18 says: “And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done.”

“Hide it not from me.” And Achan answered Joshua, and said, “Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done.”

Now look what he says: “When I saw”—remember Eve saw that the tree was good for food?—“When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and

a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them;" that is, I desired them, and I took them. "And, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

God's command was plain and simple: "Don't touch anything in the city. It's all cursed." He said, "If you touch it, you're going to become a curse." Achan said, "I saw it. I coveted it. I desired it. I wanted it. And I took it." The same lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life that motivated Eve motivated Achan. He gave in to his feelings and to a desire-oriented life; he rejected the commandment-oriented life.

When he satisfied his desires, it killed him. It not only killed him; it killed his family. Every member of Achan's family was put to death. Undoubtedly, they were part and parcel of it and knew what he had done. It was hidden under the tent, and they were responsible for the death of thirty-six Israelites. Achan said, "Here is what I desired. This is what I want. Yes, I'll give in to my feelings. I will take this." He swapped the commandment-oriented life for the feeling-oriented life, and it cost him the life of his family. God said, "Don't touch it or you'll die," and that is exactly what happened.

The feeling- or desire-oriented life is contrary to God and contrary to Scripture. Everyone knows the story of Samson. Surely someone as strong as Samson would be able to overcome all of his desires. Yet Judges 14:1 says, "And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

"Now therefore get her for me to wife." Then his father and his mother said unto him, "Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" And Samson said unto his father, "Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well." But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

Samson had gone down to Timnath, among the Philistines, found a woman, and wanted his parents to get her for him as a wife. His father and mother objected: “Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all thy people?” They were saying, “Samson, there are plenty of beautiful young women in your own tribe. Get one out of your tribe. And if you do not find one in your tribe, there will be other tribes to choose from.”

“Just do not marry a heathen. Do not violate the law of God.” Exodus 34:12-16 and Deuteronomy 7:1-5 specifically forbade the children of Israel to intermarry with the heathen. God said, “You stay separate. You do not marry the Ammonites and the Moabites and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Hivites and all the rest. No, you do not marry them.”

Now, here is what Samson was doing. He was saying, “I know what God commands, but I know what I want.” He was sinning on two distinct fronts. First, he was violating the known law of God. Secondly, he was violating the fifth commandment: “Honor thy father and thy mother.” His father and mother said, “Do not do this,” but Samson said, “Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.”

The word “pleaseth” literally means, “It is agreeable in my eyes.” Samson was saying, “I do not see anything wrong with it. I do not care what God commanded or what God says. It is agreeable to me; it is all right in my eyes. She pleases me. Get her. I want to fulfill my desires and my feelings ahead of the Word of God.”

That is what he was doing. Without going into great detail, if you continue reading Judges, you come to chapter 16, the story of Samson and Delilah. Delilah was a Philistine. She deceived Samson, cut his hair, and the Philistines came and put out his eyes. They brought him as a slave and honored their false gods.

Judges 16:21 says: “But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.”

Later, you know how the boy brought him to the pillars of the temple where all those Philistines were. He brought the house down and killed the Philistines, but he himself died as well.

Samson gave in to his feelings and to a desire-oriented life, and he lost his life, his family, and his ministry simply because he put his feelings and desires ahead of the Word of God. It seems as if we never learn. Most people, and unhappily most Christian people, live on their feelings rather than on the commandments of the Word of God. It is a clever wile of Satan to tempt men to think they cannot do what God requires because they do not feel like doing it. He also tempts them to think they have to give in to their feelings because they cannot help themselves.

The Pervasiveness of Feeling-Oriented Living

Have you ever heard someone say, "Well, I couldn't help myself. I couldn't stop myself. I just had to do it"? Christians say, "I just don't feel like praying." Is prayer a command of God? What have feelings got to do with not praying? I am not talking about being sick. Some say, "I don't feel like studying. I don't feel like reading my Bible. I don't feel like going to church." You are not sick; you simply do not feel like it, and you give in.

I have often wanted to stay home from church one Sunday. Then the next Sunday someone might ask, "Where were you last Sunday? We were all here." "Well, I just didn't feel like coming." You know you do it. I know I have told you this, but it is still my favorite story about the mother who went in to get her son up.

"Get up. It's time to get ready to go to church." He said, "I'm not going today." She answered, "Oh, yes, you are." He said nobody there liked him, listened to him, or talked to him. She told him to get up and get dressed. He asked for two good reasons why he should. She said, "Number one, you're 40-something years old, and number two, you're the pastor."

You understand what I am saying: we give in to feelings. We have adopted the motto, "If it feels good, do it," and, by converse, "If it doesn't feel good, I'm not going to do it."

Think about how many broken homes and divorces there are, and probably are taking place now and will continue to take place, because a husband or wife simply says, "Well, I no longer have feelings for my spouse." What? "I no longer have feelings." It

seems to me there is a commandment. Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives." Isn't that a commandment? Conversely, that also applies to wives. God does not say, "Husbands, feel like loving your wives," or, "Wives, feel like loving your husbands." He commands it. It is a command. Yet people say, "Well, I no longer have feelings."

When people are encouraged to follow their feelings rather than the Word of God, it is not only treasonous to the law of God and to God, but it also gives the victory to the flesh and Satan. It solidifies and cements the problems in their lives and further complicates those problems because it encourages more disobedience. As a Christian, you and I do have a choice.

The unsaved, according to the Bible, are servants of sin. But Romans chapter 6 tells us we have been delivered from the dominion of sin. We have a new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin is not our master. We do have a choice. We do not have to give in to our feelings, and we do not have to give in to our desires.

Everyone knows that Moses was in line to be the Pharaoh of Egypt. But Hebrews 11:24–26 says, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." He was refusing the pharaohship of Egypt—all the money, power, and prestige. "By faith, when he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

We do have a choice. We do not have to follow our feelings or our desires. Many people give in to their feelings and desires, and they always end up in depression and despair. You should never make decisions when you are desperate, depressed, and in despair. When you make a decision based upon the Word of God, you may move forward with confidence.

The Bible says in Romans 14:23, "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If you cannot do something in faith toward God and toward the Word of God, do not do it. Here is the little principle: When in doubt, do not. It is always easier to change a no to a yes than it is a

yes to a no. If you are not clear about something, and cannot do it in faith, do not do it. Do not make major decisions when you are in despair and depressed. When you make a decision based upon the Word of God and its principles, stick with it regardless of circumstances, situations, or feelings.

Everyone knows about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. What did they tell Nebuchadnezzar? "We will not bow. Don't care what you do. We're not going to bow." They did not know whether they would be thrown into the fiery furnace. They only knew that they were not going to bow. When he said, "If you don't bow, you will be thrown into that fiery furnace," they said, "Be it known unto thee, our God can deliver us. But whether he delivers us or not," the Lord says, "that's his business. Be it known unto thee, O king, we will not bow." God sovereignly delivered them. But the perception of bad feelings—being burned to death—did not deter them from their decision, which was based upon the Word of God. When you make a decision based upon the Word of God, you do not back down.

Now understand this: Here is the desire-oriented life that most people follow, even most Christian people.

Behavior Determines Feelings

Secondly, I want you to see another principle: behavior determines feelings. It is important that you understand the connection between behavior and feelings. Feelings are never, ever to lead us. Feelings never lead; they always follow. God has ordained that if we do what is right—that is, if we obey—we will feel good. If we do that which is wrong and wicked, we will feel bad. Good feelings follow obedience and righteousness, and bad feelings follow rebellion and disobedience.

Look back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 4, beginning with verse 3. Everyone knows, or at least should know, the story of Cain and Abel. You remember how God required a sacrifice? Genesis 4:3 says, "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." God had required a blood sacrifice, but Cain brought the fruit of the ground. Verse 4 says, "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his

flock and of the fat thereof." Now watch carefully: "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Abel undoubtedly was very happy because God respected and received his offering. But Cain did not bring what God required. Verse 5 says, "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect."

"Now watch: "And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." Cain became angry; he became morose, depressed, and anxious. His bad feelings stemmed from his rebellion and disobedience.

Look what God told him in verse 6: "And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?" Why are you so upset, depressed, and morose? Verse 7 says, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" In other words, bring what I require, and I will receive it. If you do what is right, I will receive it. "And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire."

Cain, if you bring the offering I require, I will receive it. There is no reason for you to be moping around, angry, upset, mad, morose, depressed, discouraged, or in despair. Why are you like that? Because you did not obey Me the first time. Feelings follow. They never, ever lead. When someone is depressed, anxious, in despair, discouraged, or hostile,

You know what most people say? "Well, he's having emotional problems." I got news for you, folks: he's not having emotional problems. His emotions are working all too well. That is the problem. The problem is not emotional; the problem is behavioral. You change your behavior and you change your feelings. You do what's right and you're going to feel right. This is why, when people try to relieve the symptoms and never deal with the root of the problem, they never, ever are successful.

Someone says, "Well, I'm depressed. I'm discouraged. I think I'll just go out and pitch me a good drunk." Well, fine. Go pitch yourself a good drunk. When you wake up, you've got a hangover. You're broke or broker. And guess what? You have the same problems. You haven't changed a thing. The same thing is true with pills. It doesn't matter. "Well, I know what I'll do. I'll just go

cuss him out." Go cuss him out. When you get through cussing him out, you not only have the same problem; now you've complicated and compounded it, and there are additional problems.

People feel bad because of their bad behavior. On the other hand, people feel good because of good behavior. I can make you feel bad this morning. I can. I really can. If you would do what I say, I can make you feel absolutely bad. You say, "How can you do that?" I could say, "Now, here's what I want you to do. I want you to think of the most hurtful, the most embarrassing experience that you've ever had in your life, and I want you to dwell on it." Don't do it. But if I were to make you dwell on your most hurtful, most embarrassing experience, you know what? Pretty soon your stomach would start knotting up and all those memories would come flooding in: "Oh boy, here we go again."

I'm trying to show you that feelings follow behavior and attitude as well. God has designed that feelings follow; they're never to lead. Good feelings always follow obedience. Would you like to have a good life? Would you like to be able to enjoy life? Would you like to have good feelings? Would you like to have fewer problems? Well, look what God says. Notice 1 Peter 3:10: "For he that will love life, and see good days,"

"Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." Or pursue it. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

Now note what he says. If you want to love life, if you want to see good days, what do you do? You keep your tongue. You keep your lips. You keep your mouth. "Let him eschew evil." I love that word "eschew." Do you know what it literally means? To spit out. You cannot stomach it; you cannot swallow it; you cannot take it. Let him spit out evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. Why? If you do right, you are going to have good days and love life. What is he saying? Feelings follow. Good feelings follow right behavior.

Peter says, "Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." Having a good conscience stems from doing what is right. People may speak evil of you, slander you, and attack you. Someone may say, "I don't like this, and I don't like that, and I'm going to slander him. I'm going to attack him." Let them. Help yourself. While you're talking about me, at least you're not talking about some widow or some orphan. At least you're giving someone else some rest. But I've got news for you: as long as you do what is right, you have only one person to please, and that is the Lord. Their slander and lies will not cost you one night's sleep. You can still feel good because you know that you are doing what is right, biblical, and holy. That is exactly what he is saying: if you want to live a good life, love life, and have good feelings, simply obey. Remember, feelings never lead; they always follow.

Here is an illustration that I hope you can identify with. Every one of us has awakened one morning and simply did not feel good. We say, "I don't feel like getting out of bed. I don't feel like going to work." We are not sick, and there is really nothing wrong with us; we just do not feel like doing anything. We think, "I can lie here in bed most of the day. Maybe that will help me."

But then we begin thinking about all the things for which we are responsible. We lie there a few more minutes and say, "No, I don't feel good, it is true. But I have a responsibility to study. I have a responsibility to clean the house. I have a responsibility to cook dinner. I have a responsibility. I might as well get up and get on it."

You get up, start moving, working, and doing what you are supposed to do, and within an hour you feel great. You have already forgotten that you did not even feel like getting out of bed. On the other hand, if you give in to those feelings and stay in bed, then wake the next morning saying, "Oh no, now I really don't feel like getting up. Now I have two days' work to face," you soon give in to despair and depression. Before long, you are languishing in a bed of pure, absolute sorryness.

The Commandment-Oriented Life Is the Godly Life

Why? Simply because you gave in to your feelings. If we do right, we feel right. If we do wrong, we feel bad. It is just that simple.

The Commandment-Oriented Life as the Godly Life

The commandment-oriented life is the godly life. What is salvation? You might answer, "Salvation is being saved from sin and judgment," and that is correct in one sense of the word. But you could also truthfully say that being saved from sin and judgment are byproducts of salvation. Being saved from sin and judgment was not necessarily the first thing in salvation. Salvation is more than negative; it is positive. It is true that we are saved from sin, and it is true that we are saved from judgment, but there is also a positive purpose. What is that positive? First Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Why did Christ die, the just for the unjust? Here is the answer: "that he might bring us to God."

What does it mean that He might bring us to God? Let us go back to where we started, not by turning in our Bibles, but in our minds, to Genesis 3. What had God done in Genesis 2? God had put Adam and Eve in the garden under a commandment-oriented life. In Genesis 3, they said, "No, thank you. We're going to follow the desire-oriented life," and they ran from God. They did not run to Him. God hunted them down.

Ever since the Fall, man has been running from God. Man has been saying, "No, no, I don't want your law. I don't want your commandments. I don't want You telling me what to do. I know what pleases me. I know what makes me feel good. I know what is agreeable to me. I want to do what I want to. No, thank you, God." But when Christ came and died, the just for the unjust, He died that He might bring us back to God. When God—when Christ saves us, He brings us back to the Father, and we bow to Him now. We say, "Lord,

"What wilt thou have me to do? Here I am, Lord. Here's the prodigal, here's the runaway. I'm coming back to submit myself to you and your commandments." Then we learn to say with David in

Psalm 119:97, “Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” His commandments become our standard, our standard for righteousness, our standard for obedience. We now want to obey Him. We strive to obey Him. We pray for a right heart that we may obey Him. We pray like Christ that we might be like Christ when He said, “I do always those things which please the Father.” We want to please Him. He’s brought us back to God.

We’re no longer running from Him. We’re running to Him. We no longer want to disobey Him. Now we want to obey Him. What does God do in salvation? In salvation, He places us again under a commandment-oriented life.

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” Now, who is it that loves Christ? He that keeps His commandments. “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.” Our Lord said, “If you love me, you’re going to keep my commandments. If you don’t love me, you won’t keep my commandments.”

One of the most important passages in the Bible, as far as I’m concerned, is 1 John 5:2: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.” How do I know that I love the children of God? When I love God and keep His commandments. What does that mean? It means I treat my brethren the way God commands me to treat them. I don’t try to steal their wives. I don’t try to steal their property. I don’t try to kill them. I obey God’s law for them. How do I know that I love the children of God? Because I act obediently toward them in obeying God’s command. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” What’s the love of God? It’s keeping God’s commandments.

It does not grieve us. I am not upset because I cannot go out and rape and pillage and plunder and lie and steal. It does not bother me; I do not want to do those things. I am not upset because I cannot have fourteen wives. I can barely support the one I have.

We obey Him, and it is not grievous. It is liberty, freedom, joy, and happiness in obeying God. There is nothing grievous about it.

Look in your Bibles, if you would, to 1 John 2, and look at verse 3: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” How do I know that I know God? How do I know that I am genuinely converted? Because God enables and empowers me continually to bring my life into conformity to His Word. Does that mean I am perfect? Of course not. It means there is a constant, continuous bringing of the life into conformity with the Word of God. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” Verse 4 says, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” What does God do when He saves us? He places us back under a commandment-oriented life. As our Lord said in Luke 6:46, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

That which characterizes a true child of God is that he obeys the commands of God. We are back under a commandment-oriented life. Why should I not steal? Everybody is doing it. I should not steal because God said, “Thou shalt not steal.” That is how simple it is; I do not care what everybody else is doing.

Why should I not commit adultery? Everybody is doing that too. Because God says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” If I am a child of God, I am under a commandment-oriented life. My feelings do not matter. I may look at the most beautiful woman in the world and say, “Wow, look at that woman.” I do not care about the feelings. God says, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, or his daughter, or anything that’s thy neighbor’s.” A commandment-oriented life.

Contrast Between the Lost and the Saved

Proverbs chapter 1 shows the contrast between the unsaved and the saved. Wisdom is personified, none other than Jesus Christ our Lord, and speaks in Proverbs 1:23: "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." God says, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have

set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." He continues: "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

What characterizes the lost? They disobey God. They hate God and His commandments. They do not obey Him but do whatever they please.

In Proverbs 3:1, God says to the believer: "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee." That is 1 Peter 3:10. "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man." Proverbs 4:4 says: "He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth."

What does a commandment-oriented life mean? It means we bring our lives into conformity to the Word of God.

As Christians, we have to distinguish between feelings, attitude, and behavior. Our behavior is answerable and accountable to God and is to be judged by the law of God. It is either right or wrong. We must learn to obey regardless of the situation, circumstances, feelings, desires, or temptations. We must obey. We are His servants. We are His sons. We are His family. And we must honor Him.

Applications and Conclusion

Now, let me make just a couple of very quick applications. The first one is this: Obedience is not optional for the child of God; it is

mandatory. It is mandatory, it is necessary, but it should also be given in loving submission and humble gratefulness. Why should I obey God? I could give you a multitude of reasons. First, God is God, and He has the right to command, while I am responsible to obey. I should also obey God because He redeemed me, saved me, and created me. There is a multitude of reasons. But we must understand that obedience is not optional. It is mandatory.

Secondly, a principle we need to comprehend is this: If we act right, if we obey, we're going to feel good. If we disobey, we're going to feel bad. Feelings never, ever lead. They always follow. For you and I to honor God, our attitudes must be biblical in order that our conduct might be biblical. Feelings change daily, sometimes hourly.

Feelings change. Are you listening? Principles never change. If you live by your feelings, you're going to be up and down, in and out, under the circumstances, under the weather. You're going to be so up and down, you'll be worse than a roller coaster. But if you say, "Look, I don't care about the feelings, don't care about the desire, I'm going to obey God," guess what? It's always right to do right, and it's never right to do wrong. If you live by those principles, you're going to do what's right regardless of how you feel. Make sure you understand that we must obey God.

And then thirdly, and lastly, I just want to remind you that the commandment-oriented life is the only lifestyle for the child of God. What did he say? Let me quote it again: "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil," let him spit it out, "let him seek peace, and pursue it." God saved us. And when He saved us, He placed us back under a commandment-oriented life.

And it's this: do and thou shalt live. This do and thou shalt pay. God is sovereign and He has the absolute right to command. And we are responsible to obey.

Father, we're so thankful today for Your Word, for Your truth. And Lord, help us never, ever give in to our feelings, but to always, Father, obey Thee and to bring our lives in conformity to Your

Word. Give us grace, Lord, that we may serve Thee and serve Thee acceptably and honorably and willingly, Lord, for Your honor and Your glory and our good. We ask these things in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

When You Know You're Going to Die

July 19, 2009

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 14:21-23, 26-35 (KJV)

Introduction: The Certainty of Death

We will read Numbers 14 first. The title of the message today is, "When You Know You're Going to Die." Notice, if you would, when you know you're going to die.

Numbers 14, verse 21: God says, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I swore to their fathers. Neither shall any of them that provoked me see it."

Skip down to verse 26. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, 'How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the

> murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as you have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, doubtless you shall not come into the land concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.'
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> "But your little ones which you said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which you searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, you shall bear your iniquities even forty years and you shall know my breach of promise."

When You Know You're Going to Die

Hebrews 3:17 refers to this passage: “But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?”

Have you ever considered what it must be like to know when you are going to die? How about not only knowing when you are going to die, but also how you are going to die? Think of the men and women on death row. Not only has a date been designated for them to die, but the method of their death has also been designated. What must it be like to count down the years, the months, the days, and the minutes before one is executed? What must it be like to know that within fifteen minutes you will be executed by, say, the electric chair or lethal injection? What must it be like to know that within fifteen minutes all of your questions concerning God, death, and judgment will be answered?

In one sense, we all know that we are going to die. The Bible declares in Hebrews 9:27, “As it is appointed unto men once to die, after that the judgment.” We know that the wages of sin are death.

We were created from the dust of the earth, and into the dust we shall return. There is no escape from physical death. As Pilgrim explained in Pilgrim's Progress, we must die and stand before God in judgment. Pilgrim said that he was unwilling to do the first—to die—and unable to do the second—to stand before God in judgment. Therefore, he went around saying, “I must die, I must die, I must die.” What a realization when we understand that we must die.

How would you like to be like Hezekiah when he heard the words delivered to him by the prophet Isaiah? In Isaiah 38:1, God said to King Hezekiah, “Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live.”

We know that the Bible teaches us that the wages of sin is death. We also know that we are going to die. We do not know exactly when, but we know about when. How can I say that? Look in your Bibles. Hold Numbers 14, but look to Psalm 90:10.

Psalm 90, verse 10, says, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." What God is telling us in Psalm 90 is that the average lifespan is from seventy to eighty years. Usually it is around seventy, more or less. If we make it eighty, our days are usually filled with sorrow and sickness. Some, however, do not even reach the normal lifespan. Some are cut down in the prime of life, while others do not even get to begin life.

General Promises for Long Life

In Scripture, there are general promises for long life, and there are also general promises for a shortened life. The most famous passage for long life is found in Exodus 20, verse 12: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." That same promise is repeated in Ephesians 6, verses 2 and 3: "Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long upon the earth."

Here, then, is a promise of long life in relationship to whether or not we honor our parents. Actually, there are three promises of long life in the Bible. Each relates to the very core of our being. The first is in reference to our attitude and our action toward our parents. We must honor them if we expect a long life. According to Matthew 15 and Mark 7, honoring parents involves a great deal more than saying yes sir and yes ma'am, or no sir and no ma'am. God is simply saying that we must honor them if we have any expectation of long life.

Conversely, if we dishonor our parents, our days will be shortened upon this earth. In other words, there is an implied and inherent threat for those who dishonor their parents. Now, let us consider the second promise in the Bible for long life.

Hold Numbers 14, but look, if you would, to Deuteronomy chapter 22. The first promise, then, is in reference to our parents, whether we honor them or dishonor them. But in Deuteronomy 22, beginning with verse six, this may surprise you, or even shock you. This promise is in relation to how we treat animals. Here it is: Deuteronomy 22, verse six.

"If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam, that is, the mother, with the young. But thou shalt in any wise let the dam or the mother go, and take the young to thee. Now note that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days."

Note that God has said in other passages of Scripture, for instance, "Thou shalt not kill her mother and her young on the same day." God forbade killing a cow and a calf on the same day. Here, He says that if you are walking down the road and see a bird's nest with the mother on it, you may take the eggs and let the mother go, or you may take the young and let the mother go, but you cannot take both. He expressly forbids taking the mother.

Why? If you took the mother, the eggs would not hatch or the babies would die. You would be taking the mother and the young both in one day.

Very obviously, this is an illustration of the fifth commandment. What God is demanding here is respect and honor for the family, even the families of animals. In other words, it is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If God commands us to honor the families of animals, how much more are we commanded to honor the families of men and women, and how much more particularly are we commanded to honor our own family?

Very obviously, here are two general promises of long life. One concerns how we respect and honor our own family, and the second concerns how we respect and honor the family of animals as well. If you will turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 25, you will see the third general promise of long life. This one may surprise you. You will see how intimately it is tied once again to the very core of our being. Notice what he said, Deuteronomy 25 and verse thirteen. Let's begin reading.

"Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, different weights, great and small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers, or different measures, great and small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have, that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The third promise for long life is in relationship to our money and how we deal with other people, how we deal with each other. In other words, we cannot be cheaters. We cannot be thieves. We cannot be dishonest.

Let us put these three promises together. There is the promise of long life in how we treat our family. There is the general promise of long life in how we treat the families of animals. And there is the general promise of long life in how we treat each other. So we have to learn to be honest and just with each other.

It is not simply a quantity of life that God has promised, but a quality of life as well. What good is long life if you live that life in misery and sickness and turmoil and trouble? God not only promises quantity of life, but also a quality of life as well. In 1 Peter 3, verses 10 and 11, notice what he says: "For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it." When he says, let him eschew evil, that

means let him spit it out. He cannot swallow it; he cannot stomach it.

Quality of Life Also Promised

If you want not just quantity of life, but a quality of life, then refrain your tongue from speaking evil, restrain your lips so that they speak no guile, spit out evil, seek peace, and ensue it. God has promised long life, not just quantity, but quality as well. There are general promises for long life, but there are also general promises for shortened lives. Obedience is the way, the means that God has ordained to lengthen our days. Disobedience is the means that God has ordained to shorten our days.

Disobedience Shortens Life

I can hear the objection. You say, "But wait a minute, Pastor. I thought that Scripture taught that our days were numbered, that we are going to die when we are going to die, and there is nothing we can do about it." That is true in one sense of the word. It is certainly true when you read Job 7:1. God asks, "Is there not an appointed time for man upon the earth? Are not his days also like the days of a hireling?" Is there not an appointed time? Yes, there is an appointed time. There was an appointed time for you to be born, and there is an appointed time for you to die. Job 14:4–5 says, "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." So God has said to each one of us, like the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." However, consider this: when God ordained the end, He also ordained the means to that end.

Thus, if I live a long life, that long life will be because I have obeyed God, honored my parents, honored the families of animals, been honest in my dealings with other men, and been generally obedient throughout my life. On the other hand, if I have a shortened life, it is because I have used the means: I have disobeyed God, dishonored my parents, dishonored the families of animals, been dishonest in my dealings with other men, and been generally disobedient. There is the means to shorten my life.

Now, does this mean that every individual who is obedient is going to live a long life? No, of course not. There is God's secretive will that must be applied. I do not know God's secretive will for you. Generally speaking, this is true. Does it mean that every wicked man is going to be cut down in the prime of life? No. All you have to do is read Psalm 73. Plenty of wicked men live to ripe old ages, but they are the exception and not the rule. Generally speaking, God has ordained that if we obey, we will live long lives; if we disobey, we will live shortened lives.

Now let me show you some of the promises—or, I might say, some of the threats as well. Let us work our way through the book of Psalms and consider the warnings, curses, and threats; or, if you want to call them promises, that is fine. Psalm 34, verse 16: “The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.” God is going to cut him off; He is going to cut off the remembrance of him.

Psalm 37, verse 9, says, “For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.” Verse 22 says, “For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.” Verse 28 says, “For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.” As you turn to Psalm 55, let me quote to you Proverbs 2, verse 22.

In Proverbs 2:22, the Word of God says, "But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it." So God's going to cut the wicked off, the disobedient. He's going to root them out. Now look at Psalm 55:23: "But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee." Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in thee.

What did David just say? Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. What's he saying? God's going to cut them off. God's going to kill them. In other words, disobedience is the means to shorten your life.

Now, if you will turn back in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 2, I will show you an excellent illustration of this principle. Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were wicked men, although they were priests. They were vile, wicked men. Eli refused to restrain his sons. They not only dishonored God, they committed immorality. They were just vile. They were just wicked.

Notice what God tells Eli in 1 Samuel 2. Verse 30: "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house."

When God says there shall not be an old man in thine house, help me translate that: He's going to kill them before they get old. Now watch: "And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age." What is he saying? I'm going to kill every one of them, and there are not going to be old men around.

“For they that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, and there shall not be an old man in thine house.” When God says there shall not be an old man in thine house, help me translate that: He is going to kill them before they get old.

“And thou shalt see an enemy in thy habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel, and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from thine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart, and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.” What is he saying? “I'm going to kill every one of them, and there are not going to be old men around.” Anybody who lives a little bit longer, it will just be to cause heartache and

grief. You're under my judgment. That's it. So here's the means that you use to shorten your life.

In Deuteronomy 30:20, notice how length of life, long days, are promised to those who obey: “That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.” You love the Lord, obey him, and cleave to him. Why? He is thy life and the length of thy days.

Then Jeremiah 7:23 says, “But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” So it's not just quantity of life. It is a quality that God promises if we obey.

Now, let me show you how God puts this together. Look in Deuteronomy 30 and begin with verse 15. Then we are going back to Numbers 14 and dealing with the message.

God had set before them His will and His law. Deuteronomy 30:15 says, “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

What did He say? “I've set before you life and death. I've set before you blessing and curses.” If you want a long life and quality of life, God says, obey Me. Generally speaking, that is how you live long. If you want to die early, disobey God. Generally speaking, that is how you die early. The principle is simple: obedience brings life and blessing, and disobedience brings death and curses.

The Israelites' Provocation and Judgment

In Numbers 14, some people had provoked God grievously. Verse 22 says, “Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice.” God was saying that these same reprobates had provoked Him ten distinct times. Most of these provocations are given to us in the Bible: at the Red Sea in Exodus 14; at Marah in Exodus 15; in the wilderness of sin in Exodus 16; at Rephidim in Exodus 17; in the golden calf in Exodus 32; at Taberah and Kibroth-hattaavah in Numbers 11; and here at Kadesh-barnea in Numbers 14.

Look back at verse 22: “Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times.”

There are at least two painfully obvious truths from this verse. The first is this: God does keep a record of our sins. He knew how many times these people had provoked Him. The Bible says in Numbers 32:23, “Be sure your sins will find you out.” In Psalm 50:21, God told the wicked, “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.”

God said, I know what you have done. Just because I did not strike you down instantly, do you think I did not see it, record it, or know about it?

Many of the wicked have a peace that comes only from their own forgetfulness. They have forgotten, but God has not. In Exodus 34:7, He said, “Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear

the guilty." If you are outside of Christ, unregenerated, and unconverted, then you are unforgiven, and God knows each and every one of your sins. He has not forgotten them; He has recorded them. You may have forgotten them, but God has not.

The second truth is that God has a point at which He will no longer extend mercy or grace. What did He say? "I've had it with you. Ten times you provoked me."

Now you are going to be destroyed. You know what the Bible says in Romans 2:4–6? God says, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds."

What did God say? You despise my goodness, my forbearance, and my longsuffering. When you despise everything that I am and everything that I do for you, all you are doing is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. God says there will be one day when He will render every man according to his deeds—to those who provoke God. They have nothing but judgment and destruction ahead of them, not only in this life, but in the life to come as well.

Now, look back at Numbers 14:1 and see again how this chapter opens, with these wicked people provoking God and failing to obey Him: "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night."

"And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

Here are people expressing a belief that death in Egypt or death in the wilderness would be far better for them than that which God

had prepared and provided for them. They failed to believe Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb. They failed to believe God. In fact, they chose to believe those ten spies who brought up an evil report, a false and libelous report against God and against His promised land. So God rightly charges them with provocation.

Look in verse 11, Numbers 14: "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?" God is saying that their unbelief provoked Him. Clearly, that which led to their murmuring, bellyaching, and complaining was their unbelief.

Unbelief dishonors God. It challenges His Word. It ignores His promises as well as threatenings. It calls God a liar. Unbelief basically spits in the face of a holy God. It challenges God and dares Him to do His worst. Unbelief is a heinous sin and brings judgment upon the unbeliever.

If you really grasp Numbers 14:2, it should make you very concerned for that which you pray: "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!" The translation of "would God" is from a conditional particle that may literally be interpreted, "oh that it might be," "if haply," "I pray thee," "if only that," or "all that it might be." In other words, they were saying, "I pray that, if haply, I would, I prefer, I want to die either in Egypt or in this wilderness."

They were not in Egypt, so they could not die there; but they were in the wilderness, and God could answer their prayer very easily. In Numbers 14:26, the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me." God said, "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness."

"As you have spoken to me, as you have prayed, as you have wished, as you have wanted, that is exactly what I am going to do to you. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness." Their children, whom they had said would be a prey, would go into the promised land, but they would never see it.

In verse 31, the Lord continued: "But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in this wilderness."

The word of the Lord had been given, and their sentence had been pronounced. They would die in the wilderness. There was no escaping this now. They knew that they were going to die. The sovereign, omnipotent God of heaven and earth had pronounced His decree: "You prayed to me to die in this wilderness. I am going to answer your prayer. I am going to let you die. Your carcasses shall fall."

In verse 35, the Lord said: "I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die. And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord."

Now, what did God just do? He looked at all those men and said, "You want to die in this wilderness? Fine, I am going to answer your prayer. Your carcasses shall fall." And, by the way, these ten men who brought up this libelous, slanderous report died instantly as a plague before the Lord. The death of those ten men was kind of like an earnest. When they died instantly, God was guaranteeing the others' death: Just as I killed them, so you are going to die as well. Those ten were nothing more than earnest, so to speak.

And what did God say? "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness." You prayed for it. You asked for it. You have got it.

Now, when God said, “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness,” it meant more than simply the fact that they were going to die. They were going to die, but there was more to it than that.

The Horror of Dying Under Judgment

Look in your Bibles to Jeremiah 22, beginning at verse 18, and read about Jehoiakim. You are going to see the implication when God says, “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.” We are talking about King Jehoiakim. Here is what God said about him: “Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.”

How do you bury an ass? You do not. You drag him off, let his body rot, and let the buzzards pick his bones. What did God say? “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.” Go back in your Bibles to Hebrews 3 and verse 17. The author of the book of Hebrews is referring to Numbers chapter 14, and he says this: “But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell,” past tense, “in the wilderness?”

Albert Barnes comments on Hebrews 3:17, “Their carcasses fell in the wilderness”: “That is, they all died, and were left on the sands of the desert. The whole generation was strewn along the way to Canaan. All of those who had seen the wonders that God had done in the land of Ham, who had been rescued in so remarkable a manner from oppression, were thus cut down and died in the desert through which they were passing.” Such an example of the effects of revolt against God and unbelief was well fitted to admonish the Christians in the time of the Apostle, and is fitted to admonish us now of the danger of the sin of unbelief. Their carcasses were strewn along the sands of the desert.

Adam Clarke comments that “whose carcasses fell” properly signifies the members of a body. He says there may be an allusion to the scattered, bleached bones of this people, long apparent in the wilderness as continual proof of their crimes and of the judgment of God. They were not buried or mourned; they simply

fell down and died. Finally, John Gill says that their carcasses fell in the wilderness and so never entered the land of Canaan. They did not die common or natural deaths, at least not all of them; their deaths were by way of punishment, in wrath, in a judicial way. The Syriac version renders it, "their bones fell in the wilderness." They lay scattered, unburied, and exposed to view as an example of divine vengeance.

When God said to those wicked, unbelieving people, "Turn you into the wilderness," they began dying under the judgment of God. Remember this: when the cloud moved, they moved; when the cloud stopped, they stopped. But if the cloud was moving and somebody dropped dead, what did the rest of the people do? They kept moving. They kept walking.

How many men died in the wilderness? Numbers 1:46 gives the number of men from twenty years old and upward who were able to fight and go to war: "Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty." Thus, 603,550 men above twenty years of age dropped dead in the wilderness.

There were probably two million people. That did not count the younger men, the little children, or the women.

If they wandered for forty years, approximately 16,000 would die each year, 1,300 each month, or fifty each day. Here were these people walking along, and all of a sudden fifty men would fall down dead. What did they do? They kept going.

What happened to their bodies? The buzzards got them. They were unburied and unmourned. This was only the men of war. It did not count women or children who died, whether naturally or perhaps by the judgment of God. It did not count those who died of old age or disease. Can you imagine not only knowing that you were going to die, but knowing that you were going to die under the judgment of God, and that when you died, you would be unburied and unmourned, lying simply wherever you fell?

Did they all die? Numbers 26:63–65 gives the answer: "These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan

near Jericho. But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." There was not a man left of them.

Did God kill all of them? He killed all of them. Not one escaped. Everyone whom God said was going to die, died. Do you imagine that some vainly hoped they would escape God's judgment? Do you imagine that some thought, "Maybe God will forget," or, "God will overlook me"? But He did not. There was not a man of them left. God accomplished all of His purpose. His decree was totally and completely carried out.

When God told these people to turn in the wilderness, they knew they were going to die. They might not have known the exact date, but they knew that within forty years not one of them would be left.

Application: Are You Prepared to Die?

Each of us knows, just like those Israelites, surely that we're going to die. And we are. Hebrews 9:27 says, "As it was appointed unto men once to die, after that the judgment." Are we prepared to die? Earlier I told you about Pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress. When Evangelist met him, Pilgrim was weeping. Evangelist asked why, and he answered, "I must die. I must die. I must die. I find that I must die and stand before God."

"I'm unwilling to do the first and I'm unable to do the second." Dear friend, all those who are outside the Lord Jesus Christ, all those who are outside of Him in faith, are not prepared to die. If you do not know Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, like Pilgrim, you are not prepared.

Secondly, the Israelites who refused to trust in God and obey His voice died under the judgment of God. Likewise, today, those who refuse to trust in Christ will die under God's judgment. The Bible says in 2 Thessalonians 1, beginning in 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."

Those who are outside of Jesus Christ will be destroyed and judged, just like those Israelites in the wilderness. Not all the Bible may be written to you, and not all the Bible may be written about you, but all the Bible is written for you. You better understand that what is revealed in the Old Testament, according to Romans 15 and 1 Corinthians chapter 10, is written for our admonition and our learning. Just as these men died under God's judgment in Numbers 14, 15, and 16, those who refuse Christ shall also die under God's judgment.

How can we have a greater surety of death and destruction than the Word of God? God decreed the deaths of these men in Numbers chapter 14, and it came to pass exactly as He said. God has decreed that it is appointed unto us once to die, and after that the judgment. Dear friend, it will come to pass exactly as God said. Psalm 138, verse 2, tells us that God has placed His Word above His name. If God's Word ever fails, then God would cease to be God.

But I do have some good news: for the child of God, the one who has been regenerated by grace and converted through repentance and faith, death has no sting and judgment holds no harm.

In 1 Corinthians 15:53, the apostle says, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

For those who are in Christ, death has no sting. The grave holds no horror. Judgment holds no horror. Why? Because God has

given us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says in Hebrews 2:14–15, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Do you realize that when Christ died as our substitute and the wrath of God fell upon him in our place, He took all the sting, all the horror, and all the pain? For the believer in Scripture, it is called being among those who sleep in Christ.

Conclusion: Death Swallowed in Victory

Do you have a horror each night of going to sleep? I do not. I welcome it, am thankful for it, and look forward to it. For the child of God, death is nothing more than simply sleep. There is no horror and no pain. As children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, we know that we shall lie down and go to sleep physically; that is, we shall leave this earthly body.

But for the child of God, listen carefully, there is no death, only life. What did Christ say? "I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly." In John 5:24 He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." We will not experience, as believers, the agonies, sting, and pain of death, because Christ has experienced that for us.

And when it comes our time to die physically, it is just going to sleep. It is really and truly entering into life. Death is nothing more than a passport into eternity for the child of God. As the Apostle said in 2 Corinthians 5, we would rather lose this earthly tabernacle that we might have a heavenly tabernacle. And the Apostle Paul said to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

How horrible could that be—to have the blessed Son of God and to be in His presence, His life? It is not death, and it is not pain.

But those who are without Christ know that they shall die, and they will die with God's judgment upon them.

Dear Christian, be thankful for the salvation that God has given us through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Father, we ask You today to help us, to teach us. Make us, Lord, thankful and grateful for Thy so great salvation. May we trust in Thee. May we look to Thee. May we honor Thee. We pray that You would speak to hearts, convict and convert, and have Your will in every way and in every life. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 9

How Not to Treat Your Parents

September 12, 2010

How Not to Treat Your Father and Your Mother

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 20:12; Genesis 37:1-11 (KJV)

Introduction and the Fifth Commandment

Our main text is Genesis 37, but Exodus 20:12 is the fifth commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

"And Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being 17 years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren, and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was a son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors. And when his brethren

> saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren, and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, 'Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed.'
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> "For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright, and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf." And his brethren said unto him, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and he told it his brethren, and said, "Behold, I have dreamed a dream more. And behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me." And he told it to his father and to his brethren, and his father rebuked him and said unto him, "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I, thy mother and thy brethren, indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee in the earth?" And his brethren envied him, but his father observed the same.

The example I am going to give you today concerns grown, or adult, children. The pettiness, wickedness, and deception I will discuss might be understood to some degree if they came from small children who lacked the ability to think things through to a logical conclusion or did not possess understanding. But what I am going to share with you concerns what you and I would know as adult children.

The Requirement of Obedience and Honor

Do you realize that God requires two things from children? Those two things are obedience and honor. God says in Ephesians 6, verses 1 and 2, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.”

Strictly speaking, we might say that there is a time when, generally speaking, obedience ceases. That time would be when the

child is grown, has married, left his parents' home, and established a home of his own; he is now the head of a new home, or the wife is now in submission to her husband. However, I believe that even a grown child is obligated under God's law to continue to obey his parents as long as he can, especially if he is living at home under his parents' roof.

Even as an adult child, when we return home to visit our parents, they are still our parents. It is their home, and we should obey them as much as we can, to the best of our ability, out of honor and respect for them. If you wanted to quibble over an adult child obeying his parents while at home, you might quibble a little, but you cannot quibble over "Honor thy father and thy mother," because there is never a time when we are to cease honoring our father and mother.

Hatred and Envy Among Siblings

Jacob's sons in Genesis 37 give us an excellent example of how not to treat our parents. Let me assure you of one thing: the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. It was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and I believe that I can prove that simply by reading Genesis 37. If the Bible were simply the work of man, they would have left out what is recorded there, for it is shameful and embarrassing to men. The fact that shameful and embarrassing deeds are recorded shows us that it is far more than the work of man.

The message today is how not to honor or how not to treat our father and our mother. First of all, we are not to dishonor our parents by the sins of hatred and envy among the siblings—that is, the brothers and sisters.

Dishonoring Parents Through Sibling Hatred and Envy

Very obviously, Joseph's brethren hated him. I will point out later that they also hated their father. It is indeed unnatural to hate your family. However, Romans 1:31 and 2 Timothy 3:3 tell us that there are some who are without natural affection. Galatians 5:20 tells us

that hatred is a work of the flesh. Moreover, Proverbs 10:12 says, "hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins."

So let us begin by asking: How in the world did hatred and envy arise in the sons of Jacob? First and foremost, hatred and envy often arise from a perceived advantage or partiality, as well as from a perception of dominance and superiority.

Notice what I said: hatred and envy often arise from a perceived advantage or partiality. The advantage does not have to be real, and the partiality does not have to be real. It is enough that individuals perceive them as real and true. You know the story in Genesis 37. Joseph was given a coat of many colors, which I will explain momentarily. He also dreamed that they were out in the field and all the sheaves of his brothers bowed down to him. Then he dreamed another dream in which the sun, the moon, and the stars bowed down to him. And they were upset.

Even Jacob said, "Is it true that I, your father, and your mother and your brother are all going to bow down to you?" Here were things that would be perceived advantages Joseph had, which would stir up what you and I would call hatred and envy.

Joseph's Character and the Coat of Many Colors

Now, let us deal with this phrase, because the Bible says plainly, "These are the generations of Jacob, Joseph being 17 years old." Then, in verse 3, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children," because he was a son of his old age and he made him a coat of many colors. That verse could also be read this way: "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, and he was a son of his old age."

It is true that elderly parents normally dote over young children. But Joseph was not the youngest child; he had a brother younger than he was, Benjamin. Moreover, Benjamin was born as Rachel died. So if special consideration were given, it would certainly be given toward Benjamin even more than Joseph. How then do we understand that Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, and/or because he was the son of his old age? "The son of the old age" may be interpreted to refer to a wise son.

Joseph was a son who possessed wisdom above his years. He had an old head on young shoulders. Joseph was a wise and prudent son, and old age is normally associated with wisdom and prudence—not always, but usually. The phrase, then, would refer to Joseph as one who was born old, or born wise above his years; in other words, one who had a gray head at such a young age.

Joseph was indeed a child like this, and good evidence is given in this chapter. Verse 2 says, "These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being 17 years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren, and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought unto his father their evil report."

I do not know what those boys were doing, but it was certainly wrong and wicked. Joseph brought the report to his father. I will say something about that a little later.

Moreover, remember that Joseph was seventeen years of age when he was sold into slavery. He would have been probably eighteen or nineteen in the house of Potiphar when Potiphar's wife made her play for him. Joseph did not allow his teenage hormones to take over. He stood for principle and for that which was right. Throughout Scripture, Joseph is known for a virtuous and godly life, and this was evident at a very early age.

The coat of many colors given to him was Jacob's recognition of his character. But it was not only a recognition of his character; it was a coat that conferred upon Joseph the rights of the firstborn. It is true that Joseph was the firstborn of Rachel, but it is not true that he was Jacob's firstborn. Jacob's firstborn was Reuben. Reuben should have received the birthright, but he did not. First Chronicles 5:1 says, "Now the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, for he was the firstborn, but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright."

Reuben went in to his father's wife, one of the handmaids given to Jacob. Jacob therefore said, in effect, "No, you will not be the firstborn. You will not have the birthright. You may be the actual

firstborn, but your character demonstrates that you are not worthy to have the birthright."

Thus Joseph, with his godly character, replaced Reuben and received the inheritance of the firstborn.

Secondly, hatred and envy often arise when one refuses to betray his principles or compromise. In verse 2, Joseph again refused to go along with his brethren. I do not know what they intended to do. Whatever they were doing was obviously wicked and detrimental to Jacob. Perhaps they intended to defraud Jacob, steal some sheep, or sell some cattle. I do not know. But Joseph said, "No, that is not right. That is wicked. That is wrong. I will not participate. I will not go along."

Joseph did not go along with his brothers; he came back and told his father exactly what they were doing. May I remind you that Joseph was not a talebearer, a gossiper, a troublemaker, or a sower of discord among the brethren. He was bringing the problem to the one who could fix it, the one who had the solution and could do something about it.

Very obviously, hatred and envy will often arise when you are wicked and try to get someone else to go along with you, but they will not do it. Then you call him “Mr. Goody Two Shoes,” begin to make fun of him, and, before long, there is pure despisement of him.

Thirdly, hatred and envy are personal sins that affect behavior and lead to tragedy and disaster. Look at verse 4: “And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him and could not speak peaceably toward him.” Their inability to speak peaceably to Joseph was not physical, but moral. They still had the ability to frame words with their tongues and speak peacefully and civilly; but because they hated him, morally they could not do so.

Sin affects every area of our lives. How can one brother murder another brother, or one sister murder another sister? We have often read and heard of one child murdering an entire family. How in the world can that happen? Those who do such things are always filled with hatred and envy. They are selfish, self-willed,

and wicked. I have heard and read of teenagers murdering their parents over video games, and of individuals murdering their brothers over fifty cents, sometimes even much less.

When I was in college, I worked at the hospital, sometimes at the back desk by the emergency room. I never will forget seeing a man come in whose throat was cut from ear to ear. He had a towel catching the blood as he walked into the emergency room. Thankfully, the jugular vein had not been severed, but he was holding that bleeding. As he walked by my desk, I heard him say, "My son did this to me." He said, "I didn't give him any reason to do it. I guess when I get over this, I'm going to have to go home and kill him."

When anyone is filled with hatred and envy and cannot discuss problems or speak civilly and peacefully to someone, it will not be long before disaster strikes. Thus, we dishonor our parents by allowing hatred and envy among siblings. When brothers and sisters cannot get along and are envious and hateful toward one another, it is wicked and dishonoring to the parents.

Denigrating a Sibling's Calling

Secondly, deliberately trying to denigrate, derail, and destroy a sibling's vocation or calling is dishonorable to the parents. Evidently, the providence of God had marked Joseph out for an unusual service. Joseph was not endeavoring to lord it over his brethren by sharing his dreams. He told them, "Your sheaves bow down to mine. The sun and the moon, the stars bow down to me."

If God in His sovereign providence had marked Joseph out for an unusual service and calling, why was there no encouragement? Why was there suspicion and resentment? Even if Joseph had come to a place of prominence or superiority, would you not rather have your brother rule over you than a stranger?

If he was my flesh and blood, if he was my family, very obviously he would be more gentle and more tender toward me than a stranger would. And by the way, you have to understand that in this day and time, in the day and time of Genesis chapter 37, the eldest son was already favored and had the place of prominence

and dominance. So why then were they upset with Joseph? Evidently, in his dreams, God was marking him out for an unusual vocation.

Now, in order to demonstrate that Joseph was not arrogant, proud, boastful, or high-handed, consider his attitude. Look in verse 13. Israel said unto Joseph, “Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them.” And he said unto him, “Here I am.”

I do not know how long the journey was, how uncomfortable the weather, or how difficult the terrain was. However, whatever his father desired, Joseph was willing to do. He did not whine. He did not bellyache. He did not complain. He did not try to hide himself. He said, “Here I am. I'm willing to do whatever you want me to do.” It is just that simple. His attitude was, “I'm ready to obey. I'm ready to do whatever you ask, and I will do it to the best of my ability.”

The command is repeated in verse 13: “Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send thee unto them.” And he said, “Here I am.” After Joseph got to Shechem, his brethren were not there. He found a man and asked where his brethren were. The man said, “They are departed hence, for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

So here then is another complication: more trouble, more effort, and more work. Yet Joseph was intent on obeying his father. His father had sent him to check on his brethren and to check on his flocks, and that was exactly what he was going to do. Joseph's attitude was not only one of obedience; it was also, “I will finish the job that my father has given me.”

After Joseph had gotten to Shechem and found that his brothers were not there, he could have turned around and gone back home, saying, “Well, Dad, I’m sorry. They weren’t there. I tried, but I couldn’t find them. They had left and gone somewhere.” He could have done that, but he did not. He refused to give up and refused to give in. He had been given a task, and he was going to see it through.

Here is where most Christians and most children fail: We give up too easily. We do not finish the job or the task assigned to us. We have to learn a simple lesson: It is easier to do something right the first time, even if it requires more time, than to go back four or five times and redo it.

Joseph's attitude was, "I'm going to do it. I'll do exactly what my father wants. It's more work and more effort, but that's fine. That's what he wants, and that's exactly what I'm going to do." Joseph's actions, attitude, and language did not indicate that he was seeking dominion for dominion's sake. He was simply honest and straightforward.

He merely told the dreams God had given him. He relayed them and shared them. His brothers, however, were not only willing to reject and destroy the dreams; they were ready to reject and destroy Joseph as well. There was no encouragement from any of the family. Verse 11 says, "And his brethren envied him, but his father observed the same."

The word "observe" means to guard, watch, keep, or mark. Jacob was not pushing or encouraging; he was simply waiting, watching, and observing to see how things would work out. Joseph's brethren, however, were unwilling to wait, observe, or watch. They wanted Joseph and his dreams destroyed. That is why the Bible says in verse 11 that his brothers envied him.

The Nature and Danger of Envy

The word "envy" and the word "jealous" always go together. Proverbs 14:30 says, "A sound heart is life to the flesh, but envy is rottenness to the bones." Proverbs 27:4 teaches, "Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy?" Wrath is cruel, anger is outrageous, but notice this question: who is able to stand before envy?

It was envy that delivered Joseph to the pit and sold him into slavery. It was envy that delivered Christ up to Pilate. It was envy that led the Jews to persecute the apostles. Titus 3:3 tells us that envy motivates us to be hateful and to hate one another.

Here is the problem with envy: envy does not want what someone else possesses. Envy simply wants what someone else possesses destroyed. That way, neither the one who possesses it, nor the one who is envious, nor anyone else can have it. That is why, many times, men kill their wives, wives kill their husbands, boyfriends kill girlfriends, and girlfriends kill boyfriends. Why? Because they are envious, and their attitude is, "If I can't have her, no one will." That is envy. That is why God asks, "Who can stand before envy?"

Mark this down, children, no matter their age—whether they are sixty, forty, twenty, or ten—no matter their age or profession, when they are filled with envy and jealousy, it is dishonoring to their parents. It destroys not only the lives of the siblings, but also the life of the one filled with envy and jealousy. It will destroy the entire family.

You have to understand that one sin always leads to another sin. When it does, sins begin to flow together. So how do we not treat our parents? We do not treat them with envy and hatred. We do not treat them with envy and hatred among the siblings. We do not treat them when we are trying to deny, denigrate, or destroy some vocation or some calling that God has upon it. We ought to be thankful that God places a call upon our brothers. We ought to be thankful that God would elevate one of them and use them for His honor and His glory.

But here is the main point: we dishonor our parents through deliberate deception. Look, beginning there, verse 20.

Deliberate Deception as Dishonor

The brothers saw Joseph coming, and they said, "Come now, therefore, and let us slay him and cast him into some pit, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him. And we shall see what will become of his dreams."

Deception is a lie. Yet deception is more than a lie. It is a distortion of reality and a deliberate attempt to make our parents think and believe something totally opposite than reality, or that which is really the state of things. Joseph's brethren stole his coat,

ripped it into shreds, and dipped it in the blood. They knew exactly what their father would think: that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

Look at how cold and premeditated their plan of deception was in verse 20: “Come now, therefore, let us slay him and cast him into some pit. Lord, no one will ever find him. And we will say”—this is our deception—“we will say some evil beast hath devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.”

To see their plan, verse 23 says, “And it came to pass when Joseph was coming to his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him, and they took him and cast him into a pit, and the pit was empty where there was no water.” They put their plan into operation. Verses 31 and 32 say, “And they took Joseph’s coat and killed a kid of the goats and dipped the coat in the blood. And they sent the coat of many colors and they brought it to their father and said, ‘This have we found, know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no.’”

"And he knew it and said, 'It is my son's coat. An evil beast hath devoured him. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.'" Their deception worked exactly as they had planned. Jacob assumed that Joseph had been destroyed by a wild animal. He assumed that he had loving, obedient children and that his sons would never hurt their brother. He assumed that the death and death appearance of Joseph could not possibly have been at the hands of his sons. Jacob could not and would not ever entertain such a thought.

We might possibly understand the envy and jealousy of the brothers, and how they could hate Joseph because of their perception of his dreams and because of his promotion to administrator of the estate by their father. But the question remains: how could they hate their father so as to perpetrate such a deception upon him? Jacob's response and the evidence convinced him that Joseph had been destroyed by a wild beast.

The Duration and Depth of Jacob's Suffering

Look in verse 34. "And Jacob rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his loins and mourned for his son many days. And all his

sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, 'For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.' Thus his father wept for him."

Jacob put on sackcloth and ashes. He mourned, the Scripture says, many days for his son. When all of his sons and his daughters rose up to comfort him, he refused to be comforted and said, "I'll go down to the grave mourning for my son." Thus the father wept for him.

The question must be asked: how could those who knew the truth bear to see their father mourn and suffer and agonize over a lost and dead child when they knew the child was not dead? How could they put their father through such agony? How could they bear to watch their father from day to day as he sorrowed over his son? It is absolutely beyond my comprehension to see how any child or children could deliberately perpetrate such a hoax and deception upon their father and mother and then watch them agonize day after day. In verse 34, Jacob said that he would mourn for his son many days. Jacob also said in verse 35, "I'll go down into the grave unto my son mourning." Thus his father wept for him. Jacob's mourning was neither light nor temporary. These sons had to watch their father suffer and agonize over a son whom he genuinely believed was dead, but they knew was alive.

Go back to Genesis 37 and verse 2: “These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph being how old? 17 years old.” Now look at Genesis 41:46: “And Joseph was 30 years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt.” Thirteen years had passed.

Remember how God got Jacob and his sons down into Egypt. Remember the dream that He gave Pharaoh. There were going to be seven years of plenty and then seven years of famine. During the seven years of plenty, Joseph was laying up, and everybody had plenty. Then came the seven years of famine. Add those seven years to the thirteen, and you have twenty years. Add another two years, when it took them to run out of food and get down into Egypt.

Genesis 45:6 records Joseph speaking to his brothers: “For these two years hath the famine been in the land, and yet there are

five years in which there shall be no earing or harvest." So let us put this together: thirteen and seven and two. For a minimum of twenty-two years, these sons deceived their father. For twenty-two years, they made their father believe that Joseph was dead.

It is exceedingly difficult for me to believe that in twenty-two years there was no repentance, no remorse, and no change of heart. How could you keep such a secret from your father for twenty-two years? How could you watch him agonize and suffer for twenty-two years? And, by the way, he did so. If you do not believe that, look back in Genesis 44. When Benjamin finally came down into Egypt, Joseph was going to keep Benjamin, his younger brother, to ensure that these brothers were not spies. Of course, Joseph knew who they were. Look in Genesis 44, beginning with verse 32, and here is what Judah said. In fact, let us go back to verse 31—indeed, let us read verse 30. "And now…"

Judah says, "Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant, my father, and the lad be not with us, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life, it shall come to pass when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die. And thy servant shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, 'If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father forever.' Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come upon my father." How did he know how his father would react? Because he had already seen how he reacted when he thought Joseph was dead. For twenty-two years, they had seen the evil.

Now let me point something out. The boys may have begun with minor deceptions concerning the flocks. Back in Genesis 37, verse 2, I told you earlier, I do not know what they were planning to do, but whatever it was, was wicked and evil. They may have begun with minor deceptions, but minor deceptions pave the way for major deceptions, and minor sins pave the way for major sins. Little disobediences always run into open rebellion. It is wicked and wrong to deceive your parents.

And I will say this to the teenagers and young people: If you tell your parents that you are going to one place and then go to another, that is deception. If you tell them that you are going to be with one set of friends, then hightail it to some place where you are not supposed to be and associate with friends your parents would not approve of, that is deception. When you tell them that you are going to do something and do it right, but do not perform it, that is deception.

The Bible says in Isaiah 44, verse 20, “A deceived heart hath turned him aside.” The reason we deceive is because we are deceivers. Deception is wicked and wrong. What was the root of the deception of Jacob’s sons? We do not perceive the depth of this sin. Deception involves dishonor, disrespect, even denial.

Deception as Cursing Parents

And I will go further. Deception involves cursing your parents. Let me say that again. Deception involves cursing your parents. And before I explain this, may I point out the fact that you may curse your parents and never use a slang word and never use a curse word. I want you to turn in your Bibles very quickly to the book of Exodus, chapter 21. I want to show you several verses, Exodus 21.

And let's begin reading there with verse 17. Exodus 21, verse 17. Look what God says, Exodus 21, verse 17, God says, "And he that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." Hmm. Look in the book of Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 9. Leviticus 20 and verse 9. Leviticus 20, verse 9. What does God say? "For everyone that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death. He that curseth his father or his mother, his blood shall be upon him." Now turn right over to the book of Proverbs, chapter 20, and look at verse 20. Proverbs 20, verse 20. Proverbs 20, verse 20. Look what God says. Proverbs 20, verse 20. "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness." That is, he'll die. Then if you look in Proverbs 30 and verse 11. Proverbs 30 and verse 11. And God says, "There is a generation that curseth their father and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that curseth their father and doth not bless their mother."

There is another passage that says, "He that curseth his father and mother, the ravens shall pick out his eyes." He'll die. Now, I want you to understand something. The Hebrew word for "curse" means to treat as a light thing, to despise, to use contempt, to dishonor, to treat as despicable, to treat as of little account or worth, or to treat as valueless or worthless. By the way, deception does all of these.

Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles to Matthew 15 and Mark 7 because our Lord makes an application of all of these verses. Look in Matthew chapter 15. And then go ahead and turn to Mark 7. Matthew 15 and Mark 7. I want you to look at what our Lord says, Matthew 15, beginning there with verse 1. "The Pharisees also, with the Sadducees, came in tempting, desired him that he would show them a..."

In Matthew 15, the scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, asked Jesus, “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? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother.’ And, ‘He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.’” But they said, “Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, ‘It is a gift, that whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me,’ and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free.” Thus, they had made the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition.

The same thing is found in Mark 7. Our Lord says, “For Moses said, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother,’ and, ‘Whoso curseth his father and mother, let him die the death.’” But they said, “If a man shall say unto his father and mother, ‘It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me,’ he shall be free, and you suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother.” They were “making the word of God of none effect through your tradition which you have delivered, and many such like things you do.”

Notice what our Lord is talking about in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. He uses the word “curse.” The Greek word is kakalogeo, which means to curse, to speak evil of, to abuse, and to revile. Matthew

15:4 says, “For God commanded,” while Mark 7:10 says, “For Moses said.” Who said it—God or Moses? Obviously, both. It was God who spoke through Moses, and Moses penned the word of God. To curse your father and mother is to abuse them, speak evil against them, and dishonor them. That is true, but here we are talking about deception. They claimed that whatever might have profited their father or mother was a gift, or Corban, and therefore they avoided honoring their parents. By declaring their possessions a gift, they were free from doing anything for their father or mother. Thus, they made the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition.

The phrase “it is a gift” is the word Corban in Mark 7. Corban is simply a Hebrew word denoting a gift. Here in Matthew 15, the word “gift,” and the word Corban in Mark 7, refer to something dedicated to God or to the service of God. Since it is dedicated to God or to the service of God, it cannot be appropriated for any other use.

The sin of cursing one’s parents is opposed to the duty of honoring one’s parents. Those who speak ill of their parents, abuse them, mock them, wish them ill, taunt them, or speak to them disrespectfully violate the fifth commandment. But it is not sufficient that our language be respectful. Do you not remember in Matthew 21, verse 30, where our Lord speaks of the parable of the two sons? He said to one son, “Go work today in my vineyard.” He answered, “I go, sir,” and went not. He was very respectful, but he was very disobedient. Was that respectful son not cursing his parents? Of course he was, because he was deceiving them. He told his father he was going to work in the vineyard, but he did not go. It was deliberate deception. It was a lie.

Our Lord teaches us that the fifth commandment obliges children to relieve their aged and elderly parents in their necessities. That is the concept used in Matthew 15 and Mark 7 when he speaks of honoring father and mother.

The Duty to Care for Aging Parents

The Pharisees said it was more important for a man to dedicate his property and money to God than to relieve the needs of his elderly

parents. It did not matter how poor, elderly, or hungry they were, or how desperately they needed medical attention. If a son simply said "Corban" over his property or money, then it was dedicated to God.

That is what our Lord said: "Thus you shall be free." In other words, the Pharisees said, "You're free." What were they free from? Free from helping their parents and alleviating their needs.

You remember the eldest son. He always received a double portion of the inheritance. Do you know why? Because it was the eldest son's responsibility, duty, and privilege to take care of his parents when they were old and could not take care of themselves. He received a double portion for that.

So the Pharisees were saying, "All you have to do is say, 'Corban'; it is a gift to God." Who would expect you to take that which is dedicated to God and use it for such a mundane thing as feeding your elderly parents or buying medicine for them? "Come on. This is God's money. You cannot use God's money."

What did our Lord say? God said they were cursing their parents when God had commanded, "Honor thy father and thy mother."

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 4: "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home and to requite their parents, for that is good and acceptable before God." "If any widow have children or nephews"—we have the immediate family and the extended family—"let them learn first to show piety at home and requite their parents, for that is good and acceptable before God."

First, note the word "piety." Piety is another word for godliness or holiness. So he says, let the children learn to show godliness at home.

How do you show godliness at home? He said, "and requite their parents."

Secondly, note the word "requite." It literally means to pay back. How can children pay back their parents? Your parents took care of you when you could not take care of yourself. They fed you when

you could not feed yourself, clothed you when you could not clothe yourself, and doctored you when you could not doctor yourself. They provided your education, your medical attention, and everything for you. Now God says that you are an adult, and your parents are elderly and cannot take care of themselves. You need to requite them. Pay them back. He said this is good and acceptable before God.

Now skip down to verse 8: "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." God says that if we do not take care of our own, we are denying the faith and are worse than an infidel. A violation of God's law, especially a violation of the fifth commandment, is a denial of the faith and makes one worse than an infidel.

Think back on Genesis 37. What did Jacob's sons do to their father? They cursed him for twenty-two years. They failed to provide the comfort, solace, and knowledge he needed to be reunited with Joseph. For twenty-two years, they withheld what their father needed. They allowed him to suffer mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually when they had the ability to free him from his suffering.

Applications and Conclusion

Their hatred, envy, and deception were a violation of God's law. How not to treat your parents. God's law demands that we love and honor our parents. Our parents are not perfect; they are sinful. Some have unsaved parents. There are no perfect parents. But they are still our parents, and God still requires us to honor and obey them while we can.

What did our Lord say in John 5, verse 23? "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Now listen carefully: "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father who sent him." So God has sovereignly provided our parents. I know that many of us have parents who have gone on. I understand that. But God has sovereignly provided our parents, and when we refuse our parents, we are also refusing Him who gave us our parents.

Did you know this is actually the way it should be? Parents should always be a prophet, priest, and king to their children: a prophet to declare to them the Word of God, a priest to intercede for them, and a king to rule over them biblically. Do our parents fail in those areas? Many times. But they are still our parents. God still calls upon us to honor them and not curse them.

The second application is this: If you will not love, honor, and obey your parents now—if you will not do for them now while you are young—what makes you think you are going to take care of them when you are old? If you are in the habit of cursing your parents, what makes you think all of a sudden you are going to change and start honoring them? Now is the time to love them, repent, communicate with them, work out differences, and forgive. Now is the time, because one of these days our parents will not be around. It is time now. God says, "Honor."

"Honor your father and your mother. He that curseth father and mother, let him die the death." Here is the last one: You have to remember that God's law teaches we reap what we sow. Our children will ultimately treat us the way we treat our parents. If I want my children to love, honor, and help me, I need to love, honor, and help my parents, because we reap exactly what we sow. There is a proper way to treat your parents biblically, and there is a way not to treat your parents.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your love, for Your Word, and for Your truth. We ask that You speak to our hearts. Help us, convict us, and build us up in the most holy faith. Make us God-honoring and holy. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

Give us a call at 912-... You can also visit our website at www.dominionministry.com.

CHAPTER 10

Why Doesn't God Answer All Prayers

December 10, 2015

Why God Does Not Answer Most Prayers

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 22:1-20 (KJV)

Introduction: The Question of Unanswered Prayer

"Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem."

"And his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand, or to the left. And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the Lord, saying, Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people: and let them deliver it into the hand of

> the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord: and let them give it to the doers of the work which is in the house of the Lord, to repair the breaches of the house, unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house."
>
> "Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully. And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord. And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king, saying, Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that

“For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.” So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college; and they communed with her.

And she said unto them, “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto

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

"Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." And they brought the king word again.

I don't know if you've ever considered why God does not answer most prayers. I suppose if I could answer that question specifically in every instance, I could become a very wealthy man, because most people would pay good money to have their prayers answered. Those whose prayers were not answered would pay good money to find out why they were not answered, so they could correct them in order to have them answered.

The Nature and Purpose of Prayer

Praying, of course, is a duty as well as a privilege. The Bible tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 that we're to pray without ceasing. Our Lord said in Luke 18:1 that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Since prayer is a command, it is also a duty. But since prayer is to our heavenly Father, it is also a privilege: an opportunity to commune with our heavenly Father through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer is not an attempt to change the mind or the will of God. You try to change the immutable God and you've got problems; prayer is not an attempt to change the mind of God. Moreover, prayer is not simply an instrument or means to get what you want. Prayer is an instrument to accomplish the will of God. God has not only ordained the end; He's also ordained the means to the end as well. The truth of the matter is this: we must actually pray,

whether our prayers are answered or not, for the very simple reason that God has commanded us to pray. So prayer, first and foremost, is to be done in obedience to the command of our heavenly Father.

Our prayer life is not to be judged by how many prayers we have answered, but by how well and how faithfully we pray, because prayer done in obedience and faith is always acceptable unto the Lord. Before I delineate specifically from the Bible why most prayers are not answered, consider these prerequisites concerning prayer.

Prerequisites for Answered Prayer

For prayer to be successful, for your prayers to be answered, there must be a proper association. What do I mean by proper association? Our Lord said in Luke chapter 11, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven." By proper association, I mean there is a relationship between you and the heavenly Father.

That is, we are indeed the children of God by faith. I understand that God blesses the just and the unjust alike, as He said in Matthew chapter 5. But the truth of the matter is there is a covenantal relation that exists between the Father and His children. There will always be a far more gracious bond between the Father and His children than between the Father and the children of strangers.

The Proper Association and Approach

In fact, our Lord Himself used this illustration: “Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

If a father has his son ask for a piece of bread, he is not going to pick up a stone. If he asks for a piece of meat, he is not going to hand him a serpent. In other words, we do good to our children because they are our children. If we, being evil, know how to give

good gifts unto our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father do that as well?

So there must be a proper association. In 2 Thessalonians 2:16, the Bible says, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.” There is a proper association that we must have.

Secondly, there must be a proper approach. The Bible says in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” In Ephesians 2:18, the Bible says, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” You have to understand this: no one can get to God the Father except through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only way. Just stop and think about the Old Testament.

If any Israelite even tried to rush into the Holy of Holies on his own, what would have happened? He would have died—killed instantly. Only the high priest went in, once a year, and not without the shedding of blood. The Bible teaches that you cannot approach God any way you want. There is a proper way to approach Him. That is why 1 Timothy 2:5 says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Scripture now shows the proper approach and what we have in Jesus Christ our Lord. Contrast what the children of Israel could not do in the tabernacle and the temple with what we may do through the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 10:19 says, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

He tells us that through our Lord Jesus Christ we may come boldly to our heavenly Father. But that is the only way we may boldly come to Jesus Christ. Anytime you depend on works, merits, good deeds, ancestors, angels, saints, or anyone or

anything else, you have already messed up. The only acceptable approach to God the Father is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

To have your prayer answered, there must be a proper association. There must be a proper approach, and, thirdly, a proper attitude. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Why in the world would you come to God if you did not believe in Him, and did not believe that He would hear or answer your prayer?

Consider the opposite in James 1:5-7: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."

You have to come to God believing. Our Lord said in Matthew 21:22, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive them." In Mark 11:24, He said, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

There has to be proper association, proper approach, and proper attitude. Fourthly, there has to be a proper asking. In John 14:13-14, our Lord said, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." In John 16:26, He said, "At that day ye shall ask in my name."

Every parent understands this. If your child comes to you demanding, belligerent, and rebellious, are you going to give him anything he asks for? What is the answer? No. Years ago, our two oldest grandchildren, now twenty-eight, were about two years old. Alice and I took them to Walmart because they wanted cowboy boots. They called them "cow boots."

To be absolutely honest, I had twenty dollars to my name. That was all I had, and we had to buy groceries. We decided to take the boots down, let Casey and Renee try them on, and come back to

buy them later when we had the money. They were not that much, but we had to buy groceries as well. We tried the little boots on, and they put them on the floor and started walking around in them. When we saw that they fit, we took them off, put them back in the box, and put them back up. I picked up my grandson, and my wife picked up her granddaughter. As we started to walk away, my grandson looked at those cowboy boots and said, “Bye-bye, cowboots.” I looked at my wife and said, “Get them. We’ll go hungry.”

If he had pitched a fit, thrown himself on the floor, and started screaming, the only thing he would have gotten would have been a whipping. You see, there has to be a proper asking. What do I mean by proper asking? You should not think that your prayers will be heard simply because they are loud and vociferous or because you repeat them. The Bible says in Matthew 6:7, “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” It is not the repetition or vigor of our prayers that has merit. Merit is found only in Jesus Christ, our Lord. We have to learn to ask in the name of Christ. Have you ever wondered what it means to ask in the name of Christ? Have you ever really thought about that?

Suppose I went to Tennessee to a bank, wrote a countercheck to myself for a million dollars, signed it, and took it to the teller. “I’d like you to cash this check, please.” She looked at it and said, “Wow, that’s a pretty good amount.” Then she asked, “Mr. Weaver, do you have an account in this bank?” “No, ma’am, I don’t.” “You mean you have no account here?” “No.” “You have any money in this bank?” “No.” “You don’t expect me to cash this check, do you?” “Well, ma’am, I really need the money. I’d really like you to cash it.” She said, “I can’t cash the check.” Here I am at this bank asking for money in my name.

I have absolutely nothing. So I go to the same bank the next day, and here is a check made out to me, signed by Jimmy Barber. I hand it to the teller and say, "I'd like you to cash this check for me." "Oh, Jimmy Barber. Is that all that old skinflint's giving you? How do you want it, sir?" She just yells it out.

You understand. I am making that up, but on the one hand, I was asking in my name when I had absolutely nothing. Now I am asking in the name of a rich man who has a multitude of things. Where she would not cash the check in the first instance, she would cash it in the second instance.

So here is what it literally means to ask in the name of Christ. When we come to our heavenly Father and pray in the name of Jesus Christ, we are confessing: We are nothing. We have nothing. We can do nothing. We merit nothing. Father, the only reason I expect You to hear and answer my prayer is because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. That is the only reason. There is a proper asking.

There is also an improper asking, even if you ask in the name of Christ. James says, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

God is not going to give you something just to consume upon your own lust. I never will forget years ago I was talking to a man who was a professing Christian. He said, "Preacher, I need to ask you a question."

I said, “Well, go ahead.” He said, “When I got saved, I smoked and I drank. I asked the Lord to take away my drinking, and He did. I asked Him to take away my smoking, and He did—just like that.” I thought, “That’s good; that’s wonderful.” Then I asked, “Well, what’s the question?”

“Well,” he said, “He’s answered my prayer in so many instances, but I’m having problems with a prayer request now that I can’t get answered.” I asked, “Well, what is it?” He said, “I’ve met this woman and I want to marry her, but she won’t marry me right now.” I thought, perhaps she did not love him. He said that she did.

I said, “Now, wait a minute. Both of you are of age. If you say you love her and she says she loves you, why can’t you get

married?" He replied, "Because her husband won't give her a divorce."

When I picked my jaw up from the floor, I said, "Let me explain something to you. God is not going to help you violate His law. Do you understand that? 'Ye ask, and receive not.'" He asked, "Why?" "Because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your own lusts." There has to be a proper asking. There must also be a proper apprehension.

Look in your Bibles to 1 John, chapter 5. Notice verses 14 and 15. In fact, let's begin with verse 12. Here is proper apprehension. 1 John 5:12 says, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Now notice verse 14: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." And, "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." God says, "Whatever you ask according to my will, I will hear you." If we know that He hears us, we know that we will receive those things. So how do we know that we are praying in the will of God? The answer is when we pray according to the Scriptures.

God's Word and God's will are revealed in the Bible. Here is absolute assurance in prayer. But there are times when we might not know specifically what God's will is for an individual. That is why our Lord taught us to pray in Luke chapter 11: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

In all my ministry, I have prayed for many sick people. I prayed for people on their deathbeds, and they got well. I prayed for other people, and they died. It is God's will to heal most of the time, because all of us have been sick and have gotten well; but it is not

His will to heal all of the time, because if He did, no one would ever die. The wages of sin is death. We are going to die.

When I am praying for someone and do not know what God's will is for that individual, I simply ask, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Romans 8:26–27 reveals a tremendous ministry of the Holy Spirit to us and in us: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Has there ever been a time in your life when you have been so burdened and broken over an incident—sometimes family, sometimes finances, sometimes friends—that all you could do was fall on your face before God and say, "Oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God"? You do not even know how to pray or where to begin. All you can do is groan. The Scripture says the Holy Spirit then makes intercession for us because He knows the will of God. So many times, when we do not know what to do, we need to ask God to pray in us, through us, and for us, because we want His will.

Sixth, there must be a proper affection. The Bible says in Colossians 3:1-2, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." When we pray that we want God's will and want God to be honored and glorified, how could we say that if we do not really love Him, love His will and truth, and truly want to see Him honored and glorified? Remember what our Lord taught His disciples to pray? The very first thing He said was, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." Honored, glorified, sanctified be thy name. If we want our prayers answered, we must have a proper affection as well.

If we lack a proper association, approach, attitude, asking, apprehension, and affection, it will seriously damage our prayer life. My basic assumption is that everyone in this room already knows these things. You know this is fundamental and elementary. What I want to do is show you, even in light of our knowledge of these truths, why our prayers are not answered most of the time.

The Story of Josiah and the Lost Law

Here we have the story of Josiah in 2 Kings chapter 22. Josiah was a young man brought up in the ways of the Lord. He was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. According to Scripture, he was obedient to that which he knew. Verse 2 says, "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left."

That is a very great commendation. As much as he knew, he lived an obedient life; he walked in the way of David his father. However, there was one problem: the law of God had been lost. In fact, I preached an entire message on this truth, "The Lost Law." I am not going to re-preach that message, but unhappily, the law was lost in the house of the Lord. Unhappily, that is where it is lost today. As our Lord was wounded in the house of His friends, so likewise God's own law has been denied, denounced, and denigrated in the house of His people. The law was lost in the temple, but while they were cleaning out the temple, a copy of the law was found.

And Hilkiah delivered it to Shaphan, and Shaphan read it. Then he went to the king and read it to him. "And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord. And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it

before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes."

"And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king, saying, Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."

The Consultation of Huldah the Prophetess

When he hears the law of God read, he rends his clothes. He tears off those royal garments and says, "Look, you better go inquire of the Lord for us. We are in deep, deep problems." Where did the king send these men? "Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah."

After he sends them to inquire of the Lord, verse 14 tells us, "So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her."

So here is the question: Why did the priest and these men go to a prophetess? The king never sent them unto her. He said, "Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me." Why would the priest then go to a woman?

Several answers might be given. First, the king was very earnest and very urgent in this request. Huldah was already in Jerusalem, and she was well known in the royal court. Her husband was a member of the royal court, and she was close by. So they went to her. But let me ask you another question.

Did you know that Jeremiah and also Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah? Why were they not consulted? Jeremiah lived in Anathoth, which was not far from Jerusalem. Why did they not send to Anathoth to Jeremiah the prophet?

I understand that Jeremiah may have been in some other part of the kingdom doing the Lord's work. That is very possible. But obviously, Jeremiah knew Josiah very well. In 2 Chronicles 35:25, we learn that Jeremiah made a lamentation over Josiah when he died. Notice the verse: “And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations.” Jeremiah lamented for him. Obviously, he was there and knew him, but they never inquired of Jeremiah.

It could have been that Zephaniah was not actually prophesying at that particular time and had started a little later. But why in the world did they go to Huldah the prophetess?

I believe the fact that they went to Huldah the prophetess was a most singular circumstance, and it was very revealing. I believe it demonstrates the depth of apostasy into which the kingdom had sunk. Let me explain that. Jeremiah was certainly a prophet, but they did not consult him. Zephaniah was a prophet, but they did not consult him either. Notice verse 13: He told these men, “Go inquire of the Lord for me.” Who was Hilkiah? Hilkiah was the high priest. Do you know what the Bible says in Malachi 2:7?

Malachi 2:7 says, "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." Why would the high priest go to a woman? He was responsible to know. How about Shaphan the scribe? The scribe was the secretary of sacred things. He was responsible to know, and yet he was as ignorant and as useless as he could be. Contrast him with Ezra in Ezra chapter 7:6: "This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given." Ezra was a ready scribe. He knew the law of God. Shaphan knew nothing.

Moreover, King Josiah himself was helpless. At this point, he was twenty-six years old, and he knew nothing. Deuteronomy 17 requires that the king have his own personal copy of the law and read from it every day. The secret of the Lord was not with Hilkiah the priest, Shaphan the scribe, or the king. It was not with any ministers of the temple. Yet Huldah the prophetess, of whom we

know absolutely nothing except this circumstance, was consulted on the meaning of the law.

Tradition says that she prophesied among the women of the court, being one of the court ladies herself. What is the significance of the fact that they went to a woman? I believe this points out that God never leaves Himself without witness, because He is never going to leave sinners without excuse. But remember, I believe this is a singular and most revealing circumstance, because it reveals the depth of apostasy into which the kingdom had sunk.

When those who should rule, know, and exercise dominion refuse to do so, power will always shift to those who will. Do you realize the only thing needed and necessary to have a matriarchal society is for the men to do nothing? Men, let me tell you something.

If you will not be the head of your home, I can assure you, your wife will. And if your wife will not be the head of your home, your children will. Somebody will run that home.

I was in a store in Douglas, Georgia, and saw a woman with a child in her shopping cart. The child was screaming, crying, and pitching a fit. She pushed the cart up to a man, evidently her husband. Standing about three feet away, I heard her say, "Would you please do something with this kid? He's upset and crying because I would not buy him a toy that he already has one just like it at home."

I bit my tongue to keep from saying, "Give him to me, lady. I can take care of it; I can assure you, I can take care of it." You know who ran that home?

All I am pointing out is this: I know there are plenty of godly women, and I am thankful for every godly woman. But the sad truth is that most of them became that way apart from their husbands. It should be the husband leading and directing and saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

The point of this message is not necessarily to deal with Huldah. The point is to show you why God does not answer most prayers. They came to Huldah, and I want you to look at 2 Kings chapter 22, beginning with verse 18, and see if you can pick this out

yourself. I never will forget when I first saw this simple truth and how it affected me.

The Principle of Lex Talionis in Prayer

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

Did you hear what I just read? Let us go back to verse 18 and watch the latter part: “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard.” Josiah heard God’s word: “Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.” Here it is: God says to Josiah, “Because you heard me, I heard you.”

Every negative has a positive, and every positive has a negative. The positive is that Josiah heard God and God heard him. The negative is that if you do not hear God, God is not going to hear you. It is the lex talionis—the law of retribution, where God makes the punishment fit the crime. You have read it over and over in Exodus 21 and in Deuteronomy: an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, stripe for stripe, wound for wound. That is the lex talionis. God makes the punishment fit the crime. When we refuse to listen to God, God in His righteous justice refuses to hear us.

Scriptural Evidence for the Principle

You know what He said in 1 Samuel 2:30: “Them that honour me I will honour, saith the Lord. But they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” God said, “You honor me, I’m going to honor you. But you despise me and you’re going to be lightly esteemed.”

Now turn in your Bibles. Hold 2 Kings 22, but look to the book of Hosea, chapter 4 and verse 6. You know this verse; you can quote it, or at least part of it. I want you to see it in light of what I am teaching tonight. Here it is, Hosea 4:6.

God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Everybody can quote that. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Now, watch: "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." Whoa, wait a minute. Did you hear what I just read? God not only said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," "because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." Here is the lex talionis, where God makes the punishment fit the crime.

You want to know what's wrong with our young people in this land? You want to know what's happening in America? We have forgotten God's law and God in righteousness is forgetting our children. Let me explain that. You know what God's law is? God's law is an expression of His will for you. That's what it is. You know what your children are? They're expressions of your will. You wanted them, you had them. So God says, "You forget my will, I forget your will. You forget my law, I forget your children." Wow. You know what David said in Psalm 66:18, now listen.

He said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." He did not say if I do iniquity, if I commit iniquity, he just said, "If I regard it," in other words, if I counted something high or something pleasing or something satisfying, if I regard it, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." How much worse is it if we do and commit iniquity? He said if we do that, the Lord will not hear us. Why?

Because we're violating His will. We're violating His Word. Do you know what iniquity is? Iniquity is sin. Now listen carefully. 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." You cannot sin without violating God's law. Sin is a transgression of God's law. So David said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

God said to Josiah, “You heard me. Now I’m going to hear you.” Hearing God’s Word does not necessarily mean that we simply read it every day or attend services faithfully. You can be here twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and never really hear God’s Word. That does not mean it is not being preached. There are actually two types of hearing: external, audible hearing, which everyone with ears can hear, and spiritual, internal hearing.

Let me show you. Remember how King Saul had been sent by God to destroy the Amalekites. The Bible tells us that Saul spared Agag, king of the Amalekites, and the best of the sheep and oxen. When Samuel came to Saul, Saul said, “Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” Then Samuel said, “Saul, if you’ve obeyed God, what meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” If Saul had obeyed God, everything would have been dead.

Saul answered, “The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.” First Samuel 15:21 says, “But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.” Samuel answered, “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.”

“Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?” Look what he says: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” God had rather have your obedience than anything else. If you could say to God, “Lord, I’ll give you obedience for a million bucks,” He’d say, “I’ll take obedience.” “I’ll give you obedience or a truck full of gold,” you’ll take obedience.

But let me show you something about obedience. Look back in verse 22. He says, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,” and then he says, “and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Do you know

what the fat of rams was? The fat of rams was the choicest part of the sacrifice, always given to God. So when you read, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," you have to understand that hearkening and obedience are synonymous. They're one and the same.

No one ever really hears the Word of God until he heeds the Word of God. No one ever really hears the Word of God until he obeys the Word of God. You can sit and listen externally, and you can learn, quote, and memorize, but unless you actually apply it and obey it, you have not heard it. You haven't heard it.

Now, you say, "Wait a minute, Brother Weaver, I don't know if there's all this to this that you're making up." Really? Let's see if there are other verses that say exactly the same thing. Proverbs 28:9 says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." You know what an abomination is? It's a stench in God's nostrils. God says, "You turn away your ear from hearing, obeying my law; even your prayer will be a stench in my nostrils." What does God say? You don't hear Me; I don't hear you.

The same truth appears again in Zechariah, chapter 7, right before Malachi, beginning with verse 7.

This is taught throughout the Scripture. Zechariah 7:7: "Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain? And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not

hear, saith the Lord of hosts: but I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate." Did you see what he said in verse 13? "Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear."

That's the lex talionis of Scripture. That is the law of retribution. That is perfect justice. God said to these people, "You will not hear me. I won't hear you."

Look in Mark, chapter 4, and begin reading in verse 23. Mark 4:23: "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath." Now, go back to verse 24: "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you."

If you spend fifteen minutes a day studying your Bible, you will get fifteen minutes' worth of truth. Whatever you measure, God will measure back to you. You will not receive two hours' worth of truth for studying fifteen minutes.

Notice what He said in verse 24: "And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given." Do you know why most people remain absolute babes in Christ and never mature? The answer is simple: they do not obey truth. Why should God give you any more truth if you are not going to obey what He has already given you?

The principle is this: if you do not use it, you lose it. If you do not use God's truth and apply it, you forget it and lose it. This principle applies not only to the saints of God, but also to sinners.

One of the greatest fallacies in the minds of sinners is that salvation is in their hands and that they can be saved whenever they want to be saved. I have had people tell me, "Brother Weaver, I'm going to get saved about fifteen minutes before I die." Really? You do not even know when you are going to die. You may not

have fifteen minutes. The Scripture says, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” He may not be found, or He may not be near, when you begin dying and are in trouble.

Consider Proverbs chapter 1, verse 22: “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof:” Then God says, “behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.” But He continues: “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; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”

What did God say? “They will call unto me, but I will not answer. They will seek me early, but they will not find me.” You are not ever saved in your time; you are only saved in God's time. If God does not save you, you are not saved, no matter how many professions you make. It is just that simple. If you refuse to hear God, He may justly and righteously refuse to hear you.

Conclusion: Hearing Means Obeying

It is not merely hearing the preaching of the Word of God that counts. It is obeying it, applying it, and making it practical in every day of your life. The reason God does not answer most prayers is that people refuse to hear Him—even His children. How many parents will try to bless a disobedient, belligerent, arrogant, rebellious child? You will not. You will let him eat the fruit of his own way and learn the hard way. Oftentimes, that is what God does to us. If we refuse to hear Him, He may justly refuse to hear us.

CHAPTER 11

Christian Protocol

May 12, 2018

Introduction: The Deer's Thirst and Longing for God

I like the song, “As the Heart,” or “As the Deer Panteth After the Water Brooks.” Every time I hear it, I think of deer hunters in Georgia who used dogs to chase deer. You can imagine how thirsty a deer gets after running a couple of miles. In the old days, the Indians used to run deer down. They would station four or five men in certain positions, and when one gave out, another would take over. It does not take long to run a deer down. David is saying, “As the deer panteth after the water brooks, as he longs to get there, so my soul longs after thee.”

Romans chapter 15 is our text. The title of the message is Christian Protocol. Verse 7 will be our text, but notice verses 1 through 8: “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good edification. For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproach thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime,

written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

"Now, the God of patience and consolation grants you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, receive you one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now, I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers."

Paul writes, "Wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God." The word "receive" is pros lambano in the Greek. It literally means to take into one's heart, to receive into one's home, to receive into friendship, or basically with open arms. Pros is a preposition meaning "to" or "toward." Lambano means "to take" or "receive." It is therefore a receiving or taking toward one's self.

Christian Protocol

In verse 7, he says, "Wherefore receive you one another." In other words, this receiving is to be reciprocal and mutual. In the context of Romans chapter 15, the Apostle Paul is dealing with a practical application that he is making from his previous doctrinal teaching. Romans chapters 1 through 11 are doctrinal, and Romans chapters 12 through 16 are practical. The Apostle Paul is laying down his doctrine first, and then he is building duty based upon that doctrine. Thus, what you have in Romans chapter 15 is an application of the doctrine that has already been taught.

The Meaning of Christian Protocol

When you look at the text in Romans chapter 15, you cannot help but notice that there is a certain protocol. The word protocol may be defined as the system of rules governing affairs of state or diplomatic occasions and, more broadly, the accepted or established code of procedure or behavior in any group, organization, or situation. When you think about protocol, you usually think about the White House, state dinners, and similar occasions. But the definition goes a little farther. Protocol is

actually an accepted or established code of procedure or behavior in any group, any organization, or any situation. The online dictionary goes on to define the word protocol by saying that the original word literally meant the record of an agreement forming the legal authority for future dealings in reference to it.

Thus, if you understand this correctly, the Scriptures are our official record or agreement forming the legal authority for our future dealings with each other. The Scripture tells us not only how to live, but how not to live as well. The Scripture also teaches us how to treat each other. There is indeed a Christian protocol, and the Apostle Paul is demanding, in Romans chapter 15, that we observe and practice it, since it is a legal, binding authority upon all Christians.

Have you ever stopped to think about this: the Bible is our treaty? Usually, when there are warring factions and they come to a peace agreement, it is because there is indeed a treaty. Do you realize that we were rebels against God? The Bible tells us in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Our Lord Jesus Christ has made peace for us with our heavenly Father, and He has given us this legally binding treaty, which is indeed the Word of God. Therefore, He says in verse 7, "Wherefore, receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Receiving one another is not something that we normally think about.

We understand what receiving lines are when it comes to weddings, funerals, and sometimes other events, such as retirement parties. At a wedding, funeral, or retirement party, you go by the people standing there and shake their hands; you either congratulate them, give them condolences, or say something of that nature. They are simply called receiving lines. But that is not what this is all about. Have you ever stopped to think about how God demands that we receive one another, and what it means to receive one another?

I will explain that when we get to verse 7, but I want to work our way down so that we can see exactly what the Apostle Paul is talking about. In Romans 15:1, the very first thing we see is obligation. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of

the weak, and not to please ourselves." Why would the Apostle Paul begin Romans 15 that way? Because Romans 15 is a continuation of his argument from Romans 14. In Romans 15, the Apostle is pursuing his exhortation to mutual affection and forbearance, notwithstanding differing sentiments and understandings. In Romans 14, he speaks of certain brethren as strong and certain brethren as weak. In verse 1 he says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

Obligation: Bearing the Infirmities of the Weak

Paul says, "For one believer that he may eat all things. Another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not. Let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him." He is talking about the weak and the strong. The strong, according to Romans chapters 14 and 15, are those men and women who understand doctrine, Christian liberty, and the truth that God has given them. The weak are those who hold certain scruples that are not sinful in and of themselves.

Let me put it plainly: they do not see truth; they do not understand. They have not yet reached the point where they realize that doctrine comes first. What you think or feel, or what somebody has told you all your life, is not necessarily true. You have to come to the place where you understand that God's Word is absolute and absolute truth. When Paul starts Romans 15:1 by saying, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves," he is actually continuing the thought of Romans 14:1: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

Interestingly, in Romans 15:7 and Romans 14:1, the word "receive" is exactly the same word. Moreover, in each verse the word is in the imperative mode, and the imperative is a command. I could ask Isaiah, "Would you please get me a glass of water?" That is a request. But if I looked at him and said, "Isaiah, get me a glass of water," that is a command. In Romans 14:1 and Romans 15:1, it is a command where God says, "Receive ye one another." Here, then, is an obligation: we that are strong have an obligation to receive those who are weak, even though they entertain scruples

and things that you and I think are childish and immature. So first of all, you have an obligation.

Edification: Pleasing Our Neighbor for His Good

Secondly, look in verse two. There you have what we would call edification. For now, he says, "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good edification." So let me deal with the word "please." Obviously, when the apostle Paul tells us in verse two, "Let every one of us please his neighbor," he is not saying that we must cater to the whims and the desires of our neighbor. What if our neighbor demanded our vehicle or if our neighbor demanded our house? No, he is not saying that we are to please his every whim or his every desire. That is not what the word means here.

The Greek word here is aresko, and it literally means that we are to please him in the sense that we are not going to argue with him. We are not going to fuss with him. We are not going to fall out with him. There is not going to be a knockdown drag-out. The word "neighbor," when he says, "Let every one of us please his neighbor," can refer not only to a neighbor, but also to a friend or anyone with whom we are concerned.

Verse two is talking about accommodation and not compromise. Our pleasing our neighbor—in this instance, our brother—is to be for his good. That is what it says: "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good." The word "good" is agathos in the Greek, and it is used in many different ways in the New Testament. However, when you look at this text, the word "good" would mean for his benefit, for his blessing, for his advantage, and for his favor. The verse gives further explanation: "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." Now, what does the word "edify" mean?

It means to build up. It means to strengthen. You and I are endeavoring to build up this brother who is weak. We are endeavoring to build him up in the faith, in wisdom, in piety, in holiness, and in obedience. In other words, we are doing everything we can to bring this weak brother up into strength so that he can be a strong brother. It begins with what we would call obligation in verse one, comes to edification in verse two, and then,

if you look in verse three, comes down to participation. Verse three gives us an illustration that should lead us to participation.

Participation: Christ as Our Example

He says, “For even Christ pleased not himself. But as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproach thee fell on me.” Paul is giving a carefully crafted argument: you have an obligation, and that obligation is edification. Edification is therefore a result of your participation in Jesus Christ, because “even Christ pleased not himself.”

The word “pleased” in verse 3 and the word “please” in verse 2 are exactly the same Greek word. How did Christ please not himself? Do you not remember that, over and over, Jesus Christ said, “I came to do the will of my Father who is in heaven”? Do you not remember that while our Lord was in the garden, praying in Matthew 26 and verse 42, he said, “O Father, if this cup could pass from me, fine; if not, thy will be done”?

In other words, He was willing to drink it and to have this cup. If it was the Father’s will that it pass away, that was wonderful; if it was not His will, that was wonderful too. Romans 15:3—“For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproach thee fell on me”—is a direct quote from Psalm 69:9: “For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproach thee fell on me.”

Albert Barnes, in his commentary, points out five things that show how Jesus Christ pleased not Himself. All of these are important, but listen particularly to number five.

First, Jesus Christ came to do the will of God in undertaking the work of salvation. It was the will of God, agreeable to the divine purposes, and the Mediator did not consult His own happiness or honor in heaven, but cheerfully came to do the will of God.

I could stop right there and quote Philippians 2:5: “Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus.” He goes on to say that Christ, being in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation, took upon Himself the form of a servant, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the

cross. Very obviously, Jesus Christ did not please Himself by saying, “I’m very comfortable here in heaven. I don’t need to go down to earth and sacrifice Myself and suffer all the reproaches.” No, He willingly came. That is what Barnes is saying first.

Secondly, Christ went on earth and made it His great object to do the will of God, to finish the work God had given Him to do, and not to seek His own comfort and enjoyment. He expressly confirms this in John 6:38 and John 5:30, saying, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.” Christ did not please Himself in that sense.

Thirdly, He was willing to endure whatever trials and pains the will of God might demand, not seeking to avoid them or shrink from them.

Fourthly, in His life He did not seek personal comfort, wealth, friends, or honor. Our Lord said, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.”

He denied Himself to promote the welfare of others. He was poor that they might be rich. He was in lonely places that He might seek out the needy and provide for them. Nay, He did not seek to preserve His own life when the appointed time came to die, but gave Himself up for us.

Remember, Christ pleased not himself. We have an obligation. According to verse one, that obligation is to edification. That edification leads to participation. Listen to what Albert Barnes wrote: “There may be another idea which the apostle had here. He bore with patience the ignorance, blindness, erroneous views, and ambitious projects of his disciples.”

“He evinced kindness to them when they were in error. He was not harsh, censorious, and unkind when they were filled with vain projects of ambition, or perverted his words, or were dull in apprehension. So says the apostle, we ought to do in relation to our brethren.”

I do not know if you have ever read through the New Testament and found out how many times the disciples were wrong, how many times they wanted things that were unbiblical, or how many times they were ambitious. Who said, “Lord, grant to us that we

may sit one on thy right hand and one on thy left hand"? All the other disciples were upset. They were ambitious. Jesus Christ simply said, "That's not mine to give. It shall be given of them to whom it is ordained of my Father."

The question is, our Lord said, "Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I'm to be baptized with?" And they said, "Yes, Lord, we're able." He said, "You shall certainly be baptized with that baptism. But it's not mine to give."

He did not jump all over them. He did not cuss them out. He did not ring them out. He simply straightened them out kindly and lovingly.

He says in verse three, "The reproaches of them that reproach thee fell on me." The reproaches speak of calumnies, censures, harsh speeches, hateful words, deeds, and actions. All of these things that were exhibited toward God the Father fell on Jesus Christ. In other words, they could not get to God the Father, but they could get to God the Son since he was here on earth.

One of the reasons the world hates God's people so much, and one of the reasons we are persecuted so much, is because they can no longer get their hands upon Jesus Christ. So they persecute his children. "The reproaches of them that reproach thee," he said, "fell on me." Jesus Christ was the God-man. He was and is God incarnate. He is perfect God and perfect man. Every hatred, every ill thought, every unkind action—anything that they could do against God—they did to our Lord Jesus Christ. And he did not flinch. He did not back up. He did not back down.

He willingly suffered those reproaches. Hebrews 12:1 says, "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Verse 2 says, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." "Lest ye be weary

and faint in your minds." Then he makes this statement: "You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

Do you remember our Lord in the garden? He sweat great drops of sweat as blood. The Bible says our Lord endured the cross, despising the shame. It says He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. You and I cannot conceive of the reproaches that really fell upon Jesus Christ. Yet the Bible also tells us that the servant is not greater than his master. If they reproached Jesus Christ, they will reproach us.

First Peter 2:21 says, "For even hereunto are we called. For Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps." Just as Christ willingly accepted the reproaches, so likewise we should willingly accept their reproaches, even though they sometimes come from weaker brethren, perhaps even from stronger brethren.

When someone comes to me and says, "Brother Weaver, do you know what so-and-so said about you?" before they say anything, I normally respond, "Well, whatever they said, if they really knew me the way God knows me, they'd probably say worse than that about me." Stop and think about that. It really does not matter what people say. What really counts is what God thinks about us, is it not? Our Lord here, of course, is dealing with the fact that, yes.

There is an obligation, there is edification, and there is participation. In verse 3 there is also confirmation. Paul says, "For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written." The little phrase, "as it is written," should lead us to confirmation in the sense that we know the Word of God is true, and what was written in the Old Testament is confirmed in the New Testament. Nothing has changed. God is immutable, and His Word is immutable forever: "O Lord, thy word is settled in the heavens."

So you have in verse 1 obligation, in verse 2 edification, and in verse 3 participation. In verse 4 you have inspiration: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime," that is, the Old Testament, "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." There

are so many people today who try to say, "Well, that's in the Old Testament."

Inspiration: The Old Testament Written for Our Learning

The Old Testament is just as much the Word of God as the New Testament. We have one Bible, not two Bibles. Everything in the Old Testament is indeed Scripture. Consider how the Apostle Paul takes what happened to Israel in the Old Testament and applies it to the Corinthian church in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 10 he says, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

Then he says, "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Every time I read that, I smile and think of how polite the Apostle Paul must have been. He was tactful when he said, "But with many of them God was not well pleased." How about all of them but two? All of the men who came out of Egypt, except Joshua and Caleb, died in the wilderness. Paul simply says, "But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

Paul is talking about Old Testament Israel and making an application to the Corinthian church based upon what happened to Israel: “Now these things,” or these people and experiences, “were our examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.” Verse 7 says, “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”

Verse 8 continues, “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.” All these things happened to them for ensamples, or examples, and they are

written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. In verses 6 and 11, the apostle Paul specifically refers to the fact that everything in the Old Testament is for our benefit. Verse 12 makes another application: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” If you become proud like them, you will fall like them.

What does the Bible say in Romans 15:4? “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” Every bit of the Word of God is applicable.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The word “inspiration” is very specific: theopneustos. It literally means God-breathed, or exhaled from God. All scripture is given by God’s breath and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.”

The apostle Paul emphasizes this in Romans 15 because he wants us to know that what he is saying and teaching is based upon the Word of God. Our problem in this day and time is that people say, “But I know what I’ve been taught. I heard my preacher years ago say this, or my grandpa believed this, or my parents believed this.”

As long as Grandpa, parents, and preachers are right, that's one thing. But they're not always right. You must come to the realization that you need to be saying, “God says,” or “the Bible says.” Listen, do you realize I was taught many things? When God saved me and called me to preach, three, four, or five preachers took me under their wings and began teaching me. And guess what? Only several years later did I find out that many things they taught me were wrong. They were good men.

They did not understand everything. Of course, I did not understand. I simply believed them because they told me that this was exactly what I was supposed to believe. I came to the realization that the old black preacher was right when that black preacher said, “The Bible sure does shed a whole lot of light on

them commentaries." The Bible sure does shed a whole lot of light upon what we have heard all our lives.

You have to understand that the Apostle Paul is saying, "I am trying to teach you something, and I want you to understand that this is from the Word of God. It is not just something I am making up; it is not just something that I have heard. This is from the inspired Word of God."

Supplication: Prayer for Like-Mindedness

You have obligation, edification, and participation. Now, of course, you have inspiration.

Watch this in verses five and six. You have supplication. Before the Apostle Paul makes his application in this section, he gives a supplication; he prays. Look at what he prays in verse five: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." In his supplication, Paul prays specifically that the God of patience and consolation would give us His gift of like-mindedness.

I want to emphasize that He is indeed the God of patience. Look, if you would, in verse 13: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Now look at verse 33: "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

You must know Him first as the God of patience before you will ever know Him as the God of hope. Then you must know Him as the God of hope before you ever know Him as the God of peace. The Apostle Paul is dealing with what you and I would call patience. Do you understand how patient God was with each of us? Do you remember the very first time you were ever convicted by the Holy Ghost? The answer is no, because you did not even realize that the Holy Ghost was convicting you. But one day you probably did realize there was conviction going on in your life, and you probably said something like this: "Man, I'm feeling sick. I need to get over this." What if you had said something like this?

"I don't want to feel like this anymore. I don't want to be like this. I don't want my mind disturbed. I don't want my conscience upset. Just leave me alone." And what if God said, "Okay"? You know what he did? He patiently dealt with you until he brought you to repentance and faith and brought you to himself. When he brought you to himself, you were not brought to him fully grown with all understanding. You were brought to him as a baby, and he patiently taught you. I look at Luke's children and some of these other younger children, and I have thought of this several times since I have been here: Thank God he gives children to young folks.

Because the older you get, I suppose sometimes the less patience you have. We had six grandkids, and occasionally we would keep them all at one time. Finally, I said, "Oh, two at the time will help me, but I don't want six all at one time, not least till they get older." You see what I am saying?

This is the same thing here. Albert Barnes says, "The God who is in self long-suffering, who bears patiently with the errors and the faults of his children, and who can give patience, may he give you of his spirit that you may bear patiently the infirmities and errors of each other. The example of God here who bears long with his children and is not angry soon at their offenses is a strong argument why Christians should bear with each other. If God bears long and patiently with our infirmities, we ought to bear patiently with each other."

There is not a grandparent in here who took their grandchild, when they were trying to teach that grandchild, picked him up and shook that baby and said, "What in the world is wrong with you, kid? Straighten up. You just do what I tell you." No, you did not do that. When that child messed up, you cleaned up and said, "No, son, we do not do this," or, "No, sweetheart, we do not do this."

You patiently go over it again and again until finally it sunk home. This is exactly what God is saying. Paul is praying, "Now the God of patience and consolation grants you that you might be like-minded." To be like-minded means basically that we think the same way. It takes time, patience, and study to arrive at the same mind. The same mind cannot be demanded, coerced, or forced.

You cannot demand that someone have the same mind. It takes time and patience to be taught. You cannot force-feed anyone, because the illumination of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for us to understand and grasp truth. That is why Paul prayed, “Now the God of patience and consolation grants you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.” This refers to Christ’s example and spirit.

Our Lord was patient with us; we should be patient with each other. The word “like-minded” is a very special word. It is the Greek homothumadon, which occurs twelve times in the Bible. Eleven times it is translated “with one accord,” and one time it is translated “one mind” or “like-minded.” We could read it this way: “Now, the God of patience and consolation grants you to be like passion, one toward another, according to Christ Jesus.”

One author said concerning this word, “A unique Greek word used 10 of its 12 New Testament occurrences in the book of Acts helps us to understand the uniqueness of the Christian community.” Homothumadon is a compound of two words meaning to rush along and in unison. The image is almost musical. A number of notes are sounded which, while different, harmonize in pitch and tone. As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concertmaster, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of the members of Christ’s Church.

If the great concertmaster of the Holy Spirit is blending together our lives, even while there are so many disagreements and misunderstandings among us, producing a glorious concert for the honor of God the Father, what must it be like when we are in heaven and truly are all one mind? The Scriptures demand unity, not uniformity. Unity means that we are together; uniformity means that we would be exact copies of one another. I am not an exact copy of your pastor, and he is not an exact copy of me, nor am I an exact copy of Pat or anybody else.

We are all individuals, and we are all unique. But what God does demand is that we have unity in Him based upon the Scripture. For instance, Romans chapter 12 and verse 16 says, "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but

condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

Now, "Be of the same mind one toward another." We do not necessarily have to agree in every detail to be of the same mind one toward another. We can be Christian, biblical, and civil toward each other, even though there may be disagreements. Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 10. The apostle Paul writes these Corinthians and he says, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, and that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Now, let me ask you a question. How in the world are we going to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment? The answer is that the only way we can be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment is if each one of us submits our mind to the Word of God and comes believing that. If we have the same mind, we are going to end up saying the same thing, because we will be thinking alike.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 11, again the apostle Paul says, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." Interestingly enough, in Ephesians 4, verse 3, he says, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." In Philippians 2, verse 2, he says, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." I hope you are beginning to see now why the apostle Paul is praying in verses 5 and 6 before he makes his application in verse 7.

Why do we have to patiently put up with the weaknesses of each other and seek to edify and help each other rather than censure, malign, and condemn? Here is the difference. Let us say Warren Luke asked me a question. I can give him two different responses. I can look at him and say, “Don’t bother me with that. I’m too busy.” Or I could say, “Wait a minute, let me stop what I’m doing. Let me come over and sit down and talk with you. Let’s try to research this and find out.” One requires patience and time. The other simply tells him not to bother me and get out of my way.

Why should we be patient with each other? Romans 15:5-6 gives the answer: "Now the God of patience and consolation grants you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus," so "that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." One mind produces one mouth, and one mouth produces one motive: to glorify God.

When we think alike, we speak alike, say the same things, and do the same things, and it redounds to God's honor and glory. Alice and I have been married a long time, soon to be fifty-six years, and I would say that we pretty well think alike. There are many times when we are riding along and our hands hit as we reach to turn the radio on or off. I am tired of it, she is tired of it, and our hands hit.

We used to have a family night at our church and would play the old Newlywed Game. They finally asked Alice and me not to play any longer because we always won; nobody else would win. This is what the Apostle Paul is saying. We are to learn to receive each other in patience, be kind, and teach each other, so that we can all come with one mind and one mouth and end up with one motive, glorifying God the Father.

Application: Receiving One Another as Christ Received Us

Romans 15:7 brings us to our application: "Wherefore receive you one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God." This is where we are finally getting to our application. In light of everything Paul has already said, here is Christian protocol, Christian reception, and the beginning of Christian fellowship, instruction, and edification: learning how to receive one another. How do we receive each other? The answer in verse 7 is that we receive each other to the glory of God. Now wait a minute; look closely at verse 7: "Wherefore receive you one another as." If you want to, circle that little word "as," or at least underline it, because it is important. That little word "as" is the Greek word kathos.

This word is translated in our Bibles "even as" thirty-six times and "according to" one time. It literally means "just as," "even as," "in proportion to," and "in the same degree." So look at it in verse

7: “Wherefore receive ye one another in the same degree, just as, even as, Christ also received us to the glory of God.” Do you realize that you are to receive each other just as Christ received you—to the glory of God, to the same degree and in the same proportion?

That brings up a question: How did Christ receive us? Christ received us, to the glory of God, as sinners. Romans 5:8 says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, and while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “Much more than being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

There are no perfect Christians. Each one of us is a sinner. Each one of us has faults, failures, shortcomings, sins, and peculiarities. There are things about us that other people do not like—things about you that other people do not like, and things about me that other people do not like. But whether we like them or not is immaterial. Christ received us while we were sinners. He received us when we were imperfect, knowing our faults, failures, shortcomings, and sins. Even so, just as, in like manner, to the same degree, and in proportion, we are to receive each other.

Christ not only received us while we were sinners; He also received us in our ignorant and darkened minds. Colossians 1:21 says, “And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind hath he now reconciled.” Ephesians 4:18 tells us what we were when we were unsaved: “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart.” When Christ received us, not only were we sinners; we were ignorant.

I could use another word: We were stupid. We did not know everything. In fact, most of us did not know hardly anything. We were not scholars or theologians. We did not understand all doctrine. We could not explain the difference between dichotomy and trichotomy. We did not know the difference between infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism. We did not understand the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism. We did not know anything.

The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, patiently opened our eyes, taught us, led us, and showed us. There is no one now who understands and knows all truth. Even though we are Christians, and even though we may study the Scripture every day, there is still a fog upon our minds and a blindness there. We will not have that totally removed until we get into glory. Then we will know even as we are known. Then we will understand perfectly and completely.

It does not matter where you are in your Christian faith or walk; you are going to have a problem because there is no perfect understanding. Because there is no perfect understanding now, we cannot make total positional agreement a standard for receiving each other. I cannot say, “Now Warren Luke, if you do not hold my eschatological position, I am not going to fellowship with you. Or if you do not see this the way I see it, I am not going to.” That is wicked.

“Wherefore receive you one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, received us.” We cannot say, “You have got to agree with me or I am not going to fellowship with you.” God is just as sovereign in illumination as He is in salvation. God does not give the same light to all people, neither does He give the same amount of light, neither does He give the same light at the same time.

He teaches and instructs us as we are able to hear the truth. Mark chapter four and verse 33 says, “And with many such parables spake he the word unto them as they were able to hear it.” Only as they were able to hear it. Alice and I had a dear friend who used to play the saxophone all the time.

Before God saved him, he was a drunk, and he did not get saved until he was probably in his fifties. One of the songs he used to play on that saxophone all the time was, "Wasted Years, Wasted Years, Oh How Foolish." He would look at me and say, "Would God I'd heard this when I was a child or when I was a young man." I would look at him and say, "Papa."

"You wouldn't have listened then. You wouldn't have heard it then. God brought you into life in his time, and as you were able to hear the truth." That's what God does. It is just like being a baby.

You do not take a month-old baby and start feeding him steak. You feed that child as he is able to hear it, bear it, or digest it. That is exactly what God does to us.

Our Lord did not receive us only when we were sinners. He received us in our ignorance, and thirdly, he received us willingly. No one forced Jesus Christ to take us. No one coerced him into receiving us. He did so willingly. He willingly left heaven. He willingly gave himself a sacrifice. He willingly received us. It is not a burden to receive a brother, no matter how weak he is or how low his understanding is. It is still not a burden to receive him as long as we receive him for God's honor and God's glory, so that we may edify him.

We have really changed. I am working on four messages entitled "The Theology of Change," and I am on the third one now. I remember when I was a boy. We were in church Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and any other night when there was a special meeting. Some elderly people would come up to my dad after church. One couple in particular would say, "Mr. Weaver," and then, "We would like to come home with you and break bread with you."

They were inviting themselves to dinner. My dad would say, "You're more than welcome." When they came for dinner, they stayed all afternoon, ate supper, and then went back to church together. The adults would sit around and talk about theology, the Bible, or whatever they talked about. I always wanted a family with children to come home with us because I needed somebody to play with. People used to spend all day on Sunday together.

That way, there were opportunities to teach, share, and fellowship. In the early days in this country, church was one service. People would get up in the morning before daylight, feed all their animals, get in their horse and buggy, carry a picnic dinner, and go to church. The preacher would preach, they would have their picnic dinner, and he would probably preach again. Then they would get home before dark so they could feed up again and get everything settled.

As they sat around the supper table, they would catechize their children, ask them about the message, and explain theology to them. Do you realize we have changed? Why is it that we do not do this today? Why do we not have real Christian protocol today? Let me answer it in three ways.

Reasons for Failure in Christian Protocol

First of all, I suggest that we do not do it because of ignorance on the subject. We have never heard it. It has never been taught. We have never understood it. But now that you have heard this message, ignorance is no longer an excuse, because you now know there is such a thing in the Bible as Christian protocol, and God expects us to receive each other just like Christ received us, to the glory of God. He receives us as sinners, as ignorant, but He received us willingly so that He might teach and edify us.

The second reason we do not actually engage in Christian protocol today is what I am going to call the Diotrephes syndrome. We have ourselves filled with pride, arrogance, and a domineering spirit. We do not wish any longer to teach and edify; we wish rather to dominate and subjugate. We are not interested in taking time to explain and teach, going over something again and again. We would rather say, “You either see it or get out of my life.” What do I mean by the Diotrephes syndrome? Let me show you.

Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of 3 John. 1 John, 2 John, 3 John. Look, if you would, in 3 John, and let's begin reading there, in 3 John, with verse 9. 3 John, verse 9. Look at it. He says, "I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not." Now, this is the Apostle John and those who are with him. He says, "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence, will not even receive us. Wherefore," he says in verse 10, "if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words, and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren." Oh, there's that word. "Neither doth himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." So here's a man who loved to have the preeminence. He would not receive the apostle John or anyone

that John sent. And anyone that would, he berated them, and if they did not give in to him, he'd kick them out of the church.

Wow. By the way, look if you would, please, at verse 9. He said, "I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not." Did you know that the word "preeminence" only occurs twice in the New Testament? The first time it occurs is in the book of Colossians chapter one, "that in all things Christ might have the preeminence." And so here's Diotrephes, he's willing to replace Jesus Christ and run the church. And not receive whomever he wants to not receive and kick out who will not believe on the way he does. That's a Diotrephes spirit.

He was not interested in teaching. He was not interested in edifying. He's interested in subjugating and dominating. That's another reason we don't receive each other the way we should. But then there's a third reason. And that reason is, because there is a failure or a lack of realization and understanding concerning the importance of this subject. You say, how important is it? Let me show you. Look in your Bibles, first of all, to the book of Matthew. Matthew chapter 10. Matthew chapter 10. And look, if you would please, at verses 40 and 41. This may surprise you. Matthew chapter 10, verses 40 and 41. Matthew 10, verse 40. Jesus Christ says this.

The Importance of Receiving One Another

"He that receiveth you," talking to his disciples, "he that receiveth you receiveth me. And he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."

“Whoever receives you”—that is, those disciples whom He sent—“receives me. And whoever receives me receives him,” or the Father, “who sent me.”

The opposite is also true. If you do not receive the ones that Jesus Christ sends, you are not receiving Jesus Christ. And if you

are not receiving Jesus Christ, you are not receiving the Father. Our Lord says in John 13:20, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.”

To receive a Christian brother is to receive Jesus Christ, and to receive Jesus Christ is to receive God the Father. I have had—and Alice can tell you—I have had people call me or come and visit with me when I have thousands of things to do, tons of work to do. Inevitably, I will say, “Why sure. You’re welcome. Come on.” I will stop doing what I am doing and take the time to visit with them, teach them if I can, and help them if I can.

Why? You say, is the work that I am doing at home important? Yes. Has it got to be done? Yes. But there are some things more important. That is ministering to God’s people. I want you to look in Matthew chapter 25. I am going to show you just another verse or so. Look in Matthew chapter 25, and let us begin reading there with verse 37. You know this passage, but I am going to point it out in great detail. In fact, let us go back and start with verse 33.

"And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left hand. Then shall the king say unto them on the right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was a hungred, and you gave me meat. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you took me in, and naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, When saw we thee a-hungered, and fed thee, or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in, or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say to them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me. Then shall they say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was a hungred and you gave me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger and you took me not in. Naked and you clothed me not. Sick and in prison and you visited me not. Then

shall they also answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungred, or a thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Lord, if we had seen you, surely we would have done it. Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Is receiving each other important? Oh, yes. Because whatever we do to each other, we do to Jesus Christ.

How would you really like to minister to God the Father? How would you really like to minister to the Lord Jesus Christ specifically? I realize we worship him, we give him honor, we give him glory, and we give him praise. But how would you really like to do something special for God the Father and God the Son?

What does God the Father need? Nothing. He's God; he's perfect. What does God the Son need? Nothing. He's God. He's perfect.

How do we minister to them? Hebrews 6:10 says, “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which you have showed toward his name in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister.” The only way we can minister to God the Father is to minister to each other. The way to show your love for God is by ministering to each other.

It is wicked, wrong, and unbiblical just to shun each other simply because you disagree on some things or because others do not hold your positions. I am not talking about someone who denies Jesus Christ or the word of God; I am talking about believers. Believers do not always see everything exactly alike. That does not mean we have to shun each other, be mean and cruel, or be hateful, unkind, and unsettled toward one another. Only God can open the eyes and give us light. If God was patient with us and taught us, then we have to be patient with each other.

Conclusion: Sin Defined by God, Not Man

Sin is determined by God and not by man. You say, “That guy’s a big sinner.” Really? Do you know what sin is? First John 3:4 says,

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law.” If it is not a transgression of the law, it is not sin. You may not like it or agree with it, but if it is not transgressing the law, it is not sin. If a brother does sin, we have an obligation not only to rebuke him, but, as Galatians 6 says, “Ye who are spiritual, restore such one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

In other words, if it were not for God’s grace, it would be us who had fallen and not them. How do you receive each other? You receive each other as sinners. Nobody knows all truth. I do not know what your pastor knows, and your pastor does not know what I know. We are all different and have certain amounts of light and knowledge. That is why we are able to teach and help each other. But we can do that only as we learn to receive each other as God has received us in Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer

If there is no receiving, there's not gonna be edification. If there's no edification, there's not gonna be any participation. If there's no participation, there's not gonna be any supplication. And if there's no supplication, there's not gonna be any application. Romans 15:7 says, “Wherefore,” that is, in light of everything that Paul has just taught, “receive you one another as Christ also received us for the glory of God.” When we learn to receive each other, and edify each other and minister to each other, you're gonna find that we're gonna end up with one mind and one mouth and one motive. The Christian protocol is learning to receive each other as Christ received us to the glory of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We ask you, Lord, to teach us, to help us, to build us up in the most holy faith, and teach us what it means to receive each other. Give us, Lord, a patient spirit, a teachable spirit, a receptive spirit, hearing ears, an obedient heart. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, amen.

CHAPTER 12

Scope Of Christian Obedience

November 6, 2019

The Scope of Christian Obedience

She said, “Did you hear me?” I said, “Of course, I’m just not answering you.” I saw a lady today with a shirt on that said, “I hear you. I’m just ignoring you.”

He was talking about some of the tyranny. I read today where a man in Michigan had his house stolen from him by the state of Michigan because he miscalculated the interest on this property tax by eight bucks and 41 cents. And so the property was valued at $160,000. The state confiscated it, sold it for $24,000, got their $841, and kept the remainder for themselves. Then they said that is legal in Michigan.

Introduction: The Scope of Obedience

Tonight I want to bring a message which I’m calling “The Scope of Christian Obedience.” Most of us hear the word obedience, and we

tend to think that basically we are obedient Christians as well. Many times we read the Scriptures and hear the word obedience, and we tend to think, "Well, you know, I'm all right. I'm pretty good."

When you talk about the scope of Christian obedience, you have to understand that the word scope means something like the extent or the range of Christian obedience. It could also refer to the outlook. It could also refer to what you and I would call the aim or purpose. So, if time really allowed, we could really expand on what is known as the scope of Christian obedience.

If you consider the scope of Christian obedience, we have some very succinct answers given us in the Bible, especially if you argue what is known as the argument from the lesser to the greater. Our Lord did this many, many times, especially in Matthew chapter 6. He would say, like, "Consider the sparrows," or, "Consider the lilies." Then He would go on to say, "Are you not much more valuable than many sparrows?"

Does not God take care of you? He is arguing from the lesser to the greater. You and I understand that God commands children to obey their parents. If God commands earthly and fleshly children to obey their parents, what is the scope of their obedience? The answer is given in Colossians 3:20: "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord."

Biblical Basis for Total Obedience

The child does not get to pick and choose, saying, "I like this," or, "I do not like that," and therefore, "I might obey and I might not obey." The Bible says, "Children, obey your parents in all things." If God requires earthly children to obey their parents in all things, do you not think that, by extension, He would also call His children in grace and mercy to obey their Heavenly Father in all things?

Then, in 1 Corinthians 6, the Bible speaks of the fact that we are not our own; we are bought with a price. In other words, we are what you and I would call the servants and slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ. Anytime you see the Apostle Paul saying, "Paul, a servant of

Jesus Christ," the Greek word is *doulos*, which literally means a slave. He is calling himself a slave of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 6, the Bible says, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God? Ye are not your own. Ye have been bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are His." If you confess and acknowledge that you are a child of God, then you can say, by extension, that just as God commands earthly children to obey their parents in all things, so He commands me, as a heavenly child, a child of heaven, to obey my Father in all things.

Since I am also a servant and a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, do you not know that servants and slaves are bound to obey their masters? How far are they to obey them? What is the scope of their obedience? The Bible answers that in Colossians 3:22: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord." Notice what he said: "Servants, obey in all things."

The servant does not get to pick and choose. He does not say, "I like this, I'm going to do it," or, "I don't like shoveling manure, so therefore I'm not going to shovel manure." If God calls you to shovel manure, that is exactly what you are supposed to be doing, because a servant or slave has no choice in the matter. The Lord considers that you and I are to be obedient in every area of our life.

In Acts 3:22, you will see the quote taken from Deuteronomy 18. The Bible says, "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you." If you are to hear in all things whatsoever He said, what are the implications? The very first is that if you are to hear in all things, you are to obey in all things.

In other words, the scope is absolute, total, and complete obedience. It is not that we like this and are going to do it, or do not like that and are not going to do it. We do not get to pick and choose. God says we are to obey in all things. We have to come to several realizations: He is the Father, and we are the child; He is

the Creator, and we are the creature; He is the Redeemer, and we are the redeemed.

God's Sovereignty and Our Submission

We must recognize that He is in control and we are to be the controlled. We must also recognize that He is the potter and we are the clay. In other words, we have to realize and recognize, like the Apostle Paul said in Acts 17, that in Him we live and move and have our being. Without Him, there is no life. Without Him, there is no being. Without Him, there is no moving.

Here is a simple truth that we have to understand: God is totally and completely sovereign. He has all power, all authority, and all jurisdiction.

Many people have taken the idea and attitude that Pharaoh took. When Moses came to Pharaoh, he said, “Thus saith the Lord, let my people go that they may serve me.” Pharaoh answered in Exodus chapter 5 and verse 2, “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.”

Pharaoh's Rebellion as a Warning

Stop and think about this. Pharaoh asked, “Who is the Lord that I should obey Him and let Israel go?” There was ignorance on Pharaoh’s part exactly as to who God was. Then he made this statement: “I know Him not.” That is, “I do not recognize Him. I will not count Him as sovereign. I will not count Him as Lord.” Consequently, because he did not count Him as Lord and did not count Him as sovereign, he was not going to obey Him.

Our obedience comes down to our concept of God. If you do not know who God is, you are not going to obey God. If you do not understand God’s sovereignty, you are not going to obey God. Total obedience requires total submission. Total submission requires total recognition of who God is and who we are. If God is the sovereign, we are not. If God is in control, we are not in control. If God is the Creator, we have to be the creature. If God is the Father, we have to be the child. If God is the Redeemer, we

have to be the redeemed. Obedience is a sovereignly dictated order of life.

Before we get to our text, I want to show you how wrong we are and how we got to where we are. Go back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 2, and notice what God says to Adam. God had created Adam and placed him in the garden. Genesis 2:15–17 says:

Adam's Commandment-Oriented Life

“And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Go back to verse 16: “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying.” The word commanded is a very interesting word. It does not mean merely that God charged Adam or commanded Adam, though it obviously means that. But it means more than that. It literally means that God placed Adam under an oath.

Adam was the creature; God was the Creator. Adam was the man; God was God. God put Adam in the garden and gave him a command, a charge. He actually put him under an oath: “You will obey me in the totality of your life. Here I am. And there you are.” Your responsibility is obedience.

In other words, everything Adam had, he owed to God: his life, his creation, his position, and the fruits of the garden. Everything he had, he owed to God. Have you ever stopped to think that everything we have and everything we are, actually we owe to Him? Have you ever stopped to think, even in 1 Chronicles chapter 29, when all those people were giving all that money to the temple, what David said?

"Out of Thine own have we given back to Thee." In other words, we cannot give You anything because everything we have, You gave to us. Adam was in the garden, and God had graciously given him all the fruits of the trees. He reserved only one tree for Himself and said, "You don't eat of this tree. This one is Mine. Everything else you can have."

Matthew Henry, speaking of Genesis chapter 2, verses 16 and 17, says, "A confirmation of his present happiness to him in that grant of every tree of the garden he may freely eat."

"This was not only an allowance of liberty unto him in taking the delicious fruits of paradise as a recompense for his care and pains in dressing and keeping it, but it was with an assurance of life to him, immortal life upon his obedience. For the tree of life being put in the midst of the garden and as the heart and soul of it, doubtless God had an eye to that too especially in this grant. And therefore when upon his revolt the grant was recalled, no notice is taken of the tree of life in the garden as prohibited him except the tree of life, of which there it is said he might eat thereof and live forever."

That is, he would never have died or lost his happiness had he remained obedient and eaten of that tree. God was saying to Adam, "Continue thou in holiness, continue in conformity of thy Creator's will, and thou shalt continue in life and thou shalt continue in happiness."

Certainly, that is exactly where we are today. As long as we continue in obedience, as long as we continue in happiness, God will continue to bless us. God placed Adam in the garden and said, "Here's what I want from you. I want your personal obedience, your perfect obedience, and your perpetual obedience. As long as you obey Me personally, perfectly, and perpetually, then everything is yours forever. It is yours. You may have it. You may enjoy it."

There are two points that I want you to grasp before we go any further. First, when God created Adam and placed him in the garden, He placed him under a commandment-oriented life. In other words, it is very simple: God said to Adam, “Do this and thou shalt live. Do this and thou shalt die.” God told Adam, “Here are My commands. You do this and you live. You break My commands and you die.” Originally, then, when God created Adam, He placed him under a commandment-oriented life.

Secondly, absolutely nothing was to get in the way of Adam’s obedience to God. He was obligated to God; he owed Him. God

was his Creator, Sustainer, Provider, and Protector. Obedience was his first and foremost duty, and he was responsible to render that obedience to God personally, perfectly, and perpetually. God created him and put him under the commandment-oriented life.

So here is the question: What happened? I want you to look in Genesis chapter 3. Let us read the first seven verses, and then I am going to give you some answers to what happened. Notice Genesis chapter 3, beginning there with verse 1.

The Fall: Trading Commandment for Feeling

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened. Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons."

When God created Adam, He created him with original righteousness, holiness, and knowledge. He placed him under that commandment-oriented life. Then, in Genesis chapter 3, what happened? Many people answer, "Adam and Eve were tempted."

May I surprise you with a statement? Temptation is not sin. It may lead to sin, but temptation is not sin in and of itself. Plenty of Christians, and plenty of non-Christians, have been tempted to do certain things but never did them. It is not sin to be tempted; it is sin to yield to temptation. Even our Lord was tempted. According to Matthew chapter 4, the Spirit of the Lord led Him into the wilderness, where He was tempted forty days and forty nights. So

do not say, “Adam and Eve were tempted.” That is not the answer as to what happened.

Certainly they were tempted; that is for sure. But the temptation itself did not ensure the fall. We could say, yes, they were tempted. Someone has said, “Here’s the answer. What Eve did was add to the word of God. God said, ‘Not eat of that tree,’ but she says, ‘But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.’” Someone will say, “Aha. There she is adding to the word of God, for God just said, ‘You shall not eat of it.’ He did not say that you should not touch it.”

But what Eve confessed in verse 3 is a truth. She was not adding to the word of God. Let me explain it. Here is the principle.

When God forbids any act, at the same time He forbids anything and everything that would lead up to that act. Here is the fruit, and God says, “Don’t eat it.” You cannot eat it unless you touch it. Touching and grabbing the fruit is the beginning of the sin. In other words, God says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” He forbids the act of adultery, and in forbidding that act He also forbids lust, covetousness, and vain, wicked, and foolish thoughts—everything that leads up to it. When God says, “Thou shalt not murder,” He is also forbidding anger, strife, bitterness, ill will, and hard feelings that would lead up to murder.

Therefore, when Eve said, “You shall not touch it,” she was not necessarily adding to the word of God. She was saying that you cannot eat it without touching it. If I touch it, that means I am grabbing for it, and I am violating the word of God. Lust and covetousness likewise violate the word of God. Simply because Eve added something there does not necessarily mean that she was wrong.

What caused Adam to sin is the same thing that causes us to sin, and what caused Eve to sin is the same thing that causes each of us to sin. Although Eve was the first to sin, sin did not come into the world by Eve. Sin came into the world by Adam. Eve took the fruit and then gave it to Adam. The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 14, “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being

deceived was in the transgression." Eve was truly deceived, but Adam knew exactly what he was doing. God's covenant was with Adam.

That is why Romans 5 and verse 12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." All of us sinned in Adam. God's covenant was not with Eve; it was with Adam. She was in the covenant through her relationship to Adam, but Adam was the one in the covenant. Sin came into the world by Adam, not by Eve, even though Eve was the first one to sin, per se. When you come to 1 Corinthians 15, verses 45 through 48, you understand that Adam was our representative.

Adam was there in our stead. He was our federal head and our representative. What he did, we did. When he sinned, we sinned; when he fell, we fell; when he died, we died. That is why the Bible says, "Wherefore by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, for that all sinned." It is an aorist passive, which means that something happened once and for all. When did all of us sin once and for all? The answer is, in Adam, because he was our federal head and representative.

You may say, "I do not like that. I do not like being in Adam like that." But if that is the truth, then you do not like being in Jesus Christ like that. Jesus Christ is called the second man and the last Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:45–48. He was the second chronologically in time and history to sustain that federal headship in relationship. Scripture tells us that when Jesus Christ died, we died in Him; when He was buried, we were buried; when He was raised from the dead, we were raised from the dead; when He ascended to heaven, we ascended to heaven; and when He sat down at the right hand of God, we sat down with Him. He is the head, and we are the body. The truth is that Adam was a federal head and representative.

Now look carefully at Genesis 3:6: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Where in that verse is the word commandment or

command? It is not there. What is there? Sight, pleasantness, and desire.

When God created Adam, He placed him under a commandment-oriented life. Yet in Genesis 3:6 there is no commandment anywhere around: "I see. This is pleasant. I want it. I will take it." Eve took her desires, emotions, and what was pleasant to her and placed them above God's commandment. Thus she sinned against God.

Now, Adam knew what he was doing. Adam's sin was this: he had regard to his wife, and he took. He knew exactly what he was doing, and he took because of his wife. In that instance, he was also violating God's law, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," because he was placing Eve above God and above God's commandment.

Adam and Eve were trading the commandment-oriented life for a feeling-oriented life. They were trading a commandment-oriented life for a feeling-oriented life. Let me explain what is happening: this principle goes throughout Scripture. Scripture shows it repeatedly. The commandment-oriented life was being exchanged for a feeling-oriented life, in which the feeling of regard for Eve took precedence over obedience to God.

Consider the fall of Jericho. Jericho was condemned by God. In Joshua chapter 6, beginning with verse 17, God said concerning Jericho, "And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in her house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." He continued, "But all the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasure of the Lord."

Old Testament Examples of Feeling-Oriented Sin

Here was a plain command to all these Israelites: Do not touch anything in Jericho. It was all condemned. It was all under the curse. If they took it, they would make themselves a curse as well. That was all there was to it.

Yet Achan stole and hid the spoil in his tent. In Joshua chapter 7, beginning with verse 20, Achan confessed, “And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.”

God had said, “Don’t touch anything in Jericho. It’s a curse. If you touch it, you’re going to die too. You’ll be a curse.” And so what did Achan do? He saw it, and he took it. He said, “When I saw”—that is, it was pleasant to the eyes—“and then two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, I coveted them.”

That is, I lusted after them. I wanted them. I felt like having them, and I took them. And I hid them under my tent. I hope you know the outcome: Achan and his family were stoned to death, and then everything was piled upon them and burned. Adam and Eve had already shown us that death is absolutely certain from disobedience, and now Achan comes along and proves it. Here is what he wanted to do.

He desired that goodly Babylonish garment. He desired that silver. He desired that gold. He said, “I wanted it, and I took it.” It did not matter about the commandments. It did not matter what God said. “I saw it. I wanted it. I took it.” May I remind you what the Bible says in 1 John 2, beginning with verse 15? The Bible says, “Look carefully.”

This is what we've been talking about. First John 2:15 says, "Love not the world." Here He is talking about the world system—everything that is contrary to God: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world,

the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

He sums everything up in verse 16 by saying that you have the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of heart. That's exactly what Adam and Eve did. That's exactly what Achan did. In other words, God's commandments did not matter. What mattered was what they wanted.

Now look in your Bibles at Judges chapter 14. Let's read about Samson, because everybody loves Samson. Samson was an ordinary man with the power of God upon him, which made him an exceedingly strong man. But watch this. I'm trying to explain to you what has happened. What is happening? Watch carefully. Judges 14:1 says, "And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife."

"Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel."

Samson was obviously violating God's word. In Exodus 34:12–16 and Deuteronomy 7:1–5, God expressly forbade the Israelites from intermarrying with the heathen, especially the Philistines. Samson knew this, and his father and mother knew it. When he came to them and said, “I found a woman of the Philistines, now therefore get her for me to wife,” his father objected: “Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?” In other words, could he not find a

good Israelite woman in his own tribe? And if not, there were eleven other tribes. He should not take a Philistine woman.

It did not matter to Samson that God had forbidden him to marry a Philistine woman. It did not matter that he was violating the fifth commandment, “Honor thy father and thy mother,” because his father's expression was saying, “Do not do this.” But look at what Samson said. In verse 3, “Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.”

What does the word pleaseth mean? It means agreeable in my eyes; it is right in my eyes. Samson was saying, “I do not see anything wrong with it. I like this woman. You get her for me to wife.” Here were God's commandments, and Samson was saying, “I do not care what God said. She pleases me. Get her. I do not see anything wrong with it.”

Although this did not work out, later he went down to another Philistine woman, Delilah. You will read about that in chapter 16. Delilah deceived him and cut his hair. The Philistines gouged out his eyes, put him in the prison house, and made him grind. Samson lost his life, his eyes, and his ministry because he could not control his desires. He lost his life and his family because of his lusts and desires. He could not control them. Adam and Eve lost their lives and their posterity's lives because of their desires and emotions.

The Modern Problem of Feelings Over Commands

This is exactly where we are today. The point in this message is this: we must obey in all things. Literally, our lives are to be brought in total conformity to the Word of God, period. The two main hindrances we have are our feelings and our desires: “I don't feel like obeying. I don't desire to do that.”

Do you realize that most people live on their feelings? They don't live by principles; they don't live by commandments. They live by feelings. It is a ploy of the enemy to tempt you and make

you think that you cannot do what God commands simply because you don't feel like doing it and can't help yourself.

How many times have you said, “I don't feel like praying”? It doesn't matter how you feel. God said, “Pray without ceasing.” “I don't feel like studying my Bible.” I don't care. God says, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.” “I don't feel like going to church.” I don't care. God said, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.” “I don't feel like giving.” I don't care. God commanded you to give.

You have a commandment-oriented life, and you have a feeling-oriented life. Most people are living by their feelings. We have swallowed the old adage, hook, line, and sinker: “If it feels good, do it.” We have also swallowed the opposite: “If it doesn't feel good, don't do it.” We are living by our feelings and emotions. It doesn't matter what God commands to most people.

We're like Samson: “I see her. I want her. Get her for me. I don't care.” We're like Achan: “I want it. I don't care what God says. I'll take it if I have to steal it and spit in God's face.” The biggest problem that you and I have is our feelings and desires. Neither our feelings nor our desires should hinder us in obeying God.

Ezekiel's Obedience Amidst Loss

Ezekiel is a prime illustration of this fact. In Ezekiel chapter 24, we read: “Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke.”

"Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded."

Ezekiel was a priest whom God called to be a prophet. He was in Babylon, and there he was a sign not only to the people who were there, but also to those who were to come to Babylon. He was a

sign to the people in Jerusalem, against whom God was sending the Babylonians, and that the temple was going to be destroyed. We have to understand what happened to Ezekiel in order to understand that it is not our emotions or desires that count; it is God's commandment.

In verse 16, the word of God came to him: "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." What was the desire of his eyes? It was his wife. God was going to take her away very quickly.

John Gill, in his commentary, wrote: "I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke, meaning his wife, who very probably was of beautiful countenance and goodly to look to, however of an amiable disposition, and in her conjugal relation very agreeable to the prophet, and no doubt a truly religious woman, and upon all accounts desirable to him. This lovely object of his affection, the Lord who is sovereign in the disposer of all persons, signifies that he would take away from him by death his wife unto himself. That is, suddenly and at once, and so the Syriac and Arabic versions render it with a sudden stroke, as sometimes persons are struck with death at once."

God comes to Ezekiel and says, "Ezekiel, I know you love your wife. I know she's a beautiful woman. I know she's a godly woman, but I'm going to take her. I'm going to take her very quickly." It was not that she was ungodly, nor that Ezekiel was ungodly. Yet God forbade him to grieve in any way whatsoever.

He said, "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, don't cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men." I find this absolutely and totally astounding. He cannot weep. He cannot cry.

He has to act just like nothing has happened. Matthew Henry says, "He must not give way to his passions by weeping or letting his tears run down, though tears are a tribute due to the dead. And when the body is sown, it is fit that it should be thus watered. But

Ezekiel is not allowed to do this, though he thought he had as much reason to do it as any man and would perhaps be ill thought of by the people if he did not do it. Much less might he use the customary formalities of mourners."

"He must dress himself in his usual attire, must bind his turban upon his head, here called the tire of his head, must put on his shoes and not go barefoot, as was usual in such cases. He must not cover his lips nor throw a veil over his face, as mourners usually did. He must not be of a sorrowful countenance, appearing unto men to fast. He must not eat the bread of men or expect that his neighbors and friends should send him in provisions, as they usually did in such cases, presuming the mourners had no heart to provide meat for themselves. But if it were sent, he must not eat of it, but go on in his business at other times."

It could not be but greatly against the grain of the flesh not to lament the death of the one he loved so dearly. But God commands it. Here is a man who has a beautiful wife, and God says, "Ezekiel, I'm going to take her. You can't cry. You can't mourn. You can't weep. You can't go barefooted. You can't make your head bare. You can't put a veil over your face."

You have to act the way you normally act. Matthew Poole, in his commentary on this verse, said, “It is likely that he, Ezekiel, had this revelation in the night or the evening before. And he tells there'll be times in the morning what God would do in taking away his wife and what he must not do when she is dead and be buried.”

Consider this for a moment. If what Matthew Poole said is accurate—and I believe it is—Ezekiel did not really have any time to prepare himself for the death of his wife. In other words, when God told him, “I’m going to take your wife,” within twelve to twenty-four hours she was dead.

Look again at verse 17. God says, “Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died.”

Can you imagine God coming to you and saying, “I’m going to take your wife in the next twelve to twenty-four hours. I don’t want you to cry. I don’t want you to mourn”?

Alice and I have been married so long that I had to ask her tonight how long we have been married: fifty-seven years. She can start a sentence and I can finish it. I know what she is going to say, and I know how she is going to act. Unhappily, she can finish my sentences as well. She knows what I’m going to act. I usually tell people that if I ever married another woman, her name would have to be Alice, because I call that name a hundred times a day.

Oftentimes, our hands will touch as we go to turn the car radio on or off. It is almost inconceivable to me to think that God would say, “In twelve hours, she is going to be dead. You cannot cry or weep; you cannot show any emotion. You simply have to do what I tell you to do.”

Go back to verse 17. He says, “Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.” What emotions did Ezekiel go through? What about his feelings? What about the desire of his eyes? It did not matter. What God commanded was right and true.

In this, God was picturing that He would destroy the temple in which everybody trusted. “So at evening my wife died, and in the morning I did as I was commanded.” No circumstances, situations, desires, emotions, or feelings caused him to disobey. He simply obeyed God.

Does that not make our whining and complaining pale in significance beside such a devastating loss? If the grace and mercy of God could uphold Ezekiel and enable him to obey in the most stressful and distressing of all circumstances, surely His grace is sufficient for us.

How often do you and I complain? We consider our feelings, emotions, and desires in such a way that we completely disregard the Word of God and His commands. It is as if we think we know

better than God, or that God is insufficient to satisfy us. We think we must have this lust, desire, or obedience in order to make our lives full and complete. We profess to love Him, but the truth is that we love ourselves more, because we put our desires, feelings, and emotions ahead of Him.

Application: Returning to Commandment-Oriented Living

When God created Adam, He placed him under a commandment-oriented life. When Adam sinned, we began a feeling-oriented life. When God saves us, He takes us out of that feeling-oriented life and places us back under a commandment-oriented life. Our Lord said in John 14:21, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." He that loveth Me not, He said, keepeth not My commandments. The Bible says in 1 John 5:3, "And this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And they are not grievous unto us." What is the love of God? It is keeping His commandments.

First John 2:4 says, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." So when God saves us, He puts us back under a commandment-oriented life. No, we are not perfect; I understand that. And yes, I know that we are sinners. But it does mean that we are to be purposely endeavoring to obey God's commandments rather than our feelings, emotions, and desires.

Our Lord said in Matthew 10:37, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. He that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." We could also include husbands and wives. What is He saying? We must love Him supremely, so that we will obey Him completely. Your view of God will determine the degree of your obedience. If you believe that God is absolutely sovereign, you will submit to Him and obey Him. If you believe that He is the Father and you are the child, you submit to Him and obey Him. If you believe that He is the Creator and you are the creature, you will submit to Him and obey Him. If

you believe that He is the Redeemer and you are redeemed, you will submit to Him and obey Him.

If you don't remember anything else from this message, remember this: "In the evening, my wife died. And in the morning I did as I was commanded." You do what God commands, and everything will work out for you.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this night. Lord, we confess we've lived by our feelings. We've lived by our emotions. We've let them get the best of us. We get irritated, get angry, get upset, get bitter. We are impatient. We do all of these things, Lord, and we forget Your commandments. Lord, help us to understand that we're to live under a commandment-oriented life, not a feeling-oriented life. And give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear and obey Thee in every area of our life and bring our lives into greater conformity to Your word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

Community in the Old South & in the Confederacy

August 1, 2023

Introduction: The Nature of True Community

We are talking about communities in the South and in the old Confederacy as well. Many people have not understood that community involves a common cultural heritage and, of course, a faith as well. A Christian friend sent me this quotation concerning what he thinks the next "civil war"—not using the word civil in that sense—is going to be in this country.

We all understand the concept of nation in the geopolitical sense. Biblically, however, nation, or ethnos, is not an amalgamated conglomeration of people from different linguistic, cultural, political, or religious persuasions. It is a particular people group akin to a large extended family. Thus, conventions, customs, ethics, values, laws, and their applications suitable, desirable, and effective in one group are odious and repugnant to another. It should be noted, however, that ethnicity ought not to be an

essential factor, but integration and a degree of conformity are essential to any immigration policy.

Further, while aliens and sojourners could be a blessing to a godly theonomic society, they are a curse to a rebellious antinomian society. Multiculturalism, diversity, unbiblical ideologies, and deficient concepts of history and heritage do not and cannot promote community.

Think of the word community. Com is a preposition meaning with, and the rest of the word is unity. Community means that there is a people, a group that is one, unified, and characterized by commonality. In fact, community comes from the Latin word communitas, which refers to that which is held in common. Where there is no commonality, there is no community. One reason people may live next door, down the street, or down the road from you without your knowing their names or who they are is that you have absolutely nothing in common.

Why are you going to visit with someone when you are total opposites and there is no commonality? Consequently, you cannot have community. You have heard the old adage, "Birds of a feather flock together." That is certainly true with people as well. If you and I are going to have a Christian community, we have to have people who think alike. That does not mean that we will agree on every little detail or in every specific area. It does mean that we must come together with some basic commonalities.

Rebuilding Society on God's Law

Our communities basically need to be resurrected. This resurrection is always on God's terms, not man's. If our communities are going to be resurrected, they will be resurrected based upon the Word of God.

Here is a question I like to ask people: If our society disintegrated today—totally and completely, economically, socially, and in every other way—and you had the opportunity to rebuild society tomorrow from the bottom up, whose law would you use to rebuild society?

If you say, "I would take the best that man can offer and rebuild on that," you might as well let it stay down, because it will be cursed from the beginning. In Joshua chapter 6, when Jericho was destroyed, Joshua said, "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho." He shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates thereof.

If you read 1 Kings chapter 16 and verse 34, it was Hiel the Bethelite who actually rebuilt Jericho. He laid the foundation in Abiram, his first son, and set up the gate in Segub, his second son. That is, he sacrificed his first son and offered his second son in sacrifice when setting up Jericho. The point is this: If we do not build according to God's law, it is a waste of time. It will fail; it will be cursed.

The Necessity of Godly Individuals and Families

To have a community, you must have individuals, and then you must have families. Every community is made up of individuals and families. Our communities will never be any better than our individuals and our families. If you have an unresurrected community, you will not have a good community whatsoever. You cannot have a spiritual community with unspiritual people, or a godly community with ungodly people. You cannot have a community of people fussing, fighting, and feuding all the time. The truth is, you will have war left and right.

Robert Winthrop, who happened to be a congressman and a former Speaker of the House and 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 of stringent self-government, the more they must rely upon individual self-government. The less they rely on public law or physical force, the more they must rely upon 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."

What he is saying is this: if society is not going to do right, there must always be someone who will make them do that which is right. If we do not want the strong arm of man forcing us, then we as individuals and families must rely upon the power of God within us, and upon His Word and His truth.

It is easy for someone who is right, holy, and godly to live with other people who are right, holy, and godly. I do not have any conflicts with God's people. I do not have any conflicts with Presbyterians. I preach in Presbyterian churches all the time, although I am a Baptist. In fact, I had a Presbyterian pastor who is a dear friend of mine down to the last class, and he was shooting very, very well. I went up, put my hand on his shoulder, and said, "You know, for a half-baptized brother, you're really shooting well." Of course, he laughed at me. I was joking with him, but that is the point.

I have no problem with him, and he has no problem with me. I preach every year in a Presbyterian church down in Alabama, and right straight across the street is a big Baptist church. The pastor always puts on the billboard outside, "Come here, Baptist Pastor John Weaver." No Baptist ever comes, but I am just going to point out the fact: people who love each other and love the Lord are not going to have any problem. It does not matter if you disagree on something; you are still not going to have any problem.

Think about the Old South. Think about the Confederacy. Think about the glue that held those people together. At the same time, think about why we are falling apart today. I am going to give you four things—four major concepts that the Old South had that we do not have today, basically speaking.

Southern Hope: Biblical Hope as the Foundation

First, there was Southern hope. Southern hope is nothing less than what you and I would call biblical hope. The South was settled basically by Scots-Irish, people who came with a love for the Word of God. Even General Nathan Bedford Forrest's mother, Mary, was a Presbyterian who loved the Word of God. She left him a Bible that had been underlined and marked up by her. She was a woman

of the Word, and General Forrest understood his mother and received that Bible from her.

There was a theological aspect in the war of northern aggression. The North basically had apostatized. They had gone into Unitarianism, Rationalism, and Transcendentalism, while the South basically stayed with the Word of God. James Henley Thornwell, a Presbyterian who died in 1862, also pointed out that there was indeed a theological concept in this war.

He said those on the other side were red republicans and heathen, while those on the southern side were for religion and political order. By and large, the South was unashamedly Christian. They believed the Bible to be the divinely inspired Word of God. When the North made fun of us and called us the Bible Belt, that was meant to be a slam, not a compliment. They considered themselves far above us in their rationalism and set their minds above the Word of God. The truth of the matter is, the Bible was first and foremost in the South.

There were people in the North who were Christians, and there were people in the North who were what they used to call Copperheads, very Southern in their sympathies. To say that the South was predominantly Christian does not mean that everyone in the South was a Christian, nor does it mean that there were no Christians in the North. It does mean that, generally speaking, the North had apostatized and left the Word of God.

Listen to the testimony of Robert E. Lee: “The Bible is the book of books, a book which supplies the place of all others and cannot be replaced.” Later, he said: “There are many things in that old book that I may never be able to explain, but I accept them as the infallible Word of God and receive its teaching as inspired by the Holy Ghost. I prefer the Bible to any other book.”

There is enough in the Bible to satisfy the most ardent thirst for knowledge, open the way to true wisdom, and teach the only road to salvation and eternal happiness. It is not above human comprehension and is sufficient to satisfy all desires. So likely the South believed the Bible was indeed the Word of God. What many

pastors and many people have not understood is that there was indeed a theological aspect to that war.

The Theological Roots of the War and Cultural Change

You cannot have a change in culture without a change in theology. Let me say this another way: a change in culture is always preceded by a change in theology. Do you want to know why our culture has changed in this country? Because our theology has changed.

Stop and think of all the grain and revenue, everything that we have sent to India for years and years. It is all wasted. Some get to eat of it, but do you realize that if they had a pile of grain as high as this building, the cows could walk in and eat whatever they wanted to eat and defecate wherever they wanted to defecate, because cows are worshipped in India? I have seen it on video and in pictures: Indian women offering bowls of milk to big wharf rats, then bowing down and worshipping the wharf rats.

Listen, you are not going to change that culture unless you change the theology. We used to send missionaries to foreign countries; now we send soldiers. We are trying to force the change instead of allowing it to be a biblical change. You are never going to force religion down somebody's throat, and you are not going to change their culture until you change their theology.

When the South did not voluntarily relinquish the Word of God and did not bow to the rationalism and transcendentalism of the North, there was war. The war was basically to force the Northern way of thinking upon us. When that did not work and the South lost, there was Reconstruction. Reconstruction was nothing more than a military move to force us into submitting to the thinking of the North.

Political correctness is still the same thing as reconstruction. You are being reconstructed, whether you know it or not, when you listen to propaganda and leave everything that comes off the TV and radio. You are being propagandized, brainwashed, and basically controlled.

I had an interesting conversation with a woman who called me on the phone. She said, “Mr. Weaver, you’ve been a good customer for years.” It was telephone service. She said, “I can save you some money.” I said, “I’d really like to save some money. How are you going to save me some money?” She said, “We can bundle everything in one bill. You can have your TV, your internet, and your phone service, and it’ll be all one bill. We can save you lots of money.” I said, “That’s wonderful. Tell me how much money you’re going to save me on my TV.” She said, “How much are you paying?” I said, “I’m not paying anything.”

"Oh," she said, "you have an antenna." I said, "No ma'am, I don't have an antenna." She asked, "How much do you pay?" I said, "I don't pay anything." She said, "How can you have TV and don't pay anything?" I said, "Because I don't have TV." She was shocked. "What? You don't have a TV?" she asked. "What do you do?" I said, "Ma'am, have you ever heard the word reading?" I'm serious.

She was absolutely shocked that we had not had a television in our house for years, and I do not want one. I am simply pointing out that we receive all kind of propaganda and do not even realize what is happening. Basil Manly, a Baptist pastor, chaplain, and provisional Confederate congressman, said that he viewed secession not as rebellion, but as a Christian reform movement. W. W. Bennett, in The Great Revival, wrote of Southern soldiers, "Their conviction of right in what they did were second only to their convictions of the truth of the Christian religion. Nor has the stern logic of events eradicated this conviction from the Southern mind."

"The cause may be lost, but its principles still live and must continue to live so long as there remains a human nature and in a human nature, any perception and appreciation of justice, truth and virtue." You cannot lose the principles; if you lose the principles, you lose hope. I usually tell people that the cause is not lost as long as there is a biblical hope and you understand the principles. In the Old South, there was Southern hope. Secondly, there was Southern honor. Honor was the glue that held the family and community together.

Southern Honor: The Glue of Family and Community

Men were men and women were women. Men of honor worked, provided, protected, and loved their wives and families. It was an honor to work, to be independent, not to be in debt, and not to be dependent upon charity. It was an honor to be a man and an honor to be a woman. The woman was more feminine then than she is today. Here was the code of honor in the Old South. The code of honor for Southern men required, number one, a reputation for honesty and integrity.

When I was a boy, which was a long time ago, I watched my father make deals with other farmers. Sometimes those deals were for $40,000 and $50,000, which was a lot of money back then, and all they did was shake hands. There was no contract; they simply agreed. I have seen my father and other farmers, when a farmer died, go up to the widow and say, "I owe your husband so much, and I want to pay it right now." They would pay the debt after the man was dead, when no one else knew about the debt, but they knew about it.

The Code of Honor, first of all, said this: a reputation of honesty and integrity. Secondly, a reputation for martial courage and strength—that is, you were able to fight. Number three, self-sufficiency and mastery, defined as a patriarchal dominion over the household. In other words, you had your household in order: wife, children, slaves if you had them. Number four, a willingness to use violence to defend any perceived slight to his reputation as a man of integrity, strength, and courage, as well as any threat to his independence or to his kin.

Now think about the threats to our independence today that no one is fighting. I was telling some of the fellows before service today about a friend who was a pastor. He called me one day and said, "John, I found out how to get men up in arms marching on Washington, D.C." I said, "Really? Tell me how." He said, "No one's concerned about abortion. That doesn't upset anybody. No one's concerned about sodomy. That doesn't upset anybody. Nobody's concerned about the social condition and deterioration in this country. That doesn't upset anybody. Let's get Congress to

pass a law banning balls of every size, shape, and form, and men will be in arms marching on Washington, D.C." Just stop and think about that. We'll fight for our pleasures, but we won't fight for our independence and our freedom.

William Pettigrew, a North Carolina Carolinian, gave this advice to his younger brother: “As far as it can be done, we should live peaceably with our associates. But as we cannot always do so, it is necessary occasionally to resist. And when our honor demands resistance, it should be done with courage.” That is the same truth as Romans chapter 12 and verse 18, where the Bible says, “As much as in you is, live peaceably with all men.” In other words, God understands there are some men that you cannot live peaceably with.

All I am saying is that there was Southern honor. Men were going to defend their integrity, their families, and their independence. Southern men have always been fighters. Whether you like it or not, whether you agree with it or not, study and find out: of every war that this country has ever been in, the majority of the soldiers have been from the South.

Listen to Alexander Solzhenitsyn: “A decline in courage may be the most striking feature that an outside observer notices in the West today.” The Western world has lost its civic courage. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling and intellectual elite, causing an impression of a loss of courage by the entire society. Along with this is a loss of will in the West.

We cannot defend ourselves if we are not willing to die for anything. There is little such readiness in a society raised in the cult of material well-being. In other words, all we want is money.

This Southern emphasis on honor affected women as well as men, because Southern women wanted to be women. They wanted to be homemakers, wives, and good neighbors. Let me give you two definitions.

The first is Robert E. Lee’s definition of a gentleman. Lee could not envision a Christian not being a gentleman; neither could he envision a gentleman not being a Christian. To him, they were one and the same. Lee’s description of what a gentleman should be was

this: “The forebearing use of power does not only form the touchstone, but the manner in which an individual enjoys certain advantages over others is the test of a true gentleman.” In other words, I have power over you.

Robert E. Lee writes: “The power which the strong have over the weak, the magistrate over the unlettered, the experienced over the confiding, even the clever over the silly, the forebearing or inoffensive use of all this power authority, or the total absence of it when the case admits it, will show the gentleman in plain light. The gentleman does not needlessly or unnecessarily remind an offender of a wrong he may have committed against him.”

He can not only forgive; he can forget. He strives for that nobleness of self and mildness of character which imparts sufficient strength to let the past be the past. A true gentleman of honor feels humbled when he can help humbling others. That is why the Bible says in Proverbs 29:23, “A man's pride shall bring him low, but honor shall uphold the upright in spirit.” Robert Lee is a real gentleman. He is not someone who will take advantage of others, but someone who will let bygones be bygones. He does not bring up past sins, errors, and mistakes merely for the sake of bringing them up.

Ladies, this may seem a little out of date, but that is fine. Varina Davis, Jeff Davis’s wife, wrote this concerning being a lady: “A lady is simply someone who cares about herself and others. She sees that her garments are clean and neatly pressed. Her shoes are polished and every button is in place. She is neat and tidy even at the breakfast table and wishes to appear well to her own family. She keeps her hair clean and well-groomed and never puts her hand to her hair to rearrange it or search for loose pins while others can see. A lady does not monopolize the conversation. She does not talk of herself and her own affairs, listens with well-simulated interest to a story that bores her.” That is most wives.

This is the mark of good breeding. A lady does not sit apart with one or two friends, but makes the gentle effort to assure a good time for all with pleasant conversation. She does not say or do anything that will upset those around her or make them

uncomfortable. A lady does not let any man kiss her or put his arm around her unless she is engaged to him.

And even then, she should be a little stingy with her favors. A lady, when she brushes off her hat, does not forget to brush away the cobwebs from her hair or from her brain. She does not conclude that every man who has said something pleasant to her has fallen in love with her. A lady is possessed of refinement, which prevents her from all fidgeting, from playing with her handkerchief, her umbrella, her purse, or whatever may be in her hands. When she sits down, she remains quietly, her hands resting easily without movement, and her whole figure is filled with repose.

She is calm, composed, self-controlled at all times, yet there are no airs about her. These qualities keep her from talking and laughing loudly, and prevent her from hurting the feelings of anyone. A lady does not grow weary in well-doing, but encourages herself by trying to live up to the ideal of a woman. Varina Davis wrote that. The Bible says in Proverbs 11, verse 16, "A gracious woman retaineth honor and strong men retain riches." In the South, it was an honor for a man to be a man. It was an honor for a woman to be a woman. There was no confusion. I've never wanted to be a woman at all. I've always wanted to be a man. And that's exactly what the Scripture says: God created us man and woman. So there was Southern hope, there is Southern honor. Here's the third thing, and that's Southern heritage.

Southern Heritage: Birthright and Identity

Let me tell you this about heritage. Heritage is the status that is acquired by a person through birth. Your heritage is your birthright. Your heritage is what you were born with. Down in Georgia, I've seen many bumper stickers. One of them says simply this: "I was not born in the South, but I got here as soon as I could." Those who are born in the South have inherited this great inheritance of our ancestors. We can no more change the fact that we're Southerners than a leopard could change its spots. We would not want to change.

I remember when I was in college, I had to take a class in voice and diction. My teacher, Mr. Pratt, was from the North. I gave a recitation, and he looked at me and said, "Mr. Weaver." I said, "Yes, Mr. Pratt." He said, "You still have that Southern accent." I looked at him and said, "Mr. Pratt, do you know why I still have that Southern accent?" He said, "Why?"

Because I am a Southerner, I am planning on keeping my heritage; I am not planning on changing it. I want to speak correctly, but you are not going to change me into a Yankee. I was not being ugly; I was pointing out the fact that we have a heritage. The psalmist said in Psalm 16:6, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” God has given us a goodly heritage. Psalm 61:5 says, “For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name.” Have you ever heard the vow that Major R. E. Wilson gave, the oath that he gave?

Major Wilson said, “If I ever disown, repudiate or apologize for the cause for which Lee fought and Jackson died, let the lightnings of heaven rend me and the scorn of all good men and true women be my portion. Sun, moon, stars all fall on me when I cease to love the Confederacy. ’Tis the cause, not the fate of the cause that is glorious.” That is heritage. N.B. Littlejohn sent his son off to fight with the Yankees. Listen to what he said to his son.

He shook his son’s hand as the son was about to leave and said, “My son, I grasp your hand probably for the last time upon earth. You’re going to meet the dangers and hardships consequent to a soldier’s life. You may fill a soldier’s grave. Well, father and son, you may die. Let me impress upon your mind to never fill it dishonorably.”

"Ever be at your post of duty. Be an honor to our beloved Southland. Go where your superiors order you. Never turn your back upon the foe, except when deemed necessary by your superior officers. Be true to your God, yourself and your country. Never bring reproach upon your beloved Southland or yourself. Never desert your country. But if necessary, die at your post of honor." There is not only Southern hope and Southern honor; there is Southern heritage as well.

Henry Grady was the editor of the Atlanta Constitution. On December the 21st, 1886, twenty-one years after the war for Southern Independence was over, he spoke to the New England Society in New York. The title of his address was "The New South." Speaking to people in Massachusetts, Grady said, "The South has nothing for which to apologize. She believes that the late struggle between the states was war and not rebellion, revolution and no conspiracy, and that her convictions were as honest as yours. I should be unjust to the dauntless spirit of the South and to my own conscience if I did not make this claim in this presence. The South has nothing to take back."

"In my native town of Athens, Georgia, is a monument that crowns its eternal central hill, a plain white shaft, deep cut into its shining side, is a name dear to me above the names of men, could better soldiers name, that of a brave and simple man who died a brave and simple death. Not for all the glories of New England, from Plymouth Rock all the way, would I exchange the heritage he left me in his soldier's death. To the foot of that monument, I shall send my children to reverence him who ennobled their name with his heroic blood."

That was 1886. Grady went on to venerate the Confederate soldier by telling everybody that the Confederate soldier was fighting for truth and righteousness and principle. That's what our Confederate ancestors fought for. They not only had hope and honor; they understood their own heritage.

Robert L. Dabney, Stonewall Jackson's chief of staff, was speaking on the subject of the New South at Hampden-Sydney College in 1882. He said, "It behooves the New South in dismissing the animosities of the past to see to it that they retain all that was true in its principles or ennobling in its examples. There are those pretending to belong to this company who exclaim, 'Let us bury the dead past. The issues are all antiquated and of no more practical significance. Let us forget the passions of the past. We're in a new world. It's new questions alone that concern us.'"

Dabney says, “But I rejoin. Be sure that the former issues are dead before you really bury them. There are issues that cannot die without the death of a people, of their honor, their civilization, and

their greatness. Take care that you do not bury too much while burying the dead past, that you do not bury the inspiring memories of great patriots whose actions, whether successful or not, are the eternal glory of your race and section.

"The influence of their virtues, the guiding principles of their histories. Would you bury the names and memories of Jackson and Lee and their noble army of martyrs? Would you bury true history whose years are those of the God of truth?" He said, "You better be careful what you bury. You can bury too much." We have to understand that we have a heritage, and that heritage has been given to us by God. You have that undergirded the old South: Southern hope, Southern honor, Southern heritage. And then you have a fourth one, Southern hospitality.

Southern Hospitality: The Glue of Fellowship

Do you realize the South is probably the most friendly section in the entire country? All natural-born Southerners wave to each other and speak to each other. Whether we know each other or not, it is just that simple. I had an aunt who lived in Toledo, Ohio, for years and years. When my uncle retired, they moved back to the South, and my aunt could not get over the fact that everyone spoke to her and waved to her. She did not even know them.

She told me one day, "You don't understand. This is so traumatic for me." I said, "What do you mean, traumatic?" She said, "Up north, if someone you do not know speaks to you or waves at you, you run." I said, "Well, if you tried that down here, you'd be running yourself to death, because everybody speaks and everybody waves." We Southerners love fellowship. We love barbecues, get-togethers, and reunions. We enjoy the company of family and friends.

When I was a child, we had company every Sunday. There was one old couple I never will forget. He played the piano. He was a tall, slender man, and before he was converted, he played in a juke joint. When he played the piano, you could hear him two blocks away. He would bang that piano.

His wife was elderly, too. After church on Sunday, he would come to my father and say, “Brother Weaver, may my wife and I come home and break bread with you today?” They were inviting themselves to dinner. Dad would always say, “Well, sure, you may come.” Anyone who came to our house on Sunday afternoon stayed with us all afternoon, ate supper with us, and then went back to church with us on Sunday night.

When I was young, I could never understand why adults wanted to take a nap on Sunday afternoon. I thought it was a wonderful time to play, while they were inside sleeping. Eventually I discovered that an hour’s snooze every now and then is good for you. The truth was that we had company every Sunday—every Sunday. If you were at our house when it was dinner or supper time, you ate with us. It did not matter who you were. After we were married, my wife and I would visit my parents and sit down at the dinner table with people I had never seen before in my life. If you were there, you simply ate.

That was part of Southern hospitality. That is all there is to it. The Bible tells us to be hospitable one to another. Romans chapter 12 and verse 13 says, “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.” First Peter 4 and verse 9 says, “Use hospitality one to another without grudging.” Pastors are particularly commanded to be hospitable. First Timothy chapter 3 and verse 2 says, “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality.” Titus 1 and verse 8 says, “But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.”

I have news for you: Southerners by nature are indeed hospitable. The Lord has a sense of humor, and I am thankful. It is astounding. Years ago I had two flat tires. The first occurred while I was on my way to visit a pastor friend in a nursing home. He was actually dying. I pulled off the side of the road, and just as I did, a truck pulled in right behind me.

A young man jumped out and said, “I’ll get that for you, sir.” I thanked him. I could have done it, but he got the jack and started changing the tire. About that time, his phone rang. He picked it up and said, “Listen to me now. I’m sorry. I can’t talk to you right

now. I'm helping change the tire for two elderly folks." My wife and I were only in our sixties at the time, and we were elderly. He changed the tire, and I thanked him.

The second time, I was on my way to church when the tire went flat, and a man pulled in right behind me. Of course, I had a shirt and tie on. He said, "You don't have to get dirty. I'll get that for you." I told him I appreciated it and that I was going to preach. I said I would not like to preach with dirt all over my shirt. He changed the tire and then reached into his pocket and gave me ten dollars to get it fixed. I said, "Lord, that's Southern folks."

I did not know either of those people. All I am trying to say is that Southern folks are hospitable.

If you come to visit me and go to the Agrirama, an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century working farm, you will see several old houses with dog trots. A dog trot usually was straight through the house: the roofs were on either side. The house I was raised in had a dog trot. There was the front porch, then the passage straight through, and then it went around. There were bedrooms on one side, with the kitchen and dining room back here. My parents closed in the first dog trot and made a living room out of it. But that is what a dog trot was.

Those houses also had traveler's rooms. A traveler's room was attached to the outside of the house and had a bed, a wash pan, water, and whatever else was needed. If a man passing by arrived at night, he could get off his horse, tie it, go in, wash up, and go to bed, probably staying until breakfast the next morning. I did not even know who he was, but all of these old houses had traveler's rooms.

That undoubtedly took place from 2 Kings chapter 4. You remember when Elijah was passing by and the woman said, "This man is passing by all the time. Let's build a little room for him and put a table, a candle, and a bed in it." And that is exactly what happened. You would find these travelers' rooms in all of these old houses, and you can see them there even today.

This is Southern community and Southern hospitality. When I was a boy, if a barn burned down, all the neighbors came together

and helped rebuild it. When someone died, the church and the community came together, brought food, and took care of everything. If somebody needed help, they helped. I had a neighbor who had a stroke. He was a farmer. I was raised on a farm, but I was pastoring at that time. When my neighbor had that stroke, my girls, myself, and his wife planted all of his crops and harvested them because he was incapable of doing it. I am simply saying, that is in the South.

You cannot get over this. When I was seven years old, there was a rabid fox in our community. Twenty to twenty-five men came to our house and sat on the front porch, figuring out how they were going to kill that rabid fox so it would not attack anyone. You do not have twenty-five men, every one of them armed. I will tell you something else: every time we would have a so-called revival—actually, it was a Bible-conference revival—we always had cottage prayer meetings. They began one to two weeks before the meeting. As a child, I would go to those meetings. We would sing and pray, and thirty to fifty people would attend every night. Each family hosted it differently. This Southern hospitality was a glue that bound people together as well.

Henry Benjamin Whipple was from Minnesota. He toured the South in 1843 and 1844 to recover his health. In his diary, on November 25, while at St. Augustine, Florida, he wrote: “The people of the southern states are generally much more hospitable than northerners, and the difference must be attributed to the fact that they are not such money loving people.”

"You do not see the low, mean cupidity, that base selfishness, those striking a characteristic of one of our portions as our restless Yankee brethren. I am convinced that most exaggerated abolitionist stories exist only in imagination, and know from observation that abolitionists in the North have only injured the slave and destroyed the kind and fraternal feeling which existed between North and South."

The Southerners did not have the money hunger, money love, and desire that the Yankees had. Hope, honor, heritage, and hospitality underpinned the South. You can have a group of people in a locality, but you do not have community. You can have people

gather together, but you do not have community. You can only have community when you have commonality, when you have a common faith and a common heritage.

The Necessity of a Common Language and Conclusion

You cannot even have community unless you have the same language. Here is a biblical example. In the book of Judges, chapter 12, 42,000 men were killed because they could not say "Shibboleth." They had a different accent.

Here is a good example from history. In 1883, Sitting Bull, the great Sioux chief, was a guest of honor at the opening ceremonies of the Northern Pacific Railroad. When it was his turn to speak, he said in the Lakota language, "I hate all white people. You are thieves and liars. You've taken away our land and made us outcasts." A quick-thinking interpreter told the crowd that the chief was happy to be there and looked forward to peace and prosperity with the white people. Sitting Bull received a standing ovation.

If you want community, you need hope, honor, heritage, hospitality, and the same language. Do you realize that all these things will come together in eternity? Our hope will be finalized. There will be honor and a heritage, and we will have the same language. We will speak the language of heaven; that is for sure.

If you wonder why we are so divided, fractured, and unable to get along, look no further than the loss of these things. We need real communities. We need to get together with people who believe, who know, and who have the same heritage and culture. That is all there is to it.

Have you ever noticed that when the Chinese come to this country, they go to Chinatown? They have a commonality. When other groups come, they go to their group because they have a commonality. It takes the grace of God to bring commonality among all of us by giving us His grace and mercy. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee.

We thank you for your word and truth. And we ask more that you would help us and build us up to the most holy faith. And may your perfect and holy will be accomplished in our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 14

The Life and Times of Jesse James

August 3, 2023

Introduction: The Need for Justice and Historical Context

Isaiah 59:12–15 says: “For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us, and our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them. 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. Truth faileth. And he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey. And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.”

God demands justice. One of the failures in modern man, as well as the failure of ancient man, is the failure to issue real justice. Without justice, society withers and dies, and without justice, evil men increase and prosper. Government was ordained of God

simply to be a minister of justice. The Bible tells you in Romans chapter 13, he beareth not the sword in vain.

Solomon actually said it like this: there's nothing new under the sun. Certainly, all of the corruption and everything that we see today is not new. As I talk today about Jesse James and his world and times, I would encourage you to think also about the direction in which our country is headed.

We must remember that all history is God's history. Simply speaking, history is nothing less than God's eternal decree coming to pass in time. Therefore, we must study history not only from a theological perspective, but a historical perspective as well. Another line of thought is this: If you and I are blind to the injustices of the past, we will also be blind to the injustices in the present and in the future as well. We have to understand that justice is based upon the word of God.

The Legend and Polarizing Figure of Jesse James

Greatness, Mark Twain said, may be classed as the ability to win recognition. "Some years ago, I was making a purchase in a small store in Missouri. A man walked in and, seeing me, came over with an outstretched hand and said, 'You're Mark Twain, ain't you?'" I nodded. "'Guess you and I are about the greatest in our line,' he remarked." Twain said, "To this I could not nod, but I began to wonder to what throne of greatness he held." "'What is your name?'" I inquired. "'Jesse James,' he said, as he gathered up his packages."

Then Mark Twain said this: "Greatest in his line." Jesse was not alone in the estimate of himself. Carl Sandburg said that Jesse James is the only American bandit who is classified, who is to this country what Robin Hood and Dick Turpin were to England. He says his exploits are so close to the mythical and the apocryphal.

Jesse and Frank James are legends in our time. You can hardly find anyone who has never heard of Jesse James or Frank James. Jesse James's name invokes either admiration, wonder, and awe, or hatred, ill will, and all kinds of wicked things. When it comes to Jesse James, there is no neutrality. You either love the man or hate

him; you either believe he was a freedom fighter or believe he was nothing more than a thief and a murderer.

But the truth of the matter is that most people who have heard of Jesse James have never really studied him, delved into the facts, or considered his world and time. They have simply assumed that what they have heard from Hollywood and what people have told them is true, when in reality it is not. It is impossible for you and me to judge a man by our standards when that man died 150 or 160 years ago. We often try to judge people in light of what is happening today.

The Importance of Judging Historical Figures in Context

I have heard men, even preachers, criticize and condemn Martin Luther, the great reformer. I am not a Lutheran, and I am sure there are things about Martin Luther with which I would disagree. But you have to remember that he was coming out of a time when there had been a thousand years of darkness. He was facing abysmal ignorance and, at the same time, fighting religious and political crowds in an effort merely to preserve his life. I can understand that Luther did not have time to study every doctrine and come to the correct conclusion. The truth is that none of us today have time to study every doctrine. When you think about Martin Luther or Jesse James, you have to consider the world and times in which they lived.

Family Background and Early Life of Jesse and Frank James

Alexander Franklin James was born on January 10, 1843. Frank James died of old age on February 18, 1915. Jesse Woodson James was born September 5, 1847, and was allegedly murdered by Bob Ford on April 3, 1882.

Jesse and Frank James were the sons of Reverend Robert James and his wife, Zerelda. Their father was a Baptist preacher. When he died, his will was probated in 1851, and his library listed 51 books dealing with mathematics, chemistry, philosophy, theology, astronomy, grammar, history, literature, Greek, Latin, public

speaking, and other subjects. Pastor Robert James was also one of the founders of William Jewell College.

Robert James was connected with William Jewell College, a sturdy Baptist college still in existence in Liberty, Missouri; in fact, he served on its board of trustees at the very beginning. He also pastored New Hope Baptist Church in Clay County, Missouri. After reorganizing the church, he saw its membership continue to grow. In 1844, he helped begin the North Liberty Baptist Association, Providence Baptist Church, and another church as well.

The prosperity of the James family is evident from their holdings. By 1850, Robert James and his family held an unencumbered title to 275 acres—meaning that he did not owe a dime on it. They farmed the land, which included thirty sheep and six head of cattle. They also had three horses and a yoke of oxen. In addition, James owned seven slaves.

Besides Frank and Jesse, two other children were born into the family: Robert, born July 19, 1845, and Susan Levina, born November 25, 1849. Robert died in infancy. In 1850, Robert, the father, left for the gold fields in California and died shortly after arriving there. Thus, he was buried in an unmarked grave, dead at the age of thirty-two.

His wife, Zerelda, also known as Zee, remarried Benjamin Sims, but the marriage lasted only a few months before Mr. Sims died. She married again, this time Dr. Reuben Samuel, a physician. They prospered and had four children: Archie, John, Sally, and Fanny. Jesse and Frank became the two most famous children of the James family. Archie also became well known, but for another reason.

The Religious and Moral Character of Jesse James

These boys were no dummies. Frank loved Shakespeare and quoted Shakespeare. Jesse loved the Bible and quoted the Bible. J. A. Dacus, their next-door neighbor, said that Jesse's Bible was so heavily underlined that it was almost unreadable; he had read and underlined it so much. Jesse was a member of a Baptist church and sang in the choir. His favorite hymn was "What a Friend We Have

in Jesus." He did not drink, use vulgar language, and always treated women in a gentlemanly manner.

Paul Peterson, in his books Quantrill of Missouri and Quantrill of Lawrence, tells much about the men who rode with Quantrill. Concerning Jesse James, he wrote that Jesse was a devout believer and was never known to swear or use foul language. Peterson lived and conducted his research there in Missouri.

Jesse James had a nickname: Dingus. How did he get that nickname? He was messing around with his revolver, was unsafe, and shot off the tip of one of his fingers. When he shot it off, all he said was, "Dingus." He did not swear or do anything else. He simply said, "Dingus," and that became his nickname.

Peterson also gives these words concerning Frank and Jesse. He states that neither he—that is, Frank—nor his brother Jesse was ever known to drink. Then he quotes Frank as saying, "A man is a fool to drink. It takes away his money and his brains, and it does him no good anyway." Remember, these boys were raised in a Baptist church, and their father was a Baptist preacher. Later, in one letter, Jesse did admit to drinking some beer at one time. Jesse and Frank played cards and raced horses, which was the biggest thing back in those days as well.

When Jesse lived at St. Joseph, Missouri, he had to take a false name, and he took the name Howard. Howard was the last name. There was a neighbor there who helped Mrs. James. His wife's name was Zerelda, called Zee as well, just like her mother. The neighbor lady said that she visited the home frequently and saw the James children. No children could be brought up better than they were. Mrs. Howard, or Mrs. James, used to take them to Sunday school regularly. She would read to them from their Sunday school papers and teach them to pray. "I know that they were very good children. I fairly adored them while they were in St. Joseph." Mrs. James was a frequent attendant at the Presbyterian Church.

Jesse James wrote a letter that was published in a newspaper against the Pinkertons, especially Allan Pinkerton. He wrote, "Justice is slow, but sure. And there is a just God that will bring all

to justice. Pinkerton, I hope and pray that our heavenly Father may deliver you into my hands. And I believe He will. For His merciful and protecting arm has ever been with me and shielded me. And during all of my persecution, He's watched over me and protected me from workers of blood money who are trying to steal my life."

"And I have hope and faith in Him and believe He will ever protect me as long as I serve Him." That was a letter from Jesse James. Jesse's wife, Zerelda, was indeed a devout Methodist.

The Question of Jesse James's Christianity

So, having known a little bit about Jesse James, whether it is true or not, just from Hollywood and other media productions, the question is this: Was Jesse James a Christian? Think about that. If the answer is no, he was not a Christian, then we understand his life and conduct. There is no problem. But if we answer yes, he was a Christian, then you have to answer this question: How could a Christian turn to what you and I would believe would be a life of crime, where he robbed and shot people? That is for sure.

Before you tell me that there cannot be a real Christian who could steal and kill, may I remind you about a man called David, who was a man after God's own heart? He stole Uriah's wife, and then he had Uriah murdered. He killed him with the sword of the children of Ammon, according to the word of God. And yet David is known as a man after God's own heart.

Now, you are going to say, "But that is an exception." Let me tell you something: There is another man in Scripture. If Scripture had not told me that he was a just man, I would have said, "This man is lost as a hound dog." Lot. Have you ever wondered how Lot could live in Sodom? He lost his family. If the Bible did not say that that righteous man vexed his righteous soul with their unlawful deeds, I would have said Lot was lost. I do not know how in the world a man could put up with something like that.

The truth of the matter is this: I do not know whether Jesse James was a Christian or not. I do know that he was a member of a Baptist church. I do know that he sang in the choir. I do know that he tried to do that which was right on many occasions and was not

allowed to do that which was right. And I do know that the circumstances, the times, and the world in which he lived helped him to be what he became, molded him, and basically, in one sense of the word, forced him into being what he was.

The Missourians were oftentimes raided by the Jayhawkers, who committed violence after violence, and that violence was crying out for justice and vengeance. It is impossible to accurately judge this man so many years after his death, with so many conflicting stories, unless you go back, do original research, and look at original documents as well. It is imperative, then, that we understand the time in which Jesse and Frank lived.

The Border Conflict: Bleeding Kansas and Missouri

Jesse was from Missouri. Missouri was a slave state, but slaves made up only 9 percent of its population. However, three-fourths of Missourians had slave-state backgrounds. As they faced the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, most Missourians wanted Kansas to be pro-slavery. Of course, they were willing for Nebraska to be a free state.

You have to understand that the battle between the North and the South was going on. Before 1854, there was a balance of power in the government: an equal number of representatives for the slave states and an equal number for the Northern states. But if these territories were opened and Kansas and Nebraska became free states, there would no longer be a balance of power. The free states—the Yanks—would have control over basically everything, is what it amounted to.

Not only was the Kansas-Nebraska Act happening at the time; the transcontinental railroad was also being built. This railroad was sponsored by the government, and it was confiscating and stealing land left and right.

I will tell you this: there is only one movie I have ever seen that actually portrayed Jesse and Frank James in a good light. The name of that movie is “American Outlaws.” In one scene, the railroad barons came to Zerelda James, the mother of Frank and Jesse, offering to buy her land for 50 cents an acre.

Jesse and Frank pulled their pistols and said, “Get off the property. Get off the property.” The baron said, “Well, you better take it while you can, because the next offer is going to be lower than this.” Zerelda said, “Well, let me pray about this.” “Yes,” the baron said, “you pray about it.” She bowed her head and prayed silently. The men stopped and smiled. The baron was expecting her response, and she looked at Jesse and Frank and said, “The Lord said that we could kill him and bury him in the orchard, and nobody would ever find him.”

You have to understand that the railroad did indeed kill a lot of people and stole an awful lot of land. So, in 1854, when Congress opened this land, the people were to determine whether it would be a free state or a slave state. Obviously, the Missourians did not want Kansas to be a free state, and certainly the Yanks and those abolitionists did not want Kansas to be a slave state. Thus they were fighting over this sectional… James is about to take place, and literally all hell broke loose on the borders.

The Jayhawkers were raiding over into Missouri, stealing, killing, raping, and taking whatever they could. Border ruffians from Missouri would go into Kansas and try to get back everything that had been stolen from them as well. Here is a quote from one of the newspapers there, the Democratic platform, at Liberty, only fifteen miles from where the James lived:

“Let every man that owns a Negro go to Kansas and settle, and our northern brethren will be compelled to hunt further north for a location. Kansas must be a slave state if half the citizens of Missouri had to immigrate there with musket in hand, prepared to die for the cause. Shall we allow such cutthroats and murderers to settle in the territory joining our own state?”

“No.”

“If popular opinion will not keep them back, we should see what the virtue there is in arms.”

In other words, they were willing to fight, and certainly the Kansans were already fighting as well. Missouri was crossing over into Kansas, Kansas was crossing over into Missouri, and they had marshalling points in Jackson, Clay, and Lafayette counties.

Prominent citizens were saying that something had to be done, or they were going to lose everything they had.

Pretty soon, out of all the fighting, it was known as Bleeding Kansas. Please understand this: Bleeding Kansas was propaganda from the abolitionists. You have heard of Beecher's Bibles. Henry Ward Beecher sent Sharpe's rifles in cases known as Bibles to the Kansans so they could kill more Missourians. John Brown was there, hired by the Secret Six to foment and begin the war. I would encourage you to read Otto Scott's book, The Secret Six. Another book called The Secret Six is excellent as well, but I forget the author. Otto Scott's wonderful book shows the six richest men in the North who got together to foment this war.

James Henry Lane, known also as Jim Lane, was one of the notorious leaders of the Redlegs and the Jayhawkers. Lane hated and despised Southerners. He hated and despised Missourians. This is what he said: "Missourians are wolves, snakes, devils, and damn their souls. I want to see them cast into a burning hell. We believe in a war of extermination. There is no such thing as Union men in the border of Missouri. I want to see every foot of ground in Jackson, Cass, and Bates County, Missouri, burned over and everything laid waste."

That was a United States Senator. Lane unfolded his plan with the approval of Brigadier General George McClellan. He proposed to exterminate Southerners out of Missouri. "If conciliatory methods should not be successful, that he, Jim Lane, would employ the most violent. Sir, if I can't do better, I will kill the white rebels and give their lands to loyal blacks."

So he planned on just killing every Missourian that he could kill. Federal forces and Union militia raided Missouri, plundering, pillaging, burning, looting, raping, and murdering, and Lane and Jennison were two of the most notorious leaders.

Federal Atrocities Against the James Family and Missourians

It was not long before the James family was involved. This is a report from John Samuel, who would be Jesse's half-brother,

telling about the first time Jesse was met by these Federals: "Jesse was out plowing in the field when some northern soldiers came to the place to look for Frank. Jesse was only 15 at the time. They beat him up. Then they went to the house and asked where Frank was. Mother and father didn't know or pretended not to know, but the soldiers wouldn't believe them. They took father out and hung him by the neck to a tree. After a while, they took him down and gave him another chance to tell. Of course, he couldn't. So they hung him up again. They did this three times. It's called stretching the neck. They'd put the rope around the neck, throw it over the tree, pull him up until he almost died. And then they'd drop him, let him catch his breath and ask him if he didn't answer. Then they did it three times. Now, they didn't kill the old man, but he never recovered. He was never quite mentally the same after this. Then they took him to the back of the house and told mother they were going to shoot him."

She begged them not to do it, but they took him off in the woods north of the house and fired off their guns. They did not shoot him; they took him to another town and put him in jail. My mother did not even know until the next day that he had not been shot, because the soldiers ordered her to remain in the house if she did not want to be shot.

Jesse was only fifteen years old. He was plowing in the field when they put a rope around his neck and led him back to the house to witness his stepfather's neck being stretched. They also took the flat part of their sabers and beat Jesse. He was threatened with death, and the whole family was threatened with death if they ever communicated with Frank or gave him any help whatsoever.

The same week, Jesse's mother, Zerelda, and his sister were arrested, carried to St. Joseph, and thrown into a very filthy prison. Mrs. Samuel was pregnant at the time, and I believe, if I remember correctly, she lost the child because of the hardship she endured. Her daughter almost died from a fever because of everything that was going on there. They were cut off from all communication. No one could talk to them, and they could not talk to anyone.

When Mrs. James came out, she was suffering. She was emaciated, and it made her age more than she should have aged. With the hanging of his stepfather and the arrest and imprisonment of his mother and sister, Jesse got the best horse on the place and rode as fast as he could to join William Clark Quantrill, the noted guerrilla, in order to fight against those who were destroying his home, his family, and the South.

Missourians had a right to life, liberty, and property like everyone else. But when the government, the Federals, and the state abused their power, usurped authority, and refused to protect the people, they did what anyone else would do: they tried to protect themselves and what they had.

Times were exceedingly bad during the War of Northern Aggression, but I believe Missouri really had it worse than all the other states. Someone has aptly pointed out that in most states the war lasted four years; in Missouri, it lasted twenty years. There were years before when sectional violence was taking place, and after the war there was, of course, Reconstruction. People were being killed even after the war was over. The war created a great deal of animosity.

There is still animosity in the South, not necessarily because the South lost the war, but because of the way it was treated afterward—as a conquered enemy and territory. That is exactly what happened. Southern men were not even allowed to return home, or, if they did, they could not make a living.

High George, who also wrote the Quantrill, gave his reason for fighting for the Southern cause: “They burned and took everything I had, killed my father and hanged my brother.”

Many Southerners—not merely soldiers—were scalped, or had their ears or fingers cut off so the Jayhawkers could wear them as souvenirs and necklaces. You did not have to be a soldier; you only had to be a Southerner. Young male family members were treated as adults.

In Jackson County, Missouri, thirteen-year-old John Fox, whose brother was with Quantrill, was shot and killed by federal soldiers while his sister and mother hugged him and begged them not to

shoot. He was killed in their arms because he was charged with feeding his brother. Federals also killed fourteen-year-old James Nicholson because he had two brothers serving under General Price. When thirty-five-year-old Henry Morris was serving Captain Upton Hayes, Federals ran to his house and shot and killed his eleven-year-old son.

Southern women were raped, tortured, and imprisoned simply because they had a husband, brother, or son who fought for the Confederacy. The Berry brothers—Dick, James, and Isaac—left their father and four sisters at home. Federal soldiers from neighboring Danville raped twenty-year-old Catherine, eighteen-year-old Nancy, fourteen-year-old Elizabeth, and eleven-year-old Sally Ann.

You wonder what drives men to do what Jesse and Frank did, and what others did. Frank Dalton, a cousin of Jesse and Frank James, wrote this. The Youngers, the Daltons, and the Jameses were all related. Listen: “If this would not make your blood boil, you’re just not a man. That’s all there is to it.

“Jenison’s Jayhawkers visiting the home of the James brothers, Jesse and Frank, and taking the women—Aunt Zerelda, the mother of Frank and Jesse, their sister, and my mother and sisters—after stripping them to the waist, they tied them to trees and, taking a black snake whip they had found in the stable, they

They whipped them until they got tired and then rode away, leaving the women and girls to be cut down and carried to the house by our Negro slaves, who washed and bandaged their bleeding backs and bodies and put them to bed. As I told you in the first message I preached on the Union's war against women and children, many of these women and children were taking this dilapidated tenant and then moving to another whose building was totally undermined.

Let me remind you that General Thomas Ewing and William Tecumseh Sherman were brothers-in-law. Here is what Sherman said. I want you to remember what Pastor Brink just discussed in his two lessons, but listen to Sherman: "This is just so unbelievable." Concerning Southerners, he said, "Next year, their

lands will be taken, for in war we can take them, and rightfully too. Another year, they may beg in vain for their lives. A people who will persevere and wade beyond certain limits ought to know the consequences. Many, many people with less ferocity than the South have been wiped out of national existence. Now listen, to those who submit to the rightful law and authority, all gentleness and forbearance. But to the petulant and persistent secessionists, why, death is mercy, and the quicker he or she is disposed of, the better."

Did you get what he said? "To those who submit to the rightful law and authority." In other words, you have to bow down to us and do whatever we say.

The war was absolutely devastating for Missouri and Missourians. Many people suffered greatly during that war, but I believe the Missourians suffered far more than anyone else. Both sides certainly suffered enormously, but the Missourians suffered more. I believe the bitterest, most violent, and hateful acts were committed against the people of Missouri, which would always create more ill will after the war. The same radicals who had pushed for the war were now pushing for the destruction of those who had not been killed in it.

Post-War Persecution and the Forced Outlawry of Jesse and Frank

When the war was over, Jesse and some men with him planned to surrender and turn themselves in with the other men. When he did that, he ultimately was shot by federal soldiers. He went with the men to Major J. B. Rogers, the provost marshal, who told Jesse and those with him that they had to give up their guns and horses. Jesse said, "No, we will never give up our guns and our horses because so many people are trying to kill us." Finally, the provost marshal said, "Well, look, I will allow you to keep your guns and your horses."

“And if you will come back in tomorrow, I will have the papers drawn up and you can sign them and the surrender will be official.”

As they rode out of town, they were met by eight Union soldiers, the advance guard of sixty Union soldiers. The eight soldiers saw Jesse and the men with him, drew their weapons, and fired on Jesse James and his men. Jesse and his men returned fire, killing four Union soldiers and wounding two more. The other sixty were soon there, and a running fight began, because Jesse had only a few men with him and they were now facing sixty federal soldiers.

Jesse was wounded when a bullet entered his right lung. As he fought, his horse fell on him. The Federals, chasing the other men, ran by Jesse and shot at him. They killed his horse but did not hit Jesse; they were after the other men. Jesse somehow got his leg out from under the horse and began crawling toward the woods. Five Federals saw him and chased him, shooting at him. Remember, Jesse was wounded. He was crawling, on the ground, yet he still drew his revolver and killed the first federal. The second he shot out of the saddle. That man hit the ground running through the woods. Jesse shot and killed the third federal, while the next two decided they did not want any more and turned and left.

Jesse got away, crawled into the woods, and finally found a creek, where he lay and bathed his wound for two days. He had a fever, but after two days he could still crawl out of the creek. Thankfully, he reached a field, where a man who was plowing found him and took him to a doctor. It took Jesse three years to recover.

Remember, this was after the war. The war was over. When Frank returned to Missouri, he was challenged by four federal soldiers. The troopers provoked and forced the issue. Frank drew his weapons, killed two instantly, wounded a third, and escaped, though the fourth managed to wound him in the hip. A doctor saved his life, but Frank had trouble with that hip for the rest of his life.

In December 1866, federal authorities in Missouri passed a law requiring every able-bodied Missourian over eighteen to join and register for the state militia. If you did not, you were fined twenty-five dollars or imprisoned and jailed.

The Confederates knew they were not going to join the Union, and of course they would not have twenty-five dollars either. They tried to return to what you and I would call a normal life after the war. In fact, Frank and Jesse tried farming, believe it or not, but everything was at starvation wages, and they were unsuccessful.

Moreover, the regulators—these federal troops—were roaming through the woods and communities looking for ex-Confederates, especially the guerrillas. They were seeking them out and wanted to kill them. The promise was that, in settling old scores, they would give any returning rebel a swift bullet or a short rope.

In 1866, a solid year after the war was over, four thousand Southerners were murdered from southwest Missouri alone—not the whole state, just the southwest. They were ex-Confederates. The regulators and Federals were killing anyone who had anything to do with the Confederacy. They simply did not want them.

On February 18, 1867, two years after the war, five state militiamen rode to the James farm in Kearney, Missouri, looking for the James boys. General William Clark had ordered that all guerrilla leaders were to be brought in either dead or alive. They did not care. These five Union soldiers pounded on the James door, demanding entrance.

Jesse was still not fully recovered from being shot in the lung. Dr. Samuel asked him, “What should I do?” Jesse looked out the window and saw five Union saddles. “Help me to the door,” he said. Dr. Samuel helped him there. Jesse pulled out his pistol and, through the crack in the door, shot the first federal soldier. Then he threw the door open, grabbed his other pistol, and killed all but one. He understood they were fixing to kill him. It was either him or them; they had come looking for him.

So Jesse and Frank were forced to take to the bush and live as outlaws. Peaceful pursuits were not allowed the former Confederates. Harrison Trow, who rode with Quantrill, said, “The law which should have protected them was overridden. Indeed, there was no law. The courts were the instruments of plunder. The civil officers were cutthroats. Instead of a legal process, there was a vigilance committee. Men were hanged because they had a very

natural desire to keep hold of their property. To the cruel vigor of actual war, there had succeeded the irresponsible despotism of greedy highwaymen buttressed upon assassination. The border countries were overrun with bands of predatory plunderers."

Some Confederate soldiers dared not return home, and many guerrillas fled the country. Can you imagine being unable to return home or live where you were raised? James Cumming from Clay County attended the same Baptist church as the James brothers. He said, "When the war was over, I wanted to settle down, but the Federals would not let me; they pursued me with malignant hatred." Federal vengeance was so fierce that many men were compelled to become outlaws to protect their families.

CHAPTER 15

Old Paths Christian History Conference

October 27, 2023

Longsuffering in Community — Opening Speaker

Introduction to Longsuffering

Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law.” I would like to look at this word “longsuffering” just for a moment.

To us, no matter who we are or what we are doing, the word “suffer” is automatically equated with pain. Suffering means hurt and pain. But in Scripture, Christ said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me.” He was not saying to pain or hurt the little children to come unto Him, but rather to allow the children to come to our Lord. So longsuffering, in the context of Scripture and within the Old English, ought not mean long pain or long hurting, but rather, perhaps, long allowing—allowing ourselves to be inconvenienced for the sake of another, a brother or a sister.

Long-allowing means allowing patience to have her perfect work, even when we are mildly wronged in some way. Not necessarily sinned against, but just mildly wronged. We are to be longsuffering. We can allow with love. Longsuffering is a pillar of biblical community. Without it, the community will not last. Folks will instantly be at each other's throats, and it will disband and dissolve. There will be no bond without proper biblical longsuffering. It is a fruit of the Spirit, and we are called to be longsuffering anyway.

Whether the discussion today is community or not, we are to be a people who are longsuffering with one another. Community becomes another way to fulfill Scripture in our lives, as well as to enjoy the blessing that follows.

Practical Example of Longsuffering

Let us look at a real-life example. If we talk about being close, as I was with Brother Chuck earlier, let us use Brother Stan. I know Brother Stan has a son, a fine young man. Suppose Brother Stan's property and mine literally joined, with our two lawns on the property line. His son gets on his zero-turn, and because of the terrain, a tree, and the embankment, he needs to swing onto my yard for a couple of feet to get around that tree. Then he gets back into Brother Stan's yard and continues mowing. In fact, he has crossed the line, entered my yard, and mowed my grass. And do you know why he goes around that tree?

Because if he did not, he would have to use a hand trimmer. His son over there is lazy, I know he is, and he takes that zero-turn and makes a swoop around that tree into my land to mow the grass just so he does not have to use a trimmer.

Now you can see that I am having to conjure up an offense. I am being blessed; he is mowing my grass for free. I have to pretend I am hurt, offended that his son would use their zero-turn to mow my grass. Well, let us change it. Let us say his grass is on the property line.

But I have an acre garden of beans that have come in beautifully this year. In making that swooping pass, he kills three of my bean

plants. I have three thousand bean plants in that acre. Brother Weaver will preach to you that there are violations here in Scripture. There is trespass. Now that he has killed my beans, there is theft. That boy stole my beans, and I am offended. Or can I be long-suffering? It is obvious that he is not malicious.

He needs to make that cut into the land because of the way the tree and the bank are. He means no harm. What is the cost of three bean plants? It is nothing. I am not really being offended unless I make it seem that I am so hurt. I can be long-suffering with a fine young man who is obeying his father. When his dad tells him to mow the lawn, he obeys. I can be long-suffering, seeing that it is easier to come around that tree than to go around the other way.

I can be long-suffering, or I can let this fester. Then I am not going to him one-on-one; I am telling everybody else first about what his boy did. I can cut the community into pieces, cut the church into pieces, and we can all fight over a couple of feet of lawn or a couple of bean plants. Or I can simply say, “It is no problem.”

Brother, be blessed in coming into my yard. Take your swoop. Take out a couple of plants. No problem. There is no offense here. There was, in fact, loss of beans. But that is love, charity, mercy, and long-suffering. If we live that close, we will find anything with which to pick each other apart. As soon as we do, it is the sin nature within us: jealousies, envying, and strife. But a fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering, so we can allow it in love.

Or we can blow it up. We can ruin our relationship, ruin a church. Scripture cries out, the scriptural principle cries out, forbearance. Long-suffering. Not just the once, but for the rest of Stan Clough's life, for the rest of our relationship, for the rest of my relationship with his son. I can long-forbear, long-suffer, long-allow that minor inconvenience. This is necessary. It's a fruit of the Spirit. You're called to it anyway. We must see long-suffering. If we are to make this work, to work hand-in-hand, to walk hand-in-hand, to work side-by-side, must be long-suffering.

If we've got to remove stones out of a pasture, and we're carrying them one by one, and whoever's helping me, any brother

here who's helping me, and I'm carrying more rocks than you did that day, because you weren't going quick enough, can I just love you that much to say we've each toiled and we're each going to enjoy the harvest of this labor? Or do I get to pick and to count rocks, how many you got versus how many I got?

Any little thing, it must be long-suffering within the community of God.

Independent Churches, United in Dominion — Brother Cliff

I want to thank you ladies for that good food. Some of us are going to suffer for that right now. I told Brother Weaver I would put you all to sleep and get you rested up for him, so I have the easy job.

The meal was tremendously delicious, and we thank you for it. We realize there is a lot of work in all of this, and appreciate the work of this church and all you have done. I am a little jealous and envious that you have a pastor who can preach and sing. Our church never got blessed like that; we are still looking for one who can do either one. We have enjoyed the services and thank the Lord for it.

With a conference like this, we are bound to step on each other's toes a little as far as overlapping in our thoughts. Brother Allen was gracious enough to steal my opening text, Psalm 133. Stan started getting into my message a little, but that is all right. It is not mine, and it is not my fire either. It is God's. Psalm 133:1 says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Unity vs. Uniformity

Unity is not uniformity. It does not say we must all look alike, walk alike, or talk alike. It is unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.

Father, thank you again for this time. Thank you for the labor this church has put forth to bring this blessing about, we ask, and we're thankful for the men who've preached already and for the Weaver that will come following me. We ask grace for him. And Lord, we ask now that as we look to your word that you would encourage us, strengthen us, and help us to be reminded of the precious truths we hear quite often.

And may you receive honor and glory in Jesus' name, amen.

Independent Churches and Dominion

My topic has been “Independent Churches, United in Dominion.” One of the things the enemy has successfully done in America today is create division. We understand that as a tactic of war: “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” If I can create a problem among those around me and get them fighting each other rather than fighting me, I have won. That is what Satan has done in many ways. He has caused many of us, in a whole lot of different arenas, to fight each other and enter into difficult situations.

I think much of that has to do with the way we have drifted theologically and, obviously, politically. I do not think you can separate those two. Everything about us is theological. Our cultures are our religion externalized.

With that thought, my mind went over to Judges 10. We are in a very difficult time, to say the least. You do not need me to remind you of that. The time is getting more difficult as we go, like that proverbial snowball going down the hill. It is moving faster and getting larger every moment, and it is hard to imagine where it is going.

I am using this text to illustrate a few things. I may come back to it, but I am going to end up in Ephesians 4, God willing. Judges 10:1–5 and 12:8–15 are like two bookends holding up the story in between of Jephthah. Jephthah was a Gileadite born of a harlot, used to conquer the Ammonites even though he was cast out and his father's natural children had nothing to do with him. He was thrown to the side, so to speak, but he was a mighty and valiant man. When Israel was threatened, they called upon him to take

care of the enemy, and he did. He won. But the thought I had here is this: What we see throughout much of the Book of Judges is a drift toward humanistic kingship.

You might think this is moving more politically, but I suggest that it has moved religiously, or at least in the churches throughout our land. Our churches have not become independent anymore; they are more denominational. They are filled with hierarchies and various things. I realize we are not individuals who adhere to a convention or a group. We are independent. But those groups are all over America, and they are part of the problem. Many professing Christians in this land are truly part of the problem, not the solution. I do not suggest that this is their desire, motive, or what they want to do. I suggest that many have just drifted into this in more ways than one.

In Judges we see a drift toward humanistic kingship. We understand what happened in 1 Samuel 8 when they desired a king. Samuel was told of God to let them know what that king was going to do and what that king was going to be. That king was going to take, take, take, take. That is exactly what the federal government does to us today. They take, take, take. But that is also what denominations do to many churches today. They take, take, take, and then dictate what they are going to do and say. Instead of being independent voices across this land, and men and women standing on their own two feet upon the Word of God, we are so—we are more worried about what is happening in the big picture and—

Then we stop and run with the assumption that somebody else is saying something, somebody else is doing something, and somebody else died a long time ago. It is a shame.

These are the minor judges. Judges 10:1 records: “And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir. And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are

called Havoth Jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jair died, and was buried in…"

I looked away and missed it. Buried in… Come on.

Now, as we think about this, we go back over to chapter 12 and see the other end of that bookend, so to speak, in verse 8: "And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Bethlehem. And after him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years. And Elon the Zebulunite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun."

"And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel. And he had forty sons and thirty nephews that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years. And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites."

These minor judges, so to speak, were important in many ways. Over the years of church history, we can look at the book of Judges as something that served God's people in many great ways. I think it was one of the inspirations among the Reformation. And we need a Reformation today in more ways than one—at least men with the same kind of grit as the men of the Reformation.

We lack that in America. One of the problems in our nation is the lack of manhood. We've lost it in many cases, and that is a plague in more ways than one. The time of the Reformation was an age of mounting tyranny. Roman Catholicism had married a state claiming absolutism, along with many monarchs who claimed divine rights. As the book of Judges was read, it provided answers and ammunition against those kinds of trends.

Three things proved to be a tremendous influence during those times. The book of Judges revealed their problems as moral and spiritual. It was a moral and spiritual disloyalty to Christ. Therefore, they stressed that unless the Levites—the preachers—got busy and reformed the church, social conditions would only go from bad to worse.

Many preachers in our land today are doing nothing but lullabying the people to sleep. The pipers are leading them on a broad road to destruction in more ways than one. As has already been said today, there is more concern about filling the pews and the offering plates, so that they can take care of their little corporations, than about standing on the one true and living God and the words of the one true and living God.

Second, they found that the Bible was opposed to centralized statism. The ideal Christian republic was decentralized and localized, hence a strong local community. It involved free men under the law of God, just as it does today. The lust for political power is quite dangerous, and we've seen that both in history and in our day. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, nine out of ten, if not ten out of ten, of our politicians today only become Christians in an election year.

Most of them probably cannot spell the word. We hear the same talking points, election cycle after election cycle. It is all a bunch of nonsense. The only way this nation will ever be repaired or be able to stand up again is if we fix it from the bottom up. It has to come with our families. It has to come from these children sitting here and from parents who will raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Number three, we found also in Judges that God sometimes blesses resistance movements. When? When it is truly the righteous throwing off a genuine tyrant. Tyranny comes in many places and in many ways. It can be found in a home, in a church, in a state, and in a federal government. But you will quickly notice upon reading this that the trend toward monarchy, which began with Gideon, continues in the story of Jephthah, in between these minor judges. You will notice also that Jephthah failed to wait on God. He desired to set up his own dynasty, and this was his demise.

Bracketing this story at the beginning and the end is the brief mention of these minor judges. Why in the world were we told that these men died and were buried? Every one of them was described that way. Is it not quite obvious that they are not here now? Why

did they die and were buried? Because they were temporary. It reminds us of how temporary they truly are.

The true Deliverer, the true Judge, was Jesus Christ. He is the Deliverer, the one who is going to bring salvation to all of us. By calling attention to the deaths of these men, the Scripture teaches us that the deliverances brought by them were only temporal. Today we are looking for deliverance from a man. It blows my mind how many people have bowed down and worshiped Donald Trump and various others. Do you really think those men are out for your best interest? We have been lied to for so long that most of us do not even recognize the truth when it comes out of one of their mouths.

It is a reality today that we have got to raise the generation that will help deliver us from where we are. It will be by the hands of God and by the mercy of God, but it will come from God's people. Here we are also going to notice God's social system.

Exodus 18 lays it out for us, and it has two aspects. You have the ministry of the Levites, the ministry of the men of God, the preachers. It is our duty to teach the whole counsel of God. Too often, as I said earlier, we want simply to entertain and not offend anybody. As one of the brethren—I think it was Stan—had already said, we do not seek to offend somebody personally; that would be counterproductive.

But if the Word of God offends you, then that is not me. That is not my problem. It becomes your problem with God. That is a reality. If the shoe fits, wear it. If it does not, do not worry about it or get bothered by it. But if it is hitting you, even if it is making you mad, that is a good thing, because it lets you know there is something to think about, something wrong, something to ponder and meditate on, and something to talk to God about.

We also see this system in God’s social system. The second aspect is the system of judges and courts of appeals. The Levites were to train the people in the law of God so they would be able to mature in self-government.

Now, you may ask yourself, what does that have to do with independent churches? I think it has a lot to do with independent

churches, because we are doing in our churches just like we are doing in our government system. We are sitting back, trying to enjoy the high life, resting and letting the preachers take care of it, the deacons take care of it, or the local officials, the president, and Congress take care of it.

No, you and I have a personal responsibility to take care of things, especially things that pertain to us and are within the sphere of our dominion. Today, we have raised a generation of individuals who not only do not recognize dominion and their sphere of dominion, but have no care about doing God's business in it. That is killing us. Until we stop and understand the importance of our responsibility, things will not change.

There was a strong government over the whole nation in one sense, yet this strong government had very little to do with the day-to-day affairs of the citizens. The government over the nation was simply a final court of appeals. They were to be mature enough to handle their problems. That maturity came from a thorough teaching of God's law and an application of God's law in their lives.

But when we cannot learn God's law and apply it, the next thing is that we run to somebody to fix our problems for us, when most of the problems we face can be fixed by the heads of the home in this nation. They can be fixed if we step up, man up, and take care of our responsibilities. Rather than that, we would rather pass them on to someone else.

The whole thrust of this system, though, was local. Immediate, day-to-day decisions would be made by the local elders. We don't give back to some of those things. We're done. As has been pointed out in this conference already, it is about community. In Matthew 18, tell your brother face to face. If he will not listen, take two or three witnesses. If he will not hear them, tell it to the church. There is nobody outside this place that even needs to know about it. First Corinthians makes that very clear.

Yet in today's society, "We do not want to offend anybody" becomes the excuse. Neither do I. It is hard to confront people. It is difficult, it is not pleasant, and no one likes it. But sometimes it is necessary. When we do, we often remove many

misunderstandings, because many difficulties and disagreements are misunderstandings: misunderstanding one's expectations or what one may have said or done.

Unfortunately, sinful man desires a reverse of all this. Instead of local churches with courts of appeal, we get top-heavy denominational structures that tend to invade and consume local ministries. Instead of local government, we get national government, universal conscription, and heavy national taxation. That is where we are.

We can understand the importance of preachers and teachers of the Word remaining true to the Scriptures and faithfully teaching them. Or would we be more concerned with developing as many programs as possible, hoping that our people can stay so active in our churches that the programs will keep them going, while we fail to teach God's Word? That describes most of the churches in America today. Pastors are not teachers of the Word; they are administrators of all the programs. We have to get back to the simple Word of God and confidence in its ability to fix our problems.

I do not disagree with anything Stan said; he really broke my heart. He reminded me of how much I miss my sons and grandchildren. I thought about that on many occasions because, after I was saved as an adult, I became part of a ministry that kept you busy as fleas on a hound dog's back. You were always doing something. As a newly saved young man, I was ready to jump in with both feet. I was praising God, thankful, and ready to serve the Lord: "I'll do whatever you want, preacher."

The preacher said he could help me build his kingdom. He did not use those words, but that is what it really tends to be. Later, the Lord began showing me and opening my eyes to the realities of these things. Pastor Weaver has helped me a great deal in that. I began to realize how much, in ministry, we are neglecting our families. How many pastors are neglecting their families for the sake of the ministry?

I hope most of you do not know Jack Hyles, because he was an Arminian. I do not even know if he was saved; he may have been. I

do not know. Jack Hyles was Mr. Arminian in my book. I read a letter his daughter wrote to the First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana. It broke my heart. There were so many things in that life, home, and family that were unbiblical and wrong. He would tell his children, "Just keep quiet for the sake of the ministry. For the sake of the ministry." They worshiped him. He would not be part of the song service. This is as I was told; I have never been part of it or seen it, so if I am wrong, you can correct me later. But I am told he would never be part of the song service.

He would wait until it was time for him to preach, then step out, and they would start yelling, "Preach! Preach! Preach!" What does that sound like? It sounds like they are worshiping somebody. There is no substance there—a bunch of fluff. Yet these personalities can fill buildings and do great things in the average fleshly mind. But where is the fruit? Look at our nation. It is going to hell in a handbasket. Many of the professing mainstream churches around this country have money rolling out of their bank accounts, and everything seems to be going right from their perspective. Yet we are morally and spiritually declining every day at a rapid pace. Something must be wrong.

Men need to quit trying to organize and patronize and get back to simply expounding the Word of God. I thought about Joshua and those men conquering. They were doing great things and the work of God, and I liken that to ministry. Does the work of God ever require you to neglect the responsibilities God gives you? No. If you are a pastor of the church, God does not expect you to be the pastor of the church and neglect your home, because your home is your first ministry.

We can take that as far as we want, but I can see the men of Joshua's day fighting battles, winning wars, and doing a great work for God while perhaps neglecting their ministry at home. I was not there, and I do not know, but maybe they were neglecting that ministry for some reason. One generation later, they were worshiping Baal, and that did not happen by accident. So I look at it like this: You can be full of your Christianity, the person who seems most spiritual in the church, and yet neglect every responsibility you have, failing God, your family, and so on.

In today's society, we want professionals to take care of everything. We need a doctor to heal us, a preacher to teach our children, a teacher to teach our children, and politicians to make our laws. In reality, it is up to us, and it should start with us. When the Word of God is taught and done properly, we can enjoy the rich diversity of local color and still find unity because of the Word of God, without its being imposed by tyrannical forces.

I have a dear brother in Jamaica, a great preacher, great expositor, and very intelligent man. He is not there now; he is in the Virgin Islands, but he is a native Jamaican. I have visited their church four or five times. They are up in the mountains, and he does not have any of these nice instruments. He gets up there with a tambourine, gets it going, and they start singing. They do not sing "Victory in Jesus" like we do; they are talking about victory and truly getting into it.

I am sitting there as the only white guy, and they are looking at me: "Come on, preach that!" I say, "Did you notice I'm white? I don't have any rhythm." We laugh about it; it is not a big deal. When it comes to clapping, I say, "I'm just not doing it. I can't do it." I know some of you have rhythm, so not all white people are like me. Nonetheless, I sit there and watch them. They do not do it like I do it.

But he was preaching from the Word, and when he went to the Word, he brought substance out of it. We had unity; we did not have uniformity. I am not going to use the tambourine. I will tell you all, forget about it. You are not going to catch me leading the music with a tambourine. It is not happening. I enjoyed it. They did not have to be exactly like me. But something needs to come out of this—and it did.

So what a blessing it is. When men refuse God's ways, they can impose their will over a large area only by using the implements of force and violence. In order to get a uniform culture—which is what many people really want—they have to impose it from above, and that only works to nullify all local diversity. Remember, culture is religion externalized.

What are the denominations doing now? They are trying to impose on preachers that they marry gay couples. No. Cold day where the boogeyman lives. We do not do that. But they are imposing it. That is uniformity; it is not unity, and it is an unbiblical uniformity. Here we have a nation falling to pieces spiritually, and much of it is being done by people who call themselves men of God.

Biblically, a larger government sets only general policy and serves as a court of appeal. In a humanistic state, however, the larger government sets all policy, whether in a church or in a state government. Thus, it destroys local diversity and has no court of appeal. In essence, all local courts merely become manifestations of the central courts. That is where we have been, politically and religiously, in America in more ways than one.

All of this is due to the fact that in Pelagian Humanism, it is man, not God, who is king. Man and not God. I refer back to my earlier days, and I felt like I was built in the man's kingdom and not God's kingdom. There is a lot of freedom when you let all that go, a lot of liberty, and a lot more joy in your service to the Lord in all that you do. When Christ is King once again in His churches, the Levites—the pastors and preachers—are doing their job, and the people are obeying the Word of God, that kind of tyranny will be gone.

Look in your Bibles in Ephesians 4. Our churches need to be independent, but we're still codependent on each other. We need each other. There are strengths and weaknesses among this group that, when put together, make a powerful force. As you've heard me say already, I can't carry a tune in a bucket. I can't play an instrument. I can barely play the radio. There are a whole lot of other people who fill that gap. You don't need me to do it.

There may be something I can do. The reality is that when we work together and learn how to apply those things together, we are a force to be reckoned with. But we have taken our independence too far. We've not really leaned on one another like we should, and I think there are many reasons for it. But let's look at Ephesians 4.

Paul says in Ephesians 4:1, "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." I illustrate that word forbearing as meaning put up with. I had several families stay in our home in 2009 because power went out over a bad ice storm, and I used this as a devotion. I talked about putting up with, and they said, "Is that what you're doing, putting up with us?" "No, that's not what I meant. But now that you mention it." They were joking, of course.

Verse 3 says, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Without the peace of Christ in you—that bond that holds all this together—there never will be unity. In other words, we have to be thinking alike. That doesn't mean we're thinking exactly alike, as though we were clones of one another, but we are thinking biblically, spiritually minded, and enjoying that bond of peace.

Verse 4 continues: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Why, we agree on all that; we have already got that somewhere, have we not? “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

“Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Why? For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

How long is that supposed to take place? “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

We are coming together, and what God has gifted you with and blessed you with has made this body stronger, better, and useful. Verse 17 says, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour. For we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

The word unity is mentioned only three times in the Bible. We have just read two of them; the first was Psalm 133. This is a textbook on unity, so to speak. You want unity? Dive into this chapter and begin studying it and applying it. You cannot simply pick parts of it out. You have to take it all and apply it all.

I once watched a video that made me laugh, but after I finished laughing, I began to think, This is real. Galatians 5:14-15 says, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one another.” You bite and devour one another.

That took me to the video. I showed it to our church and used it as an illustration. A dog was lying on a couch, stretched out with a bone in his mouth, simply enjoying it. You think I am making this up. This dog had to be retarded or something. I do not know what was going on. Then his back leg began creeping toward the bone. The dog turned and started growling at his own leg. Something seemed wrong with him; he had probably chased too many car tires and caught them. He kept going back and forth, growling at that foot as it crept toward the bone. It looked as though the foot were sneaking up on him. He was going to chew his own foot off. You wanted to smack him in the head and say, “That’s your own foot.” But that is what it is like.

That's how dumb, foolish, and useless we look when we bite and devour one another. We're destroying ourselves. We are literally hurting our ministry and testimonies, hurting the cause of Christ, and losing forward momentum. I can't tell you how many times we've felt the Spirit of God moving in our churches, only to quench the Spirit through some stupid thing like that. It makes you feel as though you've fallen back three miles after gaining so much.

Brethren, I appreciate the spirit of the conference and what is trying to be accomplished here, and I hope it will be. We've got to learn that it is our duty under God to take dominion of our sphere of influence. If every one of us takes that responsibility seriously and gives our best effort, this place can change, and it can change rapidly, with a small group of people. We don't need millions. If Christ is before us, who can be against us? Us and God are the majority. We've got to stop thinking in this worldly manner and quit looking at the world and seeing it as so large.

Remember, it is our Lord's footstool. It is nothing. What we need to do is get back to simply obeying Him, taking on our responsibilities and owning them. We will make mistakes along

the way; own those too. I told my men, my crew leads, part of your job is to make leaders. Make leaders. Teach people what you know. Be willing to step out. I have enough individuals who just want to collect a paycheck. I need leaders.

People are much like horses in many ways. A horse does not want a friend; it wants a leader. We need leaders in this day and age. If you have something you are raising, raise them to be leaders. It does not mean we will have our name in the marquee, or that we will move great mountains. But we need to be leaders in the sphere God puts us in, and biblical leaders. When all of that comes together, it is a great force to be reckoned with.

If we learn the importance of our churches coming together in unity, enjoying each other, and helping one another, Brother Stan needs help. I hope and pray to God he knows he can call me and I would do whatever I could to help. I would rally our church and do whatever we could to help, and I trust that he would do the same. Brother Peacock, Brother Weaver, that is what we need.

We do not do that much anymore. Sometimes it is because we are too proud. Sometimes we are afraid it is a sign of weakness, when in reality it is not. It gives us an opportunity to exercise the gift God has given us for the furtherance of the kingdom of God and for His glory.

Father, thank you for this time we've had. We thank you for Brother Peacock hosting this conference and the work he's done in this church. Thank you, Lord, for Brother Campbell and all he has been doing for this brother and this ministry. We thank you, Lord, that we can all say we're here for you. We're here for you. Imperfectly, but we're here for you. And we thank you for loving us in spite of us. We thank you, Lord, for your grace, your mercy, your longsuffering.

And if we just ponder your longsuffering toward us, we certainly should be able to have more toward others, as we certainly don't deserve the good things you bestow upon our lives. We love you and we thank you for this time to be here in Jesus' name. Amen.

Theonomy and Christian Reconstruction

You can Google-search them, but write two things down. The first is the term theonomy: Theos, God, and nomy, law. Theonomy is the application of God's law today—that is to say, Old Testament law. A grand portion of Christianity today rejects theonomy, rejecting the application of Old Testament law to society. What would unite these particular churches, independent though we be, is the doctrine of theonomy.

From Brother Allen, Brother Cliff, Brother Stan, and Brother Weaver, you could ask around the county—Ben Hill, Coffey, or wherever you have friends in churches—whether there is a theonomic-minded pastor or congregation. Some might not even have heard the term; do not blame them for that. But understand that many, and most, churches reject the law of God in our lives. After all, we live under grace. "We're under grace, not under law," is the common line.

If you want to know what unites us and helps bring us together, it is the doctrine and understanding of theonomy. The second thing to write down and look up is Greg Bahnsen, an author who has passed away. I have bought his books from Amazon. Look up Greg Bahnsen on theonomy, and look up the second term, Christian Reconstruction: how to reconstruct. We heard about Reconstruction after the War Between the States, not necessarily in a good way. But we understand that we need to reconstruct society so that it is in line with the principles of Scripture.

We gain an understanding of the Word of God through the ministry of R. J. Rushdoony. If you have not purchased books by R. J. Rushdoony, see your pastor, or see Brother Weaver, about which titles to get, so that you can read them and understand Christian Reconstruction. Each of these pastors and churches understands that we need to rebuild society as it is being torn down.

What if we had a revival but did not know how to keep it? We need to understand how to restructure society by the Word of God, so that we can see it continue through generations; otherwise, we

will lose it in a generation. Your homework from today is theonomy and Christian Reconstruction.

We are in October, and I was planning another wonderful day like this next October, which we probably still will have. Seeing the times being troubled as they are, we are planning another day with food and speakers for Saturday, January 20th. Here is a book, and there are many books like it, entitled Rural Home Defense.

The author is a former law-enforcement officer. He discusses how, if we enter a lawless society and the electricity goes away, we might defend our homes against marauders, thieves, and others of this sort. The title has already gotten something right: this is not suburban home defense. Suburban means tract homes, with questions about how to garden and become self-sufficient in a tract home. Rural home defense is different.

Suburban is better than urban. Can you imagine urban home defense? That is your apartment complex: making sure you have water stored or canned goods. In an apartment complex, you cannot defend yourself in an urban scenario. You cannot. Suburban is just as bad. Rural home defense includes many good things: property lines, fences, and how to deal with people who are looking to steal what you have.

What we are looking for on January 20th, as the titles of the messages come together, is biblical home defense. How do we understand this? From Brother Weaver's teaching for the last twenty-five years, we understand self-defense when my life is on the line. But what about our homes, our property, and our gardens, which will feed our families unless thieves come in to steal and pillage? How do we defend our homes biblically? What principles are involved?

I am either going to shock you, and you will never speak to me again, or otherwise—I do not know what I am about to do. Let me use my friend Jesse, who is twelve, as an illustration. Imagine chaos: society is gone, and it is a terrible day. Jesse is hungry. He has a hungry family and a 10/22, a weapon, a gun, a rifle. With his family hurt in the bushes—we cannot see them—he stumbles out of the bushes into our yard, near our garden, on our farm, carrying a

gun. He sees Jenna, my wife, carrying vegetables from the garden, trying to get back to the house.

Biblical Home Defense

He starts taking potshots to kill the woman he sees with the food. Unfortunately, he is a bad shot. From across the yard, I see dirt kicking up. I say, "Son, whoever you are, kid, stop shooting. Stop. You're trying to kill my wife." If I have a weapon and he is trying to kill my wife, and he hears me yelling, he turns to me and starts taking potshots at me with this .22.

What do I have to do? Many people do not want to think about the answer. They say, "That is so hard. I don't want to think about it." We are in 2023, getting into 2024. Life will go on just as we know it. There is no need for this kind of chaos, these ideas of apocalypse, or something like that.

If you cannot bear the thought of preparing your mind and having a theology ready to say, "This young man, young as he may be, is a threat to my life. He has attempted to kill her, and by God's grace he has failed. But I need to stop him," then what will you do? I am across the yard; I cannot tackle him. He is now shooting at me. What do I do as a man of God?

I have got to kill him. I have got to stop him. I do not know him. He has come as the thief; he has come as a murderer. He is twelve years old, and I have to stop him. If I were not already ready in my mind to do it, I might stop in analysis paralysis. But the theology I already know has prepared my heart.

I mean him no malice, but I have got to stop him. I am going to have to shoot, and I am going to have to kill a twelve-year-old boy because he is seeking to murder my wife, murder me, and murder the rest of my children.

That is a reasonable scenario when the bad times come. Think of any war in Iraq. Over in the Middle East, terrible things happen in war, and yet theology would give us a clear, crystal answer, as unpleasant as it might be. We would pray that day never comes. But are you ready? Are you aware that decisions will need to be

made—decisions based on the principles of the Word of God that you have already ingrained?

In your mind and in your heart. Otherwise, you might be facing it and say, “I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do. I've got to go read some more.” It is the wrong time to go reading, the wrong time to look for the CDs and DVDs. That time has passed. We are looking toward January 20th and biblical home defense, with all the thought that goes along with that. The men will prepare some messages, Brother Weaver, and that sort of thing.

Before Brother Weber comes, a few words about the wonderful facility we have. Brother Allen talked about it earlier. Here at Douglas Gospel Assembly, we have both the sanctuary and the fellowship hall. If anyone has a class to teach or a skill to share, bring it forward. The facility will be made available for the Lord’s glory and for kingdom use. Ladies, I know you have had cooking classes or meat-canning classes. Whatever it might be, the facility is available. By God’s grace, the Youth Conference will be held here next year. That is a wonderful thing.

See Brother Allen if you have questions about it. If you wanted to have a canning class or a bread-making class, I would encourage you to bring some theology into that as well. As the Bible says, “Man shall not live by bread alone.” Before you get to the kitchen to do all the cooking, perhaps gather around the piano and have Sister Wanda play for you.

There are wonderful hymns having to do with these things. We all grew up with “Canning Up the Peas,” to the tune of “Bringing in the Sheaves”: “Canning in the morning, washing mason jars up. We shall come rejoicing, canning up the peas.” You can get into it. I did not grow up in Georgia, but even we sang “Crock of Peaches”: “Crock of peaches, let them steam. They’re for pie and ice cream.” You can get into it.

Let me share a testimony with you. Brother Weaver and I had a chance to sing that for some folks here a couple of months ago. There was not a dry eye in the house. Laughing or crying, I do not know, but those people got emotional. We sang the duet, and it

came out four-part harmony. The Lord stopped by to help us out. That is what I am saying. Thank God.

A Community That Will Work — John Weaver

Not everybody will understand what I am about to say, but I will tell Warren Luke: it would do him no good to shoot at Jesse, because Jesse just slides right under it. Those who have seen the video understand what I am talking about.

It has been a blessing today, and I am thankful for the opportunity to be here. I thank Brother Peacock. I was thinking that it was ’92 when we met, though I do not remember for sure; it was a long time ago. Alice and I were reading a paper that had an advertisement for a speaker here, and we were flabbergasted that someone would have a speaker whom we knew. We came, and we have been friends ever since.

I could not help but laugh when Brother Stan mentioned the Christian school. Two of our grandchildren, Renee and Casey, were here, and they were kindergartners. Royce Lee, I do not remember what grade you were in—you were junior high, something like that—but I never will forget Renee saying that she thought it was funny that somebody that big and old was still in kindergarten. She called him Rosalee. She never could say Rosalee. Rosalee.

That was a long time ago, that is for sure. Brother Stan, I got to thinking, too: I met your dad before I met you. He pastored at Patterson. I met him there because he was a friend of Brother McCurry. Brother McCurry told me about him when I was in Jessup, and I went to meet him when he was in Patterson.

Doctrine as Foundation for Community

I want to tie together a number of things that have been said today. Since this has been about community, I am going to deal with a community that will work. In Acts chapter 2, beginning with verse 41, we read: “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in

prayers. And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

When Brother Peacock spoke first thing this morning, he was dealing with how the Lord has worked in this church and in this community. Brother Stan dealt with families in community, and Brother Cliff dealt with dominion, church to church, and what is going on. Let me point out to begin with: communities are no better than the individuals and families in them. If you do not have individuals who are right and families that are right, you are not going to have a right community; that is for sure.

By way of introduction, I want to mention some of the failed communities. I am not going to spend much time upon these. Many of you have never heard about them and probably are not even interested in hearing about them. But they are valuable in this sense: you can learn what will fail and what will not work. Most of these were pure socialistic experiments, and some of them were out-and-out communism. A fool's dream in socialism is this: They know that socialism does not work, that it is going to fail. But the fool's dream is, "They just have not tried my brand of socialism. Mine is going to work where everyone else's fails."

I never will forget when I was in college in Greenville, South Carolina. I forget exactly how many, but around twenty-five or thirty bank robberies happened while I was in school. And no, it was not me. About twenty-five or thirty of them happened, and not one ever got out of the city limits of Greenville, South Carolina. Not one robber ever made it out of the city limits. Why in the world would anyone continue to rob a bank when they have that kind of record, when nobody ever got out of the city limits?

Because every criminal thought the other criminals were stupid, but they had it right, and they were not going to get caught. They

were exceptions. Well, that is the way socialism works as well. Near the mid-nineteenth century, there were dozens of men and women in North America and Europe who were trying these communities in what they called looking for social progress. One of those communities was Brook Farm, started by George Ripley. He was a humanist, a humanitarian, so to speak, but he was also a member of the Transcendentalist Club. So he began this transcendental community. One of the leading principles of the Transcendentalists was mind over matter. They thought the supremacy of the mind was that which really...

He began this little community in 1841 on two hundred acres near Boston, Massachusetts. The truth of the matter is, it was a failure because one of their leading principles was this—I am reading from the Articles of Association—to substitute a system of brotherly cooperation for one of selfish competition. They were saying, "We are not going to be independent workers. We are just going to work together, and everybody is going to get a little bit of whatever we do." If I want to get a little bit of everything that everybody else does, why should I really exert myself at all? Why should I not just sit back and let you exert yourself? The truth of the matter is, socialism does not work. This group just happened to exist for a few years.

There was also an Equality Colony, an attempt to create a socialistic utopia in Washington State. It began in 1897, and by 1907 it was extinct. Socialism always fails. There was the New Harmony community, another utopian community started by Robert Owen. He began it in 1824, and by 1829 it was over; it lasted five years. And then Fruitlands. Fruitlands—you talk about a fruit group—was a weird community.

They were a vegetarian settlement and anarchists. They banned eating meat and using animal products whatsoever. In fact, they could not even use animals in their farm work. They were reduced to planting only those things which would not disturb the earthworms. Consequently, the winter of 1843 did not sit well with them because they did not have enough to eat, and so it did not last a year.

They simply left the plantation, so to speak. Warren Luke had lived for years in Cahuilla, California. Cahuilla was begun as a socialistic experiment in the 1880s, and by 1892 it was over. The town Cahuilla continues to exist, but the socialistic colony disappeared, because socialism simply does not work.

I have mentioned both words already, and I want to stop and give you a good definition. You hear people talk about a socialistic utopia or a communistic utopia. Let me say this very bluntly: there is no such thing as a utopia. The English word utopia comes from two Greek words, ou topos. Ou is a negative; it means no. Topos means place. Utopia means no place. In other words, it does not exist. It is a figment of the imagination, only in the dreams of man. It is God who determines reality, not man. Anytime you hear the word utopia, remember that it is a figment of someone's imagination.

The second word you have heard me and everybody else use today is community. We use that word very loosely. We think we understand what it means, but in reality we probably do not. Here is a good definition: a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage.

You and I can comprehend a group of people residing in a specific locality and sharing government. But just because you live in a specific locality, share government, and have people around you does not mean that you are a community. Oftentimes we overlook this latter part: having a common cultural and historical heritage. You are going to hear me say this several times: where there is no commonality, there is no community.

Another definition of community is a group of men or women leading a common life according to a rule. I hope you understand exactly what Warren Lusk was talking about when we were talking about God's law, because God's law is the rule for our life. It is our standard. If we are living in a Christian community—and you do not have to be on the same property to have a real Christian community—you can be neighbors. You can have individual property rights; that is for sure. Even a church is supposed to be a Christian community.

When you talk about a community, think about Israel. Israel was divided into twelve tribes, and those tribes were divided into families and clans. One group was not necessarily living right next to another. Every tribe had its individual property, but they all cooperated and worked together. You can have people grouped in a specific locality, and you can have people sharing government, but if they do not have a common faith, culture, and heritage, there will not be any real community. You cannot have a community unless people begin to think and believe alike.

What we have today is a conglomeration of churches, cultures, faiths, heritages, ethnicities, and ideologies, and all these things determine our political, religious, and economic views. There cannot possibly be any real community today with such major divisions. As Brother Cliff has already touched upon, separation and division are happening everywhere. Look at the Muslims who have come into this country. They are pushing as hard as they can for Sharia law. The atheists are pushing as hard as they can to kick God and any Christianity out of life.

Then there are Christians fighting each other because they want their specific denomination or sect to be predominant. I could have used the word preeminent. The word preeminence occurs only twice in the New Testament. The first time is in Colossians chapter 1, in reference to Jesus Christ: in all things he might have the preeminence. The second time is in 3 John, speaking of Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence and will not let people in the church.

And he kicks the apostles out. In other words, he would take the place of Jesus Christ. That is exactly what is happening today. If it is not going to benefit me, my church, or my ministry, then I am not interested in it. That is the attitude, and that is not ministry at all.

The truth of the matter is that there is a community that actually works. That community is given to us as an example: the church. The Church of Jesus Christ is to be a community of the saints. Likewise, our physical communities must also hold to and possess the biblical principles of our Lord Jesus Christ. Really and truly, only God can give community. Only God can give us a

commonality of faith, and only God has given us a commonality in heritage and culture as well.

Now in Acts chapter 2 and verse 42 is where I want to begin. The Bible said that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

The first important truth concerning community, whether it is a church or a community of individuals, is doctrine. Notice how they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. They continued in the doctrine, in the teaching that the apostles taught, who received their teaching from the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Why is doctrine so important? First of all, doctrine determines our duty. It is impossible to know your duty without doctrine. You do not even know how to act without duty. Our duty is based upon our doctrine. How do we know how to live? How do we know how to work? How do we know how to help?

How do we know how to get along with each other and love each other without doctrine? Doctrine teaches us that which is right, agreeable with God, pleasing to God, and honoring to God. You cannot know your duty without doctrine. The Bible says in Micah 6:8, "He has shown 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." Ecclesiastes 12:13 says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments. This is the whole duty of man." If you do not know God's law, God's word, or doctrine, you have no idea what your duty is, and you cannot perform it.

In Romans 15:27, the Apostle Paul wrote, "It hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is to minister them in material or earthly things." Duty is based upon doctrine. It is impossible to live right unless you believe right. It is impossible to do your duty, or even know your duty, without doctrine.

Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." That is why Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Our Lord said in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,

fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Everything that we do comes out of the heart. The heart in Scripture is the mind. You cannot move or act without thinking. If our thinking is wrong, our actions are going to be wrong.

SCRIPTURE READING - Romans 15:1-8 (KJV)

> If our actions are going to be right, that means our thinking must be right, our doctrine must be right, so that we will know how to act. This passage shows that doctrine determines duty.
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> "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, 'The reproaches of them that reproach thee fell on me.' For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scripture might have hope.
>
> "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you, to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers."

In order to do your duty in life according to this passage, you must understand what it means not to please yourself, to edify one another, to be like-minded, to think the same thing and to say the same thing, and to receive one another, even as Christ received us.

In other words, this passage basically teaches us as Christians that we are to have one mind, that is, the mind of Jesus Christ. We are to have one mouth, that is, we are to say the same thing. We are to have one motive, and that is to glorify God the Father. We are to have one mission, and that is to confirm the promises that God has given according to the person and work of Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished.

So, a common doctrine does not mean that everyone must agree on everything in detail. However, it does mean that everyone agrees on the fundamentals of Scripture, and we hold the Word of God to be the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. We hold to the fact and reality that Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone is salvation. We not only believe in the inspiration and authority and infallibility of the Scripture, but we also believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and we must also have and possess a teachable spirit.

The believers in the early church received the doctrine of the apostles. They retained it. They believed it. They understood it. They applied it.

You are not going to have a community without having, basically, a common faith. The truth of the matter is this: when you have a common faith, it is going to lead you, secondly, to a common fellowship. If you look back in Acts chapter 2 and verse 42, the Scripture says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship." The word fellowship is the Greek word koinonia, and it literally means community. It means fellowship. It means an association for religious or spiritual purposes. It refers to a commonality in a community.

One can be civil and kind to unbelievers, and one can be civil and kind to those who believe differently, yet there is no real fellowship. The only real fellowship is going to be those who have the like mind.

This truth can be clearly seen in the rest of the verse, because the doctrine that led to duty, and that duty led to their fellowship, and that fellowship included the breaking of bread and prayers. The breaking of bread could refer to the love feast, which many times they had before partaking of the Lord's Supper, or you could simply refer to the Lord's Supper. But no one is going to be intimately associated with individuals whom they cannot get along with and whom they cannot fellowship with by eating with them and praying with them.

I certainly have no intimate desire to associate with those who deny the dignity of Jesus Christ, deny the inspiration of the Bible, or are so confused that it is impossible to discuss spiritual truths

with them because they will not listen. Why? Because there is no commonality. Where there is no commonality, there is no community, and where there is no community, there is no doctrinal unity.

Fellowship is based upon doctrine, and being able to pray together is based upon doctrine. If one does not believe that God is sovereign, or that God will hear and answer prayer, why would I waste my time praying with him? If he does not believe that Jesus Christ is God, why would I pray with him? I am simply pointing out the fact. The Bible says in Acts 2:44, “And all that believed were together.”

Doctrine brings community. A lack of doctrine breeds contempt for others and issues in disunity. Getting back to what Brother Christman preached, one reason our churches and communities are so divided and distant from each other is that there is no doctrine. How in the world can you have fellowship when there is no doctrine? It is impossible.

Before I leave this point, I want to correct a misunderstanding. Look again at Acts chapter 2, beginning with verse 44: “And all that believed were together and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man had need.”

Someone has said, and I have heard it over and over, “This is early communism.” No, it is not. Neither is it Christian communism. The Bible does not teach communism, and the Bible does not teach socialism.

All this means is that they were willing to share, willing to help, willing to sacrifice, and willing to take care of each other. Look again at verses 44 and 45: “And all that believed were together and had all things in common.” Then, “And sold their possessions and goods, and imparted them to all men as every man had need.” As every man had need? If there was no need, there was no parting. You kept that which belonged to you.

Acts chapter 4 shows this again. Beginning with verse 32: “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul, neither said any of them that ought of the things which he

possessed was his own, but they had all things common," that is, they were willing to share.

And with great power gave the apostles witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked. Why? Because they were willing to share. For as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which being interpreted, the son of consolation, a Levite and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Here were people who owned property. They sold certain property, brought the money, gave it to the apostles, and said, "Just distribute it as everybody has need." That does not mean that these people ended themselves. It does not mean that they sold everything. They just had certain property that they sold.

To show you that this was not mandatory—it was not demanded—look in Acts chapter 5, beginning in verse 1: "But a certain man named Ananias with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet."

Before going any further, go back to verse 36 of chapter 4. Evidently, Barnabas had received some type of applause or spiritual recognition from the apostles. Ananias and Sapphira thought, "It would be good, it would be nice, if we were looked upon as generous and kind just like Barnabas." They had certain land, sold it, and, in verse 2, kept back part of it. Look at verse 3: "But Peter said to Ananias, Why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the land?"

Now watch what he says: "While it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" In other words, you did not have to sell the land. Once you received the money, you did not have to give any of it. It was yours. "Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied

unto men, but unto God." And Ananias, hearing those words, fell down and gave up the ghost.

And great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young man arose, wound him up, carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. Peter answered her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? And she said, Yes, for so much. Then Peter said to her, How is it that you've agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband is at the door.

They shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet and yielded up the ghost. And the young men came in and found her dead and carried her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things.

So, when you look at Acts chapter 2 and Acts chapter 4, these people did not have to sell their houses or lands. They did it because they wanted to be generous and kind. Probably they were not divesting themselves of everything, but they certainly had some things. As Peter said, when you had this land, was it not yours? You did not have to sell it, and when you did sell it, you did not have to give a dime. The sin was not in selling the land or keeping the money. The sin was lying to the Holy Ghost and pretending they had given everything to God when, in reality, they had not.

There is a vast difference between being willing to help and wanting to help and being forced to help. In Jesus Christ, we are made willing to help. In Jesus Christ, we have a desire to help. In socialism and in communism, one is forced to help. Force is used to make, coerce, and strong-arm one into giving, even in that which he does not believe in or desire to support.

Do you live under socialism? The answer is yes. Are you forced to support that which you hate and in that which you do not believe? You say, "I'm not." Oh, yes, you are. When you pay taxes, that is exactly what you are doing.

Do you support governmental education or indoctrination? I do not. None of my children ever went one day to a government school in their entire lives. None of them ever went one day to a public school or a government school. My wife and I sacrificed and sent ours to a Christian school. I taught in the school. I do not believe in it, yet I am forced to pay for a governmental education for children I do not even know. I do not believe in that education. In property taxes, about 90 percent of it goes to the government schools. I am simply pointing out the fact: that is socialism.

Thomas Jefferson said it like this: to compel a man to subsidize with his taxes the propagation of ideas which he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical. That's Thomas Jefferson. And I agree. It is socialism. It is communism. It is tyranny. There is no socialism and there is no communism in the early church. It was simply fellowship and a willingness to share that which God had bestowed.

Your doctrine leads to your duty, and your duty leads to fellowship. Doctrine determines conduct. Our duty and fellowship teach us exactly how to conduct our lives. How do we get along with others? What will keep us from invading and violating the sanctity of lives, homes, and the families of others?

What will give us what we call common sense and the knowledge to act? The answer is doctrine. We must know, believe, and apply.

If we are going to live in close proximity to one another, whether on the same land or side by side on private land, and see each other regularly, how do we live together without creating strife, ill will, hard feelings, and even hatred? Proverbs 25:17 says, “Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor's house, lest he grow weary of thee and so hate thee.”

Christian conduct is governed by biblical truth, and biblical truth is doctrine. Christian conduct respects the rights, time, home, and lives of others. It respects privacy and keeps us from intruding upon or violating the privacy, time, and rights of others.

There is a vast difference between being a help and being a hindrance. Just because you have nothing to do does not mean

your neighbor has nothing to do. I have been a pastor for a long time and have preached all over this country. I have company on a regular basis, usually for fellowship, and sometimes for the classes they are attending.

Steve and Lorraine come up regularly. If they are staying in the house, I tell them, “Look, I have chores that I have to do. If you would like to continue fellowshipping, come ride with me while I do the chores. If you do not want to ride with me, just stay calm. I will be back as soon as I can.” There are things I have to do, and there are things everybody has to do.

Sometimes they must be done at certain times. If I have four or five hours free, that does not mean Brother Allen or Brother Stan has four or five hours free. Not everybody can lie around at the beach all week. We tease Brother Cliff that he is going to the beach, though he works hard all week long.

Christian conduct is that which determines how we live and how we interact. I have always wanted to do this, though I have never done it: one Sunday morning, to stay in bed and let everybody gather at church, wondering, “Where’s the pastor? Where’s the preacher?” When they called to find out, I would say, “Oh, I’m sorry. I have company coming today and I just can’t make it to church.” No, if I have company on Sunday, they either go with me to church or stay home and wait for me to come back. I am simply saying that this is Christian conduct.

One of the greatest truths that must be learned and should be learned is what is known as a biblical work ethic. Everyone appreciates help—real help. The older I get, the more I appreciate help, and the more I appreciate younger men with strength. Everybody appreciates help. As I have aged, I have found that there are many things I can no longer do that I used to do. But there are some things I can still do, and I do not expect anyone to help me do that which I know I can do.

Here is the biblical principle in Galatians chapter 6, beginning with verse 2: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own

work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden."

If there is something pressing and I cannot do it, or at least cannot do it alone, I do not mind calling Brother Cliff, Brother Stan, or Brother Pete the Pop. But if it is something I can do, I am not bothering them. I have a duty and a responsibility to help my brothers and to help those who need help. But I also have a duty and responsibility to bear my own burdens and do what I can do. This is Christian conduct. We have to learn how to work together, how to help each other, how not to upset each other, and how not to bother each other.

I could give you illustration after illustration. I get phone calls from all over this country. Alice can tell you that many times I am back at my desk, studying and preparing a message, when suddenly I receive a call from someone who wants to talk for an hour and a half. They want to tell me what I already know. Sometimes they even tell me what they heard me say in a message, while I am chomping at the bit to get back to my studying.

Then it hits me: this is ministry. Just be patient. They are happy that they have learned and that they know certain things, so I sit patiently and listen. I have found that the Lord always makes up for it. He gives double help and double mercy, and I am thankful. I am simply pointing out that, if we can do something ourselves, that is what we need to do. If we need help, that is, of course, of a different color.

But laziness, slothfulness, indolence, and indifference will destroy any church or any community. Doctrine always leads us to duty. Duty always leads us to fellowship. Fellowship always brings us into conduct that will continue that fellowship and not disturb it.

Here is the fourth thing: doctrine teaches us patience. When I think of this subject, I immediately think of the doctrine of illumination. I am going to explain why in just a moment.

But let me ask a few questions first. Have you ever been frustrated with children and young teenagers who do not understand and will not perform in the way you think they should?

When that happens, we berate them, scold them, and become upset with them. Why are we upset? Why do we berate? Why do we scold? Here is the answer: we expect them to act like adults when they are not adults. They do not have the mentality of an adult.

I have often said that I can absolutely prove that light travels faster than sound, because the counsel and advice I gave my children as teenagers, they never heard until they reached forty.

That is my point. Turn in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 2, and think about this in church, in community, and in putting up with one another.

John writes, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” In this passage, the Apostle John speaks about little children, young men, and fathers. We automatically know that there are three stages in the Christian's life. In reality, there is a fourth one, which comes before little children.

It is found in 1 Peter 2:2: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” When we speak of the Christian life, we are speaking of babes, little children, young men, and fathers. There are some little children here today. In fact, there was a little girl here today who was not yet a year old, or was just a year old.

Would you talk to that one-year-old girl as you talk to Jesse, who is twelve? Would you expect her to eat the same things Jesse eats, do the same things he does, and have the same abilities and understanding? The answer is no. Would you expect Jesse, at twelve, to have the understanding of Steve, who is much older than I am? No, he is not; he is younger—but seventy-five, seventy-five.

Do you expect a twelve-year-old boy to have the understanding of a seventy-five-year-old man? No.

You're not that far off mentally. You know better than that. But isn't it strange? We do not make this distinction when it comes to church, community, or Christianity. We sometimes do not understand that there is a babe, a little child, a young man, or a father in Christ. We expect a young man or a little child to have the same understanding and the same mentality that we do, and we try to speak to them on the same level. It's impossible. Then we become frustrated and bent out of shape because they do not understand what we are trying to say.

If you're living around a diverse group of Christians, whether in a church or a community, you must understand that there are babes in Christ, little children in Christ, young men in Christ, and fathers in Christ.

Now, I said that in dealing with this, I immediately thought of the doctrine of illumination. Why? Because the answer is that God does not illuminate the minds of all people at the same time, neither does He illuminate the minds with the same amount of truth at the same time. There are principles in the Bible that will lead to greater understanding, that is for sure. But Mark chapter 4 and verse 33 says of the Lord Jesus Christ, “And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.”

I got news for you, a one-year-old or two-year-old child is not able to understand everything that I'm saying today. Probably a twelve-year-old may not be able to understand everything that I'm saying today. I hope a teenager can, but the point I'm trying to make is this: if God does not turn the lights on, if God does not open our eyes, if God does not give us light, we're never ever going to see. Wow.

That means there must be patience and dignity with each other. What is going to give us patience? Doctrine. We understand that everyone must be dealt with on their level of understanding. The apostle said in Hebrews 5, "I have fed you with milk, and not with

meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it." There is the milk of the Word and the meat of the Word as well.

The Bible says in Proverbs 2:6, "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:7, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." In other words, understanding is the gift of God. God has to open our eyes. When Paul said, "Consider," the word means to ponder, to think upon, and to meditate. While thinking upon and meditating on the Word, ask the Lord for illumination.

That is what he said: “Consider what I say to the Lord. Give the understanding in all things.” Illumination is the ministry of the Holy Spirit, whereby he guides us to understand previously revealed truth. There is no understanding apart from the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Illumination is when God turns a light on for us, when we see things in Scripture that we had not previously seen or understood. Memorizing Scripture is not illumination. You should memorize Scripture, but that is not illumination. Studying Scripture is necessary too, but that is not illumination.

If it were midnight and all these lights were turned off, it would be totally dark in here. Once you flip the switch, the room is illuminated. That is what God does through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He turns the switch on and opens our eyes that we might see certain things. I have been around other pastors and seen things, and I get so excited and try to tell them, "Look at this; listen to this." They sit there like, "So? So?"

I don't care how educated you are or how many degrees you have behind your name. If God the Holy Spirit does not turn the light on in your mind, you will never understand the Word of God. So here is the application: Why should I get upset at the baby in Christ, the little child in Christ, or the young man in Christ when he doesn't understand what I understand?

A long time ago, I would get bent out of shape if folks didn't grasp everything I taught on Sunday. Then one day it hit me: I was expecting them to grasp and understand in one hour what it had

taken me forty years to study out. If God doesn't turn the light on, I could preach on it for four hundred years and they would still never see it. So why should I get upset with you if you don't see what I see, when God is the one who illumines our minds and gives us understanding? That should lead me to be patient with you, to teach you, share with you, and pray with you until God does indeed open your eyes.

This should be a transforming thought for you. We are so often impatient with each other doctrinally. How long did it take God to bring you from where you were to where you are? Did it happen in a minute, a week, a month, or a year? No. It took a lifetime.

I have a pastor friend, and we laugh oftentimes. We have been preaching about the same amount of time—fifty-nine years. Someone will say, "Wow, what a message. How long did it take you to work up that message?" We smile and say, "Fifty-nine years." And that is true, because every message is a compilation of everything we have known, been taught, and understood by the Holy Spirit for all those years.

Doctrine Teaches Us to Defend One Another

If we understand doctrine, it will lead us to our duty, to fellowship, and to proper conduct. It will teach us to be patient with one another, so that we will not be fussing, fighting, and feuding. Doctrine also teaches us to defend ourselves and others. I am not going to preach the two messages I have on the biblical doctrine of self-defense, though I think you should listen to them if you have not heard them. I am going to set forth a principle connected with those messages. The Bible teaches clearly that we are one body, but different members of that body. When one member suffers, the body suffers also.

You say, "I don't believe that." Take your hammer and hit your thumb as hard as you can. You will find that your other hand grabs that thumb, and that thumb goes straight to your mouth. Your whole body is in sympathy with that thumb. The Bible says in Hebrews 13:3, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." We must suffer with others. If they are in bonds, we are

bound with them. I have had people say, “Well, I’m willing to defend my brother in Christ.” Really? Are you willing to help him when he needs help?

The truth is that we need each other; we need community. We may not be on the same property, but when one brother, one church, or one family needs help, we need to be there. Do you realize this is how our forefathers lived? When the Indians or the outlaws attacked one family, the community came to defend and help that family. They understood this principle: whatever the enemy can do to one family, it can do to the rest of us.

We are living in desperate times. Our economy is crashing. We are being invaded by hordes of illegal immigrants, and our government is complicit in all of this. Our borders are filled with cartels and those that push drugs. I just saw this week where there is an island right off Texas, a hundred and something acres, and the cartels have taken over that island, setting up sniper nests. Our government was fixing to go in and take the island back.

You think I am making this up? You can check it out. There are videos of it and pictures of these illegal alien soldiers coming across with weapons out front. We're living in desperate times. Just as Warren Lucas asked, if your family or homestead were attacked by a gang of outlaws, dopeheads, or illegals seeking to murder you and take whatever you possess, would you want your neighbors to help? I don't know about you, but I think I'd appreciate all the help that I can get. If you would want your neighbors to help, are you willing to help your neighbors in such an instance? Are you able? Are you capable? Are you trained to help your neighbors in such an instance?

This lawyer asked our Lord Jesus, "What is the greatest commandment?" He never quoted from any of the Ten. He actually quoted from Deuteronomy 6: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might." And the second is likened to it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." If you would protect and defend yourself, and you love your neighbor as yourself, that means you would protect and defend them as well.

It has not been all that long ago since I was a boy, but I can assure you that back then there was real community. There was a commonality of faith. Even unsaved folks usually would at least acknowledge God and His commandments. They would not run off and... Times were just different, and communities took care of each other. If a barn burned down or a house caught fire, the neighbors would come together, help rebuild, and take care of it. If a neighbor died, the other neighbors would bring food, sit with the widow or widower, and even do the chores until the mourning period was over. That was community.

On one occasion, when I was seven years old, there was a rabid fox in our community. One night, for some reason this remains in my mind, we had twenty to twenty-five men on our front porch, all with loaded weapons, waiting for that fox. You wouldn't find that today. When there was a drought in our community, the people would get together and pray. They would invite every believer around to pray. Some of you who are older might remember 1954. I was ten years old. We had a drought.

We had a neighbor who was a drunkard and an unbeliever. My father was going around getting men together to pray for rain. Out of courtesy, Dad knew that he was unsaved and knew that he was a drunkard, but Dad invited him anyhow. You know what the man did? He laughed in my father's face. God sent rain in answer to those men's prayers. I saw this as a ten-year-old boy. The fence line that separated our property—it rained on our side and did not rain on the neighbor's side.

But there was still community. When there were special meetings like this, or what the world would call a revival, there were always cottage prayer meetings, usually two weeks before. I have seen as many as fifty folks at a time praying just for God's blessing upon the meeting. There was community in those days. You know why? Because there was a common faith, a common doctrine, and a common desire to help. There was a conduct.

With all the turmoil that we are experiencing in this land, all the frustration, all the crime, and all the wickedness, here is the question: Would you like to see a little heaven on earth? Would

that be enjoyable? Would you desire that? Look at Deuteronomy 11, beginning with verse 13.

God said, “it shall come to pass if you shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in its due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn and thy wine and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and that you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them.”

SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 11:17–21 (KJV)

> And then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and He shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield no other fruit, unless you perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you. Therefore shall you lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be frontlets before your eyes. And that you shall teach them your children, speaking to them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou write them upon the doorposts of thine house, and upon thy gates, that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give you as the days of heaven upon earth.

If you have a family, a church, or a community that will live doctrinally, biblically, scripturally, obey God, and do as He commands, it will be a little bit of heaven on earth. Communities. Community. “Com” is a preposition meaning “with.” Unity. With unity is what the word community means. It means that which you have in common. We have a common unity in Jesus Christ. We need to believe it, act upon it, and bring our lives into conformity to His Word. So there will be heaven on earth.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. We thank You for this meeting.

Oh, Lord, help us to apply these truths that we've heard today. Help us determine in our hearts, Lord, that we will have community by Your grace and by Your mercy, because You're the one that can give that unity, that commonality in the faith. We ask, Father, for Your blessing upon us. Lead us, guide us, direct us, teach us. Build us up in the most holy faith. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

Geography and Community — Conference Speaker

The Necessity of Physical Proximity

One of the things we perhaps danced around today that I'll punch square in the face right now is that there is obviously a geography to community. It is not that one geography is better than another, or one piece of land is better than another. But there is a physicality, a necessity to be near. When we talk about near, a few miles away, or a few acres away, with vehicles that run on gas, it is nothing for me if I heard Brother Weaver broke his leg. He'd call me on his cell phone, and I could be at his property. If I took it fast, I'd be there in 20 minutes.

In the Pioneer days, or in Little House on the Prairie days, it would take hours to send word for the doctor to come and help. Now it is a two-second phone call and a quick fifteen-minute drive. I can be across town or across the county because I have a vehicle that runs on fuel.

If we can see through the wisdom the Lord has given us, there will come a day when there is no fuel, no electricity, and no cell service. How close do I need to be to Brother Weaver that, if he were to break his leg, he could get word to me and I would be able to assist him? I need to be within a mile or two, within an acre or two, to come to his aid.

There is a physical restraint to truly being in community. We have the affluence and ability to drive. Folks come here from the coast, driving hours to get here. But if we remove vehicles and fuel from the equation, we are back to asking how far we can walk to help someone. Can you walk from here to Highway 206, to 268, or

to Broxton? How long does it take to walk to Douglas? What is a Fitzgerald walk from here? It would take all day.

If I set out for Brother Weaver's land, I would have a backpack, and it would take all day to get there. If he needed my help, it would take a day for someone he sent as a messenger to reach me, and an entire day for me to get back, even if I started instantly.

There is inherently the need to be close physically if we take vehicles and fuel out of the equation. I believe anyone here understands that that day is soon coming upon us. Think about the night our Lord was born. The shepherds in the hills said, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing." How far away was the field where they watched their flocks? Think about Broxton. Was it in Broxton?

That is a good hour and a half walk. It must have been close; it was not miles and miles away. We can think of the pioneer days, when, if you were on the corner of your land, you could holler across the ravine to the other farm and get word. They would walk to the corner of their land, holler farther, and the message would go from farm to farm.

Brother Weaver just talked about illumination. If the Lord has laid it on your heart to be close, it takes giving up some of the things you have on your property. Everybody here lives in a house, I know that. Some are in Douglas, some farther, and some way farther. But what are you willing to give up to be close? Not just theologically, saying, "Oh yes," but physically, if you are willing to say, "There will come a time when we are reduced to foot travel." Where are you, and who can you walk to by foot?

Where should you be when you lose your fuel? You had better be where you hope to be and near whom you hope to be near, even in the midnight hour. Do not wait that long. If it comes to that, understand that we are not going to be moving around if we lose fuel. I hope I do not have to convince you what that would take and how easily it could happen.

I encourage you to be blessed in the theology we have heard today. I would hope the result of this, as well as the following meeting—biblical home defense, biblical community defense...

Down this road, the next three or four houses are all family of the Peacocks. You can holler from my house to Brother Royce; Brother Royce could holler from his house to Royce Lee; one of us could holler this way to Brother Allen; and Brother Allen could holler that way to Brother Peacock, to Brother Victor. The Peacock family is so blessed, and what we are talking about they have already done, but it is forty years in the making.

We are talking about three months, and then we will have another meeting to discuss these things. The Lord has blessed them in that. I have known Brother Weaver for twenty-five years, since 1996—twenty-seven years now—and I am blessed, after twenty-seven years, to be living near him, within walking distance. Even if I had to walk and drag my family, with children in backpacks, I could do it to be near him, living in community when we need to survive.

That day is coming. At the next meeting, January 20th, we will deal with many more pertinent issues, including where to be. Some of you are going to have to leave your homes. Leave them; they are not worth dying for. Move to where you can be safe, where the Lord can bless you. I do not need to beat the dead horse; we will discuss this on January 20th.

Please put it on your calendars and pray about these things. I encourage you: these days are upon us. If none of this made sense, talk to your pastor, and he will get you the information and literature to understand that these days are upon us. We talked about Y2K over lunch; Y2K did not happen. COVID frightened us—not so much because of the virus, but because of the disruption to the economy. It was disruptive. These days are coming upon us.

All we can do is be ready for them. They are going to happen. I am not forcing it, and you are not making it happen. But, in wisdom and with vision, we ought to be ready. In that preparation, bless others and love our neighbor as ourselves. Amen.

Community and the Old Paths — Brother Campbell

For community, that people need each other. And even then, that needed some tweaking.

We might critique that the pilgrims were a little too socialist to be efficient. So they went back to an older path, to Scripture, where it says, “If a man not work, neither should he eat.” They refined the old path they were making for us to follow. Even while forging an old path that we look to, they were following an older path that is Scripture.

The theme of this year’s conference is community. What does the Bible have to say about community—helping each other, serving each other, working alongside each other, and putting up with each other? So much is required to make a community successful in the long term. Anybody can blow in and blow out, but what does it take to make a biblical community successful? First of all, the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. We must fulfill that each and every day with those around us.

A Vision for Douglas Gospel Assembly — Brother Allen

It is a blessing to be here on Saturday morning. I appreciate the word of the Lord that Brother Campbell has given, and I would like for you to look with me at three verses found in Psalms 133.

We are talking about community, love, kindness, mercy, and enjoying being together. Several years ago, I asked all our people at the church to read a book called Meeting House Hill. That little book told of our forefathers and how, each time they pulled up their tent stakes and moved westward, they would stop to create another village and always build their sanctuary—a little log building—on the highest geographic location in the area. The book taught us always to keep God the highest and foremost. How wonderful it is that David said in Psalm 133, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.” A little boy once said, listening to his daddy talk about community and togetherness.

His daddy heard a great noise outside, ran out, and found two cats with their tails tied together, hanging over the clothesline. Well, that is unity, but it is probably not the kind we need. David said, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to

dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore." Amos said in the third chapter, verse 3, "How can two walk together except they be agreed?"

How wonderful it is to know that we have brothers and sisters together in the theology of this book called the Bible. This Bible is given to us to grow and to learn how to live, even as Brother Campbell just brought out: if a man will not work, let him not eat. What a blessing it is to be able to work and do some things. I had a wreck about two years ago and have been recuperating, but I feel better now than I did then. How wonderful it is.

I am going to give you a little bit of a history of what happened in God's in our life, and how the Lord worked a miracle regarding this church that is here. But first of all, where there is no vision, men perish. There has to be a vision and a desire. "When desire cometh, it is a tree of life," Solomon said. How wonderful it is to be motivated—to have a vision for the members of Douglas Gospel Assembly. Of course, we did not start by coming out under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church to teach us what we are supposed to teach.

We learned that the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God, and that these Scriptures are profitable unto us, every one of us, male or female. God gave His Word, and His Word is established in the heavens; it will never be removed. If someone says they are trying to take our Bibles away, they will never be able to do that. God made a covenant with a man called Abraham and decreed that it was an everlasting covenant. When John the Baptist's father was able to speak, he gave a prophecy of that everlasting kingdom. We are thankful that Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom which shall not be removed.

Our vision as men is found in 1 Timothy, the second chapter, the first few verses: "I exhort therefore, that first of all supplication, prayers, intercession, giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and

peaceful life in all godliness and honesty." Verse 2 is our vision for enabling others to find the blessing of the Lord Jesus: that we might do nothing else but worship, serve, and honor our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

That is the reason our forefathers came to this country: to give honor and praise. I told our people that we found various ones coming under the authority of the Spirit of God, calling upon the name of the Lord. We were having baptisms in the water hole outside, in the river, and in various places. What an honor it is to see people come to the Lord Jesus, that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life.

That is our joy. It is just one day, the fulfillment of Jesus' first ministry and first sermon, when we are going to hear that call: "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit" what? The earth. One day our Heavenly Father is going to be totally and completely in charge of everything, leading to a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.

The Lord worked a miracle many years ago. I was helping to pastor a little country church where my grandfather had pastored. When I was eight years old, he was asking young men at the end of his sermon to give their lives to the Lord Jesus. He said, "Lord, I'm coming home," and fell dead in the church across those young men. Afterwards, while I was helping pastor that church with Brother Frank Vaughn, God called me to preach the message of the gospel.

A man who had become a multimillionaire once said, "I remember when bread was two loaves for a quarter, but I didn't have a quarter." God blessed that man, one of my uncles, my mother's brother, to come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. He gave his life to the Lord and said, "I want to do something."

He said, "Let's buy a piece of land and let's build some elderly cottages on it. Let's do some things for the Lord's work." I said, "Well, if that's what you feel like, you man's got the money. I mean, he knows God gives some folks the ability to do that." So we bought these twenty-six acres for the church. There was no church

here then, but this is where the church is now: twenty-six acres of property.

Our desire was to lead a quiet and peaceable life. Uncle Richard, my uncle, said, “Well, maybe we can build some cottages all up in here.” So I went to governmental sources in the Douglas area. They said, “We want to know everything about your background, we want to know everything about the church function, we want to know everything about how much money is in the bank, what you plan to do in the future, and besides, we need—they need to be able to handle everything through us.”

I said, “I think not. My forefathers came to this country for freedom and liberty, and that does not sound like freedom and liberty to me.” So we put down some septic tanks and ran some EMC lines. Forty years ago, EMC turned the power on in this church; the church was full of people, and we praised the Lord. We decided to let elderly people with mobile homes come and hook up.

We built one little, one-bedroom cottage in the corner. Brother Harold has been in that cottage for five or six years or more. He has enjoyed it, and we have enjoyed him. He made a garden, fed the people here in the church, processed meat, and made a honey flow. He knows how to get those bees to multiply and do some things. God blessed the effort, though we did not see as many people take place.

After we built the church, children were born and grew up. Our daughter had gone to college and was an educated young lady, so we said, “We’ll build some rooms over here on the side and let you teach, Candace.” Brother Weaver, along with Sister Weaver, said, “Put some of our children in there, please.” So we did. We had eight or ten pupils, and we worked to see them taught the Word of God.

Where there's no vision, men perish. Maybe we did not do as much as we wanted, but we were not under the headship or auspices of the federal government. People came to me and said, we'd like to get married. I said, okay. The Bible teaches that in the mouth of two or more witnesses, every word's established. I said,

we don't have to have a piece of paper to get married. Some said, I don't know about that. Well, are we under the headship of Jesus Christ or under the headship of man?

It's up to us, the desires, and to put forth the best foot to do what is right. Our vision down through the years has been the same. I did perform those marriages and have been performing them for 40 some odd years. The government does not own us. When the government says we want your bank account, that's the day they'll have to come and take it. The reality is, we have desires associated with this Bible. Look with me at the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis. Something has happened in just the last few years that has become very prevalent in our society. I preached a message some years ago on burying your people intact, totally, completely whole.

When we started trying to get a cemetery, I knew Neil Sims had authority over cemeteries. The government was coming down in Georgia with many requirements and mandates and hooks to jump through to create a cemetery. But Neil Sims came out and said, Alan, let's do it now. He said, I see things on the horizon coming. We cut out an acre or acre and a half and created a cemetery. A couple of years later Neil Sims came and said, Alan, I'm trying to buy land for a cemetery, and there's so many things we're having to go through right now. I said, I don't know that I'm going to do it. Turn with me to Genesis 49. Verse 28 says, we're talking about the 12 tribes of Israel.

This is that their father spake unto them and blessed them, every one according to his blessing he blessed them. See, God declared that He would bless us—rising up, sitting down, in the city, in the field, in the house, with us wherever we went, because we're His people. He charged them. Here's the time that Jacob is about to leave. He charges his twelve sons. He said, "I am to be gathered unto my people." He said, "Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite."

We hear at all times, especially the last few years, "Well, Grandpa's going to die, but I think it costs less money. We're just going to go ahead and cremate him." Jacob said, "I want you to bury me with my fathers." He said, "In the cave that is in the field

of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth." When Jacob had made an end of commanding—he didn't suggest it, he commanded his sons.

He gathered up his feet into the bed, yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. What a blessing to be gathered to and with his people. In Genesis forty-nine, Jacob called unto his sons, "Gather yourselves together, and I will tell you the things which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together and hear, you sons of Jacob; hearken unto Israel your father." He begins to tell them their faults, their problems, but he told them the things that we do, and to please the Heavenly Father.

SCRIPTURE READING - Genesis 49:3–8 (KJV)

> "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father's bed and defiled it; you went up to my couch. Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united.
>
> In their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel. Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee."

What a blessing it is for God to help us in our time of trouble, in our hours of need, that have a vision and a desire to help others.

For several years, we operated a school. Along with that, we promoted private enterprise. Private enterprise tells us for a man to use his brain and to be able to overcome, to excel, to come forth victorious. Private enterprise has built and created this great

nation that is being torn apart in front of our eyes. We're persuaded that if God be for us, who can be against us? We know the bad, the ugly, but we also know the good, the righteous, and the holy. We know Him that was, who is, and is to come, the Almighty. We promoted private enterprise by building a woodworking shop. We promoted self-sustainability by having a garden. Brother Harold is a good gardener, I want to tell you folks.

He has produced a lot of food right here on the ground. But did you know you don't have to have a large acreage to make yourself self-sustainable? You don't have to have a large area. I grew up three blocks from the courthouse in Douglas, Georgia. My mother on a little 50-foot lot. Daddy bought two 50-foot lots on the side of a house and behind the house two more 50-foot lots.

We worked those gardens with a hand plow, hoes, rakes, and shovels. We created enough food by God's grace. The Lord giveth and the Lord takes away. But it can be done, for my daddy and mama taught me how to plant seed, fertilize, and do things. I don't know about you, but it's important that children be taught. Tell them this is the way we're going to do it, for the right reason and purpose.

In the process of time, we saw many people live in that little cottage that Brother Harold lives in. I think it was 10 or 12. Had 10 or 12 people in the school. But you know, if everybody would just win one or two to the Lord Jesus, everybody can't have their quiver totally full like David said in Psalm 127. Maybe they won't have but two or three children. But the reality is they can be taught the things of God the right way to go. Brother John's children, some of them kind of grew up and each gone their own way. Life changes for us. But I just want to give you a little bit of history of where we are. The government is not involved in our bank accounts for the church. We are thankful for that.

And they have no reason to be. What you gave to the Lord's work last year was up to you. That's between you and God. We're to be obedient to the voice of the Son of God, and if we are, we one day will hear His voice. Job said, when He calls, I will answer, here am I. Thank God.

Our Father, we do want to thank you again for the lovely morning that you've granted us and for the opportunity to speak a few words regarding thee. We thank you, Lord, for the many times that you've answered prayer. When we were down on our knees and didn't know exactly what to do, we felt thy presence and we knew without a doubt that your word was sufficient. And when we poured over the Scriptures to find the path that was right to take, Lord, Your Word always established our going.

And Thy peace has been in our hearts. And what a pleasant experience—how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Thank You, Lord, for these people that are gathered here this morning. Help us love You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. For this is the will of God concerning us which are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Walking and Working Together — Conference Speaker

Thank you, Brother Allen. That was the foundation we needed for today. I would like to give a few thoughts before Stan comes up. There is an old song called “They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love.” We are to have a testimony. That does not mean we are to be weak or soft, but folks are to know us by our charity in Christ, by our love. The first one goes like this.

We will walk with each other. We will walk hand in hand. And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land, and they'll know we are Christians by our love. Verse two: We will work with each other. We will work side by side, and we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride. And they'll know we are Christians by our love. How many of us have known within our churches, perhaps within our families, of an embarrassing weakness or a sin that a brother has committed, perhaps fallen into? When we learn of it by any circumstance, we have the opportunity to guard a brother or a sister's dignity. We all know that opportunity is there for us. When we hear the dirt, however it comes our way, we know there's an opportunity to guard someone's dignity, even someone outside of the faith. An unsaved

neighbor who you found has committed an embarrassing sin, even if he's not a believer.

But it's going to shame him as that news spreads. If we find out, we have the opportunity to guard someone's dignity. Or the flip side, we have the chance to spread it like wildfire. As soon as we see somebody who ain't heard it yet, we get to tell them too. Scripture would have us go one-on-one.

And if necessary, move on. But we have the opportunity as we walk hand in hand, work side by side, to save and guard each other's dignity. There's a blessing for that. How quickly a church can be torn apart by gossip, by spreading that fire of deceit, to shame a brother just because he fell into an error and you didn't, so you've got the upper hand. What a shame, but what an opportunity to be a blessing to our community within the faith and even without. I would like to pick up on this notion: we will walk hand in hand and work side by side. I was going to use Brother Alvin, because I know he would be used to it, but let me ask another brother to help illustrate it.

Take my hand. I don't really want to hold this brother's hand. It's rough, scarred, maybe a little clammy. It's just uncomfortable, awkward for us to hold hands like this. But notice, it's very personal, yet very awkward. But what if my brother—he's a healthy man, good stature—but what if he was ill? What if he had a bum leg, a bad ankle, and needed help up these stairs as he came up, and I needed to reach out my hand and help him up, perhaps?

All awkwardness would go away. I don't need to hold his hand, because he stands before me, a healthy man. I've greeted him, and then we let it go. But he needs me to hold his hand, because this brother has a disease. He has the sin nature within him. And he needs me to hold his hand. I need him to hold my hand, to help me up as I've fallen into error, into weakness. He needs to come alongside me and pick me up and work side by side to walk along with me.

This ought not be neglected. If we were not just hand-in-hand, but arm-in-arm, even closer, even stronger. In battle, we want to be united, to link arms against the foe. Are we not in a battle

against Satan and his demons? We might think life is easy now, but the unity of the brethren is so very necessary. Not just that I wave at him, but we need to be close, hand in hand, arm in arm.

Think back to Gideon's night. You give each of us a sword; you get swords. You are the bad guys, and we are on the Lord's side. Turn out the lights in this building and say, “Okay, have at it.” I would say we have a fighting chance: two against sixty. Why? Because we are united. We have strength. I know where he is; I know where his hips are and where his shoulder is. I can pull him, push him, and turn him out. We are going to defeat you, heathen—the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. Jehovah! This is what we can do when we are united. Come on, devil. Give us your best. Amen.

This is what we must have. Today we may think that was loud and perhaps a little silly-looking, but we have to take it seriously. In the times of our lives, even in the Pilgrim's day, they must have been united. Things were going well in the church and in society at that point. We are so disgusted with what we see, yet we will neglect and forsake walking hand in hand with each other—brothers helping each other that closely. It gets awkward and uncomfortable at times, but we have to be willing to go there, to be that close in community.

The Community of the Family — Brother Stan

Before I actually start my message this morning, I would like to thank two men because they have had a big influence in my life. One is Brother Allen. We met when he was a much younger pastor and I was a much younger man, because I was not even a pastor then. He was talking about when they had the church and the school, and I saw that. I was not a part of it, but it made a huge impression on me. I remember Royce Lee being over here in the school, Candace teaching, and those students in there. I was probably in there fixing some lights or something like that. I do not know what I was doing.

But I remember the woodshop. I also remember this: someone in the church had passed away and needed to be buried. They were going to be buried right out here. I believe it was Ricky Wade. He is

sitting back there—acting like a Baptist on the back pew—but I believe it was Ricky.

He was in that wood shop, and they were actually building a casket. I had never seen that done before, and I got to thinking about it. I asked, what was the purpose of that? It did not take me long to figure out: if you go buy a casket from Sims or Ricketson or anywhere else, you know, that is thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars. So here was a church operating in a way that I had never even heard about before, at least in modern history.

It was almost dumbfounding to me. I had been reared in the church my whole life, but I had never seen a church stepping out of the sanctuary, so to speak. Obviously, they would step out and maybe do certain types of outreach programs and visitation, but I had never seen a church do those types of things. Then I saw the cottages. I asked, "What are those for?" They were for anyone who needed housing. I was blown away. I was thinking, I have never seen anything like this before.

Thank you, Brother. Thank you. And then Brother John and Miss Alice—poor Miss Alice, she has to put up with you all the time. She has been dragged from pillar to post across these United States, I know. But Brother John has been a mentor to me. I was hearing Brother John's messages when you still got them on the little cassette tapes.

At one point, my wife and I were looking at buying a new vehicle to us, and the only real criterion I had for the vehicle was that it had to be able to play Brother John's tapes. Everything else was up to my wife, but I wanted to be able to hear his messages. I thank you for your faithfulness. I look around in here today, and I do not think there is probably anybody in here who has not been affected by both of you, by your kindness and grace. I told Josh—my son-in-law, who is here—that the only way they could get anybody to listen to me preach was to have me right before lunch, because nobody wanted to miss lunch. But as we are talking about community, my subject this morning is the community of the family. Family is one of my favorite subjects in all the Scriptures.

Family as the Core Community

It is certainly not anything that can be dealt with in just one sermon. This is something you could spend months and months studying as you dealt with the biblical model of the family. But I wish to bring some of my thoughts this morning. As I look, we see young couples, and then we see older folks. I am now in that second category. When I first met Brother Alan, I did not have all my children. We had some young children, and now I have grandchildren, one of whom is here. God has been mighty good to my wife and myself and our family.

I would like to share some things with you. What is the family community? What is the purpose of family? Why do we have family? You can have family everywhere. You can hear those who come together to the church. You are different from most people, different from the vast majority of the world around us, because you have set aside a Saturday to come and listen to men expound the Word of God, and to have fellowship together with other believers in Christ. You are different from the vast majority, even from many who are formal members of a church somewhere.

There is a difference, and there is a small minority—a small, small minority of people who have a real, true desire to follow the biblical model of what God has set forth in His Word. The secular world is very unsure about what family is even all about. Do you realize that what was known for years as the nuclear family was terminology that came about to describe one man and one woman? We need to make sure of that. Then they had children between themselves and lived basically a very stable life, depending on the era or decade, but it was a family organization that was not all split up, mixed, and mingled. That is becoming such a rare thing, even today. I am not trying to be critical whatsoever, but even within the church, we are seeing so many who do not have a real understanding of what God's pattern is for the family.

Why is that, do you think? I think it is because it is so easy not to address it. So many pastors are more concerned about filling pews than preaching the Word. When you really get into the Word of God, so often you do not want to offend people. None of us wants

to offend anybody willingly. But if we are being true to the Word, it is not we who are doing the offending; I would say it is the Holy Spirit.

The secular world is completely unsure about the purpose of the family. It seems more concerned with materialism, permissiveness, and even immaturity in children. I appreciate your children, Bartholomew, because I have watched them when you visited us. It is refreshing to see children who can sit. They do not have to be little statues, but they are, and all the young people I have seen here, polite and respectful.

Folks, that does not just happen. We are not greatly concerned with what the secular world has to say, because it has nothing good to say to us anyway. The truth is, the secular world hates Christ and hates Christians. We are more concerned about the purpose of the Christian family. I would say that, number one, the purpose of the Christian family is to rear godly future generations. The Christian family is not merely for a man and a woman to marry, nor merely to buy a house with a picket fence and have a bank account. There is nothing wrong with that house, picket fence, or bank account. But our purpose is to raise godly future generations.

The second purpose of the Christian family is for us to exercise dominion in our sphere of influence. What do you mean by our sphere of influence? I am a business owner; I have my business. I cannot run my business in an un-Christlike way and be biblical. Every person in this place, and every person who will listen by way of video, must understand this. Mama, you may be homeschooling your children, and praise God if you are. Or your child may attend a Christian private school, and if so, that is fine. But it is our purpose as Christian men and women to exercise dominion wherever God has placed us.

I have not often been assigned subjects to speak on, but I appreciate this assignment. I feel you gave me the best one, and the best time. How did it go? “It takes a village to raise a child?” No, it takes a Christian family. In 1996, that Jezebel Hillary Clinton published a book entitled, “It Takes a Village to Raise a Child.” Y’all are familiar with the title of that book. I hope you have not read it.

Basically, the thesis of that book is that the rearing of children takes the collective effort of a village. My daddy taught me this, Brother John: We don't raise children. You raise corn; you rear children. The basic thesis of the book is that the rearing of children takes the collective effort of a village. In essence, she was saying it becomes everybody else's responsibility if that child is going to grow up and become a successful adult.

Well, that is not what our Lord says. That is not what the Scriptures say. I'm going to tell you, a lot of people in the village of this world are wicked, wicked, wicked. They have come to the point where the government decides that they own your children. We have seen this accelerated. But folks, it is the parent's responsibility to rear the children. Do other people have influence? Absolutely they do. Some influence is good and some influence is bad.

As parents, you better make a determination on which one it is. The vast majority of people, though, have fallen prey to this unbiblical model. And what does that do? That forms out the responsibility of the family to others. We have responsibility, and we have to raise our children. We can't save our children. That is the work of God. But we can make that ground as fertile as we possibly can so that the Holy Spirit will come in and move on them and affectionately call them. Amen? I can tell you what: if you are letting them be subjected to wickedness all the time, they are much less apt to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Amen. We have this responsibility.

I see two of my grandchildren: one is four and a half, and one has just turned a year. It is those parents' responsibility, and by extension that of their granddaddy and their other grandparents. Will we have influence? Yes, we will. Should we have influence? Yes, we should. But it is the family, the community of family, that will answer to the Lord for the rearing of these children.

God's plan has always been to accomplish dominion through the family. Yet we see the family under extreme duress and so many familial problems that many have no inclination of what the biblical model for family is. If we were doing that long series, we could go into all the different roles of the family. We would talk

about how important the role of the father and husband is. He needs to be the husband before he is the father. But even the world does not understand that. With social media, there is no secret that stays secret very long. We see people proud as they can be, having children out of wedlock and calling on the name of the Lord in the next sentence.

We have forgotten what wickedness is. It is welcomed with open arms. People have no idea what the biblical model for the husband and father is. He is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. Did you know, men, that you are to be the role model for what your girls see when they look to marry someone? You are to be the role model for what your boys should be and want to aspire to grow up to be. What should your boys be doing? Your boys should be saying, "I want to be just like Daddy!"

And if they are not, then what is wrong? I remember a short story. I was about five or six years old, and I was at the farm with my granddaddy. I may have been Jack's age; I am not sure. He was not a large man, but he was the toughest man I have ever met in my life. I remember this: he was having some ponds dug, and he was out there in the wintertime.

He had heavy equipment out there. I was a five- or six-year-old little boy, and I was fascinated with that equipment. I was fascinated with what my granddaddy was doing, building those ponds. It was muddy, and he was putting out drain tile, and I was riding his way. All I wanted to do, Brother Harold, was be like my granddaddy. That was all I wanted.

Finally, he took me down—it was in Douglas—to an old hardware store called Alfred Lotz, and he bought me a pair of rubber boots. I got back out there on that job site, took my dungarees down over those rubber boots, and stomped around like I was John Wayne. There was not any man bigger than I was at five years old.

But now we have boys who do not even know whether they are boys or not. They do not know what bathroom to go into. By the time a young man is fifteen years old—and perhaps it should be younger—that is exactly what he should be: a young man. A young

lady should be a young lady by that time. This period of adolescence and teenage years, acting like Peter Pan and being unable to grow up, is not biblical. God forbid it.

When you look at the earlier history of the country and at what our forefathers did, you see something different. I guarantee you, sir—I do not know you, but I know this: when you were fifteen years old, you were not acting like a little boy. You were probably carrying the load of a full-grown man, because that is what you were.

We are raising our children to be immature. We are raising them to be more concerned about what the world thinks of them than about what our Father above thinks of them. In Joshua 24:14, it says, "Now therefore, fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord." Verse 15 says, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your father served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell."

Do you understand that we still have this choice today? We are either going to serve Jehovah God, or we are going to serve the gods of the Amorites—any pagan deity that there is—for those are the only two choices. Christ said, "You're either for me or you are against me." And Joshua says, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Those are the definitive statements we need to make. We need to declare in our hearts and minds every day that my house and I are serving the Lord.

Joshua did not go back and ask his wife or his children. He did not get a committee together to determine whether it was the most prudent thing to do. He said, "You can do what you want to, but as for me and my house, we're serving the Lord." It is easy to say that, and it is easy to go to the Gospel bookstore or Amazon and order the plaque.

We go into a lot of houses in the work that we do. We're electrical contractors, and we do trouble calls, so we'll go into house after house. Some people are Christians, and sometimes

you'll see plaques that say, "Live, laugh, love," or perhaps this quotation from Joshua: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Folks, I'm going to tell you, it's easy to put that plaque on your wall, but it's harder to live it.

Joshua had made a bold, declarative statement. He was a godly, God-ordained leader, and he said, "This is what we're going to do." He had drawn a line in the sand. But turn over two pages to the right, to Judges chapter 2. Just a little time later, we read in verse 8: "And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mountain of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash." Now look at verse 10.

All that generation—all those men and women of his generation—were gathered unto their fathers; in other words, they died as well. "And there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord." God forbid. Just that quickly—not hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years later—there arose another generation that knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. A whole new generation arose, and apparently they had not made the decision to serve the Lord. The Bible doesn't particularly say, I don't guess, but that is apparently what happened.

Do you understand that you may be a devout grandparent, and there could be a generation you know that does not serve the Lord? Did you realize—and I don't have the most current demographic studies—that even among college-age graduates reared in evangelical churches, by the time they graduate from university, 70-some-odd percent never return to the church? The number may be larger now.

We are living in a spiritual desert, in a time when people give lip service. They'll go to a church service; they'll go to a gospel service. Well, they won't even hurt to do that anymore.

I had to have a little surgery the other day, and the surgeon came in and said, “What kind of music do you like?” I said,

“Southern gospel.” She said, “What is that?” We listened to Southern gospel, and they sang about Jesus.

Folks, we cannot be passive about our decision to serve the Lord. I do not know what happened between Joshua saying, “As for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord,” and then, a couple of generations later, nobody knowing the Lord. Somebody had become passive about even giving testimony, because it says there arose a generation that knew not the Lord, or even the things that God had done for Israel. They had not even given testimony.

One of the best things we can do as parents and grandparents is tell our children about the things God has done for us. You might say, “Well, Brother John, I can't quote Scripture.” You do not have to quote Scripture. “I'm not a theologian.” Well, praise the Lord, because neither am I. But I can tell you what I can do.

I remember one of the most poignant times in my family's life, when my children were young and we were going through a difficult time. I do not even remember what it was. The difficult times go away, but I remember gathering my whole family together. I had two girls, a boy, and a wife. I said, “Everybody sit down.” I gave everyone a piece of paper and said, “I want you to write down everything that you're thankful for.” My wife was thankful for healthy children, and my youngest was thankful for the puppy dog. Did it matter what they were thankful for? It did matter, but what was important was that they were giving praise to God for the things they were thankful for.

Folks, we have got to draw a line in the sand, and then we cannot become passive. It is easy because we homeschooled mamas—boy, y'all carry a lion's share of the burden. You are at home, and you feel like your house needs cleaning, and it probably does. The kids need to do their reading lesson, and Junior over here is not learning how to spell the word “cat.” Then you want to fix supper. I get that. It gets tough, doesn't it, Mom? It gets tough. Hold on, because those seeds that you're planting will bear fruit. They will bear fruit. This crowd over here, you're like, “Put a smile on your face.”

Now we have to make our decision. If you are unsure yourself, perhaps you do not have children at home anymore. You are a grandparent, and you have more freedom to influence those children. It is amazing what you can do.

You do not know me, but my father was a pastor. He pastored big churches, traveled, and had all the degrees. He loved the Lord. But you know who had the most influence on me? My granddaddy. He raised cows and was a steam pipe fitter. He smoked cigars like a freight train, and you could hardly get him to say two words. But every night, after supper was finished and the dishes were washed, my grandmother and grandfather and I would sit down in that chair. He would open the Bible and read a chapter of Scripture every night. I do not know how many times they went through the Bible.

Once they got through, they would start all over. As a little boy, it felt like agony to sit there for a whole chapter. You hoped it was not the 119th Psalm, but the 23rd Psalm. Yet all those things were dependable, like clockwork. Grandparents, you have so much influence over your grandchildren. Your daughters and sons-in-law, or your sons and daughters-in-law, may be overwhelmed trying to make a living and dealing with all those things. You can take that time and have that influence. I see my brother Ollie back there, and I know the time that he and Miss Carol love to spend with their grandchildren and have that influence.

So this sermon is for all of us. It is not just for young parents; it is for old grandparents. The outcome of our not being strong in our decision to serve the Lord is a lost generation. That is the outcome.

What is the general outline of the family according to Scripture? There is so much we could cover, but I want to cover just a couple of things. Deuteronomy 6 tells us that the education of our children, especially their religious and spiritual education, is not supposed to be left up to the pastor, a Sunday school teacher, or anybody other than the parents. That is who is responsible. We see a picture of Noah who led his family.

Can you imagine being under the pressure of those who despise God? You say, “It sure is hard raising a godly child and having a godly home.” My word, we do not have a clue, do we? Noah and the seven others beside him were the only ones in a whole wicked world. He preached for 120 years and did not have a single convert. Can you imagine the pressure under which he worked and preached?

He was a real bivocational preacher, was he not? He did not have a single convert, yet he led his family. As Brother Allen spoke just a moment ago, Abraham showed complete trust in God in one of the most difficult situations I can imagine, as he went up that mountain to sacrifice his own son. His son was not a little boy; he was a grown lad.

And he submitted to his father. What kind of relationship did they have that a grown young man would submit to his father? It had to have been wonderful. Because he was the child of promise, wasn't he? Have you ever met a family that can't have children? That's where he was. And then can you imagine the thankfulness and the gratefulness that they have realizing that those children are gifts? Do we treat our children and our grandchildren like gifts or like a nuisance?

We see the Philippian jailer. He was ready to know the Lord, and then he led his whole pagan family right along with him. What is the general outline of the family? It's that the father leads in the home and out of the home.

I noticed something in another town. I was thinking about today's message. What I saw was all these small houses being remodeled. They were in the city, and they were all being spruced up and remodeled. You could see some of these houses had fallen into disrepair, and that happens in almost every city. At one point, you'll have a section of housing that's brand spanking new and looks good. And then over time, and it may be 40, 50, 60, 70 years, there's a transition away from those houses to new subdivisions or whatever the case may be. And so these smaller, older houses begin to crack, and they begin to crumble, and they begin to fall into disrepair. As I was looking in this other town, somebody had

decided to take these older homes that had once been bright and shiny and make them look brand new again.

And I said, you know, a lot of times that's exactly what our family is like. There's a time when your family is bright and shiny. I was thinking about the newlyweds. Y'all got some newlyweds in your family and, you know, we have some in ours. You think about it when you're a newlywed and, whoo, you're never going to get mad at that woman. She's your bride. Well, a lot of times that doesn't even last past the honeymoon, does it? And she gets mad. You know, life settles in, doesn't it? And then as time goes on, if you're not very...

Listen closely to this point. If you're not very, very careful, rot can set in. Destructive influences can set in. Disrepair can set in. Do you realize the statistic I shared with you about kids who are raised in church, but when they get out on their own and out of college, they are not returning to church? Why is that?

Because they don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Folks, our families are in crisis. I want to be kind, and I am being kind. I don't want to step on any toes unnecessarily, but do you know how rare it is, even within the confines of the church, to have a couple marry and stay married their whole life, to have children who worship God, and to have children who go out and marry as they should? If you have a Christian child, they should not go off and marry a heathen. There are certain things they should and shouldn't do. How rare it is to have one generation after another generation after another generation follow and obey Christian principles! We are in crisis. In the church, we are in crisis. But you know what? There's a way out.

First of all, we must be honest. I want you to be honest with your own family this morning. Men, are you being men? Women, are you being women? Are you being biblical women? Are you being biblical men? If not, nothing's going to change, because God's plan is the only plan that works. I want you to think about your little house—not the physical structure, but your family. Is your foundation cracked? If your foundation is cracked and corroding, dipping down, and getting undercut, you've got a real

problem, because that whole house will fall. What is the foundation?

First Corinthians 3, verse 11 says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." If your home is not founded on Jesus Christ, your foundation is wrong. Your foundation is wrong if it is not about Jesus Christ, if you are not proclaiming the goodness of Jesus Christ. Romans 2 says, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness which leadeth thee to repentance." The goodness of God is showered down all around you.

Are you expressing that to your children? Are we thankful? Do we have an attitude of thankfulness? Do we teach our children that they are bad? No, they are sinners, and there is a price to be paid for sin. Without Jesus Christ, it is an eternity in hell. So examine your foundation as you look at your house.

My son and I bought a house back in February. We remodeled it and put it on the market. Somebody became interested in it. If you have ever been through this process, you know how it goes. They hired a home inspector to come and inspect the house. What did he do? He went into the attic and underneath the crawl space. He looked at the brick, the block, and the floor joists. He looked for termites and examined everything he could possibly examine.

Then he made a report: “You have a problem with the foundation.” “What is the problem? Is it cracked?” “No, it looks like water's been running under the house.” “No, that's not water. That's where the plumber was under there crawling around.” But if your foundation is cracked, your house will come down.

What about termites? What do termites do? They are an outside influence that comes in and destroys the wall. Do you have termites affecting your family? What are you talking about? Any type of destructive influence. In Romans chapter 12, it says, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Too often, we allow outside influences to come in and conform our family to what the world would have us look like instead of

what Christ would have us look like. How are we being conformed to the world? The truth is, we are all conformed by the world to some degree: our language, attitudes, opinions, the things we watch, the things we listen to, and the things we say.

He says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed." Over in Proverbs 12:26, he says, "...the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor, but the way of the wicked seduces them." Folks, we are constantly under attack. There are termites constantly attacking our house. Termites are not like a cow that walks up in the yard.

They are not seen, are they? They are hidden. Most of the time, they are underground. They make tunnels, and oftentimes they have done the damage. You do not hear them or see them; they have to be inspected for. But by the time you know they are even there, they have done the deed and caused the damage. That so often is happening in our families. Inspect your home. Check that foundation and make sure your home is built on that solid rock of Jesus Christ. Make sure you do not have those termites attacking the walls of your home.

What about a leaky roof? When you have a leaky roof, it lets those storms come in. Young people—and old people alike, because I am one of the latter—we are going to have storms in this life. They are going to come because we live in a sinful world, and we are affected by the sinfulness of this world just like everybody else.

But the wonderful joy of it is that Jesus Christ is our shelter in the midst of the storm. In Nehemiah chapter 4, this is the last thing I will share this morning. Nehemiah had gone to rebuild the walls of the city and had been called by God to do that very thing. He had been allowed to go by the grace of God, and Xerxes allowed him to go. When he got there, he said in Nehemiah 4, verse 7, "But it came to pass that when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabians and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, or that they were going up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth," or very angry.

Did you know that the wicked hate to see the righteous succeed? They hate to see the work of God going on, and they will come against it. Some of those storms you will face if you are actively serving the Lord will come from those that hate God and hate you. It says, "...and they conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem and to hinder it." They always want to hinder the work of the Lord.

How many attacks have you faced in your life, brother? Multiple. Nevertheless, Nehemiah says, "We made our prayer unto our God and set a watch against them day and night because of them." Judah said, "The strength of the bearers of burden is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall." Their adversaries intended to stop the work of the Lord: "They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst amongst them and slay them and cause the work to cease."

Mama, did you know that the work you are doing in the home is important? I say Mama because the biblical model is basically that the husband is to go out, work, and provide. But what if you cannot make it on one salary? You better look at your finances, and you might need to cut back. Mama may need to work; I do not know. But here is the thing: Mama, you have such an influence on that child. So often you feel like you are not appreciated, but you are. Did you know that every other job in the world goes to support motherhood? Every job in the world basically goes to support motherhood.

Do you feel tired and worn out? It is because you are. Husband, father, take care of your woman. The people were tired; they were tired of the burden. They were also scared of those around them who were going to attack them. Verse 13: "Therefore said I in the lower places, behind the wall, and on the higher places. I even said to the people, what? After their families." He set them on the wall according to their family, with their swords and their spears and their plows. Why do you put families together? Because families will fight for one another—or they should. Families should fight for one another. They should protect one another, love one another, and defend one another.

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.” Then he says, “And fight for your brethren, fight for 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. They fought together. They fought together.

I want to say this in closing: You’re different. The people here in this sanctuary this morning are different from the vast majority of people. You are hearing more biblical preaching from these men than the vast majority of people in the United States will hear in their lifetime. Do you believe that? You know that.

And you’re willing to be different because you’re homeschooling or paying the money for private Christian education or homeschooling? How in the world can you justify that? “Your kid needs to do this. They need to play this. They need to do all these different things.” What good is it doing them if they lose their desire and are more concerned about what their buddy on the ball team, in the beauty pageant, or whatever, is doing? We place so much emphasis on wanting to look and act like the world that we’re losing our children. Would to God that we be committed like Joshua was and say, “You can do whatever you want to, world, but as for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord.” Please bow your heads.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this day. And Lord, I thank You for every person here. Lord, I thank You for these young parents, and I ask, Lord, that You would just work in their hearts and their minds, that You would be with their children. Lord, we pray that You would bring salvation to these children that do not yet know You. Lord, we know that all the gifts that are needed to be saved come from You, and we ask that You would work in a great and a mighty way. I pray that you would give resolve to all of us in these times in which we live. Lord, I pray that your plan is accomplished in all of our lives, as we know it will be. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.

The Blessing of the Church Family — Conference Speaker

The theology of the family is very near and dear to me. Specifically, I do have children. My wife and Jenna and I have been blessed, truly blessed, with children. But in terms of family, I do not actually have my family near me. That is to say, my parents, my grandparents who have passed on now. I have a cousin who happens to be in Jacksonville and an aunt who happens to live in Birmingham. Geographically, you might say I have some family, but they are not close to me. They do not attend this church, and they are not in town. Yet my family, by the grace of God, theologically, has been extended to the church.

When Brother Cluff started preaching, there were two more boys—my sons—on the front pew. One son is over there being watched by Sister Pearl, and another is sitting with Brother Harold. I will go into that a little bit later this afternoon. But it is a blessing to me that my church family can help me. There is a blessing there.

It is not all on Jenna and me. It does not take a village, but there is such a blessing in being part of the family of God—not merely attending church here, but extending that fellowship to our brothers in the community. As my sons grow up and become working boys, I would hope that, if Brother Stan has a job where a twelve- or thirteen-year-old could help—picking up the clippings after electrical work, setting things out, or sweeping up—I could put one of my boys in his work truck and know that Brother Stan has him for the day. He would not have to babysit him or watch out for him; my son could be a blessing to him as he teaches him.

How much would I have to pay for that education? He would do it for the work of the Lord. I would not pay him, and there would be no compensation; he would do it as a ministry. I know he would, and I look forward to that day. Raising children does not have to be expensive, and educating them does not have to mean a dollar value.

We are given an example in Scripture. Before Christ was found in the temple by His parents, they had been in town with the

family, the assembly they were with there, the group that family paid in taxes. As they journeyed a day's journey out of the city, Mary and Joseph finally realized that Christ was not actually near them.

What did this mean? All day, Mary and Joseph were at peace, knowing, “Surely He is with the cousins. Surely He is in the company of our family.” Think of Mary and Joseph going an entire day when it was normal for Christ to be among His cousins, cared for by the aunt or uncle, getting lunch, breakfast, dinner, whatever it was. Christ was around those cousins and families. Surely Mary and Joseph would have ended up with Christ there for breakfast, with who knows what cousins with Him. The cousins are there, so let us make lunch for everybody. The other aunts and uncles, whose children they were, would have known, “The cousins, the kids, they are over with Mary and Joseph.”

What a blessing it is to share such times among aunts, uncles, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, nieces and nephews. I do not have relatives near me, but I have brothers and sisters in Christ, in the church, and what a blessing that is. The blessing flows. Hebrews 10:25 says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” The assembling of God's people ought not to be forsaken.

Is this simply limited to churches and their particular members? Families have reunions where they get together. Churches gather, and members of a church gather on the Sabbath to worship corporately. Wonderful, but can we broaden the application of Hebrews 10:25? We know families get together, and members of a congregation gather corporately, but here churches have assembled. Churches from the community have come together. According to Hebrews 10:25, this gathering ought not to be forsaken. You might say, “Once a week, once a month—how often should we be doing this?” When the Lord leads, when the Lord provides the opportunity. What a blessing it is: families and churches gathering together, assembling.

Each of our pastors, in years past, has taught us the sphere authority in our churches. We heard a little bit about it earlier: family, church, and state—sphere sovereignty. One ought not to go

against the other. But where, in Scripture, is community authority? Where do we see that circle? What does it have to do with something? What are its parameters? Where is the community sphere, and where does it fit in?

I am going to suggest that community comes from a biblical desire, not a command. We desire to be in community, to rub shoulders with brothers and sisters of the faith, and to come together willingly. We volunteered to be here today. We volunteer to be a part of each other's lives. You cannot help who your blood family is. But we are to be in church, members of a church, faithful and accountable to our church.

But what about this? This is completely on your own. Today is voluntary, to be a part—even if we live close together, house to house, which would be a blessing, as we do here to some extent. It is voluntary. It comes from seeking a blessing beyond mere obedience. You attend church and are faithful and accountable because it was Christ's example to go into the church; it was His custom. And so we follow that. But what do we see here today? This is for the sake of a greater blessing for our families, our churches, and then our community. Scripture demands obedience. We know that. But we would do well to desire this further blessing for ourselves, our families, our churches, and our community. Brother Weaver points out that scriptural principles would tend to lead toward a representative form of government, a republican form—not the party, but the form of government as being a republic. The principles of Scripture lead toward that. I would say Scripture leads us to desire community.

Closing Exhortation and Song

It is not demanded, but it is to be desired. If we see a blessing in community, then we ought to seek that blessing and follow it. Again, how does the Lord urge us to seek Him? To seek first His kingdom, and all these things will be added unto us. We are to seek His blessing.

What is needed from us? We are supposed to be faithful to our families and faithful to our churches as members and participants. What is needed to be part of a community? It is what we are

supposed to be doing anyway: loving each other as ourselves. It simply becomes an extension of our godly life, serving others and loving others as Christ would have us. There is really nothing extra, no more burdensome theology, in being part of a community for the grace of God.

We serve others. Think of the verse, “Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great.” When we are rubbing shoulders with fellow believers, we can do good to them and lend. If what the Lord has given me is extra, I can give it to a brother. If I were to give it to Brother Stan, I would simply want to bless him with it. I would not hope for it again; I would want him to be blessed. The Lord gave me extra, and I can bless him with it, and he will praise God for the blessing and help.

When I need help, I would hope the brothers in the community would come to my aid, and I know you would. The Amish have this right. If we could say their theology stinks, they have this right: they help each other. They throw labor at each other, building their barns together. They give their cattle—a milk cow. If someone has lost a milk cow, another comes from the community as a blessing. When they need, they are then blessed.

This is where we ought to be. The song is called "For the Fruit of All Creation," to the tune of "All Through the Night."

For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God. Gifts bestowed on every nation, thanks be to God. For the plowing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping, future needs and earth's safekeeping, thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labor, God's will is done. In the help we give our neighbor, God's will is done. In our worldwide task of caring for the humble and despairing, in the harvest we are sharing, God's will is done.

For the harvest of the Spirit, thanks be to God. For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God. For the wonders that astound us, for the truth that still confound us, but most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.

So so.

CHAPTER 16

Family Devotions In the Context of Lifestyle Discipling

August 8, 2025

Introduction: The Only Biblical Occurrence of 'Devotions'

Thank you, Brother Mooney. He has a better memory than I do concerning dates. I tell my wife, "Sweetheart, you remember all the birthdays and dates; I'll remember everything else." I am not one who remembers dates well, but I know it has been a long time, a long time. It is good to see each of you here tonight, and good to be here. Open your Bibles to Acts 17, and let us read verses 22 and 23. I am dealing with devotions, their aim and their end, and hope it will be enlightening. Because I'm supposed to be dealing with devotions tonight, I'm going to deal with it with their aim and their end. So if you look in Acts chapter 17 and let's read verse 22 now.

"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said, 'You men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you're too superstitious'"—or

too religious—"'For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.'" I suppose that each of us has what we call devotions: we read our Bible and pray. Many times these are family devotions, with Bible reading and prayer; sometimes there is a short time of instruction, though not usually very long.

I suppose that, as I read this text, you might call it exceedingly strange that I want to begin a message on the Christian life and Christian sanctification with a verse talking about pagans. In fact, it is a negative verse in one sense: "For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

Let me point out that negatives are just as important as positives. Anytime you see a negative, ask, "What is the positive?" Anytime you see a positive, ask, "What is the negative?" When God tells us what something is not, we must mark it in our minds just as carefully and truthfully as when He tells us what it truly is. A negative is absolutely just as important as a positive.

Verse 23 says, “For as I passed by, beheld your devotions.” Before service tonight, I asked Brother Nelson, “Can you tell me how many times the word ‘devotions’ occurs in our Bibles?” He said, “No.” I said, “One time.” This is the only time the word occurs in the Bible.

It does occur another time in the Greek, but in that instance it is translated as “worship.” It is the only time we have the word “devotions” in our English Bible. Secondly, note that this word is used in the context of paganism. These Athenians did not know the One True and Living God. They had altars dedicated to all the gods, including one to which they were totally ignorant.

The Danger of Worshiping an Unknown God

They had an altar to Him as well. You would ask, “Who would be so insane as to have an altar to an unknown God?” But the truth of the matter is, there are many professing Christians who worship

an unknown God. They worship a God who is the figment of their imagination. They do not know the God who has revealed Himself in the Word of God, or the God who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have a God in their mind of what God is like. Sometimes they even imagine what God is like and picture Him in their mind, which is idolatry in and of itself. Most people are content with the figment of their imagination.

Years ago, I was in a pastor's office discussing the biblical doctrine of election. I was quoting Scripture and he was quoting Scripture. The door was open, and his secretary's desk was right outside. We had discussed election for fifteen, twenty, or thirty minutes when his secretary suddenly burst into his office without announcement or knocking.

And here's what she said: "I don't care what the Bible says. I know God is not like that." Her pastor rebuked her, then asked, "Did you hear what you just said?" She had a god of her own imagination, not the God of the Bible. The only God that exists is the God of the Bible.

So many people think these Athenians were polytheists—that is, they had served and believed in many gods. Therefore, in case they had left one out, they had an altar to the unknown God. Perhaps a plague had hit them, and they did not know which god to appease. Thus they had an altar to a god they did not even know whether or not existed: "To the unknown God."

Now look again in verse 23. He says, "For as I passed by, beheld your devotions."

The word "devotions" in Greek is sebasma. It refers to whatever is religiously honored, whatever is an object of worship, and is often used of temples, altars, statues, and idolatrous images.

Why is this important? Think about biblical doctrine and the right doctrine of God. The only God that exists is the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Our duty is always based upon doctrine. If your doctrine is incorrect, you have no idea what your duty or obligations truly are. It is impossible to know your duty apart from doctrine.

Doctrine as the Foundation for Steadfastness

Here is a clear illustration. In 1 Corinthians 15:58, the Apostle Paul says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Why? "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

How do we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord? What would it be like for us to remain steadfast, unmovable, and unshakable in a world that hates us, slanders us, ridicules us, and thinks we are absolute lunatics? What keeps us going? What keeps us ticking?

The answer is doctrine. Our duty is based upon our doctrine. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, the Apostle Paul has fleshed out the doctrine of the bodily resurrection from the dead. He also pointed out how Jesus Christ was bodily raised from the dead. Therefore, since He is our head and we are His body, just as the head was bodily raised from the dead, we shall also be bodily raised from the dead.

In other words, we understand that this life is not all there is, and this world is not all there is. The doctrine of the resurrection and the doctrine of the faithfulness of God keep us steadfast, unmovable, and unshakable. Therefore, that is based upon what I have taught you: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable.”

It does not matter whether the world recognizes us. It does not matter whether this church is ever written up in the paper as the church of the month. It does not matter whether you are ever recognized by the president. We understand that our duty is based upon our doctrine.

The Meaning of 'Devout' in Scripture

What does doctrine have to do with devotions? When you think of “devotions,” you should also think of the words “devoted” and “devout.” They are intimately connected with the word “devotions.” If devotions is the act of honoring and worshiping the one true, living God who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus

Christ, then the aim and end of our devotions is that we become devout worshipers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three different Greek words translated as “devout” in the Bible. Interestingly, these words occur in nine verses, and God has ordained it: there is one word in three verses in each instance. Turn in your Bibles to Luke, chapter 2, and understand the word “devout.” Look in Luke chapter 2, verse 25.

Here's what the Word of God says in Luke 2, verse 25: "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same was a just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him." So Simeon is called just and devout. In Acts, chapter 2, verse 5, the Word of God says, "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." Then in Acts chapter 8 and verse 2, "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." Each of these three uses of the word "devout" is the same Greek word, eulabēs. If you would turn over in your Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter 2, and look, if you would please, at verse 5. And the Word of God says this, concerning the same passage. Now, each of these three words is the same Greek word.

What it literally means is to take hold upon, to carefully, securely, surely, and cautiously reverence God. Now, stop and think about this. Each of these men cautiously, seriously, deliberately, reverenced God. They were serious men, they were determined men, they were knowledgeable men, and thus they are called devout.

Now, the second Greek word that is used happens to be eusebēs. You probably say, "You know, that word sounds familiar to me. It sounds like I've heard it before," and probably you have, because there was an early church historian by the name of Eusebius, who happened to have lived in the second and third century. This word, eusebēs, literally means godly, pious, and dutiful.

Since you're in the book of Acts, look in Acts chapter 10, verse 2. Here's the word eusebēs, "a devout man," talking about Cornelius: "And one that feared God with all his house, which gave much

alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." Now look in Acts chapter 10 and verse 7: "And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually." Then look at Acts chapter 22 and verse 12. This is the third time this word occurs: "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there." Remember, this word means godly. It means pious. It means dutiful. Now, there's a third Greek word, the word sebomai. It is related to the word in our text in Acts chapter 17 and verse 23.

If you look back in your Bibles to Acts chapter 13, I want to put these together for you, beginning with verse 50: "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts." Now look at Acts chapter 17 and verse 4: "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." Then in Acts 17 and verse 17, you'll see it again: "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him." If you put all three of these things together, you can come up with a good definition of what it means to be devout.

To be devoted is to be very serious and very dutiful, cautiously and yet reverentially laying hold upon God and worshipping Him out of a godly, pious, and dutiful attitude. The word sebomai means to revere and to worship. The actual end of all devotions, whether personal devotions or family devotions, is to turn yourself and your family into devoted, or devout, individuals. A devout individual has been explained with these three particular words.

The point of real, genuine devotions is not to fill someone's head with simple head knowledge or intellectual knowledge. It is not merely to say, “My child can quote all of 1 Corinthians chapter 13.” Believe it or not, I have seen some who could quote all of Psalm 119. It is wonderful to quote Scripture, and you should be able to memorize Scripture, but you are not merely trying to fill someone's head—or even your own—with head knowledge and intellectual

knowledge. You may say, “I want to discuss dichotomy and trichotomy.” Help yourself, and I hope you know the difference.

Maybe you can talk about all types of eschatology. That is wonderful if you know all of that. But if you have all the head knowledge and intellectual knowledge, how does it affect your life? Has it made you more pious? Has it made you more dutiful? Has it made you more obedient? Has it made you more submissive? Do you understand how to apply the knowledge that you have?

In other words, if you turn into a devoted or devout person, you understand the reality of the truth, you know how to apply the truth, and it will always make you more obedient, more submissive, and more godly. I will even say more humble, enabling you to worship God as easily as anything else, because you have it now. Let me ask you a question: Do you understand eternal life?

Eternal Life as Personal Knowledge of God

Many people have mistaken ideas about what eternal life really is. These ideas are myths in one sense; they are not really what eternal life is. I have heard many say, “Eternal life is just living forever.” But if eternal life means merely living forever, then those who are lost, die, and are tormented forever would have eternal life, too. Others say, “I do not have to worry about eternal life because you get that when you die.” As you consider John 17, notice what our Lord says about this matter.

I have news for you: if you do not possess eternal life before you die, you will never have it after you die. It is amazing, absolutely strange, how most people wish to live an unholy, ungodly life. They want to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and live in the pride of life. Yet when they die, presto, automatically, they supposedly turn into holy, righteous beings.

No, it does not work like that. Balaam, the false prophet, said, “Let me die the death of the righteous,” but he did not want to live the life of the righteous. You cannot die the death of the righteous unless you live the life of the righteous. So here is a good question: What is eternal life? Look at John 17 and verse 3, at what our Lord said.

He said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” Look at that: “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” Two very important truths are conveyed in this text. First, the Greek word translated “know” is ginōskō. It means to learn to know. It means to come to know. It means to get a knowledge of, to perceive, to understand, and to become acquainted with. Let me put it very plainly: eternal life, according to our Lord Jesus Christ, is a personal, intimate knowledge of God the Father through Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not merely facts about God; it is knowing God. It is not merely facts about Jesus Christ; it is knowing Jesus Christ.

That is why in Philippians 3:10 the Apostle Paul said, “That I might know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; that I might know Him.” In John 17:3, He said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”

The second truth is that the word “know” is a present active subjunctive in the text. The present tense means that it is actually happening now, in time and in history. The active tense means that you are involved in it. The subjunctive mood is the mood of potentiality—possibility and potentiality. So here is what He is saying: This is life eternal right now, that we would have a personal, intimate relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let this sink into your hearts and minds. Lay hold of this and think about it: we as God’s children have the absolute privilege and blessing of having an intimate, personal knowledge of our Heavenly Father now, in time and in history. What about eternity? If I were to teach you on the doctrine of God, it would be almost impossible. I could talk about the omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, eternality, and infinity of God. We could discuss all the attributes of God as He has revealed Himself in the Bible. But have you ever stopped to think about this? In eternity, we will have perfect understandings.

We will never forget anything. Our minds will be fixed. Throughout eternity, we will be forever learning things about our great, gracious, and majestic Heavenly Father, never forgetting them and fully understanding them, but never, ever totally comprehending Him. The truth is that, to a degree now, in time and in history, through your personal and family devotions, you should become more devout, more devoted, and have a more personal, intimate knowledge of God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Necessity of Precise Knowledge for Godliness

Now I want to show you the aim and the end of all devotions. I do not care whether it is personal, familial, or ecclesiastical. Look at 2 Peter 1, beginning with verse 2, very carefully.

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Do you want more grace? Do you want more peace? How are grace and peace multiplied? Through the knowledge of God. Look in verse 3: "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue." Isn't that astounding? He said in verse 2 that grace and peace are multiplied to us through the knowledge of God. Now He says that God has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of Him. In both instances, the word "knowledge" is the Greek word epignōsis, which does not simply mean knowledge. It means a fuller, precise, or accurate knowledge: epi, the preposition upon, knowledge upon knowledge, which is more accurate and more precise.

Where in the world do we get this precise and accurate knowledge of our one true and living God, who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ? The answer is the revelation that is made of Himself in the Word of God. I want you to see from the Bible how often this precise, accurate, and correct knowledge of God is commanded. Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 1.

Look at verse 17: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." He goes on in verse 18: "The

eyes of your understanding being enlightened"—and the only way they can be enlightened is through the knowledge of Him—"that ye may know"—the only way you can know is through the knowledge of Him—"what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." All of this is through knowledge: a personal, intimate knowledge, a precise, accurate knowledge, as God has revealed Himself. Look at Ephesians chapter 4, verse 13.

Here we have this statement. Ephesians 4:13 says, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect”—or mature—“man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro.” What stops us from being tossed to and fro? Knowledge. A precise, accurate knowledge. Notice that we are to come into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a mature man, unto the measure, the stature, and the fulness of Christ.

Philippians 1:9 says, “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” Someone says, “Well, we’re to love everybody.” No, we’re not to love everybody. What does the Scripture say? “Shouldest thou love them whom God hatest?” Isn’t that what was asked? What did David say? “Do not I hate them that hate Thee, O God? I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies.” Did he not say that?

What is he talking about? “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” You have to know whom to love, when to love, and how to love, and you have to use judgment. How are we going to do that? With knowledge.

Colossians 1:10 shows that this is actually commanded: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” If you want to be fruitful in every good work and walk pleasing unto Him, you have to be increasing in the knowledge of God. Colossians 3:10 says, “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” The only God

that exists is the God of the Bible. The only God that has revealed Himself is the one that has revealed Himself fully and freely in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must know Him, and we cannot be content with simply knowing facts about Him. Many people can tell you facts about Jesus Christ and are as lost as they can be. Many can tell you facts about the Bible who have no idea about eternity or spiritual life. They have more of a head knowledge, more of an intellectual knowledge.

But here is what God is saying: this knowledge, this truth, must be perceived in a way that you and I can comprehend and understand it so that we can apply it. In applying it, we end up honoring Him, walking pleasing unto Him, worshiping Him, and becoming more and more devout and devoted to Him.

Let me give you a little principle from gun training: if you aim at nothing, you will hit nothing. If you aim at nothing in acquiring a personal, intimate, precise, and accurate knowledge of God so that you may become more devoted to Him, you will miss out. If you do not aim at that, you will miss out.

It is not merely, “I read my Bible today.” I was raised in a little Southern Baptist country church. Every week we would fill out a little form: “I read my Bible, I prayed, I did this, I did that.” People would do it just so they could make the checks and show their department. No. You do not do these things merely to make a point to a schoolteacher, Sunday school teacher, or whoever. You do these things out of worship, in honor of God, to become more and more devoted to Him.

Some of the worst kids I've ever seen in my life—some—were raised in church, in a Christian school, in a professing Christian home. Did they teach them? Yes, but it was a head knowledge. I have one friend who is a pastor. His parents were divorced at an early age. He was thirty-four years old. His mother, well, it turned out to be a honky-tonk woman. She drug this little boy to every bar in town. With all the men she was running around with, he went through it. God saved him, called him to preach, and he is now pastoring in Tennessee.

Building Up Through Devotions

I am simply pointing out that head knowledge is not going to make anyone a devoted worshiper and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are not acquiring and pressing toward a personal, intimate relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, you are missing the mark.

This is the end and the aim of personal and family devotions: you are to build yourself up, and you are to build your family up. Jude said, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Have you ever asked yourself, "How do I build myself up on my most holy faith?" Interestingly, the Greek word means literally to build upon, or to build up, or to finish the structure from which the foundation has already been laid. You know what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 10: "I have laid the foundation." The foundation is in Jesus Christ. No other man needs to lay that foundation. That foundation is laid. So what he is saying in the book of Jude is that we are to build ourselves up on this foundation, the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How do we do it? One way, of course, is by praying in the Holy Ghost, which is a different sermon in itself. But the second way is, "keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." So let me ask you this question: How do you keep yourself in the love of God? Most people think the love of God is emotions or feelings, or some little ethereal thing floating around somewhere in the universe. How in the world would you keep yourself in the love of God like that? You need to know what the love of God is.

I can give it to you directly from the Scripture. First John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." What is the love of God? Keeping His commandments. Obedience. Submission.

Romans 13 states it plainly: “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Love is obedience.

I used to tell my girls—I had four daughters—I jokingly always say all my boys were girls. But, you know, I love girls. I love little girls, that’s for sure. We have identical twins, and holding one in each arm was quite a blessing and sometimes strange. My wife looked out one day at our house, and I had a hammock out there. I was in the hammock, and one of my twins was pushing me this way. The other twin was pushing me that way. My baby girl had a fan and she was fanning me.

My oldest daughter was dropping grapes in my mouth. Did I like it? Oh, yes, I can assure you. But the point I am trying to make is this: love—you know, I told my girls this—I love that, and I appreciate that. You can tell me all day long that you love me, and you can kiss my cheeks all day long. But what I really want as proof of love is obedience and submission. I do not care how many times my girls told me they loved me if they disobeyed me. The obvious conclusion is that they do not love me. So you can tell God all day long that you love Him, but if you are violating His law and His Word, you do not love Him. I do not care what you say.

In your personal devotions and your family devotions, you are teaching and training yourself and your family—not simply to know the Scriptures. They must know them, that is for sure, but they must know the principles. They must know how to apply them and how to flesh those things out in practical, everyday situations. You have to have precise, accurate knowledge in order to do that.

Have you ever thought about this? A problem is not a problem if you know what to do. You only have problems when you do not know what to do. When you have the answer from Scripture, you know what to do; therefore, you can work right through the problem. It turns out not to be a problem.

Turn in your Bibles, first of all, to Deuteronomy, chapter 6. Let us begin reading with verse 4. Look what the Word of God says. He is talking about statutes and judgments in verse 5. In fact, I will read verse 5: "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." Now look what he says concerning these laws.

“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, 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?”

“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons.” All these words which God commands shall be in the heart. They shall be diligently taught to the children, discussed when sitting in the house, walking by the way, lying down, and rising up. They shall be bound upon the hand, placed as frontlets between the eyes, and written upon the posts of the house and on the gates.

We have to know the Word of God, know what He teaches us, and know how to obey what He teaches us. There are a lot of people who can quote the Ten Commandments, and they break them all the time. How do we know whether this knowledge is in our hearts? Because we talk about it when we sit down, walk by the wayside, lie down, and get up. In other words, it becomes our life—everything to us. It becomes our food, our drink, our sleep, our work, and our hobby; it becomes everything to us.

If you turn in your Bibles to the book of John, chapter 6, I will show you the New Testament version of what I just read and quoted from the Old Testament.

Christ as Our Life and Sustenance

In John 6:48, Jesus Christ said, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Then Jesus said to them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life. And I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”

I do not believe that this passage teaches the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. Neither do I believe it teaches the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation. But I think what it is teaching is very plain and very clear: Jesus Christ is our life. He is our food. He is our drink. He is our everything. The Scripture says He is our all in all. It means He said, “If you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you abide in me and I abide in you.” What is He saying? He is saying simply, if we’re devoted to Him, He is our life. He is everything about us.

You can’t help but talk of Him. You can’t help but pray to Him. You can’t help but worship Him. You can’t help but think to Him and think of Him. He is our everything. Our devotions are to be full of life because He is life. And if you come up with deadness and dullness, it’s not life. He said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the one true and living God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” The goal, the end and the aim of all devotions is to become a more devout and devoted worshiper of God, the Father through Jesus Christ.

Applications and Warnings

Here is the first application, and it is a warning, Mama and Daddy: education alone is insufficient. I am not telling you not to educate your children, and I am not saying not to teach your children Bible verses. You must. But do not rely upon that alone. Education in and of itself is insufficient. We must have the illumination and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit of God. We must ask that our eyes be opened and that our understanding be opened.

What does Proverbs 2, verse 6 say? “Understanding cometh from God.” What did the Apostle Paul tell Timothy in 2 Timothy 2, verse 7? “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” Timothy had to consider, think, and meditate, but he also had to seek God for understanding. You do not go to bed stupid and wake up smart. You do not go to bed ignorant and wake up brilliant. You must study, consider, and meditate, but at the same time, recognize that you need the Holy Spirit to open your understanding.

Remember, the disciples walked with Christ for three years. Yet Luke 24:45 says, “Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.” There can be no understanding of Scripture apart from divine illumination. He must open our eyes. Education alone is insufficient. You must cry out to God to make it effective.

The Bible says in Proverbs 23, “For if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.” If you take that verse and say, “I know what that means,” then take a rod and go around beating everybody you can find, that is not what the verse means. It means that if you discipline that child with God’s blessing upon that discipline, he is not going to die; he will be saved. We must teach our children, but we must not rely upon our instruction and education.

We must cry out to God for this. Here's the second application. You ask so many people why they do not pray or study, and the simple answer is, “I'm just too busy.” It is inconsistent not to have time for God and yet wish to spend eternity with God. How can you

say, “I have no time for God”? He's the one who gives you time. Now is the time to know Him, learn of Him, obey Him, follow Him, emulate Him, and worship Him. It is inconsistent for you to say that you love God and want to spend eternity with Him, but are too busy now to pray, study, and worship Him.

Try this with your spouse. Tell your spouse, “You know, I love you, but I really don't have time for you right now. And I probably won't be able to have time for you for the next week or two.” See how that works out for you.

We do this. I love that passage in Jeremiah 2, I think it is. What did God say? “My people have forgotten me days without number.” How can you forget God? You better wake up every morning, and you better be quoting Lamentations 3:22–23: “It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness.” If it were not for God's greatness, faithfulness, mercies, and compassions, you would not have made it through the night.

It is inconsistent for you to say that you love the Lord and want to spend eternity with Him, but are too busy now to commune with Him and worship Him. Here's the third application. The best way to prepare for eternity is to love the Lord now and worship Him now in time and in history. If you are not becoming more and more devoted to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ, more and more devout, more and more knowledgeable, and growing in grace, you are not using devotions for their proper end.

Conclusion: Grow in Grace and Knowledge

I want to close with one last verse. In 2 Peter 3:18, the Bible says, “But grow in grace.”

“And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” The word “and” is the Greek word kai. It is translated not only “and,” but also many times as “even.” Thus, we could read, “but grow in grace even in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” If you are not growing in knowledge, you are not growing in grace. Grace and

peace are multiplied to us through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The aim and object of all devotions—personal, family, and ecclesiastical—is for you to become more devout, devoted, godly, obedient, submissive, loving, kind, and like your Heavenly Father, because you are communing with Him. The Holy Spirit transforms us into that image, into all the moral excellencies revealed of Him in Scripture. Without knowledge, you will not live a sanctified, holy life.

Pray when you pray, and when you study and read: "Lord, open my eyes. Make me more godly, more devoted, more devout. May I worship You as You have commanded, and love You as You demand and deserve to be loved with all my heart, mind, soul, spirit, and being." May God make you holy, for He said, "Be ye holy; for I am holy, saith the Lord."

Father, bless us, we pray. Speak to our hearts. Grant us Your mercy and grace. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 17

The Fruit of Sin Part 2 of 3 Rebellious Children

January 30, 2012

Review of Part 1 and Introduction

Isaiah chapter 1, and we're going to read the first nine verses. This is the second part of the message that I began last week: "The Fruit of Sin: Rebellious Children." Lord willing, there will be a third part next week.

"The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they rebelled against me.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. But Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corruptors. They have forsaken the Lord. They provoke the Holy One of Israel into anger. They're going away backward. Why

should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.

"From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores that have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is 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, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant. We should have been a Sodom, and we should have been made like unto Gomorrah."

We began looking at Isaiah chapter 1, verses 1 through 9, in detail. Sin, of course, is exceedingly wicked, and it always leads to heartache and destruction. Our Lord always cries out against sin, especially sin in His people, and He demonstrates here the grief and heartache that always attend sin.

He does so in such a way that we may easily comprehend it, because He gives us the example of rebellious children. The grief and heartache that we experience from our rebellious children is certainly amplified when He experiences heartache and grief with His rebellious children.

In verse 2, first of all, we saw the witnesses summoned: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," where God calls heaven and earth to witness against His people. Secondly, we saw the warning spoken: "the Lord hath spoken." Everyone must attend unto the words of the Lord.

The Heartache of Rebellious Children (Verse 2)

Especially when He speaks in anger, we look at the wickedness stated: “I have nourished and brought up children, and they rebelled against Me.” We simply look mainly at verse 2 at that particular point. The Lord is giving us an illustration that we can very quickly lay hold of. If any of us have rebellious children, we know the heartache and grief involved. Those who have been blessed by God not to have rebellious children certainly know

family members or friends who do, and are associated with that heartache as well. God says, “I’ve nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me.”

When we look at that verse, we cannot help but think that it is one thing to rebel against a sinful, yet loving and godly parent who tries to do what is right but fails. Yet it is quite another thing to rebel against a holy, sovereign, loving, and just God, who is absolutely perfect and absolutely righteous.

Another thing we fail to realize is this: when a child rebels against his father and mother, he is actually rebelling against God, because God is the ultimate, absolute, and sovereign authority. There is no authority but of God; therefore, God has delegated authority to the father and mother over the child. When children resist and rebel against parental authority, they are at the same time resisting and rebelling against God Himself. Many not only rebel against parental authority; they try to thumb their noses at God as well.

For instance, their attitude is much like the attitude of Pharaoh in Exodus 5 and verse 2: “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord.” Pharaoh basically thumbed his nose at God, saying, “I don’t recognize you. I don’t recognize your authority. I’m not going to listen to you.” Parents, even godly parents who desire to do that which is right, oftentimes fail. But the truth is, God never fails. There is no rhyme or reason to rebel against God. Job asked this question in Job 9 and verse 24. Listen carefully.

"Who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered?" Now stop and think. Who has ever hardened himself against God and prospered? Who has ever hardened himself against God and succeeded in his rebellion against God? And the answer is absolutely no one. As you read Isaiah chapter 1, you can come to this realization. It is extremely difficult. It is extremely heart-rending and grievous to watch a child destroy himself. When the child absolutely will not listen, will not heed any instruction, the only thing that a godly parent can do is to weep and to cry and to pray and ask God to work in that child's heart.

I've counseled many parents, and I will tell you right up front the most difficult thing for the father. It's all difficult for the mother. But the most difficult thing for the father is this: he's lost all control. He has no power, his authority is spurned, and he's totally rejected as the authority of that child. Now if you just multiply that about a million times and apply it to God the Father, you can understand the heartache that we experience is multiplied many times in the heartache that He experiences. What can you do for a rebellious child? The answer is nothing as a human except cry and pray and ask the Lord to speak to his heart.

Our heavenly Father is likewise grieved over our disobedience. He knows we're going to destroy ourselves. In fact, that's what He said in Hosea 13 and verse 9. He said, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help." But they would not look to Him, and they just went on to their destruction.

Consider Psalm 78, verse 40, concerning Israel and what they did to God: "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert?" Have you ever thought about God being grieved? Did you know the Bible teaches us basically the same thing in Ephesians 4 and verse 30, where he says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you're sealed on the day of your redemption." I want you to turn over in your Bibles to the book of Isaiah 43. Let me show you a verse. I don't know if you've ever thought about this or not, but I want you to see how grievous our sins must be to our Heavenly Father.

Isaiah 43 reminds us that we are in a covenantal bond with Him. He is our Father, and we are His children. In the New Testament, the Bible says that Jesus Christ is our head and that we are His body; therefore, we are one with Him. Notice Isaiah 43:24, where our Lord says to Israel, His people, “Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices.” In other words, you did not honor Me, worship Me, or respect Me: “but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins and hast wearied me with thine iniquities.” Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins. Can you imagine the blasphemy involved when we, as His people, sin against Him? Since we are in that covenantal

bond, and since we are His body and He is our head, basically we make Him to serve with our sins.

The Haughtiness of Rebellious Children (Verse 3)

Now return to Isaiah chapter 1. Consider not only the heartache of rebellious children in verse 2, but also the haughtiness of rebellious children in verse 3. He says, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. But Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.”

The word haughty is often used in our day. We tend to give it a southern definition and make it mean highfalutin. If someone thinks he is highfalutin, we call him haughty. But haughty means more than that. It means to be arrogant, inconsiderate, disdainful, and contemptuous. Look again at verse 3: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.”

Sin had so perverted the minds and understanding of Israel that they reached a level beneath the animals. The ox knows his owner, and the ass knows his master's crib. Here are these dumb animals, as we call them, and yet they know where they eat, they know who owns them, and they know from where their bread is buttered. But He said, “My people does not know, my people does not consider.”

If you do not believe this, come to where Alice and I live and observe our animals at feeding time. They are in the proper place at the proper time, ready to eat, because they know where and when they are fed. Usually they are waiting. When they see me coming, their eyes lock on me like radar, following every movement.

I have a certain ritual. I feed certain ones first, and they know that; they wait until their time comes. Even after feeding time, if they see me riding up and down in a golf cart, they lock on me, thinking I may be bringing an extra snack. If one of those animals does not show up at feeding time, I know something is wrong. The animal may be sick, or, if it is a cow, she may be having a calf. They are there when it is time to eat.

Those animals love me. They rub against me and lick me. You do not know what love is until you have the slobber of a newborn calf all over you. But look what God said: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” How is it that we do not understand that everything we have and everything given to us comes from the hand of our Creator and our God? How can we be so callous toward the One who feeds us—so ungrateful, unthankful, and unappreciative?

James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Every good gift you have comes from God. Your breath, food, friends, family, and ministry come from God. Everything comes from Him.

Why, then, do we not recognize this? This is what He is complaining about in verse 3. Israel became dumber than animals; animals had more sense than His professing people. The animals recognized who fed them, where they were fed, and where their home was. But He said, “My people doth not know, my people doth not consider.” We have sired a generation of people who are totally ungrateful, unthankful, and unappreciative.

Not only have we been guilty of that ourselves and guilty in teaching that, if you would look at our government, our government has made a nation of people like that because it has given and given and given when there is no desert and no work. Now everybody expects everything to be handed to them on a silver platter. Hold Isaiah 1, but turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 17. Let me show you. Luke 17, verse 11. Begin reading there. Watch carefully.

"And it came to pass, as he went out of Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off." If you had leprosy in those days, it was a death sentence. You were cut off from your family, friends, villages, and towns. You had to live by yourself or with other lepers, and whenever you saw anyone coming, you had to place your hand somewhere like this to warn them and holler, "Unclean,

unclean, unclean." Here, then, are ten lepers who stood afar off. They would not come near; they could not, because they were lepers.

"And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go, show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, and giving Him thanks."

"And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? They are not found that return to give glory to God, save this stranger." The implication is that the other nine were Hebrews. But this Samaritan, so despised and hated by the Jews especially, was the only one who returned to give thanks.

Think about this. Nine-tenths of the men who were healed just kept going and totally ignored the gift given to them. They assumed, presumed, took it for granted, and believed it was owed to them. Only one in ten turned and gave God thanks for what God had done for him. Have you stopped today just to think what God has done for you?

Alice and I and Granny Doris were traveling last night. Just as we turned on 82 off 231, seven or eight miles down the road, the speed limit was 55. I had been waiting on a semi-truck at the stop sign, and they are slow. But I waited on him. About seven or eight miles down the road, there was a crossroads, and the roads to the left and right had stop signs. We were within 100 yards of that crossroads when Alice and I looked, and my mouth fell open because some man shot through those stop signs at about 60 miles an hour. I looked at Alice and said, “Did you see that?” She said, “I did.” I said, “We better thank the Lord right now for that old slow truck that slowed us down. We better thank the Lord that the Lord protected us.”

I am simply saying that is no accident. When you stop and think of the goodness, graciousness, and kindness God has given to each one of us, where are we when it comes time to thank Him? Where

are we when it comes time to recognize His blessings? Why do we not recognize those blessings? Is it because we are haughty, selfish, arrogant, and rebellious?

Let me put it another way. Are we not as smart as an ox or an ass? “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. But my people doth not know, my people doth not consider.” Look in your Bibles, holding Isaiah 1, and go back to Psalm 49, verse 12: “Nevertheless, man being in honor, abideth not, is like the beasts that perish.” Man being in honor, abideth not, is like the beasts that perish. Adam was in honor, but he did not abide, and he became like a beast.

Skip down to verse 20: “Man that is in honor and understandeth not is like the beast that perish.” What God says is this: If you do not understand where your bread is buttered, if you do not understand where everything you have comes from, you are like a dumb beast. Look in Isaiah 56 and verse 10. Men are often compared to animals, and many times to the dumbest of the dumb. Look what God says about His watchmen, or His shepherds: His watchmen are blind, and they are all ignorant. They are all dumb dogs.

"They cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." They're all dumb dogs. There's nothing dumber than a dumb dog. We've had one that I can remember. That dog wouldn't come when you called him. The dog wouldn't listen. That was the dumbest, stupidest dog I've ever seen in my life. That's what God says. What good is a dumb dog? How would you like a dog that greeted the home invader and the burglar with a good lick and lying down? That's a dumb dog.

Jeremiah 8:6 says, "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright." That is the people. "No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" Everyone turned to his own course as the horse rushes into battle.

Then God says, "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth his appointed times, and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observed the time of their coming, but my people doth not know the judgment of the Lord." Israel would not consider the source of

her blessings, nor the source of her judgment. God says they are lower than the brute beast or the dumb animals, because at least the ox knoweth his master, and the ass his crib, but my people doth not know. They refuse to look to their God.

Go back to Isaiah 1. Not only do we see the haughtiness of rebellious children, but in verse 4 we see the hatefulness of rebellious children. God says, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corruptors, they have forsaken the Lord, they've provoked the Holy One of Israel into anger, they're going away backwards." We have said that rebellious children are hateful children. Have you ever wondered why? First, because it is the truth; second, because that is what God says. He describes this rebellious nation: "Ah sinful nation."

The Hatefulness of Rebellious Children (Verse 4)

The word "Ah" is not a word of astonishment, but a word of denunciation. It is also translated as "woe." God is literally saying, "Woe sinful nation," or "Woe to the sinful nation." The sinful nation was a nation that had incurred guilt by sinning, by disobedience and rebellion.

Now the term "sinful" designates a people that have fallen short and they've not lived up to the standard of righteousness that God has laid out for them. What had God ordained for Israel to be? Remember now, He says, "Woe sinful nation." Look in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 19, hold Isaiah 1. But look in Exodus chapter 19 and verse 6. You're going to see exactly what Israel was to be. Look in Exodus chapter 19 and verse 6. And here is what God says, notice if you would, Exodus 19 verse 6, "And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which I shall speak unto the children of Israel." So they were to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. How does God address them? "Ah, sinful nation." They are no longer a holy nation, they are a sinful nation.

America was established on Christian principles. But we're no longer a Christian nation. We are a sinful nation. If you look back in verse 4, He goes again to show the hatefulness. He says, "a people laden with iniquity."

Now the word "laden" here refers to that which is massive and heavy, an oppressive and weighty. It's a weight that presses down with great force. It's a weight and a burden that is impossible to escape. And He says the exceeding heavy weight is that of iniquity, "a people laden with iniquity." And the word "iniquity" refers to perversion, depravity and mischief. So God says that they're weighted down, they're being pressed and oppressed by their own rebellion and by their own iniquity. It's something that is pressing down heavily upon them.

Look in verse 4 again. Now when they're called "a seed of evildoers," He's not referring to their fathers, but He's referring to them. They had been planted a right seed, but now they are a degenerate and wicked generation of men. Let me show you. Hold Isaiah 1 and turn right over to Isaiah chapter 5. Isaiah chapter 5, and look at beginning there with verse 1. Isaiah 5 verse 1. Here's exactly what God is talking about when He calls them a seed of evildoers. Isaiah 5 verse 1.

"Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved, touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard and a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein. And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you betwixt me and my vineyard." Notice that He is appealing to Judah and Jerusalem, the same ones He is talking about in Isaiah chapter 1. He asks in verse 4, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked, that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

"Now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard, I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste, and it shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant."

"And he looked for judgment, but behold, oppression, for righteousness, but behold, a cry." What did God just say? He planted a ripe vine, but it turned into a degenerate vine. He did everything He could for them, and they refused it. If you follow Isaiah 5, the only thing God says is left is that they are to be destroyed.

So go back to Isaiah chapter 1. We are still looking at the hatefulness of rebellious children. He says, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers," and now He says, "children that are corruptors." They are children that pervert, mar, destroy, ruin, and corrupt. We would call them degenerate, debased, debauched, decadent, decayed, degraded, depraved, and desolate children. They corrupt everything they touch. They are absolutely worthless and useless, good for absolutely nothing. Believe me, I know children like that. I know grown children like that. They were not merely corrupt themselves; they were corrupting others by their example.

And this is always the case. When people become infidels and profligate themselves, they always seek to make other people just like them. It is just as our Lord said in Matthew 23 and verse 15: “Woe unto you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites. You compass land and sea to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”

Our Heavenly Father is not politically correct when it comes to profiling. He just calls it like He sees it. He says, here is your problem: “You are a sinful nation, a seed of evildoers, children that are corruptors.” Then, in verse 4, “they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger.” Or, as He says in verse 4, “they have forsaken the Lord.” That is the phrase I want.

This is the reason why He reproves them with such sharpness and severity. They have forsaken Him. The peculiar heinousness of their sin was that it was against God. They had indeed forsaken God, not necessarily in their profession, but simply by their practice and in reality. They were neglecting Him, His worship, and His service; they were refusing His yoke and refusing to submit to His law.

Jeremiah said something similar in Jeremiah 2, verses 12 and 13: “Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid. Be ye very desolate, saith the Lord, for my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and they have hewn them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

So they had forsaken the Lord. And again, in verse 4, “they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger.” They blasphemed. They had so despised God as to excite His righteous indignation and anger. They had provoked Him by their numerous sins, both of omission and commission.

To show you the stupidity of people, if I had a man in this room who was six feet four, 250 pounds, muscled up, a martial artist to the nth degree—someone who could fight like you would not believe, agile, flexible, and quick—how many of you would like to go up, provoke him, spit in his face, and challenge him to fight you? None of you would do that, because you are not that dumb. I do not know many people, saved or unsaved, who would be stupid enough to do something like that. Yet we refuse to provoke someone whom we think might could beat us into the dirt physically, while thinking nothing of provoking a holy, righteous God, who can do more than beat us into the dirt.

What did our Lord say? I will tell you whom you are to fear. Do not fear him who is able only to kill the body, but fear him who, after he has killed, is able to cast body and soul into hell. That is whom you ought to fear: the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Israel, in departing from and forsaking God, was actually challenging Him—daring Him to do His worst and to exercise His justice.

Peter said in 1 Peter 5:5, “God resisteth the proud, but He giveth grace unto the humble.” The word resist means to fight against. God fights against the proud, but gives grace to the humble. If God wanted to destroy us, all He would have to do is withhold our breath, and we would die. If it is that easy to kill us, what will it be like for the man against whom God rises in battle array? I do not want to challenge God or provoke Him to do His worst. Look, if you would, in verse 4 again.

He is showing us the hatefulness of rebellious children: “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corruptors, they have forsaken the Lord, they provoke the Holy One of Israel into anger.” Here it is: “They are gone away backwards.” The words “gone away” literally mean to become estranged or alienated.

Here is what this means. If I am facing Ron and go away backwards, what do I do? I turn my back to him and face the other way. God is saying that Israel has turned to Him the back, and not the face. If you and I are talking, and you are trying to convey something important to me, but I simply turn my back to you and walk away without saying a word, would you be insulted? Would you believe that I had disrespected you and had no concern for you or your needs? Certainly you would.

You know what God kept saying? “I’ve sent prophets rising early in the times and sending them.” And God says, “You just turned your back to me and walked off.”

Look in your Bible at Jeremiah 2:27. Here is how they turned their back to God: “Saying to a stock, Thou art my Father, and to a stone Thou hast brought me forth. For they have turned their back unto me, and not their face, but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise and save us.”

What did they do? They turned their back on the living God and went and bowed down to a stock—a tree stump—or a stone. I do not care how beautiful the stone is; they said, “You’re our God.” Thus they utterly and completely revolted against God, rebelled against Him, and turned aside to a course they desired and wanted. In doing that, they expressed their contempt and hatred toward God. God said in Proverbs 1:30, “They would have none of my counsel, they despised all of my reproof.” That is exactly what contemptuous people do. No wonder God said in Jeremiah 44:4, “Howbeit I sent unto you my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying,”

The Hardness of Rebellious Children

"Oh do not this abominable thing which I hate." God said, "I pled with you, but what did you do? While I was speaking you just turned the back to me and walked off." Sin is a hateful thing to God. We must consider that for Israel and for us as well. It was sin to mock anything holy, a double sin to mock God the Holy One, and a triple sin for Israel to mock God who was to be the sanctifier of Israel and the One who required Israel's sanctification. Therefore, He should have been sanctified by Israel according to His holiness.

Leviticus 19:1–2 says, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, You shall be holy. For I, the Lord your God, am holy." Israel was to sanctify God, but they turned their back to Him.

The Hardness of Rebellious Children (Verse 5)

Consider the hardness of rebellious children. Our Lord asks, "Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more, the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." The word hardness is being used exactly the way Scripture does. Proverbs 29:1 says, "He that being often reproved, and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Proverbs 28:14 teaches, "Happy is the man that feareth always, but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief."

This word, "hardeneth," is the same word used when God called Israel stiff-necked. Exodus 32:9 says, "And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people."

The hardness of rebellious children speaks of their incorrigibility, their unwillingness to repent, and their deliberate and premeditated resistance to anything that is right, true, and holy. Humanly speaking, when you have a hardened, rebellious child, nothing will deter, change, stop, or hinder them. They will persevere in their rebellion to their own destruction.

It may surprise you to learn that, according to Scripture, there is a time when chastisement and punishment will no longer avail.

Proverbs 19:18 says, “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.” In other words, there comes a time when chastening will not do any good. There is no hope of correcting him once he has established his pattern of rebellion, disobedience, and wickedness. That is why He said in verse 5, “Why should you be stricken anymore?” Why would you be whipped or chastised anymore? “You will revolt more and more, the whole head sick and the whole heart is faint.”

I know of one father who had a rebellious son and heard a message on discipline. The father went home, and the son had done something wicked. When the father drew back the switch to hit him, the boy balled up his fist and knocked his daddy flat. “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.” What is to be done to a child who will no longer be corrected and will no longer receive instruction?

The answer is that he is to be left alone—to go his own way, do his own thing, and plunge headlong into destruction. His parents, brothers, and sisters will forsake him, not by choice but by necessity, because he will want nothing to do with them if they want to do what is right and holy. So he has to be left to go his own way.

God said concerning Israel in Hosea 4:17, “Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone.” Likewise, when the disciples told our Lord that the Pharisees were offended at His teaching, our Lord said, “Let them alone. They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, they’ll both fall into the ditch. Let them alone.”

If the only thing we can do for our rebellious children is let them alone, what then? Yes, we cry for them. Yes, we pray for them. But we cannot make a child do what is right. We can try to teach him and talk to him, but he will do what he wants to do. The only thing we can do is let him alone.

There is a principle in Scripture: if we sin, we suffer. Some will not learn until they get to the pigpen, like the prodigal. But what will it be like if God leaves us alone? Do you realize that if God wants to destroy us, the easiest way is simply to leave us alone? We

will destroy ourselves. Can you imagine what it is like to receive no mercy, no grace, no lovingkindness, no goodness, and no special favors? What must it be like to be left alone by God?

For the rebellious, all the joy they will ever have is what they have in this world, in their rebellion and sin. It is a perverted joy, and all that perverted joy will hasten them to their own destruction. God said, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." Our Lord said, "Let them alone."

God said, "Why would you be stricken anymore? Why would I waste my time trying to chasten a rebellious child? The only thing you're going to do is revolt more and more. Because your whole head is sick, your whole heart is faint. And all you'll do is sin more and more." So God said, "I'll let you alone. And you will destroy yourself."

Applications: Obedience and Gratitude

The first application is a question: Are you a rebellious child, or are you an obedient child? He said in 1 Peter 1, I think it is verse 14, "as an obedient child, not fashioning ourselves according to our former lust and our ignorance." An obedient child obeys God and His law. A rebellious child disobeys God. Are you a rebellious child, or are you an obedient child?

My next application is simply this: What group do you run with? Are you in the nine-tenths group that are unthankful, ungrateful, and unappreciative of everything that God does for you? Or are you in that one-tenth group where you return daily to give thanks, praise, and worship to God for your life, your health, and your blessings? Are you the one who pauses throughout the day just to say, “Thank You, Father, for life and health and sleep and rest and family and friends and good times. Thank You”? Have you ever thought what it is to be blessed with the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, just to be able to read the Scriptures? Are you in the nine-tenths? Are you a one-tenther, giving God the praise for everything in your life?

Father, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Jesus Christ, and for Your love, grace, mercy, goodness, and kindness. Lord, I

pray that You would make each one of us a one-tenther. Help us be the one who returns and kneels and worships You and thanks You, Father, for all that You do for us. We have to confess and acknowledge that we are what we are by the grace of God, and that we have what we have by the grace of God. Whatever we have, whatever we will have, whatever we will be, it will still only be by the grace of God. We praise and acknowledge Thee, the giver of all gifts and the giver of life. Make us more obedient, more holy, more godly, more thankful, and more appreciative. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 18

Principles From the Heart of Dixie

February 2, 2012

Introduction: The Biblical South

I want to bring a message which I've entitled Principles from the Heart of Dixie. If you have your Bibles, we're going to be looking at a number of scriptures today; if you don't, I'll quote them. One of the most devastating truths that a Southerner will ever hear is that the word Dixie does not appear in the Bible. However, the word South does indeed appear in the Bible a number of times. And the truth of the matter is this: it seems as if good and godly men down through history have always preferred to live in the South. For instance, the Bible says in Genesis 12:9, "And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south." In Genesis 13:1, "And Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south." And in Genesis 24:62, Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi, for he dwelt in the south country. And, of course, I hope that you remember that our Lord Jesus Christ was also from a southern tribe, Judah, in the southern kingdom. So

very obviously, the word south is indeed predominant in the Bible. We can think of a number of reasons why we should love the South. There is certainly nothing wrong or unbiblical in loving the place where you were born, bred, and raised.

Why People Love the South

There are people who love the South who were not born here. Some of you probably have seen the bumper sticker that some proudly display: "I was not born in the South, but I got here as soon as I could." Well, very obviously, a lot of people do love the South. Have you ever asked yourself why in the world do people want to flock to the South? And by the way, it's not just the climate. You never hear of anyone retiring and moving up north. Obviously, the climate does indeed have something to do with it, that is for sure. But there is something entirely different about the South. There's something about the South that you do not find in the North, and you certainly do not find it in the East or in the West. There are things that make the South especially great.

Edward Ward Carmack, a United States representative from Tennessee born in 1858 and died in 1908, wrote what is known as Carmack's Pledge, his pledge to the South: "The South is a land that has known sorrows. It's a land that has broken the ashen crust and moistened it with tears. A land scarred and riven by the plowshare of war and billowed with the graves of her dead. But a land of legend, a land of song, a land of hallowed and ironic memories. To that land, every drop of my blood, every fiber of my being, every pulsation of my heart is consecrated forever. I was born of her womb. I was nurtured at her breast. And when my last hour shall come, I pray that God will allow me to be pillowed upon her bosom and rocked asleep within her tender encircling arms." Certainly Carmack loved the South, and there is nothing wrong with loving the place where you were born and raised. One old Confederate retiring from Appomattox said, "My shoes are gone. My clothes are almost gone. I'm weary. I'm sick. I'm hungry. My family has been killed or scattered. And I've suffered all this for my country. I love my country. But if this war is ever over, I'll be damned if I ever love another country." Many of you will remember that Belle Boyd was a Confederate spy. Captured and

put in a Union prison, she was offered release if she would swear allegiance to the federal government. She answered, "If it is a crime to love the South, its cause and its president, then I'm a criminal. I would rather lie down in this prison and rot and die than leave it owing allegiance to a government such as yours." She did indeed love the South. Again, there is nothing wrong with loving the South. But the reason the South is so special is not simply because it is the South; it is the principles taught, believed, and embraced there that produced a society in which many people desire to live.

The South's Biblical Christianity

I realize that we have deteriorated in this day and time. Many Southerners have been reconstructed, so to speak, and plenty of people in the South now have swallowed the politically correct line and stance. Besides that, we've been invaded by numerous Yankee hordes endeavoring to leave their utopian society in the north, but still these principles are ingrained in our being and still hold sway in our lives.

By the way, I talked about the utopian north. I never will forget when I learned what the word utopian really means. You read about these utopian societies—the socialist utopia, the communist utopia, the northern utopia. In my first year of Greek, I came upon this word, utopos, and thought, that word sounds familiar. Utopos is the Greek word from which we get our English word, utopia. It is made up of two words. "U" is a negative, which means no, and "topos" is the Greek word for place. The word utopia literally means no place. In other words, utopia does not exist. It's a figment of someone's imagination, not reality. So whenever you hear about a communistic or a socialistic utopia, just understand this: there's no such place in reality. It's all a figment of the imagination.

The South, however, did not hold to a utopian dream. The South held to a biblical reality. You've got to remember that the South was known as the Bible Belt. And by the way, we did not choose that name for ourselves. That name was given to us as a means of castigation. It was the North in their Unitarian Transcendentalist

Rationalistic Society that put that term upon us, the Bible Belt, as a term of derision because we would not forsake the Word of God and follow their rationalistic, humanistic dreams. We would not abandon the Word of God.

After we lost the War of Northern Aggression, there was that period known as Reconstruction. That period was to reconstruct the South, not physically, but culturally, religiously, ideologically. In other words, we were to be trained to think and talk and act as the northern crowd thought and acted. Thankfully, not everyone was reconstructed. Not everyone bit into that line. Now, why in the world should we love the South? And why in the world is the South a special place? What were the principles that make the South special?

Let me give you several of them today. First of all, Dixie was and is known for her biblical Christianity. A recent Gallup poll, printed February 15, 2009, asked, "Where does your state rank in religious belief?" A poll of more than 350,000 Americans on the importance of religion revealed that the nation is separated into enclaves of widely divergent viewpoints on faith, with some states and regions clearly religious and others significantly secular. Gallup conducted a telephone poll of 355,334 United States adults asking, "Is religion an important part of your daily life?"

As one might suspect, states from the Bible Belt scored highest, with 85% of Mississippians and 79% of Tennesseans answering yes. The poll also revealed that in addition to the Bible Belt, the United States has a pair of secular strips. The New England states—Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Maine—scored the lowest, with only 42% of Vermont residents, less than half the percentage of Mississippi, answering yes. The other secular strip is in the West, where Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and Nevada all scored in the bottom 10 states for affirming religion's importance in daily life. Isn't that amazing?

You see, the difference that existed in 1861 and 1865 is a difference that still exists today. The South was settled mainly by Scotch and Scotch-Irish people; during the war, about 75% of the population was either Scotch or Scotch-Irish. These people held tenaciously to the Word of God. The Bible played a very important

role in the lives of Southern men and women. One of our problems today is that we have not understood the extent that the Bible indeed played a role in their lives. Many have not grasped this simple fact: there was indeed a theological aspect to the war of northern aggression.

Yes, there were economic reasons. Yes, there were political reasons. But there was also a theological reason. Southern Presbyterian historian, author, and scholar James Henley Thornwell, who died in 1861, wrote concerning the conflict before he died: "The parties in this conflict are not merely abolitionists and slaveholders. They are atheists, socialists, communists, red republicans, Jacobins on the one side"—he's talking about the north—"and on the other side, the friends of order and regulated freedom." We're talking about the South. "In one word, the world is the battleground, Christianity and atheism the combatants, and the progress of Christianity or the progress of humanity is at stake." So Thornwell saw this again as a theological war. By and large, in 1861 to 1865, the South was unashamedly Christian and believed that the Bible was indeed the inspired and inerrant Word of God. Also, by and large, the North predominantly was Unitarian, rationalistic, and humanistic.

That does not mean that everyone in the South was a Christian, nor that there were no Christians in the North. It simply points out a large difference in theology between the two. For instance, Robert E. Lee said concerning the Bible: "The Bible is the book of books, a book which supplies the place of all others and cannot be replaced." A little later Lee said: "There are many things in that old book that I may never be able to explain, but I accept them as the infallible Word of God and receive its teachings as inspired by the Holy Ghost. I prefer the Bible to any other book. There is enough in that to satisfy the most ardent thirst for knowledge, to open the way to true wisdom, and to teach the only road to salvation and eternal happiness. It is not above human comprehension and is sufficient to satisfy all desires." So like General Lee, many Christians in the South endeavored not only to believe but also to obey the Word of God, and they were not going to forsake the Word of God for a humanistic religion.

Theological War and Reconstruction

It's interesting that during that time many pastors genuinely believed that the war was an attack on Biblical Christianity. You have to remember that you cannot change a culture until you first change its theology. There has to be a change in theology before there can be a change in the culture. Stop and think about this, for instance.

Some of you are as old, or a little older, than I am. Do you remember the vast difference between where we live today and how we lived 50 years ago? When I was a teenage boy, if I wanted to see a policeman, I had to go uptown and look hard to find one. Now you can drive down the road and within five miles you've passed 10 or 15 of them. Have you ever wondered why there is such an increase in policemen today? Because 50 years ago, more people regulated and ordered their lives by the Ten Commandments, by the Word of God, than there is today. Since we do not have God's control in our lives, there has to be the strong arm of man.

Stop and think about this. Our government used to send missionaries to foreign countries to convert them to Christianity so they could understand the principles of the Word of God. We no longer send missionaries; now we send armies. Think of all the economic aid we have sent to places like China, India, Iran, and Iraq. There has been and will be no changes in their culture. I do not care how much foreign aid you send them, how many diplomats are stationed there, how many embassies are there, or how well men plead for these countries to embrace what modern day America calls democracy. You will never change a culture until you change their theology. And very obviously, you're not going to change their theology with armies. So very clearly, that's exactly what happened in the South when the South lost the war.

Here came the army, the strong arm to make sure that you and I were reconstructed. When the South did not voluntarily relinquish the word of God and its position on Christianity, we got reconstruction, specifically designed to make Southerners think and act the way the Northern elite wanted. Political correctness today is nothing more than another form of

reconstruction—training us to think and act the way the elite, those in control, want us to think and act.

The theological aspect of the war has not been studied as it should. Basil Manly, a Baptist pastor and chaplain to the Provisional Confederate Congress, viewed secession not as revolution, but as a Christian reform movement. W. W. Bennett, author of "The Great Revival of the Southern Armies," wrote of the Southern men: "Their convictions of right in what they did were second only to their convictions of the truth of the Christian religion. Nor has the stern logic of events eradicated these convictions from the southern mind. The cause is lost but its principles still live and must continue to live so long as there remains in human nature any perception and appreciation of justice, truth and virtue." Basically, the war may have been lost but the principles still remain and should remain.

Henry Grady, for years editor of the Atlanta Constitution, addressed the New England Society in New York City on December 21, 1886. He said: "The South has nothing for which to apologize. She believes that the late struggle between the states was war and not rebellion, revolution and no conspiracy, and that her convictions were as honest as yours. I should be unjust to the dauntless spirit of the South and to my own convictions if I did not make this plain in this presence. The South has nothing to take back. In my native town of Athens, Georgia, is a monument that crowns at Central Hill, a plain white shaft. Deep cut into its shining side is a name dear to me above the names of men, that of a brave and simple man who died in a brave and simple faith. Not for all the glories of New England, from Plymouth Rock all the way, would I exchange the heritage he left me in that soldier's death. To the foot of that shaft I send my children's children to reverence him who ennobled their name with his heroic blood."

Did you hear what Henry Grady said? He said, "I would not trade the valor and the honor of my Confederate ancestor for all the glory of Plymouth Rock and everything on down." Why would Henry Grady so venerate the Confederate soldier? The answer is very simple: the Confederate soldier was fighting for truth, righteousness, and principle. By and large, our Confederate

ancestors died to prevent the very thing we have today—a pagan, idolatrous, humanistic government that seeks to play God in the lives of all its citizens. Like our forefathers, we must come back to the principle that there is to be no king but King Jesus. The South was predominantly Christian and held to biblical Christianity.

The South's Biblical Work Ethic

A second reason we should love the South is her biblical work ethic. Southern men have always been known for hard work, responsibility, and independence, and thankfully some of those characteristics are still prevalent today. But by and large, America, and some in the Southern states, has become a welfare society. Instead of work, independence, and responsibility, many look to the federal government to supply all their needs. When there is a hurricane, tornado, flood, or drought, most today simply cry to Washington, D.C., rather than to the sovereign God of heaven and earth for help and relief.

Let me point out one thing about this impending economic collapse that is upon us and about to take place in a more drastic way, I believe. Certainly one good thing is that most people will recognize that government is not God, that government cannot and will not take care of us. We have to assume responsibility for ourselves and have a biblical work ethic. One of my favorite stories to illustrate this is about a Negro slave.

Years ago, Wendell Phillips, an ardent abolitionist from New England, came to Charleston, South Carolina, and stayed in what we would call a hotel today, waited on by a Negro servant. In fact, he was served his breakfast in his room. Wendell Phillips took the opportunity to represent to the black man that he regarded him as a man and as a brother, and moreover told him that he was an abolitionist. The old black man just stood there. Finally, Wendell Phillips could not stand it any longer and said, "Look, I just cannot stand to be waited on by a slave. You're excused, please leave the room." To which the black man replied, "Excuse me sir, I is obliged to stay here because I be responsible for the silverware." Let me tell you something folks, the old timers, black and white, knew

what it was to work and be responsible. They knew what it was to have to work hard.

The Bible has a great deal to say about laziness and about sluggards. For instance, in Proverbs 6 and verse 6, the Word of God says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." In Proverbs 6 and verse 9, God asks, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 13 and verse 4: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat."

Now listen to what he said. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." You can sit back and wish for a new vehicle. You can sit back and wish for a beautiful home. You can sit back and wish for anything, but you will never have it if you're a sluggard. The Bible says, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but it's the soul of the diligent that shall be made fat." The Bible says in Proverbs 20 and verse 4, "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing."

In other words, he's too lazy to work and just a little bit of cold weather will keep him from working. But the Apostle Paul said it very plainly in 2 Thessalonians 3 and verse 10: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." We've got to understand there is indeed a biblical responsibility to work.

We cannot be dependent upon a government that takes and steals and confiscates from others to give to people who do not deserve it. God has decreed and demanded that we earn our bread by the sweat of our brow. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 5:8 that if any will not provide for his own, especially for those of his own household, he is worse than an infidel and has denied the faith.

Let me spell this out very clearly. My wife, my children, and my family are my responsibility, not the government's. It is not my responsibility to educate, train, feed, or provide for your wife and children; that is your responsibility. If I were to share some

Christian charity, that is one thing, but it is not my place to provide for your own.

Thomas Jefferson said, "A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned, that is the sum of good government." Our grandparents, and sometimes our parents, would have been absolutely humiliated and embarrassed to even think about food stamps, welfare, and subsidies. They depended solely upon the Lord and their own hard work. Remember that government cannot give to someone without first taking from someone else.

There is a difference between illegal plunder and legal plunder. If you do not know that difference, I encourage you to read Frédéric Bastiat's small book, "The Law," written long ago, in which he differentiates between illegal and legal plunder. If I were to reach in my pocket, pull out a pistol, stick it in your face, and say, "Give me all of your money," that is illegal plunder. I could be in real trouble: you might overpower me and take the weapon, or you might have a weapon of your own, or if I got caught, I might serve time in prison. But if you take from someone legally and they resist, they are the ones who go to prison. In "The Law," Bastiat distinguishes between legal plunder and illegal plunder.

Listen to what he writes, written over a hundred years ago: "But how is this legal plunder to be identified? Quite simply, see if the law takes from some persons what belongs to them and gives it to other persons to whom it does not belong. See if a law benefits one citizen at the expense of another by doing what the citizens themselves cannot do without committing a crime. Now, legal plunder can be committed in an infinite number of ways. Thus, we have an infinite number of plans for organizing it. Tariffs, protection, benefits, subsidies, encouragements, progressive taxation, public schools, guaranteed jobs, guaranteed profits, minimum wages, a right to relief, a right to the tools of labor, free credit, and so on and so on. All these plans as a whole, with their common aim of legal plunder, constitute socialism. Socialists desire to practice legal plunder and not illegal plunder. Socialists, like all other monopolists, desire to make the law their own

weapon. And when once the law is on the side of socialism, how can it be used against socialism? For when plunder is abetted by the law, it does not fear your courts, your police, or your prison. Rather, it calls upon them for help. The question of legal plunder must be settled once and for all, and there are only three ways to settle it. Number one, the few plunder the many. Number two, everybody plunders everybody. And number three, nobody plunders anybody." Bastiat certainly hits the nail on the head. When you and I leave off biblical responsibility and a biblical work ethic, the only thing left is socialism. Socialism is just simply a straight road to communism. In the land of the free and the home of the brave, we have been plundered by our own politicians and by our own government. Why? Because we have forsaken the work ethic and now desire everything to be given to us, handed to us on a silver platter. We've grown to love our socialistic form of life. However, when all of this socialism is suddenly and abruptly taken from us, we're going to change our minds. You're going to find there's going to be a lot of people so used to having everything given to them, they're going to riot to the nth degree because they can no longer have it. As Margaret Thatcher once said, "Socialism works very well until you run out of other people's money." And then, of course, it no longer works.

The South's Biblical Hospitality

But Dixie was known not only for her biblical Christianity, but also for her biblical work ethic. Thirdly, Dixie was known for her biblical hospitality. The South is the most friendly and hospitable section of the country. All natural Southerners speak to each other, whether we know their name or not, whether we ever have met them before. We just simply do that. All of us have experience riding down the road and folks just throw up their hands and wave. They nod because we understand, look, this is the South.

I had an aunt and uncle that lived for years in Toledo, Ohio. They were from the South, but went up there to work. When they retired, they came back to the South. My aunt just could not get used to people just waving and speaking to her. She said, "You know, it's so different down here. Up north, when a stranger waves at you and speaks to you, you run because they have ulterior

motives." Well, if you did that down south, you'd be running yourself to death. Southerners love barbecues and get-togethers and reunions and company of families and friends. That's just part of biblical hospitality. When I was a child, we had company every Sunday afternoon, every Sunday. Some family came home with us from church, they ate dinner with us, they spent the afternoon with us, they ate supper with us, and they went back to church with us at night.

My wife can tell you that after we married, we would visit my parents, sit down at the table, and I would eat with people I had never seen before. The principle was: if you were at our house at dinner time, you came in and ate, no matter who you were.

Southerners are known for their hospitality. Romans 12:13 says to distribute to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality. 1 Peter 4:9 commands us to use hospitality one to another without grudging. In 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8, the pastor above all is to be known as an example of hospitality. Southerners are naturally hospitable.

That stands to reason. You're in the South; that's how you grew up and how you live now. Henry Benjamin Whipple, a bishop from Minnesota, visited the South in 1843 and 1844, supposedly to regain his health from difficult Minnesotan winters. He was in St. Augustine, Florida, and wrote in his diary: "November the 25th, St. Augustine, Florida. The people of the southern states are generally much more hospitable than northerners. And the difference must be attributed to the fact that they are not such money-loving people. You do not see the low, mean cupidity, the base selfishness so striking a characteristic of one portion of our restless Yankee brethren. I am more and more convinced that most of the exaggerated stories of abolitionists exist only in the imagination. And from personal observation, I know that the efforts of the abolitionists at the North have only served to injure the slave and to destroy the kind and fraternal feeling which should exist between Northern and Southern states." Here's a Yankee saying that Southern people are very unlike Northern people—not selfish, not money-grubbing or money-loving, but people-loving.

Very obviously, the South was indeed a place of biblical hospitality. Fourth, the South and Dixie is known for her stand on freedom and limited government.

The South's Stand on Freedom and Limited Government

Now stop and think about the word freedom. You remember Mel Gibson's movie Braveheart: when he was being tortured, they asked if he had anything to say, and they thought he would recant, but he shouted as loudly as he could, "Freedom!" Freedom is not only the ability to move around and do as you please under the law of God. Another aspect is freedom from the domination and control of sin, as well as from the control and domination of government that often tries to regulate us for our good. When you ask, who's responsible for your welfare? The answer has to come back: you are responsible for your welfare. It's not Washington D.C. It's not Atlanta, Georgia. We as individuals are responsible for every area of our lives. And I can assure you, when you stand before God on Judgment Day, it will not be the federal government or the state government that answers for you. You will answer individually because you are responsible and accountable.

Historically and biblically, the South always believed that government was not only limited by the word of God, but also by the Constitution. In fact, it was Jefferson who said, "Bind it down by the chains of the constitutions." Unhappily, our governments today have taken the attitude of those kings and rulers in Psalm 2, where the Bible says, "The kings of the earth and the rulers thereof take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." In other words, we don't like God's limitations. We want everything different. Depraved men like to play God. Therefore, they refuse His boundaries. The Bible says in Hosea chapter 5 and verse 10, "The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water." So the princes of Judah didn't like God's limitations or boundaries. They removed those boundaries, and God said, "I'll pour out my wrath upon them like water."

So it was the South that sought to restrain the federal government in 1861, and when that became impossible, then we seceded. The war was not over slavery; slavery only became an issue later on in the war. The war was over freedom. Even Europe understood what the war was about. Lord Acton from England, in a letter to General Robert E. Lee, said, "I saw in states' rights the only availing check upon the absolutism of the sovereign will, and secession filled me with hope, not as the destruction, but the redemption of democracy. I deem that you"—that is General Lee and his people—"were fighting the battles of our liberty, our progress, and our civilization, and I mourn for the stake that was lost at Richmond more deeply than I rejoice over that which is saved at Waterloo." This Englishman mourned for that which was lost at Appomattox in Richmond because he saw that Lee and the South were fighting for a limited government. We will never ever return to liberty and freedom until we return to a biblical and constitutional government.

Biblical government, constitutional government is always a limited government. General Robert E. Lee said, "All that the South has ever desired was that the union established by our forefathers should be preserved and that the government as originally organized should be administered in purity and in truth." General Lee also warned, "The consolidation of the states into one vast empire, sure to be aggressive abroad and despotic at home, will be certain the precursor of ruin which has overwhelmed all that preceded it." When you have a consolidation of the states into one vast empire, it's going to be aggressive abroad and despotic at home. It's certainly true that the state or the government that seeks to play God shall be destroyed by God.

As Hosea 5 and verse 10 said, "He shall pour his wrath upon them like water." Let me read to you a quote by R.J. Rushdoony, who died in 2001. Listen to what he wrote, and I'm going to tell you the date in which he wrote it after I finish. One short paragraph: "The authority of the state is everywhere in decay. But everywhere the state is grasping for more power as the cure-all for man's problems. The powers of the state are thus likely to increase markedly in the years ahead, but that increase is the forerunner of the state's collapse as man's saving agency." Everywhere the marks

of the collapse of the state are evident. But as it collapses, it's going to grasp for more and more power until it is absolutely and totally destroyed. And R.J. Rushdoony wrote that in 1971.

Almost as if it had been written yesterday. The South believed in a limited government. I could say truthfully that we will eventually have a limited government—either through obedience or through destruction, but we will have it one way or the other. Until then, we need men who can be counted on, men who understand the principles for which our forefathers fought and died, men who embrace them, love them, live them, and will fight for them.

Conclusion: A Call for Godly Men

Josiah Gilbert Holland, who died in 1881, wrote a poem titled "Wanted": "God give us men. A time like this demands strong minds, great hearts, a true faith, and ready hands. Men whom the lust of office does not kill. Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy. Men who will possess opinions and a will. Men who have honor. Men who will not lie. Men who can stand before a demagogue and damn his treacherous flatteries without winking. Tall men, sun-crowned men, who live above the fog, in duty, in public duty and in private thinking. For while the rabble with their thumb-worn creeds, their large professions and little deeds, mingle in selfish strife, lo, freedom weeps. Wrong rules the land and waiting justice sleeps."

Notice what he said: "God give us men." The men we need are like the men who fought and died as our ancestors fought and died. They lived what they believed, held these principles tenaciously, believed them, and applied them. May God give us men.

Have you ever stopped to think what a difference it would make in our government, country, states, and communities if we had men like Robert Edward Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Jeb Stuart, Jubal Early? Godly men, determined men, men of conviction and principle. God give us men. Robert E. Lee's first duty station—a great place to come back to what General Lee believed. He believed the foundation of all society was indeed the Word of God. Let's pray, shall we?

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we are so thankful for this opportunity again on Confederate Memorial Day to honor Thee and honor our ancestors by proclaiming once again the principles, not only from Your Word, but also the principles for which our forefathers lived and died. Lord, we do need men. God, give us men, godly men, holy men, righteous men, who will stand for truth. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 19

So, You Want What You Want

February 3, 2012

Introduction: The Danger of Wanting What You Want

Psalm 106:14 says, “But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert, and He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls.”

Each one of us has heard a child say, “I want it and I want it right now.” Anyone who has ever been around a spoiled child has heard those words. But unhappily, it is not only children, but sometimes adults who have never grown up and have never faced reality, who use those same exact words. In fact, the truth is, no one really wishes to be around people who are like that.

As you read through the Bible, you will find that the Israelites as a whole were just like spoiled, pampered children who never grew up. Such children always exasperate their parents.

I was in a store in Douglas, Georgia, and there was a woman with a young child in her buggy. I think the child was probably four, five, or six, something like that. The child was pitching an absolute fit—screaming, hollering, and crying. I watched the woman push the buggy over to her husband, and she said, “Please do something with this child. I can’t do a thing with him. He’s crying, he’s upset, and he’s mad because I won’t buy him a toy when he already has one exactly like it at home.” I bit my tongue and said under my breath, “Give him to me, honey. I know exactly what to do.” But I did not want to stay in that area, so I quickly walked away. I did not want to be around him.

Likewise, the Israelites exasperated and infuriated the Lord God of heaven and earth. The Bible says in Numbers 14:22 that God said concerning the Israelites, “Because all those men who have seen My glory and My miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted Me now these ten times and have not hearkened unto My voice.” If you would take the time to look up the words provoke, provoked, and provocation in relationship to the Israelites and God, you will be amazed at how many times God says that they provoked Him. They provoked Him innumerable times, and they did so to their own detriment and to their own destruction.

I've known a number of Christians, a number of people, professing Christians, who have coveted and lusted in such a manner that it did not really matter to them what God said or what His Word said. They wanted what they wanted. They refused to be regulated or controlled or limited by the Word of God. In fact, I have counseled some of them. I've rebuked some of them. I have heard grown men say, "Well, I know you're right and I know the Bible is right, but I'm going to have to handle this in my own way." Or, "I'm going to do what I'm going to do." In other words, all they want is their own lust, their own covetousness, and their own way. It doesn't matter what God says.

Samson: A Clear Illustration of Lust

Everyone in this room has heard of Samson. Let me give you such an illustration. In Judges chapter 14, beginning with verse 1, we

find a very clear illustration of someone wanting what they want. It doesn't matter what God says: "And Samson went down to Timnath and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughter of the Philistines. And he came up and told his father and his mother and said, 'I've seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines, now therefore get her for me to wife.' Then his father and his mother said unto him, 'Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?' And Samson said unto his father, 'Get her for me, for she pleaseth me well.'"

Now note something. This is Judges chapter 14. If I were to take the time to read Exodus 34:15–17 and Deuteronomy 7:1–6, in both of those passages God forbade intermarriage with the Canaanites. The Philistines lived in Canaan, and He specifically named them among the seven nations that God destroyed. God said they were to make no covenant with them, and specifically said they were not to give their daughters to them in marriage, nor to take their daughters for their sons, for they would turn their hearts away from serving Him.

Here is what Samson's father and mother said when he told them, "Get her for me": "Look, Samson, is there never a woman among your own brethren? Look at your tribe. And if your tribe is too small, if you can't find a woman that would please you in your tribe, look at all the other tribes of Israel. Surely, you could get a good Israelitish girl from one of those tribes. You're not even limited to this particular tribe."

What does Samson say? "Get her for me, for she pleaseth me well." A very literal translation says, "Get her for me, for it seemeth good in my eyes." In other words, Samson's attitude was, "I don't care what God says. I don't care what you say. I want her, and I want her now. You get her for me. For she pleaseth me well; it is good in my own eyes."

Not only was Samson violating the law of God in Exodus 34 and Deuteronomy chapter 7; he was also violating the fifth commandment, when God said, "Honor thy father and thy mother." He refused to honor the counsel of his father and mother. What did Samson want? He wanted what he wanted.

The Apostle Paul wrote concerning Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed into Thessalonica." Why did he leave Paul? He loved this present world and departed into Thessalonica. Demas worked with the Apostle Paul and had part in Paul's ministry until the love of the world filled his heart.

The Consequences of Loving the World

What he did was simply this: He lusted, coveted, and desired the present world; therefore, he deserted the Apostle Paul and the ministry. I could name countless preachers, deacons, elders, and average Christians who have followed suit. They have forsaken God because of lust for money, pride, sex, and a multitude of other lusts. They wanted what they wanted. They refused to be controlled by the Word of God and refused to be limited by God.

The Bible says in 1 John 2:15–17, "Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

"Love not the world, neither things are in the world." Then he tells us what he is talking about: "The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life." All these things pass away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Stop and think about this. Demas forsook God, forsook Paul, and forsook the ministry for the present world in which he lived. That present world has been gone for hundreds of years. The temporary lusts and pleasures Demas had have also passed away, but his sin and betrayal remain. demonstrated permanent joy and happiness for temporary pleasure that passed away. All I can say is, what fools we are to betray God and His Word for temporary pleasures.

The Principle of Radical Self-Denial

A proverb applies to what we are considering. Proverbs 23:2 says, "And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." In other words, God is saying that it is better to cut your own throat than to allow yourself to sin against God.

He is not telling you to commit suicide. A proverb stresses a principle. Our Lord Himself enunciated the same principle in Matthew 5:29–30: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

What is our Lord saying? We ought not to allow any member of our body—whether the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life—to lead us away from God and cause us to betray Him and His Word for temporary pleasures. We must be prepared to do whatever is necessary to control our lust, desires, and covetousness. Whatever would take us away from God or His Word must be quickly, eagerly, and readily disposed of or dispatched.

Our Sins Always Affect Others

Before explaining our text today, it is important to remember one critical truth: our sins, lusts, and desires always affect other people. Do not come up with the stupid argument, "Well, it's my body and I'll do with it as I please," or, "It's my life and I'll live it as I please." No, your sin always affects someone else. The Bible says in Proverbs 14:7, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Whatever you do will ultimately affect your family, your neighbors, your friends, your church, and even your nation.

Consider an illustration from Matthew 14. Do you think someone's sins can affect someone totally outside himself and outside his family? Of course the answer is yes. Who would have

thought that the sin and lust of King Herod would affect John the Baptist?

Matthew 14:1 says, “At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.” Herod had laid hold on John, bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife, because John said, “It is not lawful for thee to have her.” When Herod would have put John to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod.

This dancing before Herod and pleasing him was not some little ballet or tap dance. It was a sensual dance. Verse 7 says, “Wherefore he, Herod, promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.” She had been instructed by her mother and knew the effect her dance would have on her stepfather. She said, “Give me here John Baptist’s head in a charger.” The king was very sorry; nevertheless, for his oath’s sake, he ordered it.

Herod commanded that John’s head be given to the damsel. The head was brought in a charger and given to her, and she brought it to her mother. John’s disciples came, took up his body, buried it, and went and told Jesus.

Here was a man consumed with his own lust, and his lust affected John the Baptist. John lost his life because Herod could not control himself. Just stop and think: How many children have reaped the whirlwind simply because they were in homes where parents would not and could not control their own lusts? Think of the husbands and wives whose lives have been destroyed because of the sins of their mates, because their mates would not and could not control their own lusts. We rarely consider how our sins affect others.

But mark this down as a truth from Scripture: no man lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. Whatever you do always affects other people. I often say how much easier and better it is simply to obey the Word of God. Have you ever meditated upon

how much heartache, trouble, and turmoil we could save ourselves if we would just obey? It is that simple. God has promised blessings to those who obey Him.

Listen to what He says in Proverbs 10:22: “The blessings of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it.” I would much rather have the blessing of the Lord without sorrows than have my own lust, my own covetousness, my own will, and my own way, with nothing but heartache, sorrow, trouble, and death.

Israel's Lust for Meat: Historical Background

Now look back at Psalm 106:15. With that introduction, understand what the psalmist is talking about. This is the main verse today: “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.” To understand Psalm 106:15, you need to go back and see the provocation Israel gave to God. Hold Psalm 106, but turn back to Psalm 78 and then to Numbers 11. Numbers 11 is the historical setting, but Psalm 78 repeats it as well. Let us look at Psalm 78, beginning at verse 15:

“He claimed the rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink as out of great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock and caused waters to run down like rivers. And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking, there’s that word, by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lusts. Yea, they spake against God. They said, ‘Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, He smote the rock, and that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide flesh for the people?’”

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 78:15-32; Numbers 11:4-10 (KJV)

> "Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth. So a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel. because they believed not God and trusted not in His salvation. Though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven, man did eat angels' food, He sent 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 upon them as dust, and feathered fowls 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 they were filled, for He gave them their own desire. They were not estranged from their lusts, but while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them and smoked down the chosen men of Israel. For all this they sinned still and believed not His wondrous works."

"Therefore their days did He consume in vanity and their years in trouble. When He slew them, then they sought Him, And they returned and inquired early after God, and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer was. Nevertheless, they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant."

"And the mixed multitude was among them that fell a lusting and the children of Israel also wept and said, 'Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt, free to the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic.'"

"But our soul is dried away. There's nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes. And the manna was as a coriander seed and the color thereof is the color of bdellium. And the people went about and gathered it and ground it in mills and beat it in mortar and baked it in pans and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. And when the dew fell upon the camp of the night, the manna fell upon it. Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent."

"And the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly. Moses also was displeased. And Moses said to the Lord, 'Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight? that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me. Have I conceived all these people? Have I begotten them, that thou

shouldest send to me, carry them in thy bosom as a nursing father, beareth the sucking child into the land which thou swearest from their fathers? When should I give flesh to all this people? For they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people on, because it is too heavy for me.'"

In verse 18, the Lord says, "And say unto the people, 'Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and you shall eat flesh. For you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt. Therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and you shall eat. You shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five, nor neither ten, nor twenty days, but even a whole month, until it come out your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you. because that you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?'"

Moses said, "The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand footmen." That is only the soldiers; with the women and children, probably two million. "And thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month."

Moses asks, "Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them, or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?" And the Lord said unto Moses, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

Psalm 78, beginning at verse 18, says, "And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lusts. Yea, they spake against God. They said, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, and the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed.'"

"Can He give bread also? Can He provide flesh for His people?" Here is an expression of unbelief: Can God? Look at everything God had done for them, and now they were doubting God. Psalm 78:22 says, "Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation." Though He had commanded the clouds from above, opened the doors of heaven, rained down manna upon them, and given them the corn of heaven, "man did eat angels' food." He sent them meat to the full. God had provided an absolutely perfect food

for the people. He provided manna, yet they were despising God's provision. They wanted meat. God's provision was insufficient for their lusts.

Now let me show you something. Turn back, please, to Exodus chapter 12. These people were crying to God, "We won't have meat. We're sick and tired of this manna. We don't want the manna. We want meat." Look at Exodus 12:38: "And a mixed multitude went up also with them, and flocks, and herds, and very much cattle."

Now wait a minute. Why were they crying to God for meat when they had flocks, sheep, goats, herds, cattle, and very much cattle—all different kinds? It may be true that not every individual had many sheep, goats, and cows, but there was plenty of meat there. If not every individual had that, could they not share? The Bible says they had plenty.

When you get to Numbers chapter 11, Moses asked in verse 22, "Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?" It was not merely a vast multitude of people—probably two million. I think what Moses was exasperated about was the greatness of their lusts and the greatness of their demands. Moses became so exasperated that he said, "Lord, why did you send me? I didn't conceive all these people. Why did you place this burden upon me? These folks are just crazy. They're not controllable."

They want what they want, and they want it right now. In Numbers 11:6, they say, “But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.” The manna was like coriander seed. It had a particular color, and they baked it so that it tasted like fresh oil. It fell upon the dew during the night while they slept.

They did not have to work for it; it was simply there. It was delicious and full of nourishment. Bear Grylls says on The Survivalist that it was full of vitamins and all kinds of nourishment. They did not really need anything else. But they said, “We’re sick and tired of it.”

Matthew Henry says the manna “was good for food and pleasant to the eye. Every grain was like an orient pearl. It was wholesome

food and nourishing. It was not to be called dry bread, for it tasted like fresh oil. It was agreeable to every man's palate and tasted as he would have it. And though it was still the same, yet by the different ways of dressing it, it yielded them a grateful variety. It cost them no money nor care, for it fell in the night while they slept, and the labor of gathering it was not worth speaking of. They lived upon free quarter, and yet could talk of Egypt's cheapness and the fish they ate there freely."

"Moreover, the manna came from the immediate power and bounty of God, not from common providence, but from special favor. It was, as God's compassion knew, every morning always fresh. While they lived on manna, they seemed to be exempted from the curse which sin had brought upon man, that in the sweat of his face he should eat bread. And yet they speak of manna with such scorn, as if it were not good enough to be meat for swine."

"Our soul is dried away." They speak as if God dealt hardly with them, allowing them no better food. In other words, they are despising what God has provided and comparing it with what they had in Egypt. "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic."

Isn't it amazing how people forget? They had cucumbers. They had leeks and garlic. They had fish, but they also had slavery, and toil, and heartache, and death. Now God has delivered them from all of that, and He's supplying their need with manna. Isn't it amazing how some people prefer slavery just to have their lusts filled?

John Gill said this concerning the manna: "They complain now that they are starving, that their soul is dried away. They complain that they are almost wasted away with famine and hunger, whilst they are abundantly supplied with manna. In the same way as they had just been loudly declaring that they had lived in Egypt for very little money, as if they were affected by a great dearth of provisions, when by the pure liberality of God a kind of food was provided for them, more easy to prepare than any other, and so actually prepared without trouble or cost. But such is the malignity and ingratitude of men, that they count all of God's bounty for

nothing, while they are brooding over their own importunate lust." Remember verse 6: "But now our soul is dried away, And there is nothing else before our eyes besides this manna." They were not only lusting, they were despising God. That's why in Psalm 78 they ask, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?"

"He smote the rock, He gave us water, can He also give us meat?" God was very provoked at their whining, complaining, lusts, and sins. Psalm 78 says, "Therefore the Lord heard this and was wroth. So a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they believed not in God and trusted not in His salvation."

God was providing everything they needed: no work, no money—just pick it up, prepare it, and eat it. It was fresh every day. Yet they said, "Our soul is dried away. We're so tired of this manna. What we need is some delicacy. What we need is something that will satisfy our lust. What we need is something special." They were crying against God's provision and crying for meat in their passion. Here is the truth: whatever is asked for in the passion of lusts is often given in wrath and anger.

God's Response: Giving Requests in Anger

God may give you what you want to satisfy your lusts, but when you get it, you will wish to God you never had it. Prayer may be answered in anger or denied in love. If I had a three-year-old child and he wanted to play with a rattlesnake, what would I say? No. Am I denying him because I hate him? No. I am denying him because I love him. I do not want him to get hurt or die. God can answer our prayers in love and deny them, or He can answer them in anger and give us exactly what we want. Then we wish we never had it.

The Bible says that God will supply not only our needs but our desires. But just because a man gives a man his desire does not mean that he has special favor with God. It depends on what that desire is and whether it is holy or unholy. God gave these people their desires. Psalm 78 says, "He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven and by its power He brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust and feathered fowls like 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 they were filled, for He gave them their own desire." He gave them what they wanted.

"They were not estranged from their lusts, but while the meat was yet in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them and smoked down the chosen men of Israel." God gave them exactly what they wanted, and He gave it to them in anger. The Bible tells us in Numbers 11:34 that when God killed them, they called the place Kibroth-hattaavah, that is, the graves of lust, because there they buried those people who sinned against God.

Psalm 106:15 is talking about what happened in Numbers 11 and Psalm 78: "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." I find it interesting that they complained in Numbers 11 that their soul was wasting away because there was nothing before their eyes except this manna.

The Meaning of Leanness of Soul

Part of God's judgment was not just killing some of the people. Since they said that they had leanness of soul, God said, "I will give you true leanness of soul. I'll give you what you want, but I will send leanness into your soul."

The word leanness is translated from a verb that means to make thin, to cause the waste away, and to destroy. The idea is that of scraping; hence, it means to scrape away or scrape so there's nothing left, or to become lean or waste away. The same word is translated in Isaiah 10:16 as leanness and in Micah 6:10 as scant. So God gave them their requests, but He sent leanness into their soul.

This is probably where most Christians are in our land today. We have practically whatever we want, but there is leanness in our souls. God sent quail. Quail is good food. I love quail; I do not care anything about eating doves, but I love quail. Here is the point: that which was good to them was bad for them when it came without the blessings of God.

Application: The State of the Modern Church

Our meat can become our poison when it comes without the blessing of God. Whatever our meat does for our taste buds and the strengthening of our body, if it comes without the blessing of God, it is poor nutrition and makes the soul lean. Our lusts, covetousness, and desires that are contrary to God and His Word, He may give us, but He will send leanness into our souls. We in this country have so undervalued the grace and gifts of God. We have despised His wonderful, marvelous providence, disbelieved His truth, and neglected His Word. In His righteous judgment, He has sent leanness into our souls.

I have heard this—I do not know if it is true; a couple of you doctors might be able to tell me—that when a man is starving to death, there comes a point when he no longer desires food. He does not want it. Would you look around in our churches? How many Christians do you know who genuinely want the pure, unadulterated Word of God? Most want entertainment. They want to be titillated and pampered. They do not want the Word of God or truth. Like a starving man, they disdain everything set before them. Nothing pleases them.

Do you remember what the Bible says in Amos 8 and verse 11? God said there would come a time when He would send a famine—not a famine of bread and water, but a famine of hearing the Word of God. We have come to the place in our land where we have fat bodies but lean souls. We have what we want, but it is strange that we really do not want the things of God. We have nourished and fed our bodies while allowing our souls to starve. We have traded that which is eternal for that which is temporal and lost our taste for heavenly things. I want you to turn in your Bibles to two passages.

Here is where our affection should be. Colossians 3:1 says, "If you then be risen with Christ," that is, if you are genuinely saved, "if you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth." Our affection should be on Christ, and on His Word, and on His truth, and on His glory, and not necessarily on things that are on this earth.

In 3 John, John writes to Gaius: "the elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth." Then he says, "Behold, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." What is John praying for Gaius? He is praying and wishing that Gaius would have a good and healthy and fine body equal to the good and fine healthy soul that he has. If our bodies were in the same shape as our souls, most of us would have been dead for a long time now. The truth of the matter is this: if most Christians prospered physically as they did spiritually, they'd be in bad shape. Bad shape.

What did God do? God gave them their requests, but he sent leanness into their souls. You can have what you want. You want it bad enough? Sometimes God lets you have it. I don't care if it's sin, I don't care if it's fleshly, I don't care if it's pride, I don't care if it's arrogance, I don't care if it's rebellion; you want it, God lets you have it. And when you get it, you'll woe to God that you never had it. It's far better to want what God wants than to want what you want.

Let me make an application. In Psalm 78, Psalm 106, and Numbers 11, we read about the manna that God gave. You remember how the children of Israel despised that manna. They said, "we don't want it. It's awful. There's nothing more besides this manna before our eyes."

"We're starving to death on it. We can't handle this." I want you to look at what our Lord said in John 6, beginning with verse 48: "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Note this: the antitype to the manna in the Old Testament is none other than Jesus Christ. When they despised the manna, they were despising Jesus Christ. When they longed back for Egypt, with its leeks, garlic, onions, cucumbers, melons, and fish, they were longing for the type of the world.

In other words, they were trading Christ for the world. They were trading the provision of God—the manna, which was the type of Christ—for all the slavery and rottenness of Egypt. We have done that today. The average church wants its programs, entertainment, and comfort. It wants anything and everything under the sun except God and His Word.

We have replaced Jesus Christ and His Word with a religious world. We are very religious, but we are lost. We are a world that knows nothing of the grace, mercy, and justice of a holy God. We have sired a generation that cannot and will not receive the pure, unadulterated Word of God. Their palates will not take the Word of God; they relish the delicacies of this world rather than the Word of God.

Warnings About Prosperity and Lust

The second application is this: If God does give us success, even worldly success, then we must be extra careful with our souls and their desires. Matthew Henry said:

"If we pray for temporal prosperity, we should also pray that we may at the same time have a grace commensurate with it, that it may be a blessing and not a curse. If we are visited with prosperity when it has not been a direct object of our prayers, if we inherit riches, or if our plans are successful beyond our expectations, or, in the language of the world, if fortune smiles upon us, there should be special prayer on our part that it may not be a curse rather than a blessing, that it may be so received and used as not to alienate our minds from God.

"Few are the Christian people who can bear continued success in life. Few are those who are not injured by it. Rare is it that growth in grace keeps pace with uninterrupted worldly prosperity. Rare is it that the blessings of the earth are so received and employed that they are seen to be a means of grace and not a hindrance to growth in prosperity. growth in piety. If we must know scantiness, may God grant it not be the scantiness of the soul. Yet this is the common attendant upon worldly prosperity. When wealth grows, with many a man in his worldly estate is fatter, but his soul's estate is leaner."

"To gain silver and lose gold is a poor increase. But to win for the body and lose for the soul is far worse. How earnestly might Israel have unprayed her prayers had she known what would come with their answer? The prayers of lust will have to be wept over. Where to look upon is the greatest judgment to have leanness in our souls while we're fed with manna. We look upon it as an affliction to have an overly lean body, but it's a far sadder condition to have a lean soul."

The old Puritans had a saying: "God oftentimes curses his enemies with prosperity." Why? They end up trusting in their wealth instead of God who gave it. The Puritans also said, "When a Christian gets rich, God either gains a fortune or loses a man." Very few men can handle prosperity. That's why, if God blesses you, you better pray that your soul will not become lean and that you will use it in a way which will honor Him.

James 1:13 says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Our lust leads to our sin, which leads to our death. It's impossible to hold on to your lusts and have life.

When Satan tempted our Lord to turn rocks into bread, He said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Conclusion: Want What God Wants

Our lives are to be controlled, regulated, and limited to the Word of God, and brought into conformity to the Word of God. Truly, you do not want what you want. You should want what God wants. He wants your faith and your trust, and that faith and trust will be evidenced by your obedience.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask that You would help us, teach us, and show us that we must submit to Thee and bring our lives into conformity to Your Word. If we want to save ourselves from heartaches, trouble, turmoil, and death, it is imperative that

we obey and honor Thee in every area and sphere of our lives—whether family, marital relationship, church relationship, or civil relationship. We are to do that which is pleasing and honoring to Thee. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 20

Jabez and his Prayer

February 8, 2012

Introduction to Jabez

In 1 Chronicles 4, verses 9 and 10, the Bible says, “And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren. And his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bear him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, that thy hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me. And God granted him that which he requested.” There have been books written about Jabez, including one entitled Jabez and His Prayer, and numerous sermons have been preached on this text, I am sure.

Clearly, the Bible tells us that Jabez was a very honorable person. But what is absolutely amazing about Jabez is that nothing is known of this man except what is mentioned right here. His name does not occur in any other part of Scripture, with the exception of 1 Chronicles 2:55, where it appears to be the name of a town or city. That town or city may have been named after this individual, but I do not know for sure.

Jabez is introduced without description or ancestry, in such a way as to lead us to think that he was a well-known individual. We can only suppose that he was well known to those for whom Chronicles was written, either by tradition or perhaps because he was a contemporary. Nevertheless, there is nothing else given us in Scripture concerning Jabez. The Bible says very clearly, “And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying,” and then, “that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me.”

The Meaning of Jabez's Name

His mother named him Jabez because, she said, “I bear him with sorrow.” The name Jabez actually means sorrow or sorrowful. So we must ask ourselves this question: Why in the world did his mother name him Jabez?

Scripture does not give us the details, so we can only assume that either his birth was extremely difficult or that, during that time, a grievous set of circumstances befell his mother or the family. Perhaps her husband died; perhaps she died in childbirth. We do not know. If you hold 1 Chronicles and go back to Genesis 35, you will notice that this happened to Rachel. The account directs us to Genesis 35 and verse 16, where that circumstance is found.

The Bible says, “And they journeyed from Bethel, and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath. And Rachel travailed, she had hard labor. And it came to pass when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not, thou shalt have this son also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, for she died, that she called his name Benoni, but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.”

Very clearly, here was a woman who had great difficulty bearing her son, and she died during childbirth. She named him Benoni, meaning son of my sorrow, but his father changed his name to Benjamin, meaning son of my right hand. It could have been that Jabez’s mother died during childbirth, but we do not know. The Bible does not tell us.

Genesis 3:16 teaches us that, basically, all children are born with sorrow: “Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” We understand that some children are born with and in greater sorrow than others. Jabez evidently was born in greater sorrow. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding his naming, we do know that his name is associated with sorrow.

We must ask ourselves why a mother would name her son with such a name that he would always be identified and associated with sorrow. When we hear some modern-day names, we still ask why any mother would name her child such. Notice that there are at least two possible answers as to why she named her child Jabez.

First, it could be that she desired a memorial to herself, to be thankful to God as long as she lived for supporting her and bringing her through that sorrow, if she did not die during childbirth. It is needful at times to be reminded of our sorrows, that we may learn to rejoice in things which are not sorrowful. Many times we are unthankful and ungrateful for things for which we should be thankful and grateful. We should also learn to be thankful for our deliverances from sorrow. There are many times, I believe, when we go through experiences by which God teaches us to be thankful for His deliverance. He also teaches us to rejoice in the fact that He gives us good times. Usually, in the average life, the good times far outweigh the bad times. But there could be a second reason: his name could have been a memorial for Jabez, reminding him that this world is indeed a world of sorrow and tears.

Do you remember Job 14:1, where the Bible says that man who is born of woman is a few days and full of trouble? She could have simply been reminding Jabez that he needs to be serious about this life. We have fewness of days and fullness of trouble. It might also remind him to love and honor his mother, who brought him into this world with such sorrow, and to be a comfort and a help to her.

Jabez's Honor

Now, we are told not only that his name is associated with sorrow, but also that in 1 Chronicles 4 he was more honorable than his brethren. The word honorable literally means to be weighty, to be rich, to be glorious, and to be honorable. When the Bible says that Jabez was more honorable than his brethren, this could be understood in several different ways. He may have been a man of great wealth, a man of great authority and position, or a man of great courage, strength, and spiritual understanding. We do know that he was a praying man and that he was devoted to the One True and the Living God. The Bible says that he was more honorable than his brethren.

The Prayer of Jabez

The same word is used in reference to Samuel. Samuel was undoubtedly a very godly man. God called Samuel and used him throughout his entire life. In 1 Samuel chapter 9, Saul and his servant had been sent to look for the asses that escaped. Finally, the servant said to Saul, in verse 6, “Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man. All that he saith cometh surely to pass. Now let us go thither, for peradventure he can show us our way that we should go.”

Samuel is referred to as an honorable man. When you think about the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, and all of their wickedness and all of their ungodliness, they could never have been called an honorable man. But Samuel is called an honorable man. Why? Because he was a godly man, devoted to the worship and service of the one true and the living God. Likewise, in 1 Chronicles 4 in verse 9, the Bible tells us that Jabez was more honorable than all of his brethren. In verse 10, we find that Jabez was indeed a man of prayer because he cried out unto the one true and the living God.

In all probability, the word honorable refers to his inclination to prayer, his inclination to godliness and worship and truth, and his obedience in spiritual things. In other words, I believe the Scripture is saying that he was more holy, more godly, and more dedicated to the one true and the living God than all of his

brethren. Do you realize the way to be great is to be godly? The way to be honored is to be humbled. Humility comes before honor, and godliness is what makes an individual great.

The Prayer of Jabez: Seeking God's Blessing

The prayer that Jabez uttered centuries ago has many applications for each of us today. First of all, he sought God's blessing: “Oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed and enlarge my coast.” Secondly, he sought God's power and presence: “and that thine hand might be with me.” Thirdly, he sought God's protection: “that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me.” Fourthly, we see the answer: “And God granted him that which he requested.”

First of all, he sought God's blessings. Look what he said in verse 10: "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast." It is one thing to desire and seek God's blessings, and it is quite another thing to understand the implications of seeking those blessings. Spiritual blessings are indeed the best blessings. Those who are blessed with spiritual blessings are blessed indeed. God's blessings are real. They are genuine. They produce positive effects in our lives.

And the truth of the matter is this: you and I can only desire God's blessings, pray for them, and ask for them. In order to have them, God must actually grant them; God must actually give them to us. No one is ever blessed apart from God. Each morning when I wake up, I pray before I get out of bed. One of the first things I do in prayer is say, "Lord, thank you for letting me live through the night and for giving me this day."

I have a very good friend that I grew up with who just this past week went to bed at night and never woke up in the morning. He died in his sleep. I don't need to quote this verse, I don't think, but I shall. Lamentations 3:22-23 says, "It is the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." Just stop and think.

It is God who commands the blessings. It is God who commands the sun to rise upon the just and the unjust alike. It is God who

gives us life. It is God who gives us rest. It is God who gives us sleep. It is God who protects us twenty-four hours a day. Without Him, without His blessings, we're nothing.

Now let me show you this prayer request of Jabez in light of Jacob's prayer.

SCRIPTURE READING - Genesis 28:16-22 (KJV)

In Genesis 28, beginning with verse 16, remember the story: Jacob is being sent into Paddan Aram, which is Syria, to get a wife for himself. He is going in obedience to his father. As he rests that night, God comes to him. Notice what happens:

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillar, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel, that is, the house of God. But the name of the city was called Luz at first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Verse 20 tells us that Jacob vowed a vow, asking for God's presence, keeping, bread to eat, raiment to put on, and a return to his father's house in peace. He then declares that the Lord shall be his God, that the stone shall be God's house, and that he will give the tenth of all God gives him.

Jacob's vow was essentially this: "God, I am asking You for a blessing, and that blessing is Your protection and Your provision. Enable me to return again to my father's house, and, Lord, I will serve You. You will be my God, and I will recognize that by giving You the tenth of everything that I make."

Jacob's vow, Jacob's prayer, had reciprocity in view. Simply stated, if God would provide for Jacob and protect him, then Jacob was saying, "I will worship none other than the one true and living God who has revealed Himself." Jabez prayed something similar. In 1 Chronicles 4:10, we read, "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast."

What is not written is implied. Jabez was saying, "Lord, if You will bless me, I will worship You and serve You only." Jabez did not express his promise, but he left it to be understood. Perhaps he did not express it because he did not want to promise in his own strength, but he still resolved to devote himself totally to God. When he said, "O that thou wouldest bless me indeed and enlarge my coasts," what was implied was this: "God, if You will bless me, if You will help me, I'll give You a blank check. You just write whatever You want me to be and whatever You want me to do, and that's what I'm going to do." He wanted the blessings of God and was saying, "Lord, I want Your blessings. If You will bless me indeed, I will be at Your disposal forever."

His prayer was the most ardent, affectionate expression of desire. Literally, it was, "O that thou wouldst bless me." He was beseeching, hungering, and thirsting for a blessing: "O that thou wouldst bless me and bless me greatly with manifold and abundant blessings." It was as if Jabez were saying, "O God, give me the blessings of Abraham. Give me the blessings of David."

I want everything that You have for me. Ephesians chapter 1 gives us a very important truth. The Apostle Paul gives this great hymn of adoration, this great doxology, in Ephesians 1:1–14, and he says in verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." How many spiritual blessings has God given us? All of them. Where are they? They are located in Jesus Christ.

I know that we pray that God will supply our needs, help us make the money we need to live and pay our bills, and bless our bodies with health. I know that we ask God for strength to do what we need to do. But how many of us have ever really sought Him for

spiritual blessings? Most of the blessings we ask God for are physical or material. We do not usually ask God for spiritual blessings.

Jabez, when he said, "O that thou wouldest bless me indeed and enlarge my coast," was basically saying, "Lord, I want everything that You have for me. I want everything." Have you ever prayed to be more holy, more godly, and more spiritual? Have you ever prayed to be more heavenly minded? Have you ever prayed for the fullness of God's power in your life? Have you ever prayed that God would enable you to submit yourself entirely, completely, and totally to Him? Have you ever prayed, "Lord, renew my mind; give me the mind of Christ constantly, consistently"? Have you ever prayed that God would enable you to bring your body into conformity to His Word—your body, your mind? Have you ever prayed that God would transform you by the renewing of your mind? Have you ever prayed that God would mortify your members which are upon this earth, subdue your iniquities? Have you ever prayed that God would give you the much more of the Holy Spirit?

What did He say in the book of Luke? "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" I am simply pointing out the fact that here are all spiritual blessings, yet most of us cry out for physical and material blessings and totally neglect everything God has for us in Christ. God is more interested in our being holy and obedient than He is in our having a million dollars. I had a friend—he is still a friend—but I remember that, forty years ago, his biggest prayer was that God would make him a millionaire so he could travel around and tell people how gracious and good God was.

You do not need to be a millionaire to tell people how good and gracious God is, and you do not need to travel anywhere. If you cannot worship Him and do what you are supposed to do where you are, why in the world would God give you a million dollars to do something simply because you wanted a million dollars? Jabez said, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed." He wanted everything that God had for him.

Then he added, “and enlarge my coast.” You say, “Brother Weaver, that has got to be physical.” Well, it might be. He could have been asking God to enlarge his coast by expelling the Canaanites who dwelled in the land. He could have been asking God to enlarge his coast by giving him the worldly substance necessary to use for good ends and purposes. But it could also mean, in one sense of the word or be interpreted in another sense of the word, that he was asking God for a spiritual enlargement in his own life, particularly in knowledge and understanding.

For instance, look back in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 4. You remember Solomon was praying there, and God asked him, “What do you want, Solomon?” Solomon said, “Lord, I do not have sense enough to come out of the rain, much less to lead Your people. What I need is wisdom and discernment, that I might lead Your people.” Look at 1 Kings 4:29: “And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea coast.” What did God do? God enlarged his coast. But it was a spiritual enlargement. God gave him a mind that understood and discerned, a mind of wisdom.

If you want to interpret Jabez's prayer as physical—“Lord, enlarge my coast”—then what Jabez is doing is asking God to give him the ability to drive out the enemies of God that God had already commanded him to drive out. He is still beseeching God for God's blessings. He is saying, “Lord, You told me to root out these people, and I want to root them out, but I need You. I need Your power, and I need Your blessing.”

The enlargement of the coast, not only in 1 Kings 4 and verse 29, but here also, could be very clearly stated in Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews 12:22-23 says, “But you are come unto Mount Zion, and into the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” Notice, there is indeed the heavenly city. There is indeed a heavenly coast.

And so when Jabez prayed, “Lord that thou wouldst bless me indeed and enlarge my coast,” he could have had far greater

meaning than just simply a physical coast or physical extension of property. What he was asking was the same thing that Solomon asked for: an enlargement of heart, wisdom, and understanding. One of the greatest needs that you and I have today is wisdom, understanding, and discernment.

We need to know how to live as sheep among wolves. We need to know how to stay away from the wolves—not just the four-legged kind, but the kind that are devouring us. We need wisdom. We need discernment. We need to know how to help people, how to fight injustice, and how to stand up against wickedness. You understand what I am saying?

Seeking God's Power and Presence

And how did it begin? Jabez said, “Lord, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and that Thou wouldst enlarge my coast.” Secondly, in 1 Chronicles 4 and verse 10, Jabez sought God's power and presence. He said, “O that thou wouldst bless me indeed and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me.”

Look in Exodus chapter 33, beginning with verse 12. Notice what Moses said. In one sense, this is exactly what Jabez was praying when he said, “Oh, that thy hand mightest be with me.”

“And Moses said unto the Lord, See thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people, and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, and that I may find grace in thy sight, and consider that this nation is thy people.”

“And the Lord said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” Moses answered, “And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” God told Moses, “My presence will be with you,” and Moses said, “If your presence is not with us, I don’t want to go. I don’t want to go anywhere you don’t want me to go, or take this people anywhere you don’t want me to take them. I want your hand to be upon me.”

Most of us have never learned two simple truths. The first our Lord made exceedingly plain in John 15:5: “Without Me you can do nothing.” Is prayer something? Can we do it without Christ? No. Is obedience something? Can we do it without Christ? Is fighting wickedness something? Can we do it without Christ? Is standing for righteousness something? Can we do it without Christ? No. Without Christ, we can do absolutely nothing. We have to come to the realization that we are totally, absolutely helpless, hopeless, and powerless in and of ourselves. Without Christ, we are nothing; without Christ, we can do nothing.

Whatever we do in our own strength and power, we usually fail and fall flat on our faces. It is worthless. The second truth that most of us have never learned, the Apostle Paul gave us in Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthened me.” There is nothing we cannot do with Christ. Whether arguing with the wicked, standing in a court of law, or confronting an atheist, whatever it is, Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.” We have forgotten, first, that we are nothing in ourselves and can do nothing without Christ; but with Him, we can do all things.

Now note what Jabez prayed: “O that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast,” and here is the part under consideration: “and that thy hand might be with me.” In other words, “I want your presence. I want your power.”

Psalm 44, beginning with verse 1, says: “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days and 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.”

He's talking about the wicked: “For they, that is Israel, got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favor unto them.”

Did not Israel fight when they went into the land? Did they not use their swords, spears, shields, bows, and arrows? But they did not get the land in their own strength and by their own power.

They got it by the power of God. It was God's hand that gave it to them.

What is Jabez praying? “That thy hand mightest be with me.” Notice Exodus chapter 15. Israel had come out of the land. Pharaoh chased them to the Red Sea. Israel crossed on dry land, but Pharaoh and his chariots pursued them. The waters came back together and drowned Pharaoh and his armies.

“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord. And spake saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation, my Father's God, and I will exalt him.”

“The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea. His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them. They sank into the bottom as a stone.” Here it is: “Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power. Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed into pieces the enemy.”

What did he say? “That thy hand might be with me.” I want your presence, yes, but I want your power in my life. Psalm 98:1 teaches the same truth: “O sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvelous things. His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory.” Pray that thy hand might be with me. When we are with the Lord, and the Lord is with us, victory is absolutely assured.

That is what Jabez wanted: God's presence and God's power. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 33 and verse 7, “And this is the blessing of Judah. And he said, Hear Lord the voice of Judah, and bring him into his people. Let His hands be sufficient for Him, and be thou a help to Him from His enemies.” Let His hands be sufficient for Him. In other words, Lord, You uphold him.

Yes, he has to work. Yes, he has to fight. Yes, he has to protect. But Lord, You must make it effectual. You must have Your presence and Your power there for his hands to be sufficient. So Jabez was more honorable than his brethren because he sought the

Lord. He not only sought the Lord; he wanted God's presence and God's power in his life.

Even when it comes to preaching, if you are preaching in the power of God, when you get through, you are not nearly as exhausted as when you are preaching in the flesh. Stop and think about that. What did Elijah do? When God fed Elijah and gave him water, the Bible says that he went in the strength of that meat and drink forty days and forty nights, running across the desert. When God sent rain from Mount Carmel after He chopped off the heads of all those prophets of Baal, Elijah told King Ahab to gird himself, get in his chariot, and get back to the city, for there was a sound of abundance of rain. Ahab started driving back to the city, and the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah. He girded up his loins, outran Ahab, and beat him back to the city. How can a man outrun a chariot and horses? The answer is the power of God.

It is nothing less than pride, arrogance, and blasphemy to think that we can accomplish anything without God's power and God's presence. Jabez understood that. He said, “Oh, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thy hand would be with me.”

Seeking God's Protection from Evil

Thirdly, look back in 1 Chronicles chapter 4, verse 9. Jabez also sought God's protection: “O that Thou wouldst bless me indeed and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me.” How instructive and informative this request should be to each of us.

How instructive and informative this request should be to each of us. When Jabez prayed, "that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me," he desired to be delivered from evil: from the evil of sin, wickedness, and iniquity, because he understood that those things only led to grief. He asked that God would keep him from the evil of trouble, from all his enemies, that they might not hurt or trouble him, or make him a Jabez.

There is a play on his name, because he is indeed a man of sorrows. He is saying, "Lord, deliver me, that it might not grieve me, that I might not be the man of sorrow."

The Hebrew word for evil here is ra'ah, translated in our Bibles as evil, wickedness, mischief, hurt, affliction, adversity, harm, and trouble. It speaks of everything that is bad, evil, malignant, disagreeable, displeasing, hurtful, harmful, and injurious. So he said, "that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me." You remember earlier I talked about all those blessings that we have in Christ Jesus in heavenly places.

How often have you prayed, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"? Our Lord taught us to pray that. This is exactly what Jabez is praying: "Lord, that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me." How desperate are we to be kept from evil and delivered from evil? The problem is that most of us seek out temptation. We do not want to be delivered from it; we want to run to it.

I remember the story I have told in times past about the father who told his young son not to go swimming in the canal. The father came home early and saw the son coming out of the canal with wet swimming trunks. He stopped and said, "Son, I thought I told you not to go swimming in that canal." He said, "Yes, father, you did."

He said, "But I was tempted." His father said, "Well, son, why did you bring your swimming trunks with you?" He said, "In case I got tempted." The Bible says, "Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof." Most of us run to temptation instead of running away from it. Do we purposely shun evil and wickedness?

If we genuinely want to be delivered from the grief of sin and wickedness, we need to learn to pray, "and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." We also need to learn to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," which means, "Thy will be done in my heart." How many of us really want to be His instruments, His vessels? Let me show you.

In 2 Timothy 2, Paul tells Timothy, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honor and some to dishonor. If a man therefore

purge himself from these," that is, from those to dishonor, "he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

Before modern-day conventions and inventions, every house had a vessel of dishonor. They had the honeypot. In South Georgia, they're slop jars, kept under the bed at night. Today, we have modern-day toilets. How many of you really enjoy cleaning a toilet? Nobody—except Lacey, if I have to help her. That's a story in itself.

But the point is this: there are vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. There are things in our lives that are dishonorable, wicked, and wrong. Every one of us has them—some more than others, some less than others. Paul is telling Timothy, and Jabez is praying, that if you will purge yourself from these vessels of dishonor, if you will get rid of what is wicked and wrong in your life, then you will be a vessel of honor, fit for the Master's use. And so Jabez is praying that God's hand would be with him. Why?

Jabez prayed that God might deliver him from evil, so that it might not grieve him. In other words, Jabez did not want to be pained, grieved, hurt, vexed, tortured, or made sorrowful by sin. John Gill said concerning Jabez's prayer, "that thou wouldest keep me from evil, from the evil of affliction, and especially from the evil of sin, and from the evil of one Satan, and from all evil men and all evil company, and make me companions such as I am, that it might not grieve me." He alluded to Jabez's name, which he had from the sorrow and grief of his mother. Nothing is more grieving to a good man than the evil of sin.

Sin is contrary to the nature and will of God, being committed against a God of infinite love, grace, and mercy. By it, the name, ways, and truths of Christ are dishonored, the Spirit of God is grieved, and the saints are bereaved of much comfort. Therefore, they desire to be kept from sin, knowing they cannot keep themselves, but that the Lord can and will keep them, at least from its tyranny and destruction. Jabez was praying, "Lord, keep me from this evil, that it might not grieve me." A marginal reading says, "...grant that the grief implied in my name may not come upon me."

We could pray that prayer because each of us is a sinner: "...grant that my nature that I have might not come upon me." Jabez earnestly, sincerely, and genuinely sought to be delivered from evil, and there is a stated reason: that it might not grieve him. He understood that sin, wickedness, disobedience, and rebellion always produce harmful results. No one escapes it. If you sin, you suffer. Many want to sow their wild oats but do not want to reap the harvest. If you sow the oats, you reap the harvest. Some like to work for sin, but when it comes to collecting wages, they do not want to collect. If you work for sin, you end up collecting the wages.

Avoiding the evil and grief of sin is a lawful and legitimate reason to pray for deliverance, because if we sin, we suffer. But there is a better reason to pray to be delivered from sin. Look in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 39. I am sure you are familiar with this story.

Joseph had been sold into slavery and became a servant in Potiphar's house. Potiphar had committed everything into Joseph's hand. Joseph had control of everything in the house, and Potiphar did not even know what was in his possession. But when Potiphar's wife made advances toward Joseph, he refused her. Genesis 39 records his answer: "Behold, my master knoweth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath into my hand. There is none greater in this house than I. Neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife."

Then Joseph said, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Joseph did not say, "How can I do this great wickedness and not be grieved, not be hurt?" He said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" You see, the real wickedness of sin is not that it merely grieves us, but that it grieves God. That is why God said in Jeremiah 44:4, "O do not that abominable thing which I hate." Sin is not only against us; it is against God.

We should learn to pray like Jabez, that God would keep us from evil, that it might not grieve us. Yes, but we should learn even more

to pray that God would keep us from evil, that we might not grieve Him.

Here is the most amazing thing in 1 Chronicles 4:10: you have the answer to Jabez's prayer. “And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and Thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me.”

The Answer to Jabez's Prayer

“And God granted him that which he requested.” God is always willing and ready to hear and answer prayers that are prayed in accordance with His Word and His will. What did God command us? “Be holy as I am holy.” Would not God answer your prayer if you wanted more holiness in your life? Sure He would, because He has commanded you to be holy. Would He not answer your prayer if you wanted greater obedience in your life? Sure He would, because He has commanded you to be obedient. Would He not give you greater wisdom if you asked for it? The Scripture said, “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given unto him.” Sure He would. He wants you to have wisdom. The prayer of Jabez was successful. God granted him that which he requested.

God prospered him remarkably and gave him success in his undertakings, in his studies, in his worldly business, and in his conflicts with the Canaanites. He became more honorable than all of his brethren.

“His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear.” Of course, you know the rest of that verse: it is our sins that have separated between us and our God. But if we repent of those sins, turn from them, and seek Him, He has promised to be found of us.

John wrote, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.

If we ask to be made more holy, He hears us. If we ask to be made more righteous, He hears us. If we ask to be more obedient, He hears us. If we ask to be conformed more greatly to His Word, He hears us. He said that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. His will is revealed in His Word. We know what His will is.

"And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him." If we ask anything according to His will, we know that He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, we also know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him.

Whenever we want to be holy, to do what is right, to be godly, to be brought into greater conformity to His Word, and to have wisdom to serve and honor Him, He will hear our prayer. If He hears us, we know that we have those petitions that we ask of Him. What does that mean? It means that our lives should be constantly and continually changing, and we should be constantly and continually growing into greater holiness, greater obedience, greater godliness, greater wisdom, and greater understanding.

Applications for Today

Let me make a couple of applications. First, remember that the name Jabez means sorrow or sorrowful. Those who were born in trouble and sorrow do not have to continue in that course. Repentance, faith, and obedience are the paths to change. The problem with most people is that when they are in sorrow and swallowed up by it, they do not want to repent or change. They want somehow to be delivered from their problems while still being allowed to keep doing whatever they did that got them into their problems to begin with. No. It does not work like that. We may be sorrowful and sorry, but repentance, faith, and obedience are the only roads to change and deliverance.

The second application is this: We must learn to pray the prayer of Jabez with a present-day application. Evil is evil no matter where we are or where we live. Think of all the evil in this life: the evil of sin, tyranny, injustice, and so many other kinds of evil. We need to learn to pray that He would lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil. Sometimes you can spell evil with just three letters, can't you? The alphabet agencies? Of course. We want to be delivered. We need to learn to pray.

The third application is this: We need never despair, because we serve a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. I never will forget a preacher I met probably forty years ago. He had a good sense of humor and liked little quips. He would always ask people, "Do you know God's telephone number?"

He said, "If you don't, I'll give it to you. It's Jeremiah 33:3: 'Call upon Me and I'll answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.'" We need never despair when we serve such a glorious, sovereign, majestic God and understand, according to Proverbs 21:1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he willeth." God is in control, and we need to cry out to Him and worship and serve Him.

Father, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Jesus Christ. We thank You, Father, for this prayer. I pray, Father, You would teach us to pray the prayer of Jabez. Help us, Lord, to pray and seek Thee, and say to Thee, "O that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thy hand would be with me, and Thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me." Lord, I pray that You will answer our prayers as Thou didst answer Jabez's prayer, by granting us that which we ask. Thank You for Your grace, mercy, goodness, and kindness. We ask Your blessing upon Your people, in Christ's holy and blessed name. Amen.

CHAPTER 21

Perfecting Holiness Part 1 of 5 - God as Father

November 28, 2012

Perfecting Holiness

Introduction to Perfecting Holiness

Today I want to start a brief series—I say a brief series; it will be five messages. This is the first one today, and it will basically be an introduction. The theme of this series is perfecting holiness. This message today and next week's message will concern perfecting holiness and then God as Father.

Look at 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Notice that last phrase: "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

I believe that every true child of God genuinely desires to live a holy, godly life. I might add that if you do not desire to live a holy,

godly life, there is doubt as to whether or not you are really a true child of God. The Bible teaches very clearly and dogmatically that without holiness no man shall see the Lord—Hebrews 12 and verse 14. Even our Lord said in Matthew 5 and verse 8, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

The Need to Know Holiness

One of the problems that each of us encounters, one of the problems that each of us possesses in his own life, is the problem of ignorance. When I say that, I mean this: we do not know the Word of God as we should know it. Consequently, since we do not know the Word of God, we do not know how to make application of the Word of God to our lives. We do not even know that which God demands. So, if you and I are going to live a holy life, we have to know the Word of God; we have to know that which God demands.

Moreover, if we understand that we are to live a holy life, we must ask ourselves: What is a holy life? What is the definition of holy? How do we discern whether or not we are holy? How do we discern whether anyone else is holy or not holy? It was the duty of the priests in the Old Testament to teach the difference between holy and unholy, and between that which is clean and unclean.

They had a responsibility to teach this to all of the people of God. Now, I want you to hold 2 Corinthians 7, but go back in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel chapter 22. Ezekiel 22, and look if you would please at verse 26. Without me multiplying scriptures, I do want to show you at least several right here. Look at Ezekiel 22 and verse 26, where God here condemns these priests, and look what He says specifically. Ezekiel 22 and verse 26, God says, "...her priests have violated My law, and have profaned Mine holy things. They have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them." So God is condemning the priest here because they put no difference between the holy and the unholy, the clean and the unclean, and He says they profane My name. Now if you will turn to Ezekiel 44, here is what the true priests indeed are to do.

Notice Ezekiel 44 and verse 23. God says this: "And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean." So the true priest of God is to teach the difference between the unholy and that which is holy, that which is unclean and that which is clean. It was the duty and responsibility of priests in the Old Testament to teach this. It was the duty and responsibility of the priests in the New Testament to teach this. Someone may be sighing at this particular point and saying, "Well, I'm thankful I'm not a priest and I'm thankful I don't have that responsibility because that requires a great deal of study and a great deal of information." Well, before you get too thankful, I want to show you a couple of verses. First of all, I want you to turn to 1 Peter chapter 2 and look at verse 5. 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 5. And notice particularly the Word of God says, 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 5, "You also as lively or living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

So the Bible tells us that we are already a holy priesthood. And if you would turn in your Bibles to the book of Revelation chapter 1, you will see how we got to be priests. Revelation chapter 1, look at verses 5 and 6. Revelation 1 verse 5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his

Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. So the Bible tells us that we have been made priests unto God and our Father. Since we are priests, since we have been made priests, we must know and be able to discern the difference between that which is holy and that which is unholy, that which is clean and that which is unclean.

In fact, Scripture is very specific. In 1 Thessalonians 4:7, God says, “For God hath not called you unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” For God hath not called you unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. If we have a calling to be holy, we must know what holiness is. The word for holiness literally means to be set apart.

Negative and Positive Aspects of Holiness

There is a negative and a positive connotation attached to holiness. In 2 Corinthians 6:17, we see the negative aspect: “Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.” Notice God says, “Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.” If we are going to be set apart, we have to be set apart from something, and that something is whatever is sinful, wicked, and wrong.

There is also a positive aspect of holiness. In Romans 1:1, the apostle Paul declares, “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.” Separated unto the gospel of God. Here is a negative and a positive: we are separated from sin and wickedness, that which is ungodly and unholy, and we are separated to something. We are separated to God and to His Word.

When Paul says, “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ,” the word servant is the Greek word doulos, which literally means a slave or a bond slave. Paul says he is now a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ and to His gospel.

Thus, holiness refers, on the one hand, to the fact that we have been purged from our sins, repented, and turned from those sins; and, on the other hand, that we have been regenerated, converted, and renewed in our minds and souls. It means that we have turned from unrighteousness to righteousness, from sin and wickedness to the Word of God and to the Lord Jesus in truth.

First Thessalonians 1:7–9 gives an excellent picture and summary of what holiness amounts to, both the negative and the positive. Paul says that the Thessalonians were examples to all who believed in Macedonia and Achaia. From them the word of the Lord sounded out, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place; their faith toward God was spread abroad, so that Paul and his companions did not need to speak anything. He then says, “For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” There you have both the negative and the

positive. They turned from idols, the negative, to God to serve Him. That is the positive.

Obviously, then, holiness means simply to be set apart. You are set apart from something, and you are set apart unto something.

Positional vs. Practical Holiness

Second Corinthians 7:1 says, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” When Paul speaks of perfecting holiness in the fear of God, he is not referring to what is known as positional holiness. We must understand the difference between positional holiness and practical holiness.

Positional holiness is the work of God alone. It refers to the work of God the Father in Jesus Christ, placing us in the body of Christ, imputing the righteousness of Christ to us, and making us acceptable to Him in Jesus Christ alone. What is positional holiness? It is something God alone does. We have no work in positional holiness.

Let me show you several passages so you can see what is known as positional holiness. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 30 and 31, 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, that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Incidentally, when you see the word sanctification, the word holiness and the word sanctification are synonymous. They are the same exact word in the Greek. So you could read that, "But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God has made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption, that according as it is written, He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord." It is God the Father, then, who makes us positionally holy in Christ.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21, it is again showing you that this is the work of God the Father: "For He," that is, God the Father, "hath made Him," that is, God the Son, "to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." So God the Father has made us righteous in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians chapter 1, beginning with verse 4, shows that this is the work of God the Father: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

But note, “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” So, here is positional holiness. Positional holiness is something that God the Father does. It cannot be added to, and it cannot be taken from. It is already perfect. You cannot be more holy in Christ positionally than you already are. It is perfect; it is the work of God.

But when you get to 2 Corinthians 7:1, Paul is not talking about positional holiness. He is talking about practical holiness. Look at verse 1 again: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” What the Apostle Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 7:1 is a practical holiness in which you and I are engaged. We are actually doing something in our lives, and that something is seeking to bring our lives into greater conformity to the Word of God.

Now, why is it important that you learn practical holiness? Let me show you why this is so vitally important. Romans 6:19 says, “I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh. For as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.”

Before you were converted, you yielded your members—that is, your body, your mind, your heart, and your limbs—to wickedness and uncleanness. You did those things willingly, delightfully, and premeditatedly. Just as, when you were unconverted, you yielded your body to all of those lustful, wicked things, now that you have been saved by the grace of God, yield those same members as servants unto righteousness and to holiness.

The Command to Be Holy

What is He teaching us? He is teaching us that we have a duty, a responsibility, a privilege, and, I might add, a command to bring every area of our lives into conformity to the Word of God.

It is amazing how all of these different authors say exactly the same thing, but sometimes they say it in a little different wording. Peter writes, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children.” Here is the negative: “Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.” That is the way you used to live. “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

Notice, please, the negative in verse 14. Here is what you are not to do. Then He tells you in verse 15 what you are to do, and in verse 16 why you are to do it. In holiness, then, there is obedience required. That is why He said, “as obedient children.”

Let me ask you a question. Do not answer it out loud. Have you ever had a disobedient child? Do you know the difference? Every parent knows the difference between speaking to a child and the child hearing and instantly obeying, and the parent speaking to the child and then having to reprimand him, rebuke him, and finally chastise him just to get him to do what he is supposed to be doing to begin with. What is the difference? A lot.

Just as we want our children to be obedient—to obey when we speak—God wants us to obey as He speaks. If we are going to be an obedient child, we are not going to fashion ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance. We are going to be holy in all manner of conversation as He is holy, because it is written, “Be ye holy, for I am holy,” saith the Lord.

Now, remember I quoted Hebrews 12 and verse 14 earlier. Let me show you how important holiness is. Because in Hebrews 12 and verse 14, the scripture says, "Follow peace with all men." Listen carefully. "And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." So, if God has saved us, He has made us positionally holy. If

we have been made positionally holy, He now demands that we make a practical holiness in our life.

Now, let me ask that you turn back to 2 Corinthians chapter 7. And let me emphasize something right here. And it's important that you and I understand this distinction. 2 Corinthians 7. Notice if you would please verse 1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved," look at the next two words, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." So when it comes to practical holiness, that is your responsibility. However, that does not mean that you may perform practical holiness without the aid, help and blessing of the Lord. If you and I are to be practically holy, that means we must have the power and the grace and the mercy of God in our lives in order to make us practically holy. You remember what our Lord said in John 15 in verse 5, what is it? "Without me you can do" how much? "Nothing." Well, is practical holiness something? Well, yes it is. That means you need the Lord. That means you need His grace, you need His mercy, you need His power.

For without Him, you can do nothing. So let me put it like this. Ours is the responsibility. His is the ability. So once again, we need to learn to seek our Father for ability to fulfill our responsibility. Okay?

The Promises in 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

Now, I told you today is just going to be an introduction mainly. I want you to consider one point today. Just one point. I want you to consider the promises. And we're going to take up on this next week. We're still going to consider the promises next week, but only one aspect. Look if you would at 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Having therefore these promises. What promises? What promises? Well, verse 1

This harkens back to chapter 6, verses 14 through 18. Here the apostle writes: “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord

hath Christ with Belial? And what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

"Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The promises that the apostle talks about in chapter 7 and verse 1 refer back to the promises given to us in verses 17 and 18—in other words, verse 16 as well.

For he says, "In what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." So there are basically two promises here. That is why he used the plural in verse 1. The first promise is given to us in verse 16. The second promise is given unto us in verses 17 and 18.

The first promise, found in verse 16, is where God says, "In what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people." First, here is the promise that God will dwell with us and walk with us; He will be our God, and we will be His people.

This promise is given to us in the context of separating ourselves from idolatry, compromise, and corruption. That is why he said in verse 14, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Remember that holiness has a negative and a positive aspect. We have to be separated from something, and we have to be separated unto someone. Holiness, then, is separation from sin and separation unto God.

God is demanding in this passage that if we have been made positionally holy in Christ, there be a corresponding resemblance of that in our lives—a practical holiness. I might add that it is this practical holiness which defines and differentiates between His possessing people and His professing people.

Like the old black man said, “A lot of folks talk about heaven ain't going there.” A lot of folks profess Christ, but they do not possess Christ, and their lives are absolutely, totally contrary to Scripture.

It should be plain based on verses 17 and 18. “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

Is it not plain that the promise that God is going to be our God and walk among us is based upon our separation from corruption and wickedness? In other words, it is evidenced by our obedience to God. The evidence that we have taken God as our God is that we have left all of this wickedness, idolatry, and corruption. God is not going to be identified with idolatry or wickedness in any way whatsoever.

You remember what the Bible says concerning Christ in Hebrews 7:26: He is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” Do you mean to tell me that the sinless Son of God will have communion with someone who is full of sin and wickedness? The answer is absolutely no. Therefore, he asks in verse 14, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”

“For what fellowship hath the righteous with unrighteousness?” None. “What communion hath light with darkness?” None. Light is either going to conquer the darkness or darkness is going to conquer light. “What concord or agreement hath Christ with Belial,” or the devil? None. “And what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” None. “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” None. The answer to every one of these questions is that Christ has nothing to do with any of these things.

“Wherefore, come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” He is telling us that we should avoid all wickedness and all sin as we would avoid the plague. We do not want to be

around someone who has an extremely communicable disease. Likewise, we should not want to be around anything that will pollute our soul and mind, just as a disease would pollute the body. The command to come out is therefore a command to separate from what is contrary to Christ.

There are two passages that make this clear. Isaiah 52:10–11 says, “The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing, go ye out of the midst of her, be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.” Isn’t that amazing? He tells us to be clean. If there were time, the New Testament could be examined to show that our bodies are the vessels of the Lord.

Revelation 18:4 says, “And I heard another voice from heaven saying, Come out of her, My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.” There is a commercial Babylon, and there is a religious Babylon. Again, the command is, “Come out of her.” The promise is that God will dwell with us, walk with us, and be our God. He will recognize us and treat us as His people.

The Promise of God's Presence and Protection

Go back to 2 Corinthians 7. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved." Having therefore these promises. How can this promise—that God will dwell with us, walk with us, be our God, and make us His people—apply to us if we are already His people?

What follows is to be an encouragement to believers. Turn to John 15, verses 18 and 19. Our Lord said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own. But because you're not of the world, but I've chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

What does the world do to a real, genuine believer who wants to live holy and godly and bring his life into conformity to the Word of God? What does the world do to him? They hate him. They will

persecute him. Do they persecute our Lord? Yes. Do they persecute His disciples? Yes. Will they do that today? Yes.

So here is what this promise is all about. The Lord is saying to us, when the religious establishment kicks you out, the way the Jews did anybody who believed on Christ in the New Testament, when the religious establishment kicks you out, and when the world hates you, despises you, and will have nothing to do with you because you belong to Christ, God says, "Don't worry. I will take you under My wings. I will protect you. I will preserve you. I'll keep you as the apple of My eye. I'll build a fire and a wall of protection round about you. And I will walk among you. And I will make sure that you are well taken care of."

Here is a promise that you and I have in light of our separation from the world and religious idolatry. Our Lord said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated me first.”

In 2 Corinthians 6, the message is that we are to come out from among them, and here is the promise: God is going to protect us and be to us everything that we need. In 1 Peter 2:9, He says, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” How can we show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness if we are still participating in darkness? How can we praise Him for His marvelous light if we do not see the light for the darkness in which we are participating?

This promise—that God will be our God, that we will be His people, and that He will walk among us—is given to us when we separate ourselves from the world and from idolatry, and become His bond slave, His personal property. The promise is connected with coming out from among them, being separate, and touching not the unclean thing. God says that He will receive us and be everything we need as we belong wholly to Him.

The Promise of God as Father

The second promise is that God will be our Father and that we will be His sons and daughters. For He says in 2 Corinthians 6:17–18:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

Has the truth and the implication of God as our Father ever sunk into your soul? Think about that with me. You remember when the disciples came to our Lord and said, “Lord, teach us to pray. John taught his disciples to pray, teach us to pray.” Our Lord said, “All right, when you pray, you say, Our Father who art in heaven.” Have you ever really thought that God is your Father?

In Romans 1:7, the Apostle Paul writes, giving his salutation, “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” I want you to note that this salutation is very common to the Apostle Paul. He made it a habit of greeting all the saints this way by referring to God our Father.

If there are so many references in the Bible, especially the New Testament, to God being our Father, undoubtedly there have to be implications of this truth. Are we not missing out on something by not recognizing, acknowledging, and confessing that God is our Father? Certainly, if God is our Father, that speaks of a relationship, a fellowship, and a communion—one of which, I am afraid, most of us are absolutely and totally ignorant concerning.

Most of us have never really considered this fact that God is our Father. Let us look through the New Testament and see how many times the apostles refer to God as our Father. In 1 Corinthians 1:3, we read, “Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” Now we just read that in Romans.

In 2 Corinthians 1:2, we read, “Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” Did you see that? Verse 3 says, “Blessed be God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Again, verse 2 says, “Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Look in Galatians 1:3. The Apostle Paul writes, “Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.” These repeated salutations show how commonly the Apostle Paul

referred to God as our Father, yet most of us have never really considered this fact.

SCRIPTURE READING - Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2, 4:20; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:11, 13; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Philemon 3 (KJV)

Look in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 2. Ephesians 1 and verse 2: "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Turn right over to the book of Philippians. Philippians chapter 1 and look if you would please at verse 2: "Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Look in Philippians 4 and verse 20. Philippians 4 and verse 20: "Now unto God our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen." Look in Colossians 1 and verse 2: "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Then if you'd turn right over to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and look if you would please at verse 1: "Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Skip down to 1 Thessalonians 3 and verse 11.

1 Thessalonians 3 verse 11: "Now God Himself and our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you." Look in verse 13: "To the end that He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all of His saints." Look at 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 1: "Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Skip down to verse 2: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet." Well, verse 2: "Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Now skip down to verse 16 of chapter 2. 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 16: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God even our Father, which hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." Wow. Look, if you would, at 1 Timothy

chapter 1 and verse 2. Turn right over. "Unto Timothy, mine own son in the faith, grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."

Look in 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 2. 2 Timothy 1 and verse 2: "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." Then if you would turn right over to the book of Philemon. And notice if you would please, verse 3: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

If God is mentioned as our Father so many times in the New Testament, are there not implications of that truth for our lives? There must be great significance attached to this truth for it to be repeated so many times in the Bible. Every time we read about God being our Father, the Father of believers, He is always mentioned as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Implications of God as Father

The imagery conveyed to us is twofold. First, God is recognized as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is distinct from everyone else because He is uniquely the Son of God. Everyone can quote John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The words "only begotten" are from one word in the Greek, monogenes, which means one of a kind, unique. There is only one like Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man. He is the Son of Man, and He is the Son of God. God the Father is called His Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But secondly, God is also called the Father of individual believers, and He is our Father by virtue of regeneration, adoption, and redemption. When our Lord spoke to His disciples, He used phrases such as "Your Father," "Your Father which is in heaven," and "Your heavenly Father." He is called the Father of mercies, the Father of glory, the Father of spirits, and the Father of lights.

The very fact that God is Father is mentioned over and over in the New Testament. What significance does this have for our lives? How do we apply the truth that God, the sovereign, majestic, eternal, infinite, holy God of the universe, is our Father? Note that

it is the Father who begets the children. If you are a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ, the Father who begat you is your heavenly Father. He begat you into His kingdom. He adopted you into His family in Christ Jesus. He regenerated you. He converted you. He gave you faith and repentance. Children do not beget themselves. They are begotten. Children do not decide or determine to be born; they are begotten by the Father.

As this is true physically, it is also true spiritually. If Jesus Christ, the unique, only begotten Son of God, is the begotten Son of God in the sense that the Father begat Him and determined and ordained everything about Him, then it is obviously the Father who begets individual believers as well.

James 1:17 makes clear that God the Father is in view: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:18 could hardly be plainer: "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." Of His own will begat He us. We are begotten of the Father.

First Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Notice again: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us."

First John 5:1 says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," or has been begotten of God, "and everyone that loveth Him that begat loveth them also that is begotten of Him." Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God. That is what Scripture says. It is God the Father who gives life; there is no life apart from God the Father. If you have been begotten by God the Father, you have been regenerated and converted. If you have not been begotten by God the Father, then you are not a Christian.

Now consider the simple and obvious implication. All our physical children look like us, talk like us, and act like us. The Klinglers and their children are not here today, but if all the Klinglers were here, and you looked at Janet and Henry and then at their children, could you tell that those children belonged to Janet and Henry? Certainly. Could you look at Tripp and Lacey and tell that they belonged to Beck and Dean? Of course. I see people all the time and figure out who belongs to whom simply by the way they look, act, and talk, because children look and act like their parents.

There is a family resemblance. It appears not only in looks but also in attitudes and actions. I can show you children who walk exactly the way their father walks. You can look at them and tell.

Now turn to Matthew 5. You will remember that in Matthew 5 our Lord is correcting the misinterpretation and misapplication of God's law promulgated by the Pharisees. He teaches this repeatedly and corrects it. In fact, if you read Matthew 5, over and over you will hear our Lord say, “It has been said of them of old time, but I say unto you.” Or, “You've heard that it has been said of them of old time, but I say unto you.”

In other words, here is what they taught, and it is wrong; here is what I am telling you is truthful and right. In Matthew 5:43, we see the last of these: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Why? “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

God says, “My children should walk like Me and talk like Me and act like Me, that ye may be the children of your Father.” Just as Henry and Janet’s children look like them, walk like them, talk like them, and act like them, God’s children should resemble Him. When people see you, they should know that you are a Christian by the way you speak, walk, act, and talk. His children act like their parents.

Every young child—though this cannot be said about every teenager—wants to please his father. If we are His children, if we have been begotten by Him, there should be in us a desire to please Him. Scripture says that we are to walk pleasing in His sight. Obviously, if we are His children, we are to walk pleasing unto Him. I am to be as my Heavenly Father.

Application: Acknowledge God as Father

Now, let me make two applications. Unhappily, most of the time we do not think about God as our Father. When we pray, we may say, "Dear Lord," or "Lord Jesus." There is no problem with praying like that. People have asked me, "How should I pray? Should I pray to the Father? Should I pray in the name of the Son? Should I pray in the Holy Spirit?" The biblical way is this.

Ephesians 2, I believe it is verse 18. We are to go to the Father through Jesus in the Spirit. But since we have one God, not three, it does not matter if you say "our Father," "Lord Jesus," or "Blessed Holy Spirit." It is still one God. By Him, or through Him, we have access unto the Father. The emphasis is on the Father.

Christ said, in 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ hath also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." He died to bring us to the Father, unto God. Therefore, when we pray, we may lawfully, legitimately, and honestly, if we have been regenerated by the grace of God, say, "our Father."

We have a responsibility, and I might add a privilege, to acknowledge and confess God as our Father. As a child, I never had any problem asking my father for whatever I wanted. He was my father, and I recognized him as my father. Likewise, we have an obligation to recognize, acknowledge, and confess God as our Father.

Why do we not do so more frequently? Because if we acknowledge that we have a responsibility to confess God as our Father, then the corollary is that we have a responsibility to act like His child. If He is my Father, I am His child. I have a responsibility to act like His child and to bring my life into conformity to the

Word of God. We need to more frequently acknowledge and confess that God is our Father through the person and work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We do come to Thee, and we acknowledge today that Thou art indeed our Father. Father, You are our Father only by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and we glory in the fact that the sovereign, majestic God of heaven and earth is our Father. But we also have a responsibility to act like and live like Your children. As we look at this doctrine of holiness, practical holiness, enable us to repent of any and all of our sins and to bring our lives into greater conformity to Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 22

Who's Side Are You On?

October 31, 2013

Whose Side Are You On?

Introduction: The Question of Sides

The title of the message is a question: Whose side are you on? In Exodus chapter 32 and verse 26, the Bible says, “Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me.” And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

Note the question: “Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me.” When I read that verse, I immediately thought of an exclamation that we made as children, especially when a number of children would get together and a game was going to be played. Someone would just holler, “Sides.” That means that we would all get together and choose sides.

I hope you understand that we've chosen sides all our lives. We've chosen sides in dodgeball, baseball, basketball, football, tag, and a dozen other games as well. More people today choose sides

in politics. I've heard people say, “Well, I'm a Republican.” Another one says, “I'm a Democrat.” Another says, “I'm a Libertarian.” Some say, “Well, I'm just with the Freedom Party.”

We not only choose sides in politics; we also choose sides in religion. In fact, there are people who prefer certain denominations, and they will choose that denomination because they believe it is the one that suits them best. We also choose sides in Christianity. We choose favorite preachers. I've heard people speak about their favorite television preachers.

The Corinthian Church's Division Over Preachers

The Corinthian church was notorious for choosing sides when it came to preachers. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1, the apostle Paul writes to the Corinthian church: “For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” He continues, “I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I baptized in mine own name.”

What you had in the Corinthian church was a division over preachers. Some would say, “I like Paul; I’m going to listen to him. I’m not listening to the others.” Others would say, “I like Peter. I’m going to listen to Peter and no one else.” Someone else would say, “Apollos is a better orator. I’m going to choose Apollos.” Then some would say, “We’re more spiritual than you. We’re just going to choose Christ. We will listen only to Him.” Paul says, “Look, is Christ divided?”

“Was I crucified for you?” He said, “I thank God I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, lest any of you should say that I baptized in my own name.” In other words, Paul was not trying to get a following. But notice how they were divided. People are divided like that today. We choose certain men to listen to, saying, “We like this one better than the other one.” Both may be preaching the truth, but we are going to listen to only one of them.

I never will forget what one of my friends said: "I like ice cream." He said, "I don't care if it's vanilla, strawberry, or chocolate. I just like ice cream. Moreover, I like the preaching of the Word of God. I don't care if the man is monotone. I don't care if he's a great orator. I don't care if he swings from the ceiling from a chandelier, just so he preaches the word of God. That's what I want."

That should be our attitude as well. We have been choosing sides most of our lives. But some folks do not like to choose sides, especially if it is going to cost them. They would rather straddle the fence, stay in the median, and remain in the middle of the road.

The Danger of Straddling the Fence

They refuse to be labeled in any certain way. I have heard preachers, as well as Christians, identify themselves theologically as Calminians. In other words, they did not want to choose between Calvinism and Arminianism, so they called themselves Calminians. You have undoubtedly heard about the man during the War of Northern Aggression who could not decide whether he wanted to fight for the North or the South. He went into battle wearing a Confederate jacket and Union pants. The Yankees shot him in the chest, and the Confederates shot him in the seat of the pants. If you are on one side, at least everyone knows where you stand; you are not trying to remain in the middle of the road. As Christians, we have to realize that there is really and truly no such thing as middle ground.

Usually every issue revolves around right or wrong. We are either going to stand for that which is right or that which is wrong, especially when it comes to Christ and His Word. Our Lord made this exceedingly clear in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." You remember when George Bush—George Jr.—was president, he used this statement in regard to, I think, the Iraq war: "You're either with us or against us." By that, of course, he meant that you were either for his administration and their war or against him and his administration in their war. But the words refer to Christ and truth.

Jehu's Call: 'Who Is on My Side?'

There are times when we not only choose sides; we delight to choose sides. There is one particular instance in which I would love to have been present, so that I could have chosen a side. I would love to have been in the palace during the time of Jehu. Jehu had slain Joram, the son of King Ahab. He also slew King Ahaziah of Judah, who was the son-in-law of King Ahab.

In 2 Kings chapter 9, after Jehu had slain Joram and Ahaziah, he came to the palace for wicked Queen Jezebel, the wife of Ahab. The Bible says, “And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out a window. And as Jehu entered at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace who slew his master?”

What she was trying to teach Jehu was a history lesson. Zimri did slay his master the king, and, I forget exactly without checking, I think he reigned a total of something like seven days and then he burned the palace down upon himself. She was trying to tell Jehu, “This is not going to work.” She said, “Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?”

“Watch, verse 32. And he, Jehu, lifted up his face to the window and said, Who is on my side? Who?” There looked out to him two or three eunuchs, and he said, “Throw her down.” So they threw her down, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses, and he trod her underfoot. When he had come in, he ate and drank, and said, “Go see now this cursed woman, and bury her, for she is the king’s daughter.” When they went to bury her, they found no more of her than her skull and the feet and the palms of her hand.

They came again and told him, and he said, “This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by the servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel.” Of course, that is exactly what happened. Jehu came up and said, “Who’s on the Lord’s side?” or “Who’s on my side?” When those eunuchs looked out the window, he said, “Throw her down,” and they threw her down.

I certainly would have chosen sides in that particular incident. I would have chosen Jehu's side because I would have wanted to get rid of Jezebel as well. She was a wicked, ungodly woman who had murdered numerous innocent people, as well as the Lord's prophets, and had elevated the prophets of Baal in that kingdom. There are times when we would be delighted to choose. There are times when we absolutely have to choose, and we must choose. We must always choose that which is right and holy.

Moses' Call in Context: The Golden Calf Incident

In Exodus chapter 32, the Bible says in verse 26 that Moses cried, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me." I want you to understand that Moses was God's representative and ambassador. He was appointed by God. He was ordained by God. He represented God. The Bible says that Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the Lord's side?" He did not say, "Who is on my side?" He asked, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me." The Bible tells us in verse 26, "...and all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto Him."

It is very significant that Moses stood in the gate of the camp. The gates in the Bible were always symbolical of authority, justice, and judgment. Whoever had control of the gates had control of the people and also control of their enemies. God specifically promised this to Abraham. In Genesis chapter 22 and verse 17, God said to Abraham, "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. All authority was in the gates. The king sat in the gate.

In Genesis chapter 24 and verse 60, when Rebekah went to become the wife of Isaac, they gave her a blessing: "And they blessed Rebekah and said unto her, Thou our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them." In other words, let your children be in control of the gates.

Deuteronomy chapter 16 and verse 18 shows this again, because the judges also sat in the gates. God said, "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." Many times, when kings conquered a city, they placed their thrones in the gates. Deeds were recognized and recorded in the gates, and trials were held in the gates.

It was a public place of assembly, but it was a place of judgment, justice, and authority. And so Moses now stands in the gate of the camp and cries, “Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come over unto me.”

When Moses made that request, he was pointing out a simple truth: there are two great interests at war with one another, and men will necessarily choose sides. It is impossible not to choose. Some will choose the side of the Lord, His word, His truth, and His righteousness. Others will choose the side of sin and wickedness, disobedience and rebellion. It is absolutely impossible to be neutral. Our Lord Himself said, “He that is not with me is against me.” There is no neutral ground and no middle ground. You are either for Christ or against Christ; either for truth or against truth. You must choose a side. When someone says, “I’m not going to choose a side; I’m going to remain neutral,” in not choosing a side, he has already chosen a side—the side of sin, disobedience, and rebellion.

Because Christ once again said, "If you're not with me, then you're against me." What we should be concerned about is not only that we are on the Lord's side, but that we are on His side constantly and continually.

We may be few in number. Our Lord said of His people, "Fear not, little flock. It's the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." We may be a small number, but we must be absolutely faithful and absolutely true, so that whenever God does choose to use us, we shall be ready. And may I remind you that all through Scripture, God has always been pleased to use a minority. He never uses a majority.

I hear people say all the time, "All the Christians in this country need to get together." First of all, that is never going to happen. But if there are, or if there comes to be, a small group or a number of

small groups of dedicated, godly, obedient, faithful Christians, you better watch out, because God will indeed use them.

And you have to remember, when George Washington was fighting the King of England, I forget the exact percentage, something like 3% of the people followed him in battle. Did you know he never had over 3,000 men at one time in a battle? Now he had more men than that. But the small percentage of the people in this country originally were those who fought for independence.

Noah had to stand alone. Daniel had to stand alone. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood alone. All I am pointing out is that God is pleased to use small numbers.

Look in your Bibles, if you would, to Exodus chapter 32. Let us begin reading with verse 1, so I can show you the context of Moses' call, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come over unto me." We will read through verse 10, then skip down, because I want you to see that this is the incident concerning the golden calf.

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

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 32:2-10 (KJV)

> And Aaron said unto them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives and your sons and your daughters and bring them unto me." And all the people break off the golden earrings which were in their ears and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool after he had made it a molten calf. Aaron deliberately fashioned it into a molten calf. And they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast of the Lord."
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> And they rose up early on the morrow and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat

> down to eat and drink and rose up to play. And the Lord said unto Moses, "Go get thee down, for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made them a molten calf, and they have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And the Lord said unto Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people."

"Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." The people were worshipping a golden calf. God had just brought them out of the land of Egypt, and Moses had gone up to receive the law of God on the mount. He had been there only forty days and forty nights—not even forty days had passed—and they were already demanding a visible symbol of God.

When Joshua heard the noise of the people, and he was with Moses, as they shouted, he said unto Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp." And he said, "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery. Neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome. But the noise of them that sing do I hear." And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing.

And Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and he break them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink thereof. And Moses said unto Aaron, "What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" And Aaron said, "Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot. Thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief."

"For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go up before us. As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me. Then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

Well, that was a miracle in itself, wasn't it? On one hand, he fashioned it; now he's telling Moses it just came out. "And when Moses saw that the people were naked," when it said they ate and drank and rose up to play, they were fornicating. That's what it means. Read 1 Corinthians 10. "And when Moses saw that the people were naked, for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies, then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on the Lord's side?"

"Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses, and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men."

Notice what happened. Aaron made this golden calf. The people were worshipping the calf and fornicating. God told Moses, “The people that you brought out of Egypt, they corrupted themselves.” God said, “They’re your people, you know. You did this, Moses. Now you just let me alone. I’ll kill all of them, and I’ll make of you a greater nation.” Moses said, “No, no. We don’t want to do that.”

When Moses came down, he became so angry that he broke the tables. He took that golden calf, burned it, ground it into powder, put it in the water, and made the people drink it. Some refused to drink it.

So there was a division between the people in that camp. One group recognized its sin, rebellion, and wickedness; humbled itself; repented; and drank that water. The other group refused to drink it. They said, “No, we stand by our golden calf. We stand by our worship. We’re not sinners. We’re not going to repent. We’re not going to acknowledge that we’re wrong. No, no, no, no. We’re not going to do this.”

There were two separate camps. One camp turned from its sins and became obedient. The other obstinately defended and

vindicated its sins. One group was willing to serve God as God ordained; the other was willing to do what it wanted to do.

The Levites' Obedience and Its Cost

When Moses stood in the gate and cried, “Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me,” it was a call to separation. If you are for the true and living God, Moses said, come over unto me. Have you ever stopped to think about this? If true, genuine, honest Christians really lived a Christian, godly, and obedient life, it would not be difficult to determine who is a Christian and who is not. Moses was saying, “This is a call to separation. If you are for the Lord, then come over unto me. Come over on this side.”

Do you remember what the apostle Paul said in Romans 1:1? Paul used this concerning himself many times in the New Testament. He wrote, “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.” Note that he said, “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.” The word servant is doulos in the Greek, and it literally means a slave: Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ. He said, “Yes, I am called to be an apostle,” but then he said, “I am separated unto the gospel of God.”

His life was given over to truth, righteousness, and obedience. When Moses stood in the gate and said, “Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me,” he was giving an opportunity for those who had refused to drink the water to repent. They had been told to drink it earlier, but they did not. Now came the call to separation: “If you're on the Lord's side, you come over unto me.”

He was calling them to take a stand. Moses was not a hot-headed troublemaker. In fact, the Bible describes Moses as the meekest man upon the earth. He truly and genuinely loved this people. Look at Moses' prayer in Exodus chapter 32 and verse 32, when God was going to kill them. Moses says unto the Lord, “Yet now thou wilt forgive their sin. If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written.” Moses said, “Lord, just take my life. Forgive them or just take my life.” Here was a man willing to die for the people. Of course, the Lord said, “No, I'll blot out the people who sinned. I'm not going to blot you out.”

"You haven't done anything wrong. I'll blot them out." But watch what happens. Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto Moses. Notice, first of all, all the sons of Levi. That was Moses' own tribe.

Moses said unto them, "Thus saith the Lord of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor." The children of Levi did according to the word of Moses, and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

The tribe of Levi distinguished itself by coming over unto Moses and saying, "We are going to fight on the Lord's side. We want Him to be our God." The three thousand who were slain that day were men who refused to repent. They persisted in their rebellion, not only against Moses, but against the Lord. Their slaying was not an indiscriminate massacre. They had rebelled against God and Moses, committed treason against God, and seduced God's people into idolatry. When Moses cried, "Who's on the Lord's side? Let him come over here," he was granting amnesty to anyone willing to repent and become obedient.

The tribe of Levi came over unto him. In verse 27, Moses said unto them, “Thus saith the Lord of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.”

The sword was only drawn against the rebellious corruptors and those individuals who had committed treason against the sovereign God of heaven and earth.

It may be easy, in one sense of the word, to draw out your sword against a complete stranger or someone you know absolutely nothing about. But it is quite a different thing when you draw out your sword to slay your own brother, your own friend, your own neighbor, or your own family member.

Consider church discipline. There are times when it becomes absolutely necessary to discipline a Christian who attends a

church. I know that church discipline is not taught today by many preachers, and I know it is practiced by even fewer. But if you choose the Lord's side against your own son or daughter, husband or wife, brother or sister, it is more difficult than you think.

I remember one church that I pastored. There was a family whose son and daughter needed to be disciplined because they had committed some very grievous sins. I met with the father, explained everything, showed him the Scripture, and spent over an hour explaining what needed to be done and why. He looked at me and said, "Pastor, I know you're right. I know the Word of God is true, but I'm going to have to handle this in my own way." He took his family and left the church rather than have his children disciplined. I could tell you the end of those children, and it is not pleasant. I could tell you the end of that family, and it is not pleasant either.

In the same church, I had a deacon who was a good and godly man. He called me one day and said, "Pastor, I need to talk to you. There's an issue that demands church discipline." When I got to his house, he explained the issue. It involved his daughter, who was his only child. Church discipline was issued against that girl, and the family stood with Christ. They stood and apologized to the church with the girl and asked forgiveness. You want to see a broken, weeping church—one that really prayed and worked with that family to help them? It is difficult when it is your son or daughter, and you know they have done wrong and need to be publicly disciplined. A private sin can be dealt with privately, but a public sin needs to be dealt with publicly.

Christ as the Dividing Line

The children of Levi, the sons of Levi, came over. They took their swords, and they slew every man his brother, his neighbor. They slew the ones who needed to be slain. Look at the blessing that God gave them in Deuteronomy 33, beginning with verse 8: "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah."

Now watch: “Who said unto his father and his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.” Verse 9 refers to this incident in Exodus 32, where they went in and slew every man his own brother. Here it indicates they not only slew their fathers and their mothers, but their children. Watch verse 10: “They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.”

Here is a blessing that God gave to the Levites because they stood with Him, and in standing they stood even against their own family. God always blesses obedience.

The call to come over on the Lord’s side is frequently enunciated in the New Testament. Moses said, “Whoever is on the Lord’s side, let him come over unto me.” There is always a division when it comes to Jesus Christ. Christ is the dividing line. There is a principle enunciated by Amos in Amos 3:3, when he asks this question: “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

And the answer is obviously no. You will not walk in truth unless you agree with truth. You will not walk as a Christian unless you agree with Christ. You will not walk with other believers unless you agree with them. Those who do not love truth and those who do not love Christ will always walk opposite to truth and opposite to Christ. There will always be a division between those who love Christ and those who do not love Christ. There will always be a division between those who will stand for His Word and those who will not stand for His Word.

Christ is the dividing line in families, in churches, in societies, even in nations. Consider John 7:40-43: “Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said of a truth, this is the prophet. Others said, this is the Christ. But some said, shall Christ come out of Galilee? Had not the scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him.” There was a division among the people because of Him.

Look at John 9:16, where the blind man has been healed: "Therefore said some of the Pharisees, this man is not of God because he keeps not the Sabbath day. Others said, how can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them." You see how Christ is dividing individuals?

Then, in John 10:18-19, our Lord said, "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father. There was a division therefore among the Jews for these sayings." Some said He had a devil and was mad; others said, "No, He is Christ." There was a division among them because of these sayings. Acts 14:4 gives another example: "And the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles."

SCRIPTURE READING - John 7:37-51 (KJV)

Once again, this deals with the preaching of Christ. "But the multitude of the city was divided. And part held with the Jews, and part held with the apostles." There was a division. In Acts 23:7, Paul is defending himself: "And when he had so said, there rose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, for the multitude was divided."

Now turn to John chapter 7, beginning with verse 37. Notice this division: "In that last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said of a truth, this is the prophet. Others said, this is the Christ. But some said, shall Christ come out of Galilee? Had not the scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him."

"And some would have taken him, but no man laid hands on him. Then came the officers of the chief priests and the

> Pharisees, and they said unto them, Why have you not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered the Pharisees, Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people knoweth not the Lord. Cursed Nicodemus saith unto them, He that came to Jesus by night, being one of them, Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou of Galilee? Search and look. For out of Galilee ariseth no prophet, and every man went to his own house."
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> There was a division among them, and it is very plain and simple. Those who believed on Christ trusted Him; those who did not, of course, did not trust Him. Our Lord is teaching us the inevitability of divisions. He knew that He would be the source of division.

Genesis 3:15 is known as the Protevangelium. All that means is this: it is the first promise of the Messiah in the Scripture. Here is the first promise of the Messiah, where God said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman," speaking to the serpent now, "and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Now note that God specifically said He would put enmity, which is a strong word for hatred, between thee, that is, the serpent and the woman, and between thy seed, that is, His children, and her seed, that is, Christ and His children. Here is the beginning of this enmity. Enmity exists between the seed of the woman, Christ and His believers, and the seed of the serpent, which would be the devil and his followers.

From Genesis 3:15 you can deduce this: it is truth against error. It is light against darkness. It is righteousness against unrighteousness. It is salvation against damnation. It is saved against unsaved. Christ is simply saying that yes, He is indeed the source of division. This is shown in Matthew, and again in Luke. Look what our Lord said in Matthew 10:34:

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance

against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foe shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, he is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loveth his life for my sake shall find it."

Now I want you to note what our Lord said: "I'm not come to send peace. I've come to bring a sword." How does Christ set a household at variance? How does he set father against mother, or son against daughter, or mother-in-law against daughter-in-law? The answer is very simple: when one believes and one does not; when one submits to truth and the other does not submit to truth. This is one reason why God forbids Christians to marry non-Christians.

It should be obvious: you not only have two different gods, you have two different sets of rules, two different sets of principles. Our Lord says, inevitably, invariably, there are going to be divisions in households, in churches, in societies, and in nations. In Luke chapter 12, beginning with verse 51, our Lord says, "Suppose you that I'm come to give peace on earth, I tell you nay, but rather division. From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son and the son against the father and the mother against the daughter and the daughter against the mother and the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." Why? Because Christ is the source of division. What did Moses say?

"Whoever is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me." Whoever comes to the Lord's side will always side with the Lord. When you side with the Lord, with truth and righteousness, you necessarily side against all those who are not with Christ, who are not righteous, and who do not adhere to truth. In that sense, Christ is indeed the source of division.

It is true that Christ is also peace. He brings peace to us individually, and He will bring peace to families, communities,

churches, societies, and nations that submit to Him. But until they submit, there is division.

Conclusion: Whose Side Are You On?

Our Lord in the New Testament verified the words of Moses. In Exodus 32:26, Moses stood in the gate and cried, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me." In John 5:46, our Lord looked at the Pharisees and said, "Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me. You didn't believe Moses, you won't believe me."

You remember that in Luke 16 our Lord spoke of a rich man who died and went to hell, while Lazarus was taken by angels into Abraham's bosom. In hell, the rich man lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and said, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, let him dip his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame." Abraham answered, "You know there's a great gulf between us, we can't go to you and you can't come to us." Then he said, "Father Abraham, send someone from the dead to go back and warn my five brothers, lest they come to this place of torment."

What did Abraham answer? "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them." The man replied, "Nay, father Abraham, but if one goes from the dead, arises from the dead, they will believe him." Folks, it ain't so. Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and folks still don't believe Him. He is still the source of separation.

Moses' call is a definite, distinct, and clarion call to be constantly and continually on the Lord's side. Whatever the issues, "He that is on the Lord's side, let him come over unto me."

David said this in Psalm 118 and verse 6: "Ha ha, the Lord is on my side. I will not fear what man can do unto me." The only way the Lord can be on our side is if we're on His side. If we want Him on our side, we need to make sure that we're on His side wherever He is.

Hebrews 13, beginning with verse 12, says, "Wherefore Jesus, also that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate," that is, outside the gates of Jerusalem.

"Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

Wherever Christ is, if He's being reproached and scandalized, that's where we need to be. If He's being praised and exalted, that's where we need to be. If He's being ridiculed and attacked, that's where we need to be. Whoever's on the Lord's side, let him come over unto me. So the question is, whose side are you on? Your own side? You're either on the side of sin and wickedness and rebellion, or the side of Christ and submission and obedience.

Is there division in your family, your church, your community, your state, or your nation? If there is, you need to make sure that whatever the division is, you're on the Lord's side, and you stand for His truth and His Word. Will you uphold His truth and His principles in every area of life? It doesn't matter how it affects us, or whether it affects our father, mother, brothers, sisters, sons, or daughters. "He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me," He said. "He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

We must at all times and in all situations choose Christ and be on His side. If we truly expect Him and want Him on our side, we have to be on His side, because our side should really be His side. Let's pray. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ for Your grace, for Your mercy, for Your goodness and Your kindness.

Lord, teach us to see that there is a division: we are either with Thee or against Thee; we are either gathering for Thee or scattering abroad. We must choose, and we must always choose the Lord Jesus Christ. Give us grace, we pray, in Thy name. Give us obedience, faith, and submission, in Thy name. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 23

The Religion Of Political Correctness

November 8, 2015

Introduction: Political Correctness as a Religion and Psychological Operation

force everyone to act and believe as it dictates and as it desires. It is reconstruction on the mental, emotional, and intellectual level. I'm going to say this later on. It is indeed a psychological operation designed to rid us of truth, honor, history, and heritage. Political correctness is a religion designed to destroy all other religions and then to hold each religion and each individual accountable to its own personal beliefs and pronouncements.

Psalm 11:3, the Bible asks this question: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" And we must understand that there are foundations that underlie every section and every area of life. And when those foundations are destroyed, we're like ships without any moorings. We're just simply cut loose and we're drifting into unknown and uncharted territories. Without a

foundation, a house falls. And without biblical foundations, societies and individuals always fail and always fall as well.

I'm going to give you a number of quotes today. The first one is from what you and I would call, or a man by the name of George Orwell. He wrote 1984. He wrote Animal Farm and a few other things. If you've never read Animal Farm or 1984, I would encourage you to do so. But he wrote this in 1984: "Every record has been destroyed or falsified. Every book rewritten. Every picture has been repainted. Every statue and street building has been renamed. Every date has been altered."

"And the process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the party is always right."

Orwell went on to say this: “The very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world. Lies will pass into history.” And that is exactly what has happened, especially in the last 200 years or so.

Political correctness may aptly be called a religion of lies. It is nothing less than a psychological operation. Psychological operations, or PSYOPs as they are often called, are simply planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to audiences in order to influence their emotion, their motives, their objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of groups, organizations, and individuals. Political correctness is indeed designed to change our lives.

Political correctness is nothing less than Moloch worship, or state worship. Donald Trump, regardless of what you think about him, said this concerning political correctness: “You know, this country is so politically correct, nobody wants to take a stance on anything.” Since the country is so politically correct, what most of the country is doing is waiting for someone to tell them where they should stand, what they should think, and what they should believe. It is just that simple. Political correctness literally destroys independence, individuality, and integrity. Those who adhere to political correctness no longer think for themselves.

Rush Limbaugh said: “We’re led to believe everybody opposes it and disagrees with political correctness, but yet everybody’s scared

to death of it. So who is it? Well, it's the power structure wherever you happen to be." According to Rush, political correctness is indeed a power structure.

It is that power structure that is controlling, dominating, and manipulating to make you conform to someone else's view and someone else's thought processes. Many of you tend to think that political correctness is some recent invention, but it is not so. Political correctness has been around basically since the turn of the century. I ran across a historical overview of political correctness and want to point out where we are and how we got here in this country. The overview says this:

"The bastion of totalitarian collectivism is based upon a culture of political correctness. Before the authorities impose their rigid formulas for shaping and defining a false reality, the ground needs to be prepared for molding public opinion. The details and narrative of mind control works best when people have already adopted an urbanity of collective singularity. The nature of totalitarian collectivism is the next level beyond political correctness."

The Origins and Agenda of Political Correctness

So how did it all start? Political correctness started in a think tank called the Frankfurt School in Germany in 1923. The purpose was to find a solution to the biggest problem facing the implementers of communism in Russia. Why was not the wonderful idea of communism spreading? The Frankfurt School came up with a number of recommendations. This is what they wanted to implement in order to promote, and get everyone to embrace, what I am going to call cultural Marxism: number one, promote the creation of racism offenses; number two, continually change in order to create confusion; number three, the teaching of sex and homosexuality to children;

4. The undermining of schools and teachers' authority. 5. Huge immigration to destroy national identity. 6. The promotion of excessive drinking. 7. Emptying the churches. 8. An unreliable legal system with a bias against the victim of the crime. Number nine, dependency on the state for state benefits. Number 10,

control and dumbing down of the media. Number 11, encouraging the breakdown of the family. Every one is visible left and right today, everywhere you turn.

America does not understand that she is under Reconstruction. We like to think that Reconstruction stopped in the South in 1877. The truth is it did not stop there then. It has not stopped. Political correctness is not just an attempt to reconstruct the South. It is now an attempt to reconstruct the entire nation, to get everyone to think exactly the way the politically correct ideologues want you to think, in order that you might follow the status quo and the status dictates of a tyrannical regime.

In seeking to change our thinking abilities, attitudes, and thought processes, the eventual outcome would be to change our conduct and behavior and bring us into conformity with its plans and dictates.

After the War of Northern Aggression, the South was divided into military districts. The South was not only conquered but subjugated to military rule. The federal government gave military governors and agents of control to every state. While the North viewed the states as still being in the United States, it believed that the Southern states were not loyal to the federal government. Each area was therefore placed under a military commander, who was obligated to see that the states developed constitutions loyal to the federal government.

In other words, what they wanted was puppet governments to do the bidding and follow all the regulations that the Yankee Empire blindly imposed upon us. Do you realize that, in essence, nothing has changed? The only difference between the Reconstruction period of the 1800s and now is that they are no longer satisfied with state subservience. Now they want individual subservience, ecclesiastical subservience, religious subservience, and societal subservience. They want everything and everyone in submission to them. Reconstruction is nothing less than war by another means. It is no longer simply our property that they want; it is now our minds and our understanding.

It is our spirits, our souls, and our bodies. Political correctness is a religion. Anything that defines right and wrong or determines good and evil is a religion. Political correctness pronounces fornication, sodomy, adultery, aborticide, and compromise with evil to be good, right, necessary, and legal. It pronounces evil good and good evil. In Isaiah 5:20, God says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" That is exactly where we are today.

Psalm 94:20 asks, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by law?" A throne speaks of government. A throne of iniquity is an evil, wicked civil government. "Shall a throne of iniquity fellowship with thee," with God, "which frameth mischief by law." Mischief is another word for sin in the Bible. Shall a wicked civil government that makes sin legal have fellowship with God?

And the answer is absolutely no. Political correctness is absolutely contrary to Christianity, to the laws of Heaven, and to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, Christianity and political correctness are conflicting ideologies, worldviews, and theologies; they are opposites. Christianity glorifies the one true and living God, revealed in the Bible and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Political correctness glorifies the state through personal submission, recognizing the Godhood of the state or of the power elite. It is nothing less than Moloch worship—state worship, worshiping the state as God.

Now, do you remember how Moloch worship was introduced into Israel? Who introduced it? King Solomon. In 1 Kings 11, the Bible says that when Solomon was old, he began building altars for all his wives, including an altar to Moloch. No one on earth had the power Solomon had.

But now Solomon begins to grow old and lose that power. So he establishes the worship of Moloch, a power religion that actually deifies the king, or ruler, as God Himself. Moloch worship, or state worship, thus came into Israel through Solomon.

Here is a principle I want you to consider. We are in desperate straits in this country, that is for sure. But the more we turn from God and from God's law, the more we will turn to the state as God. The less we look to the one true and living God, the more we will look to a false God. It is just that simple.

What is happening in this country is a reversal of 1 Thessalonians 1:9. The Apostle Paul told the Thessalonians, "You know what manner of entering in we had unto you, how you turned from idols to serve the true and the living God." And now what we are doing is returning from the true and the living God in order to serve

Political Correctness as an Attack on Culture

Serving the state as God is what it amounts to. Political correctness is an attack upon culture. It is an attack upon Southern culture and American culture. I hope you've been paying attention to all the news across Florida, Georgia, the South, and the nation: the Confederate battle flag is being attacked, and our monuments are being attacked. Anything that has to do with Southern history is being vilified by liberal, leftist, progressive, Marxist, fascist, and communist agendas. According to them, everything about the South is evil, has been evil, is only evil, and will always be evil. Nothing can change.

Al Benson, an author and commentator, wrote: “As you observe what the political and religious left is doing in regard to the Confederate flags and monuments, it would seem to be contradictory. They claim that vandalizing Confederate monuments and burning Confederate flags, or just outright stealing them, is what they're doing to promote unity and national healing.

“They couldn't be that stupid if you paid them. If you really want to promote national healing, then the last thing you do is to tear down the symbols of your opposition's race and culture. If you really want to promote healing, you just leave those symbols alone. The fact that the left is vehemently trashing anything southern shows that they have no interest in reconciliation or healing. The left has never been about that.”

They have always been about destruction: the destruction of anyone or anything with which they disagree or that stands in their way. Their real agenda is hatred and division, and what they really hate is resistance to their agenda. They are all about class struggle, which means their class overcoming your class, their ideology overcoming yours, and their faith overcoming yours, particularly if you are a Christian. I pray that Southern folks, particularly Southern Christians, are beginning to get that message.

Those people called evil good and good evil, even in spite of some of the weak-kneed Christians who just want to be nice to everyone. The left needs to be resisted. That is true.

Since there has been so much discussion of the Confederate battle flag, I want to take a few minutes and talk about it. When you read and listen to individuals discuss the Confederate battle flag or Confederate symbols, the only conclusion is that most people are motivated either by historical ignorance or by what I would call pure, unadulterated malice toward the South and its symbols. It is just that simple.

The Confederate battle flag was exactly what I called it: a battle flag, not a national flag. The South had only three national flags: the first national, known as the Stars and Bars; the second national, the Stainless Banner; and the third, the Stainless Banner with a red stripe on the end. Those were the only three national flags the Confederacy ever had. There is no animosity toward those. It is the Confederate battle flag, and the battle flag was exactly what it is called.

It was a battle flag. What many people do not understand is that there were hundreds of different battle flags in the South. The battle flag did not come into existence until after July 1861, following the Battle of First Manassas.

General Beauregard was in charge at First Manassas. Lincoln had called for 75,000 volunteers to come down and subjugate the South. As the battle began, Beauregard saw a large body of troops flanking the Union's left, but he could not tell what flag they carried or what troops they were. Looking through his glass, he called some younger officers and handed them the spyglass.

"Would you please tell me, is that our flag or is that their flag?" They could not tell, so he took the spyglass back and continued looking.

Under battle conditions, all the smoke produced by the muzzle loaders and cannon made it difficult to see. Suddenly, a little puff of wind came, the flag unfurled, and he saw that it was the Stars and Bars. He hollered, "Attack, attack, the day is ours, the day is ours!" When he saw Jubal Early and those men making that flank movement, he knew the Confederates had won the battle.

Sure enough, the Yankees threw down their arms, their carriages, and everything else, then ran all the way back to Washington. Some congressmen and high-society people had come out in their carriages with picnic baskets to watch the battle. Now they were running back to Washington, D.C., as fast and furiously as they could.

General Beauregard wrote, “At the Battle of Manassas, I found it difficult to distinguish our then-Confederate flag from the United States flag, the two being so much alike, especially when General Jubal Early made the flank movement that decided the fate of the day.” The Stars and Bars, the first national flag, resembled the Stars and Stripes. Beauregard said he could not tell the difference from a distance and under battle conditions. He therefore resolved to have the Confederate flag changed or to adopt for his command a battle flag entirely different from any state or federal flag.

After the war, or after the battle, it was found that many persons in both armies firmly believed each side had used the flags of its opponents as a strategy. The North thought the South was using the Stars and Stripes, and the South thought the North was using the Stars and Bars. Colonel Walton designed a flag with the Latin cross on it. Colonel William Porcher Miles, who was also a congressman, designed what we know as the Confederate battle flag with the St. Andrew’s cross on it, and General Beauregard chose the St. Andrew’s cross.

Please understand that the Confederate battle flag flew only for four years, from 1861 to 1865. The Confederate battle flag had nothing to do with slavery. Not one slave ever came into this

country under any Confederate flag, much less a Confederate battle flag. The South was not fighting to preserve slavery, nor was the North fighting to end slavery. Why was the South fighting? The answer is simple: Lincoln had called for 75,000 volunteers to subjugate the South. The South did not invade the North; the North invaded the South. Thus, the South was basically fighting defensive warfare.

When Confederate soldiers were captured, they were grilled. One question was, "Why are you fighting?" The most frequent answer was, "Because you're here." In other words, "If you weren't here, we wouldn't be fighting. You invaded us. If you had left us alone, we'd have left you alone." Slaves were brought into this country under the flags of England, Portugal, Spain, and the good old United States flag, the Stars and Stripes. Never did a slave ship fly a Confederate flag or a flag of the South.

Many people do not understand that Great Britain was responsible for exporting five million blacks from Africa and selling them into slavery throughout this country and the world. Later, the King of England opened it up, and anyone could participate by paying him a royalty or fee. The first slaves came into this country in 1619. After the War for Independence ended in 1783, the only ships bringing slaves into this country were northern ships flying the Stars and Stripes. The slaves did not come under any Confederate flag; they were brought in under the Stars and Stripes.

During the war, and even before it, slavery was legal. Slavery was constitutional. The only constitutional restriction was that no more slaves could be imported after 1808. However, that did not stop the North. They continued importing slaves. The yacht Wanderer, for example, was caught off the coast of Georgia unloading slaves in 1858. Quotes from Abraham Lincoln and James Buchanan describe ships caught in 1860 and 1861 from the North, flying the Stars and Stripes.

Slavery was legal in every state. There were northern slaves; there were slaves in every state of the Union.

Let me show you how slavery was not the cause of the war. I do not care what revisionist historians say: slavery was not the cause of the war. Someone says, “It had to be, because Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.” But if you think the Emancipation Proclamation released any slaves, you have not studied history. If the war was over slavery and the Proclamation ended slavery, why did Lincoln wait until January 1, 1863, to make it effective?

He wrote it September 22, 1862. If slavery was the issue, why did he not issue that Emancipation Proclamation in 1861? Or why did he not issue it when he was elected in 1860? Why did he wait until 1863? Let me tell you why the Emancipation Proclamation came into existence. It came, according to Lincoln's own words, as a fit and necessary war measure.

The Emancipation Proclamation never released a single slave—not in the North, not in the South. It was a war measure. At this point in 1862, the North was losing the war. They were having a bad, bad time. Lincoln knew that a thousand torches and a thousand black hands would effectively empty the Confederate lines because the men would go home to protect their families and properties. The very fact that a slave rebellion did not happen demonstrates the bond that existed at that time between the blacks and the whites. But the Emancipation Proclamation did not free one slave.

Here is part of the proclamation: "Whereas on the 22nd day of September, the year of our Lord, 1862, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States containing, among other things, the following: that on the first day of January in the year of our Lord 1863—all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall be then in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, henceforth and forever free. And the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons."

Notice that it only freed the slaves in the South, or in any state or part of a state that was in rebellion against the federal government.

"Now therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power vested in me as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, doing this first day of January, the year of our Lord," etc. He then names the places and areas where the slaves are to be freed. They were freed only in the southern states, where Abraham Lincoln had absolutely no authority and no right to free them. The slaves in the northern states, and those in southern states conquered by the northern army, were left exactly as they were. Lincoln tried to free the slaves where he had no authority, and where he did have authority, he refused to free them. He issued the Emancipation Proclamation as a fit and necessary war measure, not simply to free the slaves.

The war was not over slavery. The politically correct crowd states that it was, but it is not. If the war had been over slavery, there would never have been a war. How can I say that? Because of the Corwin Amendment. Thomas Corwin of Ohio proposed an amendment, which passed both houses. It was also called the proposed Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. It said, "No amendment shall be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give to Congress the power to abolish or interfere within any state with the domestic institutions thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said state." Thus, the resolution passed by both houses on March 2, 1861, said that Congress would never have power to interfere with the domestic institutions within any state.

Notice that date: March 2, 1861. At that time, there were only seven seceded southern states, the cotton states. Washington wanted those states to come back into the Union, and so this resolution was passed as a proposed amendment. This is why I say the war was not over slavery. It passed on March 2, 1861. If I am not mistaken, Fort Sumter was not fired upon until April 12, 1861.

So here is over a month. If you are going to tell me it was over slavery, why in the world would you fight over something being handed to you on a silver platter? Congress said, "Hey, we'll make

it permanent. You can have them if you would just come back into the Union."

Now, Lincoln, although he was elected in 1860, gave his first inaugural address and referred to the Corwin Amendment, although not by name. Here is what he said: "I understand a proposed amendment to the Constitution, which amendment, however, I have not seen, has passed Congress to the effect that the federal government shall never interfere with the domestic institution of the states, including that of persons held of service."

So he is talking about slaves. "To avoid misconstruction of what I have said, I depart from my purpose not to speak of particular amendments so far as to say that holding such a provision to now be implied constitutional law, listen, I have no objection to its being made express and irrevocable." What did Lincoln just get out of his mouth? He said, "We can make permanent slavery express and irrevocable. It can never change. You want the slaves? You can have them." Slavery was not the issue. It became an issue, but it was not the issue originally.

General John B. Gordon from Georgia said this after the war: "But slavery was far from being the sole cause of the prolonged conflict. Neither its destruction on the one hand, nor its defense on the other, was the energizing force that held the contending armies to four years of bloody work. I apprehend that if all living Union soldiers were summoned to the witness stand, every one of them would testify that it was for the preservation of the American Union and not the destruction of Southern slavery that induced him to volunteer at the call of his country. As for the South, it is enough to say that perhaps 80 percent of our armies were neither slaveholders nor had the remotest interest in the institution. Nor the proof, however, is needed than the undeniable fact that in any period of the war, from its beginning to near its close, the South could have saved slavery by simply laying down its arms and returning to the Union." So General Gordon said, if the South was fighting for slavery, all they had to do was quit fighting and they would have it.

They would not even have to be gun fighting because it was offered to them express and irrevocably. It is just that simple.

General Gordon's assessment is actually correct. In fact, the truth of the matter is this: There was a unanimous resolution passed by Congress July 23, 1861. This was right after Fort Sumter. Listen to what Congress said. I am quoting the unanimous resolution.

"The war is waged by the government of the United States, not in the spirit of conquest or subjugation, nor for the purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights of institutions of the states, but to defend and protect the Union." Even Congress said, "We're not fighting to let the slaves go. We're not even fighting over slavery." The London Spectator wrote in 1862, "The Union government liberates the enemy slaves as it would the enemy's cattle. Simply to weaken them in the conflict. The principle is not that a human being cannot justly own another, but that he cannot own him unless he's loyal to the United States." Charles Dickens said, "The northern onslaught upon slavery was no more than a piece of spacious humbug designed to conceal its desire for economic control of the southern states."

So, if political correctness is an attack upon culture, how is it attacking Southern culture today? We are vilified for having slaves that the North imported and sold to us. We are vilified for fighting for states' rights, self-defense, and the Constitution as it was given to us by our forefathers. We are vilified for being independent, self-sufficient, and self-governing; for standing against centralization of government, bureaucracy, and tyrants. Therefore, any monuments, symbols, or flags that remind us of liberty, freedom, and principle have to be destroyed and assailed by the politically correct crowd.

And so, why? Here is why. If these symbols are left standing, we in the South might begin to ask, "What does that flag mean? Why is this monument here? What does this symbol represent?" We might learn that there used to be liberty and freedom in this country and begin to want to be free again, to have a little liberty. We might learn that the states used to be independent, and that the federal government was created to serve the states—not the states to serve the federal government. Then we might want to be rid of regulation, bureaucracy, and tyranny. If these symbols

remain, we might begin to think that we want more liberty and freedom in this country.

Let me tell you, very quickly, what the St. Andrew's Cross and the Confederate flag represent. The red field represents the blood of Christ. The white border represents the protection of God. The blue X represents the Christian cross of St. Andrew, the first disciple of Jesus Christ and the patron saint of Scotland. The thirteen stars represent the thirteen seceded Southern states. Thus, the message in the Confederate battle flag is this: through the blood of Christ, with the protection of God, we thirteen states are united in our Christian fight for liberty and independence.

That is enough to bring forth the hatred of the politically correct crowd. That is why the Confederate battle flag is hated and despised. It is an attack upon our culture.

Political Correctness as an Attack upon Christianity

Political Correctness as an Attack on Christianity

Secondly, political correctness is an attack upon Christianity. Christianity and culture go hand in hand; you cannot attack one without attacking the other, because culture is religion externalized—the application of our faith. Culture is what we are, and you cannot change a culture without changing its theology.

All the speech classified today as hate speech is not aimed merely at free speech; it is directed at biblical speech. Political correctness is designed to stifle biblical denunciation of sin, wickedness, and rebellion and to make all religions equal—to bring Christianity down to the same plane as Islam, Shintoism, and Buddhism: "Christianity is not above them. We're all equal." Moreover, condemnation of sodomy, bestiality, adultery, and fornication will be viewed as hate speech. Why?

The federal government is now talking about sexual rights. What does that mean? Does a person have a sexual right to engage in bestiality? According to the government, yes. Does a person have a sexual right to be a pedophile? According to the federal government, yes. One pedophile even wrote an article asking for

understanding because that was the way he was. Is there a sexual right to be transgender? Where did sexual rights originate? Who gave them?

No one has the right to sin against God. There is no such thing as sexual rights outside of marriage. The Word of God delineates those duties and rights in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. Outside of marriage, there are no sexual rights. Do you realize that Obama has already declared that America is not a Christian nation? Well, it was, but thanks to him, he has stirred it far more into a pagan culture than a Christian culture.

What has happened in our country? How has our Christianity been attacked? We once had statesmen; now we have politicians. We once had men of honor and integrity who stood for truth and righteousness; now we have men who stand for party loyalty and put it above any and everything else. We once had men who sacrificed for this country; now we have men bent on plundering it for political gain and personal gratification. We once had public servants. Now we have public masters.

I'm not a country music fan, but I have watched Charlie Daniels on occasion. He is the country music star who wrote the song "The Devil Went Down to Georgia." Charlie Daniels is, I've been told, a Christian; whether he is or not, I don't know. But one thing I do know: he doesn't pull any punches in his writing.

He wrote a lengthy rant blasting Congress as "a breed of milksop, politically correct, scared of their own shadow, pushover, pathetic excuses for public servants." He says to Congress, "You don't even have the courage to face down an out-of-control president, even when he makes a deal with the devil. Don't you bunch of timid capons even care what kind of world you're leaving to your children and your grandchildren, not even to mention the rest of us? Are you really party partisans before your parents and grandparents or even human beings? You've allowed Obama to tilt the Supreme Court so far to the left that they're little more than a shameful extension of the executive branch. You've talked for decades about the porous southern border, but have done absolutely nothing about it. You have allowed cities in this nation

to declare themselves sanctuary cities where they protect the worst of the worst criminal aliens."

American citizens are paying the price for your silence. You watch an impossible national debt balloon completely out of control, knowing that a day of reckoning is coming that will seriously curtail the quality of life for coming generations. You allow corrupt government agencies like the IRS to run over the very people you are sworn to protect, and allow the entitlement society to expand exponentially while entertaining the idea of raising taxes on those who still work and shoulder the burden.

I wish you bunch of sold out, jaded, burned out hacks would go home and let people who still have vision, whose consciences have not been seared past the point of reminding them when they are wrong, take over and start to claw this nation back to sanity. Your ratings are in the single digits. Your morals are in the gutter. Your minds are on self-preservation.

Somewhere along the way, you traded your honor for political expediency. You violated your oaths, betrayed your country, feathered your nest, and sat on your hands while an imperial president rubbed your noses in the dirt time after time. You are no longer men. You are puppets, caricatures, jokes—a gaggle of fainting prostitutes for sale to anybody who can do you a political favor. The Bible demands character, courage, and that we keep our oaths and vows. This man knew exactly what he was talking about: political correctness is against Christianity, not merely against our culture.

Let me give you another example. On August 28, 2015, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, advocated revamping the English language in order to be more inclusive. You must now refer to them as "her," "zur," and "zim." "Call me zee, not he." The university wanted everyone to use gender-inclusive pronouns. Educators in the Volunteer State were concerned that students might be offended by traditional pronouns like "she," "he," "him," and "hers," according to a document from the University of Tennessee Knoxville's Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

It is offensive to some of these people to say "Lorraine she" or "Gary he." How is this an attack upon Christianity? It is not just an attack upon the English language. Listen carefully. Genesis 1:26-27 says: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." Now Genesis 2:21-24: "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept.

And he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

God created them male and female. He referred to Adam as “he” and “him,” and he referred to the woman as “her” and “she.” Are you ashamed that God created you either a man or a woman? If not, why would you want to use gender-inclusive pronouns? Why say “Stephen zee” instead of “Stephen he,” or use “Lorraine zur” or “Stephen Lorraine zim”?

I mean, that's absolutely stupid. It's not only stupid, it is an attack upon Christianity. Wow. If gender-inclusive pronouns are not enough, how about this one? France bans mother and father. If the law goes through, the civil code will use the more abstract cover-all, cover-anything term "parents." France's Justice Minister, Christiane Taubira, just when you thought things couldn't get any stranger, at least to give a glimpse of how strange they will soon become for us, France has decided to ban the words "mother" and "father" in regard to the civil legal treatment of marriage. The European country's proposed new law declares that marriage is a union of two people of different or the same gender. And the reason given by Christiane Taubira, France's Justice Minister, and here's her question: "Who is to say that a

heterosexual couple will bring a child up better than a homosexual couple?

That they will guarantee the best conditions for the child's development?" She then reassured critics of the proposed law. "What is certain is that the interest of the child is a major preoccupation for the government. If the law goes through, then all references to mother and father will be erased from the civil code and replaced with the more abstract cover-all, cover-anything term 'parents.'" Wow. So she asked a legitimate question: "Who is to say that a heterosexual couple will bring a child up better than a homosexual couple?" Who is to say?

God has the final say: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh.” God ordained marriage. God set up the institution. Marriage is between one man and one woman. It is not between two men, two women, or three or four men and three or four women. No, marriage has been ordained by God. God is the one who has the final say. Anything other than one man and one woman is a perversion, sin, and rebellion.

So thank you for asking that question, Justice Minister. God has the say. France is evidently still reaping the seeds that were sown during the French Revolution of 1789. Let me read to you what one author said: “The French Revolution descends into a reign of terror, and freedom lies stillborn under the shadow of the guillotine. The reign of terror came from a secular revolution without viable godly leadership. This, in turn, came from an earlier history, the crushing of the Reformation in France. And this was primarily a result of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre 200 years earlier.”

The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre was where they massacred literally hundreds and thousands of French Huguenots, Protestants who were protesting the Roman Catholic Church. They murdered them. The Edict of Nantes, I believe it was, gave them their liberty and freedom. That was revoked, and they were simply murdered. The French Revolution set about the de-Christianization of France. They even changed the days of the week. They even changed the names of months. They changed

anything that would reflect Christianity. Here are some of the things that they did in the French Revolution.

They confiscated all the church lands and used them as backing for their new currency. They destroyed statues and plates and iconographies—places of worship—and destroyed crosses, bells, and other external signs of worship. They instituted civic cults, including the cult of reason and subsequently the cult of the Supreme Being. The enactment of the law on October 21, 1793, made all non-juring priests and all persons who harbored them liable to death on sight.

A non-juring priest or preacher was someone who would not take an oath to support the new civil government. Thus, they were declared worthy of death on sight. The climax of the de-Christianization came with the celebration of the Goddess of Reason in Notre Dame Cathedral in November 1793. And whom did they put up for the Goddess of Reason? A prostitute.

Now the question has to be asked: Are we headed in the same direction? Will Christianity be outlawed and called illegitimate? If the politically correct crowd have their way, the answer is yes. Political correctness is a religion; it is against Christianity. It cannot succeed or overcome; it must be resisted. It is just that simple. Political correctness is an attack upon our culture. It is an attack upon Christianity. Thirdly, political correctness is an attack upon common sense.

Political Correctness as an Attack on Common Sense

I hate to say this, but the powers that be and the elite think that you are the dumbest and stupidest people that ever lived. They really do. They believe that we will never figure anything out.

Here is an article written by Paul Joseph Watson concerning Deputy Darren Goforth, who was brutally murdered at a gas station in Texas. Watson wrote: “At around 8:30 p.m. last night, Deputy Darren Goforth was pumping gas into his vehicle in full uniform before he was approached by a man who shot him from behind multiple times. Police described the suspect as a dark complexion male who is believed to be between 20 and 25 years

old and stands about 5 foot 10 to 6 feet tall. Surveillance footage of the suspect clearly shows that he is black."

"Are we at a point now in America where it is politically incorrect to identify the race of wanted murderers? If the killer was white, would the Associated Press describe him as a light complexion male? The murder took place just days after a group of black radicals called for lynching whites and killing cops." Why can't we say black? Pink, purple, white, red. What is offensive about calling a black man black? What's offensive about calling a white man white? You can't change that. Was he black? Yes, he was black. Why not just say it? We have lost all common sense.

WLTX News reports that a six-year-old kindergartner brought a small, transparent plastic toy gun to school for show-and-tell, causing her teachers to completely freak out. Naomi McKinney, a South Carolina kindergarten student, was not allowed on school grounds, her parents said. She brought her brother's clear plastic toy gun to class and was kicked out of school. The Sumter County School District says it has a zero-tolerance policy against guns in schools and would require the Board of Trustees to review the case if she is to return.

What? Do you remember the kid who was disciplined for eating a Pop-Tart, biting it, and making it into the form of a gun? Did you read just this past week where one school went into lockdown because a student said "gum," not "gun"—G-U-M, like chewing gum? We have lost all form of common sense.

Obama's war on self-reliance and cheap energy is now aiming at your wood-burning stove. Obama and the EPA want to ban wood-burning stoves. I suppose that next they will ban fireplaces, outdoor fire pits, barbecues, and forest fires. Wood-burning stoves have been around since their invention. They are what poor folks use. I have used them and would still use them. And yet Obama wants to do away with wood cookstoves and wood-burning stoves.

Let me tell you how stupid the power elite really think we are. This would be funny if it were not so absolutely insane. Did you know that Secretary of State John Kerry said it is our duty—our biblical duty—to save Muslims from global warming? Here are his

exact words: “Confronting climate change is, in the long run, one of the greatest challenges that we face. And you can see this duty or responsibility laid down in the scriptures, clearly beginning in Genesis. And Muslim-majority countries are among the most vulnerable. Our response to this challenge ought to be rooted in a sense of stewardship of Earth. As for me and for many of us here today, that responsibility comes from God.”

Really? John Kerry did not provide Scriptures saying it is our duty to protect Muslims, fight global warming, or that global warming is a sin. Where in the world has common sense gone?

If people are starving to death in Africa, what would you say? It is a third-world country, and we send food there all the time. Yet Secretary of State John Kerry advised them not to begin any new farms, even though they are starving, because creating new farms contributed to climate change. Here are his words: “I'm quoting.”

The politically correct argument says that certain agricultural processes release carbon pollution and contribute to the problem, but that existing farmlands can be made more productive rather than converting natural areas into new farmland. Well, wonderful—let's make farmlands more productive. But what about those people who do not even have farmlands to make productive? What he is saying is that you do not start new farms in Africa; you simply let people starve, because starting new farms produces carbon pollution, and we do not need any more carbon pollution. That would be absolutely hilarious if it were not so stupid.

And if you do not think climate change is serious, according to the politically correct crowd, consider the claim that climate change caused the Syrian war. I am quoting General Wesley Clark, in a discussion broadcast on HBO's Real Time on Friday, October 31, 2014. Clark placed part of the blame for the civil war on climate change.

After host Bill Maher quoted a Department of Defense report saying that climate change threatens national security, Clark said, "It's what was behind a lot of the violence in Syria. It's happening in East Africa. It's happening in West Africa." He urged the United States to take real action: "We need a carbon tax." He added that

climate-change believers were winning and that climate change impacts the neediest the most. Wow.

I wondered why I felt so mean during July and August. Maybe it was because of all the heat we have down here. Can you imagine someone being so stupid as to say that climate is the cause of the war because it is hot? It has been hot there ever since God created it. Look where it is, close to the equator.

The same General Wesley Clark has called for internment camps for disloyal Americans. General Wesley Clark was also a Democratic presidential candidate at one time. When you talk about disloyal Americans, what are you talking about? Americans disloyal to the Constitution, their history, and their heritage? No. He is talking about Americans disloyal to the government, to the status quo. And so he is calling for internment camps.

The Manipulative Nature of Political Correctness

If you are wondering why there is no common sense in Washington, D.C., among the politically correct crowd, remember what I said at the beginning of this message: political correctness is a religion. It is cultural Marxism. Here is the headline: "Former Intelligence Analyst: Political correctness is a manipulative tool for centralizing power." A former intelligence analyst, Stella Morabito, who grew up in a left-wing family and calls herself a realist, is speaking out about mass manipulation, political correctness, and the transgender agenda.

Her writings at the Federalist got the attention of Rush Limbaugh back in June, when he seemed fascinated by her piece on mass delusion. In an exclusive video interview with the Daily Caller News Foundation, she details how the left uses mass manipulation techniques to confuse Americans and grab power. She condemns conservatives for failing even to realize the behavior-modification techniques employed in the political square, including those encouraged by liberals such as Cass Sunstein, author of Nudge, and George Lakoff.

Do you know what Sunstein is saying in that book? His method is illustrated this way: I could come up to Gary, put my hands on

his back, and thrust him forward—that would be pushing him. If I pushed him hard enough, he might get up or turn around and slap the living daylights out of me, because it was a hard push. But if I merely nudged him a little, he would not get angry or mad.

If I kept nudging him, I could get him as far as where I would have by pushing him to begin with. So here is what they are doing: this philosophy of nudging. They either have changed it in some states or are going to change it. If you go to get your driver's license and want to be an organ donor, you have to say so. Now they are going to nudge you. They are going to make it mandatory that you be an organ donor unless you opt out. There is that little nudge. They will just keep nudging you in one direction until you are as far as if you had been pushed.

She says, speaking about political correctness and mass manipulation, "It was the project of cultural Marxists to capture the mediating institutions in our culture for ideological gain. The media, Hollywood, pop culture, academia, and more."

If you push an agenda to centralize power, you need mass ignorance and effective propaganda. What is political correctness? It is cultural Marxism. It is the religion of Marx. It is destroying the Christian religion and Christian America. Even some climate change scientists are now recommending prison for those who deny climate change—not just internment camps, but prison. So let me ask this question: How have we gotten in the mess that we are in? Why is there no common sense in this country?

Conclusion: The Need to Resist and Return to God

Why? Because we've forsaken God and His law. We've turned our backs upon Him, and He's turned His back upon us.

In Hosea 13:9, God says, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." In Hosea 5:6, He says, "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord, but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them." There comes a time when God will not be found, when He withdraws Himself. Then, in Deuteronomy 32:29, He says, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, and that they would consider their latter end!"

God said, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." He said, "They shall seek me, but they shall not find me. I've withdrawn myself from them." Yet we sit back and ask, "What if Putin and all the Russians come over and invade us? What if there's a war with China? What about North Korea?"

God does not have to send the Russians or the Chinese or the North Koreans over here to destroy us. All He has to do is leave us to ourselves. Left alone, we will destroy ourselves; we can do a mighty good job of that on our own. That is what we have done, and exactly where we are and what we are doing.

Political correctness is a religion—a humanistic, statist religion that denies the Lord Jesus Christ the authority and veracity of the Word of God. It denies God's law so it can establish its own law.

As Christians, we must realize we are not politically correct. We will never be politically correct, and the politically correct crowd will fight us tooth and nail and seek to destroy us, because that is the only way it can prevail. We must deny and denounce political correctness. We must confess and acknowledge one true and living God, who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. His Word is true; we bow to Him, serve Him, follow Him, and Him alone.

We do not worship the state. We worship God, our Creator, our Savior and our Redeemer. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for your grace and your mercy. Teach us. Help us to see where we are in this country, what we're facing. We're naive at times, and we're busy trying to live; we don't consider these things. But help us to know, O Lord, that thou art God, and that we are thy people and we are going to serve and worship thee and thee alone. Give us grace that we may serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 24

The Scope Of Christian Obedience

Part One of Two

September 8, 2016

Introduction: Defining the Scope of Obedience

Ezekiel 24:15 says, “Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.” So I spake unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died, “and I did in the morning as I was commanded.”

When we talk about the scope of Christian obedience, we have to understand the word “scope.” Those of us who hunt normally think of scopes on hunting rifles. But when you think about a scope, you also think about the extent or range of view, the outlook or the application, and sometimes the operation and effectiveness.

It also deals with aim or purpose as well. If we consider the word “scope” in its widest application, obviously we could have this topic extended for a number of Sundays. But I want to take the word “scope” and use it as far as the extent or range of obedience.

If you understand the word “scope” in that sense, there are answers to the question, What is the scope of our Christian obedience? They are what we would call very succinct or concise answers. Arguing from the lesser to the greater, I want to give you several. Are we the children of our Heavenly Father? The answer is yes. There is an admonition in Colossians 3:20, where the Bible says, “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”

Now, arguing from the lesser to the greater: If God requires children to be in obedience to their earthly parents in all things, does He not require us, and much more so, to be in obedience to our Heavenly Father in all things? The answer is most definitely yes. So you could also ask this: Are we not the servants and slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ? The answer again is yes.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 19-20: "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." If we are servants of the Lord, then there are applications from servants in the Bible.

Colossians 3, verse 22 says, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord." If God requires earthly servants to be in submission and obedience to their earthly masters, arguing from the lesser to the greater, does He not require His heavenly servants to be in submission and obedience to Him in all things? And the answer is yes.

Consider a passage in Acts chapter 3 concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. If those two arguments are not sufficiently clear, I think this would be. Acts 3, verse 20: "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath

spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Now watch: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you." That passage is found in Deuteronomy chapter 18, verses 18 through 20, where it prophesied that there would be a prophet raised up.

God says that we are to hear Him, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, in all things. The scope of our obedience is one of totality, one of completeness—in all things. Our obedience is not just in things that we like, choose, agree with, understand, or that please us. No. Our obedience is to be in all things.

We must recognize that He is the Father and we are the children. He is the Creator and we are the creatures. He is the Lord and we are the servants. He is the Redeemer and we are the redeemed. He is in control and we are to be controlled. He is the potter and we are the clay.

The Foundation: Recognizing God's Sovereignty

The Bible tells us in Acts 17:28, Paul said, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being." Everything that we are and everything that we have is of Him. If it is not of God, we have no life, no movement, no being, and nothing. If we do not recognize the simple truth that God is absolutely sovereign and over all things, we will never be obedient in the way that we should be.

Consequently, many professing Christians have already adopted the attitude of Pharaoh. In Exodus chapter 5, when Moses said to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go," Pharaoh responded, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

The point is very simple: If you do not recognize God's sovereignty and supremacy, you are not going to be obedient. Just like Pharaoh, you are going to say, "Why should I obey Him? Why should I do what He is commanding me?" When one does not recognize the absolute sovereignty of God, he will never be obedient. Total obedience requires total submission, and total

submission requires total recognition of who God is and who we are. He is the Father, and we are the children. He is the Creator, and we are the creatures.

He is the Lord; we are the servants. You must understand who God is, and you must understand who you are. We have to have a right view of God and a right view of ourselves if we are going to obey in all things.

Obedience is a sovereignly dictated order of life for the children of God. I want to show you this from Scripture and illustrate it as well.

Before we look at our text in Ezekiel chapter 24, let us set the stage by going back to Genesis chapter 2. All of these passages are very familiar. Genesis 2, verse 15, records Adam's creation: "And the Lord God took the man, that is Adam, whom he had created, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Adam's Commandment-Oriented Life

Notice in verse 16, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying..." The word "commanded" actually means that God put him under a charge, or God put him under an oath. Adam may have been vicegerent of the earth, or governor of the garden, yet he was to be under obedience to God. His status, position, and uniqueness did not exempt him from obedience.

God reserved one tree for Himself. He gave all of the others to Adam. Adam could freely eat of all those trees except the one that God reserved for Himself.

Matthew Henry, speaking of Genesis chapter 2, verse 16, says, "A confirmation of His present happiness to him in that grant of every tree in the garden, 'I may freely eat.' This was not only an allowance of liberty to him in taking the delicious fruits of Paradise as a recompense for his care and pains in dressing and keeping it,

but it was withal an assurance of life to him, immortal life, upon his obedience, for the tree of life being put in the

In the midst of the garden, as the heart and soul of it, doubtless God had an eye to that especially in this grant. Therefore, when upon his revolt this grant is recalled, no notice is taken of any tree of the garden that is prohibited him except the tree of life, of which it is there said he might have eaten and lived forever—that is, never died and never lost his happiness.

He summarizes the command of God and says: “Continue holy as thou art, in conformity to thy Creator's will, and thou shalt continue happy as thou art in the enjoyment of thy Creator's favor, either in this paradise or in a better.” So God created Adam, placed him in the garden, and put him under commandment, under charge, under an oath. The condition in which Adam was placed in this garden was his perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience. If Adam had obeyed, he would have been assured immortal life, not only for himself but for his posterity forever.

Two things are very clear in this passage. First, when God created Adam and placed him in the garden, He placed him under a commandment-oriented life. God basically said, “This do and thou shalt live. This do and thou shalt die.” It is just that simple. Second, absolutely nothing was to get in the way of Adam's obedience to God. He was obligated to God; he owed God. God was his creator, sustainer, provider, and protector, and obedience was therefore first and foremost demanded by God. God created man with original righteousness, original holiness, and knowledge, and placed him in the garden under the commandment-oriented life.

Now you have to ask this question: What happened? If you look in Genesis chapter 3, read the first seven verses.

The Fall: From Commandment to Feelings

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of

the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons."

Let me go back to this question: Since God created Adam, placed him in the garden under commandment in his life, and he was duty-bound and obligated to obey God, what happened? The answer is not simply that Adam was tempted. May I surprise you with this statement? Temptation, in and of itself, is not a sin. There have been plenty of sinners that have been tempted and never yielded to temptation. You have to remember that our Lord, who was perfect and sinless, in Matthew chapter 4 was driven of the devil into the wilderness and tempted, and yet He was sinless. He did not sin. So there is not a sin in being tempted. The sin is yielding to the temptation.

The answer is not that they were merely tempted. Secondly, the answer is not merely that Eve was adding to the Word of God when you look at verse 3: "...said unto the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of

“It, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.” Some people say that Eve was adding to the Word of God because the Bible does not deny them the right to touch it; it says they should not eat it. But understand the principle: When God forbids any act, He also forbids anything that would lead up to that act. How can you eat the fruit if you do not touch the fruit? Obviously, she was stating this principle.

Does God forbid adultery? Yes. At the same time, He forbids covetousness and lustfulness that lead up to adultery. Does God forbid murder? Yes. At the same time, He forbids unrighteous anger, hatred, and strife that lead up to murder.

When the woman said, “Ye shall not touch it, lest ye die,” she was right in that sense, because touching it is the first step to eating it. The answer is not that she was adding to the Word of God. What happened? That which caused Adam to sin is exactly that which causes us to sin. The root of his disobedience is the root of our disobedience.

Eve was the first person to sin, but sin did not come through Eve. The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 14, “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” Eve sinned first, but sin did not come into the world through Eve; it came through Adam, because God had entered into the covenant with Adam. That is why Romans 5, verse 12, says, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” When did all sin? We all sinned in Adam—passively.

It happened once and for all, and it is over. It is done with. We all sinned in Adam. In 1 Corinthians 15, verses 45–48, the Bible teaches that Adam was our federal head and federal representative: what he did, we did. When he sinned, we sinned. When he fell, we fell. It is just that simple. If you do not like that, then you do not like salvation, because Jesus Christ is our Second Head. He is our Federal Head and Federal Representative as well.

Because what He did, we did. The Bible teaches this very clearly concerning Jesus Christ. So here we are in Adam. Without going into extreme detail, let me tell you what transpired in Genesis chapter 3. Genesis 3:6 says, “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

It has been pointed out very clearly that here you have the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life—the same thing condemned in 1 John 2:15-17. She saw that the tree was good for food. She saw that it was pleasant to her eyes. She saw that it was a tree to be desired to make one wise. So here is my question: Where is the word “commandment” in verse six?

The answer is that it is not there. When God created Adam and Eve, He placed them in the garden under a commandment-oriented life. What is she doing? She is leaving that commandment-oriented life and learning to live by her feelings, desires, and emotions. It is true that she was the first one to sin, but the Bible says that she gave also to her husband, and he did eat as well.

In this particular sentence, he may not have been deceived. What he did, he did knowingly and willingly. Adam did this for his wife: because she was a sinner, he sinned with her to be with her. When he did that, he violated the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," for he placed his wife ahead of God.

So both of them sinned. Once this happened, man by nature became a feeling-oriented and desire-oriented creature. We live by our feelings; we live by our desires: "I want this. I don't want that." And that is exactly what has happened.

In the fall, feelings became all-important. The Bible tells us that God walked in the garden in the cool of the evening and called Adam, "Adam, where art thou?" Where were Adam and Eve? They were hiding. It is amazing that Adam did not come running to God and say, "Oh, I'm so sorry. My wife and I have disobeyed you. We have sinned. We have transgressed. We violated the covenant. Please help me. Please forgive me. Please make this thing right." No. Feelings are paramount now.

Instead of confessing and acknowledging their sins, they run and hide so they will not have to confess them. Anything that is going to make them uncomfortable, they no longer want to experience, because their feelings now have priority over everything. Here is the principle: Man has now become a desire- and feeling-oriented individual. He wants what he wants, and that is it, regardless of God's commands.

Illustrations of Desire-Oriented Disobedience

Consider another illustration in Joshua chapter 6. God is bringing the children of Israel into the land of Canaan, and they are going to conquer and destroy Jericho. In Joshua 6:17, God says, "And the

city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord."

God has said explicitly that everything in this city is cursed. Do not touch it. The silver and gold are to come into the treasury of the Lord; you cannot have them. Everything is cursed and is to be put to death except Rahab and her family. In Joshua chapter 7, Achan has stolen and is being confronted by Joshua. In verse 19: "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him;"

"And tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." And Achan answered Joshua, and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done." He would not have made this spontaneous confession; God had already drawn him out. He was taken by lot and had to confess.

"When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." What did he do? He saw, he coveted, and he took.

There is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. It is the same exact thing that Eve did in Genesis chapter 3. Achan gave in to his desires and feelings rather than obey God. He satisfied his desires, and they killed him. His refusal to obey a commandment-oriented life led to a desire-oriented life, which led to his destruction. Adam and Eve had already proven that you cannot sin against God and escape judgment. Achan verified this with his life and the life of his family as well. These were people living by their desires rather than by the plain commands of God.

In Judges chapter 14, verses 1 through 3, Samson went down to Timnath and saw a woman of the daughters of the Philistines. He

told his father and mother, “I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.” His father and mother answered, “Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?” And Samson said, “Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.” He had gone down to the Philistines, found this woman, and demanded that his father get her, although his father asked whether there was not a woman in his own tribe, or among the other tribes, whom he could marry.

Samson was deliberately, purposefully, and premeditatedly going contrary to the plain commands of God. In Exodus chapter 34, verses 12 through 16, and Deuteronomy 7, verses 1 through 5, the Israelites were expressly forbidden to intermarry with the people of the land, especially the Philistines. His father said, “Don’t do this. Pick out an Israelitish girl and you can marry her.” And what did Samson say? “Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.”

What else was Samson doing? He was violating the fifth commandment: “Honor thy father and thy mother.” Translated, he was saying, “Get her for me. It’s right in my eyes. It’s agreeable to me. It’s pleasing to me. I want her.” It really did not matter what God had commanded. He had feelings for this woman. Thus, he was leaving a commandment-oriented life and following a feeling-oriented life.

In chapter 16, Samson went down and found another Philistine woman, Delilah. He slept in her lap, she cut his hair, and he lost all of his strength and power. In verse 20 we read: “And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.”

Why did Samson lose his eyes, ultimately his life, his family, and his ministry? The answer is that he refused to have a commandment-oriented life and wanted to live a desire-oriented life. It is just that simple.

The whole point of the message is this: We must obey God in all things. Literally, all of our lives are to be brought into totality, into the totality of conformity to the Word of God. There are two main hindrances to our obedience: feelings and desires. I wish I had a Federal Reserve note for every time I have heard people say, "I don't feel like doing that."

The Hindrances: Feelings and Desires

"Or, 'I have no desire for that.' Really? Do you understand that most people today live on feelings and desires rather than principle and biblical commandments? It is indeed a clever wile of Satan to tempt men to think they cannot obey God because they do not feel like obeying Him. I have heard Christians say, 'But I don't feel like praying.' That does not matter; God commands us to pray. 'I don't feel like reading my Bible.' God commands us to study to show ourselves approved unto God. 'I don't feel like going to church.' God commands, 'Forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.' 'I have no desire for those things.' I'm sorry, but that's not my problem.

You are responsible to obey because God simply commands. It is just that simple. What we have done is change everything, and modern-day Christendom happens to be living by two principles. The first is, "If it feels good, do it." The second is, "If it doesn't feel good, I'm not going to do it." It does not matter what God said. It is like Samson: "Get her for me; she pleases me. It is agreeable. I do not see anything wrong with it."

I want to demonstrate from Scripture that our feelings, desires, and emotions should never, ever hinder our obedience. When we allow those things to get in our way, we are sinning against God. Go back in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel, chapter 24, because Ezekiel is a prime example of what I am teaching and sharing with you. I have often asked myself, "Would I perform and obey as Ezekiel did, given the same circumstances?"

Ezekiel's Example of Total Obedience

Ezekiel was a priest whom God called to be a prophet. He was already in Babylon. According to the book of Ezekiel, he was

assigned to those Israelites who were in Babylon and to those Israelites who were yet to come into Babylon. His life illustrated many truths. One was that the Temple in Jerusalem was to be destroyed.

Look again at Ezekiel chapter 24, beginning with verse 15: “Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.” Now watch.

"So I spake unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died." Here is Ezekiel, and we must comprehend his obedience in the most distressful, emotional, and feeling-oriented situation any man could possibly face: the immediate and instant loss of his wife. Look in verse 16 at what God told him: "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." In other words, God says, "I'm gonna take her from you, and she's going to die suddenly, quickly, instantly," because He was going to take the temple away from the Israelites and the Judahites.

Here is what John Gill said on verse 16: "I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke," meaning his wife, who very probably was of a beautiful countenance and goodly to look to, and however, of an amiable disposition, and in the conjugal relation very agreeable to the prophet, and no doubt a truly religious woman, and upon all accounts very desirable to him. This lovely object of his affection, the Lord, who is the sovereign disposer of all persons, signifies that he would take her away from him by death unto himself, that is, suddenly and at once. And so the Syriac and Arabic versions render it, "with a sudden stroke." Sometimes persons are struck with death at once with a palsy.

So God tells him, "Ezekiel, I'm going to kill your wife. I'm gonna take her." Notice that she is called "the desire of thine eyes." He loved her. She was beautiful.

The unexpected and sudden death of your wife would be sufficient in itself to cause the most loving and godly man to

crumble and become so devastated that he could not act or think. It does not even have to be our spouse. There have been times when we have lost loved ones instantly—a son, a daughter, a father, a mother, or a close relative. When we hear, we are absolutely stunned. We stand there in disbelief. We cannot believe it has happened, like a deer in the headlights. We do not know which way to go or where to turn. God is telling him, "I'm about to take your wife, and I'm going to take her away with a sudden stroke." But here is what makes it even worse—emotionally worse.

Look at it in verse 16. He said, “Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.” God now forbade Ezekiel even to shed a tear, grieve, or cry. He could do nothing that would indicate mourning.

Matthew Henry says, “He must not give vent to his passion by weeping or letting his tears run down. Though tears are a tribute to the dead, and when the body is sown, it is fit that it should be thus watered. But Ezekiel is not allowed to do this, though he thought he had as much reason to do it as any man, and would perhaps be ill thought of by the people if he did it not.

“Much less might he use the customary formalities of mourners. He must dress himself in his usual attire, must bind his turban upon him, here called the tire of his head, must put on his shoes, and not go barefoot, as was usual in such cases. He must not cover his lips, nor throw a veil over his face, as mourners were wont to do. He must not be of a sorrowful countenance, appearing unto men to fast. He must not eat the bread of men, nor expect that his neighbors and friends should send him in provisions, as usually they did in such cases, presuming the mourner had no heart to provide meat for themselves. But if it were sent, he must not eat of it, but go on in his business as at other times.”

It could not be but greatly against the grain of flesh and blood not to lament the death of one he loved so dearly, but God so commands.

Matthew Poole says, “It is likely Ezekiel had this revelation in the night or evening before. And he tells them times in the morning what God would do in taking away his wife and what he must not do when she is dead and to be buried.”

If Matthew Poole is correct—and probably so, based upon the text—Ezekiel did not have time to prepare himself for his wife's death. She would have died within twelve to twenty-four hours after God had spoken.

Look at verse 18: "So I spake unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded." This is humbling, poignant, and a condemning truth. Ezekiel said, "My wife died, and I did as I was commanded."

The scope of Ezekiel's obedience was in all things. His feelings, emotions, circumstances, situation, stress, and distress did not cause him to disobey. Humanly speaking, we would look at him and say, "You have every right to disobey." Yet he said, "My wife died, and I did as I was commanded."

Consider the applications. In light of Ezekiel's loss, how small and insignificant is our whining and complaining? If the grace and mercy of God could uphold Ezekiel in such a time and call him to obey, is it not possible for us to obey in our much easier and lighter situations and circumstances? We have not been through what he endured. The only thing we can say is how we have failed and disobeyed. Most of the time we excuse our disobediences, when in reality there are no excuses.

Applications and Conclusion

How often do we consider our feelings, emotions, and desires and completely disregard the plain command of a holy, righteous God? His commands are designed for our good as well as for His glory. We must confess that God knows what is better for us than we know for ourselves.

When we put our feelings, desires, and emotions ahead of God, that is the worst sort of idolatry: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Yet we put ourselves before Him—my feelings, my desires, my wants, and my emotions.

When God created Adam, He placed him in the garden under a commandment-oriented life. When Adam sinned, he left that life and went to a feeling-oriented life. Fallen man has lived by his feelings ever since. When God saves and converts us, He places us again under a commandment-oriented life.

In John 14:21, our Lord said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” In verse 24, He said, “He that keepeth not my sayings loveth me not.” First John 5:3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” What is loving God? It is keeping His commandments.

First John 2:4–5 says, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” How do we know that we are in Him? Because we obey Him. We are back under a commandment-oriented life. God expects us not to live by our feelings, desires, or emotions, but by His righteous commands.

We must come to the conclusion that absolutely nothing and no one must hinder our obedience to our Heavenly Father. Our Lord said in Matthew 10:37, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” We could also say, “He that loveth husband or wife more than me is not worthy of me.” We must love Him supremely and singly, and the way we love Him is through obedience. The scope of our obedience is in all things.

God said, “Ezekiel, I’m going to take away from you the desire of your eyes. But you can’t cry. You can’t weep. You can’t mourn. You can’t demonstrate sorrow.” His wife died that evening, and in the morning he said, “I did as I was commanded.” If God gives such grace in such dire circumstances to enable one to obey, we need to look to Him in every circumstance for grace to obey. God expects total obedience. He is the sovereign; He is the Father; we are the children. We must obey.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You this day. We thank You for Your Word, for Your truth, for Your grace, and for Your mercy.

Lord, we acknowledge that we've sinned. Often we've lived by our feelings, emotions, and desires, rather than the word of God. Forgive us for our sins, Lord, and give us grace that we may learn to obey regardless of every situation, every circumstance, and regardless of our feelings, emotions, and desires. Make us, Lord, and enable us to live a commandment-oriented lifestyle. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 25

It's Your Fault

December 18, 2016

Introduction: The Problem of Division

Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” I am not going to expound this verse. I am going to use it and apply it, though I have preached several messages from this passage. It is a very simple verse. The title of the message is, “It’s Your Fault.”

Spiritual Immaturity as a Root Cause

Each of us has heard children arguing. The argument usually goes something like this: “It’s your fault.” “Is not.” “Is to.” “Is not.” “Is to.” The argument would continue like that until some adult steps in and resolves the seemingly endless conflict. I have often said, I do not see how any child ever lives to adulthood. I have also said, and firmly believe, that grandchildren are God’s reward for not killing your own children.

It should be noticed, as you read the Bible, that God refers to Christians many times as children, little children, and babes. The

problem is that many never leave that stage. They never mature enough to be young men or even fathers.

In 1 John 2, beginning in verse 12, the apostle John writes to believers. John writes, “I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His namesake. I write unto you fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you little children, because you have known the Father. I have written unto you fathers, because you’ve known Him that is from the beginning. I’ve written unto you young men because you’re strong and the Word of God abided in you and you’ve overcome the wicked one.” In fact, in 1 John 2:1, John says again, “My little children, these things I write unto you.”

In this passage, God's people are referred to as children, little children, young men, and fathers. Peter also admonishes us in 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 1 through 3: “Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and all envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if so be that you've tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

The apostle writes in Hebrews chapter 5, speaking of Christ, called of God and high priest after the order of Melchizedek: “Of whom we have many things to say and hard to be uttered, seeing you were dull of hearing. For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God. And become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. For strong meat belongs to them that are full-aged, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

I thought about coming over here this morning that I probably need to preach a message just on babes, young men, and fathers and show you the attributes and characteristics of each one in the Word of God. But notice that the apostle says when you ought to be teachers, you have need of someone to teach you again the very first principles of the oracles of God. You become someone who

needs milk. In other words, you revert back to babyhood again, because you are unskillful in the word of righteousness.

The problem that exists in most professing Christians and most real Christians is that they cannot and will not act like adult Christians. They cannot think clearly, accurately, doctrinally, or biblically; hence, they are still children. Consequently, their lives are consumed with silly childhood temper tantrums, hurt feelings, and emotional outbursts. If they cannot get their way, and if people do not play according to their rules, they will take their marbles and go home.

The issue I am confronting today is very prominent and, unhappily, very profuse: divided families. I have been dealing with a number of families divided over issues, many of which are really non-issues, yet that does not appear to soften or ease the situation. I personally know families where fathers are divided against sons, sons against fathers, husbands against wives, wives against husbands, in-laws against in-laws, children against parents, and parents against children. The sad fact is that in some of these families, the fathers and sons are pastors and preachers. I can only say how sad.

Life is too short and death is too sure for such unnecessary division and strife. My father has been dead for twenty years and my mother for four years, yet I still think about them and miss them. I am thankful that they were my parents, and I can truly say that I love my parents.

Does that mean there were never any issues? Of course not. There were issues, but we certainly never divided over them. We worked through them and continued to act as a family. I suppose the thing that has disturbed me most recently, especially in praying for these families, is that I know what a family could be and should be. It grieves me that these people are missing some of the greatest years of their lives. I can think of nothing more miserable and devastating than missing fellowship with your immediate family, especially with your grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I know that divisions will sometimes happen and cannot be helped, but unhappily, most of the time they are unnecessary.

Divisions Arise Because of the Savior

They usually stem from our own pride, selfishness, and willfulness. I want to point out several sources of divisions and discuss them briefly. Remember, the title of this message is “It’s Your Fault.” I want you to see how most of the time it is indeed our fault. First of all, divisions arise because of the Savior. It is impossible not to experience divisions in one sense of the word, especially when some are saved and some are unsaved in the family. In Luke chapter 12, beginning with verse 51, our Lord says, “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.”

“For from henceforth there shall be five in one household divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother, and the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” He says there is going to be division.

Sometimes division is indeed based upon our Savior and His Word, His truth. He does separate the chaff from the wheat. He does separate the sheep from the goats. If you read through the book of John, you find division over and over concerning Christ. John 7:43 says, “So there was a division among the people because of him.” John 9:16 says, “Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can this man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.” John 10:19 simply says, “There was a division, therefore, again, among the Jews for these sayings.”

While we must at all times stand for our Lord and with our Lord, it does not necessarily mean that there will have to be divisions in our families. Certainly, there can be and would be, but being chosen by our Lord, converted by His grace, and indwelt by His Spirit should humble us so that pride, arrogance, and hostility are put aside. If division has to come because of Christ and His truth, let it come on the side of the unconverted and not on our side. Let it be their sin and not our sin.

The problem that existed in the early church still exists today. What do you do when God saves one spouse in a marriage and not the other? Or what do you do when a Christian, unhappily and disobediently, marries a non-Christian and becomes unequally yoked? Obviously, you are going to reap what you have sown. There are going to be consequences to that sin. But in the early church, when God saved one spouse and not the other, there was real concern about the resolution. The Apostle Paul answers in 1 Corinthians 7, beginning with verse 12: “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord.

If any brother has a wife who believes not, and she is pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. Likewise, if a woman has a husband who believes not, and he is pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbelieving spouse departs, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God hath called us to peace.

As long as that individual will live with you, let that person live with you. Paul teaches that the saved spouse can influence the unsaved spouse. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart. Notice how Paul ends this: “But God hath called us to peace.”

There should be no fighting or wrangling over the truth. Truth cannot be force-fed to anyone. You cannot force the hand of God, nor can you force God to save someone. Obviously, there will be some division if one is saved and the other is unsaved, but it does not have to be explosive. The more we keep our hearts, the less strife and division there will be, and the better the atmosphere will be for truth to take root in the life of the unsaved spouse.

Sometimes division arises because of our Savior and His truth. If it arises, it must be on the part of the one who will not listen and will not obey. As a Christian and a child of God, you must continue to do what is right and seek to resolve those things. Secondly, sometimes division arises because of Satan. Remember that Satan even sought to divide God against Job by falsely accusing Job.

Divisions Arise Because of Satan

God said, “Is thou considered my servant Job? There is none like him in all the earth.” Satan said, “Doth Job serve God for naught? Why? You take away everything he’s got and he’ll curse you to his face. The only reason he’s serving you is because you’re taking care of him, you’re giving to him.”

Do you realize it was Satan who stood up and provoked David and divided him from God and his people in 1 Chronicles 21:1? The Bible said, “And Satan stood against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” Satan tempted and seduced David to sin. In Acts 5:3, Satan was the source of deceit and division in the lives of Ananias and Sapphira in the early church. Peter said to Ananias, “Why did Satan fill thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?” Obviously, there was division and strife.

The Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 2:11 that we are not to be ignorant of Satan’s devices, lest he get an advantage over us. The word devices there in the Greek is noema, translated in our Bibles as “mind” four times and “thought” one time. Actually, Paul is saying that we are not ignorant as to how Satan thinks—his thought processes, his evil purposes, and how he works.

He deceives, he divides, and he destroys. In Revelation 12:10, he is called the accuser of our brethren. His very name means slanderer, adversary, devil. Remember what our Lord said to those Jews in John 8:44: “You are of your father, the devil. And the lust of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth. Listen, because there is no truth in him, when he speak of a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

Now here is my question: Will Satan lie and slander and accuse you? Of course he will. Will Satan lie and slander and accuse you to other people? Yes, he will. Will Satan lie and accuse other people, do you? Of course, he will. Most of the time, when we get upset with people, we put our own interpretation upon what they say. We do not even ask them what they meant. We simply say, “I bet he’s slamming me or he’s slandering me. I bet he meant that in an

evil way." That could be Satan accusing that individual to you. It could not even possibly be true.

A good illustration is found in Acts 15. God used a team very greatly throughout the book of Acts: Paul and Barnabas. However, in Acts 15 there was a division and separation between them over John Mark. Paul said unto Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark, but Paul thought not good to take him, because he had departed from them from Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. "And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder, one from the other." Barnabas took Mark and sailed into Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. He went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

When you read that Barnabas determined, the Greek word determined literally means he deliberated and took counsel with himself. In other words, it was his will, his determination, and his purpose. He was dead set on bringing John Mark with him. He would not listen or be reasoned with; he was absolutely determined. When the Bible says that it became a point of contention, the word contention means an incitement or an agitation. This contention became so sharp that Paul and Barnabas separated and divided permanently.

How much of this was flesh and how much was Satan, I have absolutely no idea. But what is clear is that two brothers in Christ, two men, two preachers whom God used greatly, separated over this issue and never worked together again.

Later, it is true that Paul asked for John Mark. In 2nd Timothy chapter 4 verse 11, he wrote, "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Although John Mark later came to Paul and worked with him, Paul and Barnabas never worked together again. In fact, you find very little about Barnabas after this incident.

We have to understand that we do have an enemy and an adversary. Our Lord said it like this in 1 Peter 5, verses 8 and 9: "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

What did he tell you to do? You better resist him, because he is attacking all the brethren. Unless we keep our hearts, unless we are sober and vigilant, we too shall fall. We have to resist all the temptations, all the seductions, and all that we know are absolutely contrary to the Word of God.

Divisions Arise Because of Sin

Divisions arise because of the Savior; we understand that. Divisions arise because of Satan; we understand that. Thirdly, divisions arise because of sin. Sin separates. It has separated husbands from wives, children from parents, brothers from sisters, as well as families and friends.

I want you to think about it. There is not a family in which sin has not separated in some degree, whether it is mother, father, or child. As Christians, we cannot pretend that sin does not matter. Sin does matter, and sin cannot be coddled or condoned. We have been explicitly commanded in Psalm 97:10, "ye that love the Lord, hate evil." Again, in Amos 5:15, God commands, "hate the evil and love the good."

You must remember that God is infinitely holy. God is so holy that He cannot look condoningly or approvingly upon sin. In Habakkuk 1:13, Habakkuk wrote, "Thou art of pure eyes and behold evil and canst not look upon iniquity." Certainly God sees evil and iniquity. He looks upon it to judge it, but He does not look upon it approvingly. When our children sin, we cannot approve or condone their sin. When a husband or wife sins, we cannot approve it or condone it. We cannot even pretend that it is not there.

What happens when a spouse chooses to commit adultery? Usually, there is a separation—a division in the marriage and

family when the sin is exposed. The same is true with drunkenness, sodomy, thievery, and a multitude of other sins. According to 1 John 3:4, sin is a violation of God's law. You cannot sin without violating God's law. But 1 John 5:17 tells us that all unrighteousness is sin. How do we deal with a child, husband, wife, or in-law who is in sin? It does not matter who.

Paul commanded Timothy, a pastor, in 1 Timothy 5:20: “Them that sin, rebuke before all that others may fear.” There is a difference between a private sin and a public sin. If Ed sinned against me privately, I do not stand in the pulpit and rebuke Ed; I go to him privately. But if Ed has done something publicly and everybody knows, he can be rebuked publicly. The Bible says, “Them that sin, rebuke before all that others may fear.” In other words, we must rebuke the sin and not suffer the sin upon our neighbor or our family member. Leviticus 19:17 says, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor and not suffer sin upon him.” Notice what he said: “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart.”

In other words, if you do not rebuke him, you hate him. Proverbs says, “open rebuke is better than secret love.” Actually rebuking a child, husband, wife, or family member—reproving and admonishing them—is a demonstration of love. God says, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor and not suffer sin upon him.”

As Christians, we should always be eager, ready, and willing to forgive. However, it is impossible to forgive unless there is repentance. In Luke 17:3, our Lord says to His disciples, “Take heed to yourselves. Take heed to yourselves. If I, brother, trespass against thee, rebuke him. And if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day, turning into thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.” And the apostle said unto the Lord, “increase our faith.”

Note verse 3: “Take heed to yourselves. If I, brother, trespass against thee,” what is the first thing you do? You rebuke him. You point out his sin, disobedience, and trespass. You tell him that it is not right, biblical, or scriptural. You may show him what is biblical

and scriptural, but God says the first thing you do is rebuke him and admonish him.

If he repents, what does it say? Forgive him. It is just that simple. The disciple asked, What if he trespasses against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day says, I repent? Our Lord says, You forgive him there. If he does it seventy times seven, you forgive him. We must always be willing, ready, and eager to forgive. But the Scripture says, "if he repent."

If there is no repentance, there really cannot be any forgiveness. You read this in the paper all the time: someone murders a family member, and before the murderer is convicted or even goes to trial, another family member says, "I forgive him." Really? How can you forgive someone if there is no repentance? Stop and think about that.

Psalm 86:5 says, "For thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon them." God is good and ready to forgive. Is God willing to forgive? Is God ready to forgive? Yes. Will God forgive without repentance? No. If there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness.

That is why our Lord said, "Take heed of yourselves, if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; if he repent, forgive him." If he does not repent, you continue to rebuke him, confront him, and admonish him. Rebuking or reproving someone does not mean jumping down their throat with both feet, cussing them out, or telling them off. If your brother repents, you are obligated to forgive him.

As Christians, we must follow the Word of God. Hebrews 3:13 commands, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." We are to exhort one another daily, lest anyone should be hardened through sin's deceitfulness.

If the brother we rebuke does not repent, we continue exhorting, admonishing, and rebuking him. How do we do that? Galatians 6:1–2 says, "Brethren, if a brother be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of

meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

If a man is overtaken in a fault or sin, you who are spiritual are to restore such an one. That is your goal: restoration. How? In the spirit of meekness—not in the spirit of superiority, and not with the attitude, "Ha, ha, you did it, not me." God says to do it in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself. Had it not been for the grace, mercy, and providence of God, it would be you who had sinned. You do it in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.

Then he says to bear one of those burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. You need to make this a matter of prayer. There are a number of things I am praying over, matters I must speak to people about, and I am asking the Lord to prepare their hearts and open their eyes. But He tells me that I must do so in the spirit of meekness.

Do you understand that we need to keep our hearts so that we do not condone or approve sin? We especially need to keep our hearts when that sin is in our family and among our loved ones. We cannot condone it, and we cannot overlook it.

It must be dealt with even if it causes further division and separation on the part of the individual who refuses to repent. I know parents whose children are absolutely alienated from them, and the fault is with the children, not the parents. The parents are doing everything they can to lead their children to repentance and restore them, but the children will not listen.

Some people, the more you reprove, rebuke, admonish, and exhort them, the harder they become and the farther they flee from reconciliation and restoration. It does not matter, in one sense, if that is the result. We still must obey God. We cannot condone or approve the sin.

There are many like the prodigal son who have lost their way. They need to be confronted, and they need repentance and reconciliation. When those children, individuals, or family members repent, there must be restoration and reconciliation.

When you tell someone, “I forgive you,” you are basically saying, “I am wiping it out of my mind. I am never going to meditate on it or think on it anymore. I am not going to hold it against you or use it against you. It is gone, over, and done with, just as if you had never sinned.” That is how God forgives us, and we are commanded to forgive others the same way.

Divisions Arise Because of Self

Divisions arise because of our Savior, because of Satan, because of sin, and because of self—that is, our fleshly, carnal, selfish nature. In all probability, ninety-nine percent of all divisions arise because of sin and self. Many people think, “Satan has really attacked me.” Most of us are not important enough to merit an attack from Satan. He attacked only about three people in the Bible: Job, Jesus, and Peter. Why would He waste His time with us when some of His little minions can do the work for Him, and when our flesh takes care of most of His work?

James 4:1 says, “For whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?” You have enough lusts and enough fighting going on in your own members. Look at Galatians 5:19: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Do you hear what he just said? All these things are works of the flesh. Witchcraft, idolatry, drunkenness, murder, adultery, lasciviousness, uncleanness, strife, and seditions are works of the flesh. Why would Satan mess with us when we have enough sin in our members to condemn us because of our own selfishness?

Galatians 5:13 says, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Then he says, “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not

consumed one of another." I have threatened for years to preach a message on this text entitled "Cannibal Christians." I still might do it.

"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." When you do the things that your flesh would enjoy, you are sinning against God.

The truth of the matter is, it is our proud, arrogant, haughty attitude and disposition, revealing itself in our flesh, that causes strifes and divisions. And the truth is, we are far more likely to display such attitudes toward our family than toward our friends and strangers. You know why? Because we know we can get away with it in our family. We take that attitude and disposition with a stranger, and he might just knock our block off. He might demonstrate, "I ain't your family. I'm not going to take it," and just deck you right there.

Paul told the Corinthians that their divisions were based upon their carnal, fleshly attitude, which revealed the fact that they were babes. He said, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal fleshly, even as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with meat, for either two you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able, you're still a babe, for you are yet carnal." Now watch: "For whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are you not carnal and fleshly and walk as men?" You are certainly not walking in the Spirit.

The point I am trying to make is this: Whenever you see a Christian who refuses to submit to the Word of God and obey the plain commands of our Lord, mark it down. He is a sulking, fleshly, disobedient child who will soon face the rod of correction.

Our strife, envy, and division reveal our spiritual delinquency—not a juvenile delinquent, but a spiritual delinquent. You have to be at least a young man to be a juvenile, I would think. Most of us are infant delinquents.

Here is the command: “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you’re sealed in the day of your redemption.” Here is what you are to put off: “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice.” Here is what you are to put on: “And be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.” Watch now: “Even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.”

By the way, look at verse 1 in chapter 5: “Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.” How do you become a dear child? By being a follower of God. You obey Him and bring your life into conformity to His Word.

The title of the message is “It’s Your Fault.” How can strife and divisions be our fault?

It Is Your Fault: Taking Responsibility

First, it is our fault if we do not obey and submit to His Word. If we fail to listen, learn, obey, and apply, obviously we have not kept our hearts. We cannot save the lost, including our lost family members, but we can be Christian toward them, pray for their salvation, and do that which is biblical and right in order to seek restoration and reconciliation in the family. If we do not, then it is our fault.

Second, divisions arise because of Satan. It is our fault if we have listened to Satan and failed to resist him and fight against him with all the power of God at our disposal. We are not to be ignorant of his devices. If we are ignorant, it is our fault because we failed to study and learn his devices in order to avoid them.

Third, divisions arise because of sin. It is our fault if we have sinned and failed to repent. There are no perfect Christians yet. While you are here, there is sin on your part, as well as on the part of others. Each one sins and must repent. It is also our fault if our loved one has sinned and we have failed to confront and admonish him in the Lord.

Listen to 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15: “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him that he may be ashamed, yet count him not as an enemy, but

admonish him as a brother." The separation and division would still be our fault if we fail to admonish and confront. You say it may not work. It may not work, but it is still our responsibility to do it. Then again, by the grace of God, it may work.

Divisions Arise Because of Self

It is our fault if we have not obeyed our Lord in seeking resolution and reconciliation. Regardless of who is right or wrong, it is our responsibility to resolve the problem and reconcile as brethren. Ron and I could get into an argument or a fight. I could come to Dr. Bowen and say, "I'm right. He's wrong." He could go to Ed and say, "I'm right, the preacher's wrong." Does it matter who is right or wrong, since we are brothers and should be working together, not against each other? There should be a reconciliation.

We cannot play childish games and constantly blame other people. The Lord holds each one of us responsible to resolve such strife and divisions. Matthew 5:23-24 says, "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, and first be reconciled to thy brother, then come again, and offer thy gift." Notice that you have nothing against your brother, but he has something against you, and you remember it. Ron's mad at me; I don't even know what. It's silly. He's a child. I don't know what it is. What does God say? I am responsible to go to him and get it worked out. "Believe my gift. Go and be reconciled to Him. And then come again."

Matthew 18:15 says, "Moreover if I brother shall trespass against thee"—now Ron does not have anything against me; I have something against him—"if I brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two or more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and as a publican."

So in this passage, Ron does not have anything against me; I have something against him. Whose responsibility is it to goad him? It is mine. He may not even realize that he sinned against me, or that he upset or hurt me. I have to go to him. If he refuses to listen to me, repent, and make it right, whose responsibility is it to get two more and go to him? Mine. If he will not listen to them, whose responsibility is it to tell the church? Mine. In other words, it is my fault if I do not do these things.

Conclusion: Seek Reconciliation

When you tell people they need to reconcile, resolve the issue, and repent, they say, "But I have been hurt. I have been hurt so bad." Yes, you have been hurt. But do you not think that your sin is hurting Christ? Have you not hurt Christ far more than someone has hurt you? Are you willing to put your hurt above Christ and His Word? That becomes idolatry. When you say, "I am too hurt to make things right. I am too hurt to go to my brother, my son, my father, or my mother," you are guilty of idolatry because you are placing yourself and your hurt above God.

We cannot save anyone. We cannot control the evil thinking and evil purposes of the wicked one, nor can we make anyone do that which is right and holy. I cannot make my child obey, and neither can you. I have heard parents say of their little three- and four-year-old children, "I'm teaching them to obey. Look how this one obeys. Wonderful." Wait until he is sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen.

I know what the Scripture says: "Train up a child in a way that you understand that." But you also have to understand that a child is a sinner, bullheaded, and stubborn, and sometimes will have to meet the rod of correction from the hand of God. We cannot make anyone do that which is right and holy, but by the grace of God, we can do that which is right and holy ourselves. We can keep our hearts and live obediently.

If there must be division and strife, let it be placed on someone else's shoulders. You do that which is right. Seek to reconcile, resolve, and make things holy. If they refuse, it is their sin, not yours. Life is too short and death is too sure to live in disobedience

and without fellowship. We must learn to do what is right, even if it never works out for the unrepentant one. If it never works out, it will be their sin and not ours. It is your fault if you do not seek resolutions and reconciliation from a biblical standpoint. Does it matter where the divisions arise? It is our responsibility to seek to resolve them and live in a biblical, godly manner.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth, and we pray for all our families. We mentioned praying for our nation and country, but unless it starts with individuals and families, it will never spread. It has to be in our homes. These dear families are so strife-ridden and divided, full of hurt, anger, ill will, and even hatred. I pray that You would break their hearts and show them how much You suffered and what their sin has caused You. I pray, Father, that You would indeed heal us and grant us repentance. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 26

The Biblical Doctrine Of Love And Hate

February 10, 2017

Introduction: The Need for a Biblical Definition of Love

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. And everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.” There is a very simple statement here: God is love. The statement is certainly a truth of Scripture. But the question has to be asked: What does it mean, and how do we understand love? Many problems that we are experiencing today in our families, in our churches, and in our governments arise from a misunderstanding of the biblical doctrine of love.

Worldly Definitions of Love

We are taught, usually from a child, that we should love everybody, but we are not even taught what love is. The truth of the matter is, it is impossible to love everybody. Moreover, it is impossible to

always live peaceably with everyone. That is why Romans 12:18 says, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” If it be possible, because there are some people that you just cannot live peaceably with.

When you talk about love, you have to understand that there are many and varied definitions of love. For instance, the hippie generation, or the flower children, as they were called, advocated free love. But their definition of love was simply sex without the bonds of marriage. Instead of love, they were advocating lust and fornication and idolatry, because they were placing themselves and their bodies before God.

Today there are many people crying, “We need to love, love, love,” but their definition of love is toleration. So if you love according to their definition, you love sin, you love wickedness, you love rebellion, you love idolatry, and you love whatever someone decides is best for them. And if you love according to them, you will also tolerate illegal immigrants who destroy your nation, collect undeserved welfare, and at the same time demand that you submit to their religion and their practices.

And you must tolerate their insults, their demands, their prayer times, their rooms, and their prayer rugs as well, even to the extent of blocking traffic. So, if you love according to their definition, you just simply tolerate everyone and everything. Then when you begin to look at the leftists and the liberals, their definition of love is compromise. In other words, you must compromise your faith and your standards to accommodate abortions, socialism, or whatever the government decides.

For instance, Hillary Clinton, in a speech on women's health, said this, I'm quoting: "Far too many women are still denied critical access to reproductive health and safe childbirth. All the laws we've passed don't count for much if they're not enforced." Clinton said, using the euphemism for abortion, that is, reproductive health. "Rights have to exist in practice, not just on paper," Clinton argued. "Laws have to be backed up with resources and political will."

"And deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs, and structural biases have to be changed." So, according to Hillary, if you love women and their rights to abortion, you must change your faith and compromise for the political will so that that shall prevail. It doesn't matter what you believe or what the Bible teaches. So, there are many and varied definitions of love. Let me give you one more. Everyone understands that there are many of my sermons that are on sermonaudio.com.

A Listener's Comment and the Continuity of Scripture

They're also on YouTube and elsewhere. But when you go to the sermons on sermonaudio.com, there is also a place for comments. Every time anyone comments on a sermon, an email is sent to me and I get to read their comments. Over the years I've received, I don't know, hundreds, maybe even thousands of comments, and probably 99.9% have always been very favorable and appreciative of the messages. Every now and then I might get one that is critical or really far out in left field.

I received a comment this past week from a listener, and I wanted to make sure that everyone understood how wrong this individual was. He had listened to my message on the biblical doctrine of self-defense. I might point out that there are two parts to that message; evidently, he had listened to only one of them. The title he gave his comment was “Old Testament gone.”

That title demonstrates that he knows absolutely nothing about the continuity of Scripture, nor about the truth the Apostle Paul enunciated in 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” When Paul wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God”—that is, God-breathed or God-exhaled—he had primarily in mind the Old Testament, because the New Testament had not been written at that time. Of course, this would have included any New Testament books that had already been written, but primarily it referred to the Old Testament.

When someone tries to do away with the Old Testament, he automatically does away with the New Testament, because we have only one Bible. The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed. When you say that the Old Testament is gone, and do away with the Passover lamb in Exodus 12, you do away with the antitype, Jesus Christ, in 1 Corinthians 5:7: “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” When you do away with the law in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, you also do away with the law in Matthew 5, 1 Timothy 1, and a host of other places.

When you do away with the creation in Genesis 1, you also do away with the new creation in 2 Corinthians 5. Moreover, if you throw out the Old Testament, you do not even know who Jesus Christ is. He would simply appear in the New Testament as an interloper, because all the prophecies concerning Him are in the Old Testament. Thus, when you deny one testament, you automatically discard and deny the other. This was only the title of the comment: “Old Testament gone.” Now, here is the comment.

The comment is this: “We are not under the Old Testament. It does not matter what the founding fathers did. It doesn't matter what military code says. Jesus said love your enemy, and that doesn't include blowing his head off. No wonder atheists think Christians are hypocrites. Even an atheist knows what love your enemies means.” Really.

First of all, that message concerns the sixth commandment: “Thou shalt not kill,” or “Thou shalt not murder.” The positive side of that commandment is, “Thou shalt preserve life.” You have a responsibility to preserve your own life and the lives of others as well.

Historically, the founding fathers always carried their weapons to church and stacked them in the aisle. The men sat on the end, while the women and children sat in the middle. If the British or the Indians attacked, the men could take their weapons, go out, fight, and defend their families.

Thirdly, Article 3 of the Universal Military Code says that if you are captured by your enemy, you have a duty and responsibility to

try to escape. Escaping was not merely so that you could return and report to your superiors what you had seen; it was part and parcel of the sixth commandment, because you have a duty to preserve your life. If your enemy is going to incarcerate you, enslave you, and kill you, you have a duty to try to preserve that life.

The final statement—that even an atheist knows what it means to love his enemy—is certainly not true. It cannot possibly be true in light of 1 Corinthians 2:14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." If you deny one part of Scripture, you end up denying all of Scripture.

While it is true that our Lord said in Matthew 5:44, "Love your enemies," it must be taken in its context. It certainly does not mean allowing your enemies to murder you or your family or anyone they please. There is a vast difference between loving your enemies and defending your life.

As I read the comment, I smiled and thought, "I wonder if I should email this fellow back and ask him if he thought that was a loving comment. Did he think it was an example of biblical love to imply that I'm totally ignorant and dumber than an atheist?" Obviously, there is his definition of love and there is what the Bible defines as love. That brought me to a very interesting question: Who defines love? Who tells us what is the essence of love? If you let any individual or group define love, there will be many different definitions. Who would be the one to say that your definition is not right?

God Defines Love, Not Man

There must be an objective standard and an objective definition of love, or else there will be nothing but confusion. In 1 John 4, verses 7 and 8, John says, especially in verse 8, "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." In verse 7 he says, "Let us love one another," speaking of Christian love, brotherly love: "For love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God."

In this passage, the Apostle John points out the necessity of biblical and Christian love for one another. If we are without love for the brethren, we are without love for God. In 1 John 3 he says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” That is one of the evidences that God has genuinely regenerated us. Clearly, if we do not love in the biblical sense, we do not know God, for God is love. God defines love, not man. One aspect of God's character is revealed in 1 John 4:8: God is love.

John does not say that love is God. He said, “God is love.” These two phrases are not interchangeable. God is love, but the character of God revealed in love is expressed by biblical love. That love is not defined by man; it is defined by God. Love is not God, and your definition of love is not God. Only God’s definition of love is right and accurate. That is why the Bible says God is love.

While it is true that the Bible says God is love, that is not the only attribute revealed about God in Scripture. 1 John 1:5 tells us that God is light. John 4:24 tells us that God is spirit. The Bible also tells us that God is just.

For instance, 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.” Isaiah 45:21 says, “Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.”

God is not only love; He is light, He is spirit, He is just, and He is a number of other things revealed in Scripture. One cannot say that God is love accurately and biblically while denying that God is light, spirit, and just, or denying anything else revealed about Him in the Bible. To believe that God is love while denying that God is light, spirit, and just is simply to deny God, because God is just as much spirit, light, and justice as He is love.

So the only God that exists is the God of the Bible. And that God is exactly as He has revealed Himself in the Bible. He is not a

figment of your imagination. You cannot make God up. You cannot make Him into what you believe.

Let me give you an illustration. Years and years ago, I was at a pastor's office, and he and I were talking about the doctrine of election. The door was open, his secretary was sitting out at the desk, and we had probably been talking about election for fifteen or twenty minutes, something like that. All of a sudden, she burst into the room, looked at her pastor, and said—and I am quoting exactly—"I don't care what the Bible says, I know God's not like that."

The pastor looked at her and said, "Did you hear what you just said?" So this is why I am telling you: God is exactly as He has revealed Himself. It is not up to you to define God. It is not up to you to define His attributes.

Since God is love, God is the only one who has the absolute right to define love. He does define love, and He tells us exactly what love is. Romans 13:8 says, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

Love Is the Fulfilling of the Law

Verse 9 says, "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Note that love is defined in relationship to God's law. According to God, love is the fulfilling of the law. It is not about feelings. It is not about emotions. It is not about sentimentality. It is not about personal quirks. No, it is about fulfilling the law.

Now look back at verse 8. He says, "Owe no man any thing." Stop and think about this. When he says, "Owe no man any thing," he is telling us that we are to render to every man his due.

He is trying to tell us what biblical love really is. It does not matter if that man is a superior, our equal, or someone we think is our inferior. What our God is telling us is that we must discharge

biblical love toward him, and that biblical love is defined as fulfilling the law. Verse 10 clarifies and explains verse 9. Why does he say in verse 8, "For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law," and then begin quoting some of the Ten Commandments—not all of them, but some—such as, "Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet," and then add, "And if there be any other commandment"? He goes down to verse 10 and says, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." What is love? Love is obedience to God's law.

It is acting out God's law biblically. How do I love my neighbor? How do I love my enemy? How do I love my God? If I love my neighbor, my friend, my enemy, or anyone else, I am not going to commit adultery with his family. I am not going to kill, steal, bear false witness, or covet anything that he has. I will treat him in a biblical manner, as God has commanded me to do. God's law is nothing less than love in action.

When I came in today, I greeted each one of you. I did not grab you around the neck, hug you, start crying, slobber all over you, and tell you that I loved you. But as long as I do not steal, kill, or covet—as long as I obey God's law toward you—I love you in the biblical sense of the word.

Love and Keeping God's Commandments

In 1 John 5:2-3, he says, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." How do I know that I love each of you? Because I treat you the way God tells me to treat you.

You have not caught me at your house stealing, coveting, committing adultery, or defrauding you. No. So he says, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.” Now watch verse 3. If you really want to know what the love of God is, here it is: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” Love, then, is keeping God’s commandments. One of His commandments is, “Thou shalt not kill,” or, “Thou shalt not

murder." The positive command is, "Thou shalt preserve life." You have a duty, obligation, and responsibility to preserve your life.

Now turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 12. Let me tie some things together for you. In Romans chapter 12, beginning with verse 17, he says, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." You have to understand that biblical love is obedience; it is acting biblically in every area, circumstance, and situation.

Loving Enemies by Acting Biblically

Now look at verse 19: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Note what he is saying in verse 19. We are not to plan vengeance just because Steve does something to me that I do not like, that I believe is wrong, and that might even be hurtful. I am not to say, "Mm-hmm, you just wait, big boy. Your time's coming. I'm gonna skin you alive. I will nail you sooner or later." No, he says, do not do that, because "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Now watch: "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him." What is God saying? If Steve has done something wrong to me and comes to me hungry, God does not command me to buy him a T-bone steak. He says, if he is hungry, feed him. He can eat whatever I am eating. I am willing to feed him. If he is thirsty, I give him a cup of water—that is what I drink. God does not command me to buy him the most expensive cup of Starbucks coffee. What is he saying?

He is saying that just because someone does me wrong does not give me the right to do wrong in return. I am to keep my heart and my spirit regardless, demonstrating that I am not filled with a vengeful, retributive, and bitter attitude as I fulfill God's law

toward him. If he is hungry, I feed him; if he is thirsty, I give him water.

In verse 20 he says, "In so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." If James stood up and cussed me out, the most natural thing would be to cuss him back. But just because he does me wrong does not give me the right to do wrong in return. I am still going to do what is right toward him, even though he has done me wrong and done me ugly. As long as I am obedient to God and do what is kind and right, I am heaping coals of fire upon his head because he cannot figure out why I am not cussing him out or fussing back at him. In other words, I am playing with his mind.

I like the story about the woman who came to the pastor for counseling. She and her husband were having problems. After listening for a few minutes, he asked, "Well, have you tried heaping coals of fire on his head?" By that he meant returning good for evil. She said, "No, but I've tried hot water and that don't work either."

Then verse 21 says, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." If James cussed me out and then came to me saying, "I'm hungry," I would say, "I'll share what I've got with you. You may have it. I'm not gonna be ugly to you just because you were ugly to me."

It is that simple. Love is, in essence, the fulfilling of the law. How do I love my enemy? By not cherishing a hateful, vindictive attitude toward him, and still acting biblically toward him even though he does not act biblically toward me. So when Paul says in Galatians 5 and verse 14, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," he is saying exactly what he said in Romans 12 and Romans 13 as well.

As long as I treat other people the way I want to be treated by obeying God's law, I am applying the truth biblically. If I do not want to be stolen from, I do not need to steal. If I do not want anyone to commit adultery with my wife, I do not need to commit adultery with somebody else's wife. If I do not want someone coveting what I have, I should not covet what they have. In other words, if I desire to be treated biblically, then I should treat other people biblically as well.

Biblical Hatred: The Other Side of Love

Now, let me show you where the rubber hits the road. What most people do not understand is that, when you understand biblical love, it is also connected—indeed, it is absolutely impossible to have biblical love without, at the same time, having biblical hatred. Biblical love and biblical hatred are the two sides of one coin.

I just read to you from 1 John 4:8, where the Bible says that God is love. But I am going to show you a few Scriptures where you can find the infinitely holy, righteous God, who is love incarnate, hating. In Jeremiah 44:3-4, God speaks of the wickedness, rebellion, sin, and idolatry of the people: "Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, ye, nor your fathers. Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." God says, "Don't do that which I hate." Now let that sink in: the God who is the God of love hates.

Let us go further to Psalm 5:4-6: "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man." The Lord will abhor—that is a strong word for hatred. The Lord will hate the bloody and deceitful man.

The Bible says very plainly in Psalm 5:5-6, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man." I could multiply passages, but I will establish one particular point with these three passages. Turn to Proverbs chapter 6, and let us begin with verse 16: "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." Wow. Look again at verse 16: "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him."

That phraseology is a Hebraism. And when he says, "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination to him," what he is saying is there are many more. This is just a summary of some of the main things that he hates. So what does God hate? A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, and He lists all of these things. So the point should be clear that the God of love hates. He hates sin. He hates wickedness. He hates iniquity. He hates rebellion. He hates idolatry. He hates any and everything that is contrary to Him. Moreover, moreover, He commands those who love Him to hate as well.

Now listen to what I'm going to tell you. You cannot love God unless at the same time you hate everything that is contrary to Him. So since we're close to Psalms, turn right back to Psalm 97 and look at verse 10. Psalm 97 and look if you would please at verse 10. Psalm 97:10: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked." Ye that love the Lord, hate evil. Now, without turning there, let me just quote Amos 5, verse 15, because we're fixing to go to Psalm 139. But in Amos 5 and verse 15, God says, "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate." Hate the evil, love the good, and establish judgment in the gate. Now, if you look in Psalm 139, Psalm 139, and notice if you would, please, beginning there. Oh, let's begin with verse 20 to show you that David is talking about God's enemies, not his personal enemies, but they turn out to be our enemies because they're God's enemies. But in Psalm 139, verse 20: "For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain." Now look what

David says concerning God's enemies: "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. 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." David is proclaiming his holy hatred for all of those who are rebelling against God, seeking to overthrow Him. He has perfect hatred in this passage because he has a perfect heart of love for God. He then asks the Lord to search him, try him, know his way and thoughts, see if there be any wicked way in him, and lead him in the way everlasting. In other words, here is an

expression of what you and I would call a holy hatred. It is not emotionalism, sentimentality, or a vengeful spirit. It arises out of a pure heart of love for God.

You Cannot Separate the Sinner from the Sin

If you understand Psalm 5 and Psalm 139, you will also understand the ridiculousness of the statement that you've heard all of your life, that you must love the sinner and hate the sin. Has it ever dawned upon you that there would not be any sin if there were not sinners? It is sinners that sin. Sin exudes from sinners. You cannot separate a sinner from his sin. Sin is not some little abstract thing floating around the universe somewhere. Sin is in individuals. That's why Psalm 5 said, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." Not just their works, but all the workers of iniquity.

"The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man." That's why David said, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that rise up against thee? Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies." So you cannot separate the sin from the sinner. It is impossible to have a biblical love to God without at the same time having a biblical hatred for everything that is contrary to God. These two things go together.

Let me show you. I'm going to call this the classic illustration. If you will turn in your Bibles to John 2, John chapter 2, everyone familiar with this story? You've heard this story since you were a child. But I want you to think about it in light of what I'm teaching and preaching. John chapter 2, and let's begin reading there, verse 13: "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in

Jesus Cleansing the Temple: Love and Hate in Action

The temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, “Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.” And

his disciples remembered that it was written, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”

Here is a clear passage of biblical love demonstrating that it includes biblical hatred. It is impossible to have one without the other. Did Jesus Christ love His Father? Yes. Did He love Him with a perfect love? Yes. Why, then, was Jesus Christ so forceful and demanding that the money changers leave the temple? Why did our Lord improvise a weapon, physically drive them out, overthrow their tables, and spill all their money?

The answer is given in verse 17: “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,” or, “the jealousy of thine house hath eaten me up.” Verse 17 is a direct quotation from Psalm 69, verse 9: “For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.” Our Lord was consumed with His Father's honor, glory, love, and worship. He was driven and motivated by love.

Hence He overthrew the money changers, turned over their tables, and took that scourge of small cords and drove them out. Whenever you look at the sickly, effeminate pictures of Jesus painted by some famous painters, remember that you do not get sickly, effeminate, and weak in a carpenter shop. Moreover, who is going to run from a ninety-pound weakling? Our Lord was a man's man. He literally drove them out of the temple.

The money changers were thieves. They defrauded, coveted, and stole; they were idolaters. If you came to the temple with a Roman denarius and said, “I want to give this to the Lord,” they would answer, “No, we cannot take that. You have to have temple money, and it is going to take ten of those to get one of these.” These men were not only covetous; covetousness is idolatry, according to Colossians 3 and verse 5.

Here they were in the temple reproaching and blaspheming God the Father, His worship, His honor, His glory. The zeal and jealousy of Jesus Christ drove Him to throw them out. He hated what they were doing. He despised how they were making His Father's house a house of merchandise and a den of thieves, doing everything contrary to God. In Romans 15:3, the Apostle Paul

quotes Psalm 69:9 again and applies it to Jesus Christ: "For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."

Do not the reproaches of the wicked now fall upon the righteous? Christ is not here for them to hate, but they hate His people and His seed. In light of the comment by the listener who said, "Even an atheist knows what love your enemies mean," which is not true, consider this question: In light of the Law of God and what our Lord just did, would it be right, or an act of love, to allow a murderer violently and viciously to take my life or the life of my wife? It certainly would not be an act of love toward my wife, nor toward myself. Why would I not rather say, like David, that I hate his violation of God's law, his rebellion against God, and how he is usurping God's authority and violating everything God says is holy? Why would I not hate his resisting and rebelling against truth?

Self-Defense as an Act of Love

Should I not prefer to live and serve God? It is in no way an act of love to allow yourself, your family, your friends, or your neighbors to be murdered, maimed, or harmed. It is not an act of love; it is an act of hate. If you love God, you are going to hate wickedness.

It is true that our Lord said, "Love your enemies," but everything must be taken in its context. In Matthew 5, our Lord was correcting the Pharisees' misinterpretations and misapplications of the law. For instance, beginning in verse 38, our Lord said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:"

Context of 'Love Your Enemies' in Matthew 5

Jesus said, “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour,

and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Now notice what He said in verse 38: "Ye have heard that it hath been said." Who said this? The scribes and Pharisees, the rabbis, were misinterpreting God's law. They said, "You've heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

In the Old Testament, this phrase was given to the judges: "An eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, burning for burning, stripe for stripe, foot for foot." It was given to the judges to execute justice. But the Pharisees took it and made it personal. If Steve hit me and knocked out a tooth, they said I had the right to hit him back and knock out one of his teeth. If he knocked out my eye, I had the right to gouge his eye out. But that was never given to man; it was given to the judges to execute God's justice.

Now watch what He says in verse 39: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil." In other words, do not get worked up over this. He is going to explain it: "But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Think about this. If Francis is standing in front of me—and most men are right-handed, though I understand that some are left-handed—and I am going to knock his block off with a haymaker, hitting him as hard as I can in the jaw, if I hit him with my right hand, which cheek will my right hand land on? His left. What did Christ say? "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek?" If I smite Francis on the right cheek while he is facing me, I have to do it with the back of my hand.

In other words, it is a slap, an insult. Your life is not in danger; you are not being hurt or harmed. You are merely being insulted. It is like the days when duels were accepted, when men would take a glove, slap a cheek, and say, "I challenge you to a duel." It is an insult. Our Lord is saying, do not get worked up or bent out of shape when folks merely insult you. Turn the other cheek; take

another insult. Do not get bent out of shape. This is a minor insult, an annoyance. Do not get worked up over it.

Look what else he says in verse 40: “And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.” If Steve wants my coat and covets it so badly that he will take me to court and sue me to get it, think of all the trouble, pain, expense, and agony I would endure defending myself just to keep my coat. God says, Give him the coat; give him a cloak also. Get rid of that minor inconvenience. Do not let it upset you or control your life.

Then watch verse 41: “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.” In Bible times, a Roman soldier could walk up to any man and compel him to carry his rucksack or weapons for one mile. It was an annoyance, especially if you were going somewhere and needed to arrive on time, and a Roman soldier came by saying, “You have to carry this a mile for me”—a mile out of the way, walking. Our Lord says, Carry it two miles. Do not get bent out of shape over things that are not important.

That is exactly what He is saying. In this passage, when our Lord tells us to love our enemies, our lives are not in danger, our property is not in danger, and we are not being harmed. We are merely being inconvenienced and annoyed. In these annoying situations, we must control our spirits. We cannot become vengeful, bitter, angry, or hateful. Instead of reacting angrily, bitterly, and vindictively, we control our spirits and act biblically and righteously.

The Bible says in Proverbs 16:32, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” If you can control your spirit and be slow to anger, you are better than a mighty warrior, even one who can conquer a city. Proverbs 25:28 says, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” If you cannot control your spirit, anyone can get in, take what you have, and get out. They can make you mad, angry, upset, or jealous. When anybody can make you angry, they have control over you.

My dad used to box, and he taught me to box. I never will forget what he said: “If you ever want to hurt somebody, the first thing you do is make him mad.” When you get mad, you do not think; you react. God says we are not going to be like that. We are going to control our spirits.

Loving your enemies simply means acting biblically toward them. It does not mean that you are to allow them to murder, maim, or harm you or your family out of love. In fact, you defend yourself out of love to God, His law, and His righteousness. Self-defense is first and foremost an act of love. The only hatred involved in self-defense is hatred of that which is wicked and contrary to God and His law. It is not so much that we hate what is in front of us when we fight or defend our families or our lives; it is that we love so much what is behind us that we are protecting. We love the Lord Jesus and His law, and we hate all that is contrary to Him, His law, and His kingdom.

If you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ and His law first and foremost, it will be impossible for you to pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” Have you stopped to think about what you are praying? Out of love, you are praying for the total and complete establishment of God's kingdom on earth, while also praying for the total and complete destruction of humanism and man's kingdoms. In every act of biblical love, there is an act of biblical hatred. Love and hate cannot be separated.

Because they are the two sides of one coin. If we love the Lord, we will hate evil. If we love the Lord, we will hate everything contrary to Him. You do not get to define love. God does, and He has. For He told us that love is the fulfilling of His law. So when you are faced with a self-defense situation, out of love to God and His law, you defend yourself and your family, your friends, and your neighbors. You hate the wickedness and rebellion that caused you to have to defend yourself. What is love? Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your love, Your grace, Your mercy, Your goodness, and Your truth. Help us, Lord, to love Thee with all of our hearts and be

obedient unto Thee, and to apply Thy law in every area. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 27

Righteous Rebellion, There Is No Such Thing

July 28, 2018

Introduction: The Quote and Its Error

Proverbs 17 and verse 11. Proverbs 17, verse 11. While I will not be expounding this verse particularly, I am going to be expounding the principle of it. Notice in Proverbs chapter 17, verse 11, the Bible says, "An evil man seeketh only rebellion, therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him."

I was recently sent a quote from a friend. I did not hear the statement, but he did. He printed it, sent it to me, and asked me about this quote. The quote not only dealt with marriage, but it also dealt with interracial marriage. The individual who was making the statement was expressing a strong favor for marrying outside of one's race. But I want you to listen to the quote, and I will explain in just a moment. The quote was this: "If your parents or grandparents disagree and say no to an interracial marriage, it is a righteous rebellion to go against them due to them being against God."

I do not believe that I know the person who made this statement. If I have met the individual, I do not remember it. I want to say that this message is not necessarily an attack upon this person who made the statement. I do believe the statement was made in arrogance and ignorance as well. I am not going to deal with the arrogant assumption that anyone who opposes interracial marriage is against God.

Obviously, that claim is contrary to truth, Christian charity, and the right of conscience. There is, however, a very clear theological error in this statement that I could not allow to go unanswered. According to this quote, if those who oppose interracial marriage are against God, then the way to rectify that sin is to begin another sin, that of rebellion. Calling it righteous rebellion does not change its nature; it is still rebellion. Now let me say at the outset that this message has absolutely nothing to do with interracial marriage. Whether you advocate it or whether you are absolutely, totally against it is beside the point. I am not interested in that issue at this particular time. That is not the issue or the focus of this message. However, there is a part of this message that I believe is very, very important. Anyone, even a novice reader of Scripture, understands, or at least should understand, this very important principle: rebellion cannot be made righteous by calling it righteous rebellion.

Rebellion Is Always Sin

There is no such thing as righteous rebellion. Rebellion is sin, wickedness, evil, and a transgression of God's law; moreover, according to the Word of God, it merits the death penalty.

Rebellion is sin because it resists and is against God's ordained authority. Rebellion cannot exist apart from authority, and authority cannot exist apart from God. God established authority, gave authority, and prescribes authority. 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 civil government, which is a ministry of justice. When God gave authority to these institutions and the individuals in them, He

always limited that authority. The only one who has absolute, total, and complete authority is God Himself.

God's Ordained Authority and Sphere Sovereignty

A father should not go beyond the authority that God gave him as a father. A pastor should not go beyond the authority that God gave him as a church. Neither should a civil servant or politician go beyond the authority that God has prescribed for civil government. When one goes beyond the authority that God ordained, it is theft, usurpation, tyranny, and despotism. It does not matter whether it is in the home, the church, or civil government.

Authority can only be exercised in its proper sphere. God has ordained what we would call sphere authority. When you leave your sphere of authority, you do not carry your authority with you; you lose it. I may be the head of my home and house, but I am not the head of Steve's house or David's house. I have no right to come to Steve's house and order Lorraine around. She is not my wife, and I have no authority over her in that sense. Alice is my wife, so I have authority over her. I had authority over my children when they were home. Once I leave my sphere of authority, I do not carry that authority with me. It is the same way as being a pastor.

Just because I am a pastor in my church and can advise, counsel, exhort, and rebuke people—tell you, as the old-timers say, how the cow ate the cabbage—does not mean I can go into another man's church or ministry, run it, and tell him what to do and what not to do. That is not my sphere of authority. Likewise, the civil government has no right to come into the church or the home and tell them what to do, unless, of course, mala in se laws are being broken. Mala in se is Latin for “that which is evil in and of itself.”

Lawful vs. Unlawful Authority: Rebellion vs. Resistance

If murder, theft, incest, or something of that nature is occurring, the civil government has the opportunity and the right to come into the church or home to correct it, because it is indeed the minister of justice. But every individual to whom God gave authority, and every institution in which He ordained and gave

authority, He ordained to be His servant. Let me put it very plainly: God never ordained any individual or institution to violate His law or His will. He ordained them to be His servants and to fulfill His will.

When one goes above and beyond the authority God gave, he may be resisted, because it is not godly authority or the authority God ordained. When you have lawful authority and act against it, that is rebellion. When you have usurped authority and act against it, that is resistance. Rebellion can only be to lawful authority. Resistance can only be to unlawful authority. When authority is lawful, it must be obeyed; when authority is unlawful, it must be resisted.

Biblical Examples of Rebellion's Consequences

Scripture teaches us that rebellion merits the death penalty. You remember in 1 Samuel chapter 15 where God had sent King Saul on a mission, and Saul disobeyed God. When Samuel went to meet Saul, Saul said, "Blessed be thou, O Lord, I have performed all the word of the Lord." About that time something went moo. Samuel said, "If you've obeyed God, what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen in my ear? If you'd obeyed God, everything would be dead." Saul said the people spared them that they might sacrifice to God. In 1 Samuel 15 and verse 23, Samuel told Saul: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath rejected thee from being king."

When Samuel said rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, witchcraft merited the death penalty. God says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Idolatry merited a death penalty. Saul was in rebellion because he disobeyed lawful authority. That is simply the Word of God. That is why Proverbs 17 and verse 11 says, "An evil man seeketh only rebellion." In other words, he is not going to seek that which is lawful. The verse continues, "Therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him."

Anyone who has ever read the Bible, especially the Old Testament, cannot help but realize that the father is always

ordained as the head of the house. In fact, everything in the Old Testament was patriarchal in nature.

The Creation Ordinance and Male Headship

That did not mean that the wife was a second-class citizen. It did not mean that the wife had no input. It did not mean that the wife was not considered. It meant that God ordained the man to be the head of the house and the head of the family. That is exactly the way it was. Is the same true in the New Testament?

The answer is yes. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 3, the Apostle Paul spells it out very plainly. He says, "But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God."

Here is God's ordained order of authority: God, Christ, man, woman. The Apostle says, "I would have you to know this, that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." So it is God, Christ, man, woman.

The Apostle continues: "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God."

The woman is placed under man by virtue of the creation ordinance. Adam was created first, and the woman was created second. Adam was not created for Eve; Eve was created for Adam. Thus the honor, or glory, of the man is that he was not made for the woman, but the woman was made for him. Yet the humility of the man is that, although he was made first and was not made for the woman, he is incomplete without her.

The humility of a woman is this: "The man was not made for me; I was made for the man, and I was made second." Her honor is this: "I'm the only one who can complete the man." Just as Eve was

initially of Adam, now man is of the woman. Both are in the Lord and of the Lord, and man needs the woman just as the woman needs the man.

This is the Creation Ordinance. First Timothy gives the theme of the book: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." First Timothy is about how to behave yourself in the house of God.

He gives directions for men and directions for women. In 1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 12, he says this very plainly, and he tells you why he says it: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” So why then is a woman not to teach in church? Why is a woman not to usurp authority over the man? Why is a woman to be in silence in the church?

“For Adam was first formed, then Eve.” There is the creation ordinance. And then he goes on to say, “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.” So the very first reason he says a woman should not teach or usurp authority over the man was because of the Creation Ordinance. The second reason he gives there is because Eve was deceived. She was the first one in the transgression. It was not Adam. Adam was not deceived.

There is a big difference. The woman was deceived. She did not know what she was doing; Adam did.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 14, we are still talking about this Creation Ordinance. We are also talking about the fact that the woman was the first in the transgression. And now He is telling us why women should not teach or preach.

This has a lot to do with what I began with. I want you to see it. Watch in 1 Corinthians 14:34. Here is what the Apostle says: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let

them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

Parental Authority and the Sin of Rebellion

Before I point out several things, I want to give you a quote. Listen to what Albert Barnes wrote in his commentary. He says: "The rule is positive, explicit, and universal. There is no ambiguity in the expressions, and there can be no differences of opinion, one would suppose, in regard to their meaning. The sense evidently is that in all those things which he has specified, the women were to keep silence. They were to take no part in the conduct of public worship. No rule in the New Testament is more positive than this, and however plausible may be the reasons which may be urged for disregarding it, and for suffering women to take part in conducting public worship, yet the authority of the Apostle Paul is positive and the meaning cannot be mistaken."

Look again at verse 34. He says: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law."

John Gill, the great Baptist expositor, said: "By this the Apostle would signify that the reason why women are not to speak in the church, or to preach, or to teach publicly, or to be concerned in the ministerial function, is because this is an act of power and authority, of rule and government, and so contrary to that subjection which God in His law requires women unto men."

Then John Calvin said: "Paul's reasoning, however, is simple, that authority to teach is not suitable to the station that a woman occupies, because if she teaches, she presides over all the men, while it becomes her to be under subjection."

When you look back at verse 34, let me read it one more time: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." Where in the Bible are women commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law?

In Genesis 3:16, where God said to Eve, after she had transgressed, after He had cursed the ground for man's sake, and

after He had cursed the serpent, He said to Eve, “And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” So not only in the creation ordinance, but now because of sin, the woman is placed under the man.

One of the major problems that we have today in our churches is that women run the churches. You may ask, “How in the world can women run the churches if you have what are known as men's meetings?” The answer is that the women run the men. The women may be silent and may not say anything, but many of them tell their husbands what to think, how to think, how to vote, what to do, and what not to do. What we have today in our generation is a whole generation of spineless, gutless men who refuse to be the head of their homes and rule their homes according to the Word of God.

So what happens is this: the husband turns out to be an extension of the wife, instead of the wife being an extension and a helpmate for the husband. In many churches, women do not need to speak because they have already told their husbands what to do and what not to do. In actuality, they are in control.

I understand, and I hope you understand, that the message I am preaching today is not politically correct. In all probability, I am going to be called bigoted, chauvinistic, hateful, unloving, unkind, and out of touch with reality. I may be. But I do know what the Scriptures teach, and I do know what the Bible says. Please understand this: the Bible is to be our sole rule for faith and practice.

We are not to be ruled by political correctness. We are not to be ruled by peer pressure. We are not to be ruled by mob mentality. We are to be ruled by the clear, plain Word of God. Stop and think about this. What is happening in society today? What is happening in our culture? What is happening in our churches? Here it is: there is a breakdown in the authority of the family. Because the authority is destroyed, the family is destroyed.

Because there is no “thus saith the Lord,” everyone does their own thing and does as they please. So, on the one hand, you have fathers and husbands who will not exercise their God-given

authority in a godly, biblical manner. They refuse to do so. And on the other hand, you have some wives and some children who, even if they see and hear that authority being exercised in a godly manner, rebel. And they say, "We are just not going to live like that. We are just not going to do that."

A glimpse of this authority can be seen in Numbers chapter 30, which deals with vows. Did you know that the Bible says if a woman, a wife, makes a vow to God and her husband hears it, if he says nothing, the vow stands? But if he looks at his wife and says, "No, you're not going to do that," the vow is disallowed. God does not hold her responsible to keep that vow.

The same thing is said there of a daughter. If a daughter makes a vow and she is in the home of her father and he hears it and says nothing, the vow stands. But if he looks at her and says, "No, that's not going to work," that vow is disallowed. So, even when it comes to marriage, in reality Scripture teaches that the father has the right to say no. There are biblical reasons why he should say no, and there are biblical reasons why he should say yes.

But let me point out the fact that Scripture is so plain that even when a young woman is seduced, it is still up to the father. Deuteronomy 22:28 says, "If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed,"—she is a single girl; she is not engaged—"and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days."

So here is a general principle in Scripture: if a man seduces a woman, he is to marry her, and he can never divorce her; he can never put her away.

There is only one exception. Exodus 22:16 says, "And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed," again, she is single, "and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife." Here is the only exception: "If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins." The father still has the final say, even if the young woman has been seduced. If she

has been seduced and there is no marriage, the man is to give her the dowry of virgins, which usually was two years' worth of wages.

Henry, the great commentator, says this on the passage: "A law that he who debauched a young woman should be obliged to marry her, if she was betrothed to another it was death to debauch her," Deuteronomy 22, verses 23 and 24. "But the law here mentioned respects her as single. But if the father refused her to him, he was to give satisfaction in money for the injury and disgrace he had done to her. This law puts an honor upon marriage and shows likewise how improper a thing it is that children should marry without their parents' consent. For here, where the divine law appointed the marriage both as a punishment to him that had done wrong and a recompense to her that had suffered wrong, yet there was an express reservation of the father's power; if he denied his consent, there must be no marriage."

Many individuals in the Bible got themselves into trouble by rebelling against their parents and despising their authority. Esau was a son who married contrary to his parents' wishes and will. Genesis 26:34 says, "And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite." Esau married two Hittite women. Verse 35 says, "Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah."

Rebekah later said concerning these Hittite women, "And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" She was at the point of exasperation and desperation, totally frustrated with these two Hittite women.

In Genesis 28:1, Isaac called Jacob, blessed him, and charged him, saying, "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother." Isaac continued, "And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give the blessing of Abraham to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest

inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham." Isaac sent Jacob away to Padan-aram unto Laban, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

Esau had disobeyed, and Jacob had obeyed. To show the rebellion in Esau's life, Genesis 28:6 says, "When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; and that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram; and Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife."

Esau's attitude was, "Jacob obeyed; I'm not going to do that." Because those women did not please his parents, he would marry more of them. It was pure rebellion, done merely to spite his parents. Jacob obeyed his father Isaac, just as Isaac obeyed his father Abraham. Isaac remained single until he was forty. Abraham sent Eliezer to get Rebekah for Isaac, and Genesis 25:20 says, "And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian." Isaac waited forty years to marry, and he did so following Abraham's instruction.

Everyone in this room has probably been to weddings. I once said that to an individual, and he replied, "Yes, and I've been to one too many"—speaking of his own wedding, though he was joking. When you look at the father walking the bride down the aisle, he comes to the groom, and the pastor normally asks, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" The father answers, "Her mother and I." Then he takes his daughter's hand and places it in the groom's hand. Why? This simply symbolizes that the father is transferring his authority over this young woman to her new husband. The new husband is now to be her protector, her provider, and her head. That is what it represents.

A lot of people got in trouble by failing to obey their parents. Samson was one of them. In Judges 14, beginning with verse 1, the Bible says, "And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman

in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well."

The Philistines were Canaanites, of the group that God had forbidden Israel to intermarry with. Deuteronomy 7, beginning with verse 1, says, "When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly."

Joshua gave the same warning before he died. In Joshua 23, beginning with verse 11, he told the children of Israel, "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from

God warned Israel concerning the nations before them: "They shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you." The point is this: here were specific commands not to marry these people. Yet Samson went down to Timnath, saw a Philistine woman, and came back to tell

his father and mother, “I found this woman; get her for me so I can marry her.”

His father looked at Samson and said, “Is there never a woman among the daughters of your own people that you have to go down to the Philistines?” Basically, he said, “There are plenty of beautiful women in your own tribe. If they do not please you, there are eleven more tribes. Just do not marry a Philistine woman; marry an Israelite.”

And here is what Samson said: “Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.” Let me tell you what he actually said: “I do not see anything wrong with it. It is good in my eyes. It does not matter if it is a violation of God’s law. It does not matter if it is a violation of ‘honour thy father and thy mother.’ It does not matter if I am rebelling against your counsel, advice, and admonition. Get her for me. She pleaseth me well.”

All the heartache that came out of this incident could have been avoided if Samson had listened to his father and mother. You know the story. He never got to marry the woman; because of what happened, she was given to a man he had used as his friend. If he had listened, it would have been different, but he did not. There is no such thing as righteous rebellion. Rebellion is sin; it is wicked, evil, and ungodly.

The Command to Honor Parents and the Curse of Rebellion

Three times particularly God has commanded us to honor our father and our mother. The first time is in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 12: “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” In Deuteronomy chapter 5 and verse 16, again He said, “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” Then, in Ephesians chapter 6, verses 1-3: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

Rebelling against the lawful authority of parents is not honoring them. Despising their godly counsel and concern is not honoring them. Deuteronomy 27, verse 16, says, “Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.” What does that mean? “I don't have to listen to them. They're old fuddy-duddies. They don't know anything. This is a new generation. They don't know what they are talking about.” That is setting light by one's father and mother.

John Gill said it like this, speaking of setting light by father and mother: “that secretly despises them in his heart, and by looks and gestures mocks at them in a private manner, unseen by others. For if he publicly cursed them, that was cognizable by the civil magistrate and he was to be put to death.”

Matthew Henry said: “Deuteronomy 27:16 is against the Fifth Commandment. The contempt of parents is a sin so heinous that it is put next to the contempt of God Himself. If a man abused his parents, either in word or deed, he fell under the sentence of the magistrate and must be put to death. But to set light by them in his heart was a thing which the magistrate could not take cognizance of, and therefore it is here laid under the curse of God.”

It is here laid under the curse of God, who knows the heart. Those are cursed children that carry themselves scornfully and insolently toward their parents. Now let me ask you a question: if setting light by your parents brings the curse of God upon you, how much more of a curse is upon you if you rebel against them? And please keep in mind, it was God who established parents.

It was God who established father and mother. It was God who established the home. You must remember that rebellion can only be to lawful authority, and this is a lawful authority. The Bible says in Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 3, "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God." And then He said in Leviticus 20 and verse 9, "For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him."

You can curse your parents without ever using a curse word. There are a multitude of ways to curse your parents. So let me put it out very plainly again: there is no such thing as righteous rebellion. Rebellion is only sin and wickedness. It merits a death penalty.

All you need to do is read Numbers chapter 16. Read what happened to Dathan, Abiram, and Korah and the 250 princes that rebelled against Moses and Aaron. God killed them. Read what happened to the children of Israel when they appointed a captain so that they could return to Egypt in Numbers chapter 14 and in Nehemiah chapter 9 and verse 17. God killed them. Why? Because they were in rebellion.

Our Lord says in Matthew chapter 5, verse 17, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." When He says this, do not even let the thought enter your mind that He came to destroy the law or the prophets. Perish the thought. God forbid. He came to put them into full force. Then He says, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Anybody who teaches others to break one of these least commandments shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.

Teaching rebellion is just as wicked as rebellion itself. In Jeremiah 28, the prophet Jeremiah confronted Hananiah, a false prophet who had been denying the Word of God, particularly through Jeremiah:

"Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD."

So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month. He was teaching rebellion, and God killed him. Jeremiah

29:32 gives another example: "Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD."

Here are two men whose lives God particularly took because they were teaching people to rebel against lawful, God-ordained authority. There is no such thing as righteous rebellion. Rebellion is sin.

Applications: Honoring Parents in a Rebellious Generation

We were given wise words by Solomon in Proverbs 13:1: "A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke." A wise son heareth his father's instruction. I have said it myself, but I have also heard it said, "The older I got, the wiser my father became."

When you are young, you think you know everything. Your dad will tell you something, and it goes in one ear and out the other, because you have all your plans and ideas, and you do not want anything to interfere with what you want to do. The more you mature, the more you understand that there was wisdom in what he said.

Proverbs 15:5 tells us: "A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent." It is a fool who despises his father's instruction. Here is where we are in our society, our culture, and our churches: we have arrived at the stage where practically all lawful authority is despised, hated, and rebelled against—especially the authority of father and mother.

Young people have basically become a law unto themselves. Like Samson, they say, “Get her for me. I see nothing wrong with it. It is good in my eyes; it is right in my own eyes. I do not care what God says, what my parents say, or what anybody says. I am going to do my own thing.”

Most of you know I could care less about television, and we have not had one in our home for years. When we did have a television,

I especially hated talk shows and game shows and never watched them. But I was in a motel, flipping through channels trying to find a news channel. I do not even know why I listen to the news, because I did not believe most of it.

I came to the conclusion a long time ago that if you believe the opposite of what the newscaster said, you're probably closer to the truth. One day, while trying to find some news, I stopped on one of those crazy talk shows. The host was interviewing a young teenage girl, eighteen or nineteen, who had become an overnight sensation, a movie star, so to speak. She was living with a married man. When the host asked, "Well, don't you think that's wrong?" she answered, "It may be wrong for others, but it's all right for me."

Let me translate that: "I'm a law to myself. I do as I please. It's right in my eyes. I don't care what anybody else says. I don't care what God says." The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 30, verse 11, "There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother." And we're in that generation.

People have asked me, "How can I honor my father since my father was a drunk, beat me, abused me, or did this or that?" First of all, there are no perfect fathers, husbands, homes, preachers, Christians, or politicians. But since God commands us to honor our father and mother, it behooves fathers and mothers to be honorable people, so that it will be easy for our children to honor us. That is one reason He said in Ephesians 6:4, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." We need to be honorable people.

Even if our parents are dishonorable, and even if they sin and violate their position, that does not change or alter God's command. They are still our parents, and we must find a way to honor them. I know of one young woman whose father was a drunkard. He deserted her, her siblings, and her mother; never supported them, never came back, and was gone for years, until he was dying of cancer. This woman took that dishonorable father into her home, cared for him, and nursed him until he died.

There was a reconciliation. But she said, “I’m so thankful I could fulfill God’s command even to someone who was so dishonorable most of their lives.” Just because someone is dishonorable does not alleviate us from our responsibility to obey God.

So let me say it again: rebellion is not righteous, and it can never be righteous because it is against God and it’s against God’s ordained authority. When one sins against God’s ordained authority, he is sinning against God Himself. There can be no rebellion where there is no authority. If there is no authority, it is resistance. But where there is lawful, God-ordained authority, there must be obedience, or the only alternative is rebellion. And so when someone admonishes you to go contrary to God’s lawful, ordained authority, it is wickedness, it is sin, it is teaching rebellion. Rebellion can only be to lawful authority. Resistance can only be to unlawful authority.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You, Father, for Your truth. We thank You for Your love, Your mercy, Your goodness, Your kindness. And help us, Father, to understand these principles. And Lord, help us to obey them and to be thankful, Lord, for all that You’ve done for us and all that You’ve allowed us to do and to be. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 28

Divine Terror

January 22, 2020

Introduction: The Reality of Terror

Genesis 35:5 says, “And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them. And they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.” Terror is a word that brings chills upon anyone. We use the word regularly, yet we really do not understand its impact, implications, or different kinds.

I have heard people say, “Well, I was terrified.” In reality, they were not terrified. They may have been mortified, stupefied, or humiliated, but they truly were not terrified. There is a terror that comes from man, and there is a terror that comes from God. Certainly, divine terror is far worse than what we would call human terror. Our Lord said in Luke 12:4–5, “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”

The Connection Between War and Terror

It is strange that men often fear other men but do not fear the sovereign, omnipotent God of heaven and earth. We fear harm and death at the hands of men, but we do not fear harm and death at the hands of God. Deuteronomy 32:25 says, “The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.” Note the words, “The sword without, and terror within.” Whenever there is the sword without, there will be terror within. Terror is destructive in nature, rendering anyone helpless in the face of death. Whenever there is war on the outside, there is usually some type of terror on the inside.

The Apostle Paul used this same truth in 2 Corinthians 7:5: “For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.” Fightings and fears always go together. War and terror always go together. Fear and faintness always go together. The faint-hearted are always fearful, and the fearful are always faint-hearted.

It was John Trapp, the Puritan, who said, “War is the slaughterhouse of mankind and the hell of this present world. It hews itself away through a wood of men, and lays heaps upon heaps, as Samson did in Judges 15, but not with the jawbone of an ass, and one after another, but in a minute of time, and by the mouth of a murdering piece.” You look around and think, “Samson did a mighty good job with the jawbone of an ass.” But look what a drone will do, what a missile will do, and what all kinds of bombs will do. That is what he is talking about in a minute.

Jacob's Disobedience and Its Consequences

Fighting fears are demonstrated in the context of Genesis 34 and 35. Jacob had gone to Paddan Aram to get a wife. He stayed there and served Laban fourteen years—actually more: the first seven for Leah, the second seven for Rachel, and the last for the cattle he acquired. Then a problem arose between Laban and Jacob. Genesis 31:2–3 says, “And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before. And the Lord said

unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee."

Jacob understood that there were problems, and that there were going to be real problems between himself and his father-in-law. God spoke in Genesis 31:3 and told Jacob, "Return unto the land of thy fathers," meaning that he was to go back to Canaan. But God also said, "and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee." Jacob was not simply to return to the land; he was also to return to his own kindred.

In case Jacob did not understand, God said it again in Genesis 31:13: "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred." Jacob began his journey back into Canaan, and his father was still alive. His father lived in Hebron, in the land of Canaan.

Genesis 35:27–29 records: "And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arba, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him." When Jacob began to come back into the land, his father was still alive. When Isaac died, Jacob and Esau came together and buried him.

When Jacob started back into the land, he was fearful of his brother Esau because, in Genesis 27, Esau had threatened to kill him. That was one reason Jacob had left the country while going to Paddan Aram to get himself a wife. Now he had to come back. You remember how he wrestled with the angel at the brook. After he crossed over the brook, he separated his family and his animals, and he sent a present to Esau.

Jacob told his servant, "When Esau meets you and asks, 'What are these?' then you just say, 'These are the blessings of God that my servant Jacob has given unto you,'" and so forth. They met, and although Jacob had been afraid, Esau hugged his neck. Esau said, "What I want you to do is come with me to Mount Seir and live with me. I will leave you some men, and they will help drive the

animals to Mount Seir." Jacob refused, saying, "The children are young, and the animals are tender, and I have to go very slowly. You go ahead, and I will meet you."

Notice Genesis 33:14: "Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir."

Jacob had no intention of going to Seir. God had told him to go to the land of his kindred. Obviously, this was a lie, or at least a deception, because Jacob stopped short of Seir, and he also stopped short of Bethel. Seir was south of the Red Sea, while Succoth and Shechem, where Jacob stopped, were nowhere near Seir.

Genesis 33:17 says, "And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth." Jacob then came to Shalem, a city of Shechem in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan Aram, and pitched his tent before the city. He bought a parcel of a field from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money, erected an altar there, and called it El-elohe-Israel.

Although Succoth and Shechem were in the land of Canaan, they were not Hebron or Bethel. God had told Jacob to get up and return to the land of his kindred, and He had also told him to return to Bethel. Jacob had bought land. Succoth evidently was a temporary stopping point, because the word simply means "booths." He was trying to keep his cattle, I suppose, in a corral. Succoth was south of the Jabbok and east of the Jordan River. From Succoth he moved to Shalem, the city of Shechem. It was in the land of Canaan, but it was not Bethel, and it certainly was not Hebron. He was close, but he was not there. He was to return to Bethel, and he was to return to the God of Bethel.

He stopped short of the will of God. He did not go where God directed him to go. His father was in Hebron. God said, "Return not just only to the land of thy kindred, but to thy kindred as well." If Jacob had obeyed God and returned to his father in Hebron,

Bethel would have been no more than 30 miles away. He would have been right there in the area as well.

Genesis 28 explains why God told him to return to Bethel. When Jacob was fleeing from Esau and, at the same time, obeying his father by going to Paddan Aram to get a wife, God opened his eyes and revealed Himself to him. Genesis 28:16 says, "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Jacob understood where Bethel was, and he understood the God of Bethel. What happened to Jacob and his family as he stopped short of the will of God?

He has now purchased some land, pitched his tent, and settled his family in Canaan, but not near his kindred. The interesting thing is that the people with whom he settled were pagans to the nth degree. Hamor was the father of Shechem, and he was a Hivite. You remember that when Israel came out of Egypt, God told them to kill all the inhabitants of Canaan. Among those inhabitants were the Hivites, the Jebusites, the Girgashites, all of these “-ites.” Here he is settling among these pagan people instead of going to his kindred, as God had said.

Genesis 34:2 shows that Shechem was a Hivite and that Jacob had settled among the Hivites, among people who were wicked: “And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country…”

Now let me tell you what happened. “And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife. And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come.”

Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land. Many commentators say that undoubtedly there was some type of feast or festival where many people were gathered together. Whether that is accurate, I do not know. It may have been mere curiosity; she may have wanted to see. But she went out to see the daughters of the land. Shechem, the son of Hamor, took Dinah, raped her, and defiled her. Word came back to Jacob, and Jacob waited until his sons came home. I want to read very quickly what three commentators said about this.

John Calvin says this chapter records a severe contest with which God again exercised His servant. How precious the chastity of his daughter would be to him. When, therefore, he heard that she was violated, this disgrace inflicted the deepest wound of grief upon his mind. Yet soon his grief was trebled, or tripled, when he heard that his sons, from the desire of revenge, had committed a most dreadful crime.

But let us examine everything in order. Dinah was ravished because, having left her father's house, she wandered about more freely than was proper. She ought to have remained quietly at home, as both the apostle teaches and nature itself dictates. For to girls the virtue is suitable, which is the proverb that applies to women: they should be keepers of the house. Therefore fathers of families are taught to keep their daughters under strict discipline if they desire to preserve them free from all dishonor.

Matthew Poole says, "For if a vain curiosity was so heavily punished in the daughter of holy Jacob, not less danger hangs over weak virgins at this day if they go too boldly and eagerly into the

public assemblies and excite the passions of youth toward themselves. For it is not to be doubted that Moses in part cast the blame of the offense upon Dinah herself when he said, 'she went out to see the daughters of the land,' where she ought to remain under her mother's eyes in the tents." Thus, he says, "she put herself out of her father's protection," and, "Merely out of a vain humor exposed both herself and others to temptation, which was worse because it was amongst them that had no fear of God to restrain them from the most enormous crime."

She was now fourteen or fifteen years old. Keil and Delitzsch say that Dinah was probably between thirteen and fifteen. Here, then, was a young girl who went out without her father's protection and without her brother's protection, and she was ravished.

Shechem, in one sense, was halfway decent and halfway honorable because he came to his father and said, "I want this damsel to wife. Get me this damsel to wife." He did not care how much the dowry was; he wanted to marry her. So Hamor and Shechem went to Jacob, and Jacob held his peace until his sons came in from the field. The boys said to Hamor and Shechem, "We could never give our daughter to one that is uncircumcised." If they wanted to marry their daughter, then they had to be like them.

"You have to be circumcised. If you're not going to be circumcised, that's all there is to it. We're not going to give our daughter to you." Hamor and Shechem went back to the men of the city and said, "Look, all we've got to do is be circumcised. Will not all their cattle be ours? Everything—in other words, we will absorb them. We will end up getting them. This is just a small price to pay to enrich ourselves with what they possess." So all the men of the city agreed, and they were all circumcised. On the third day, when they were sore and could hardly move, Simeon and Levi took a sword, went into the city, and killed every man. They not only killed the men, but also took the women, the children, and all the cattle and brought them back.

When Jacob found out what had happened, this is why Calvin said his trouble was soon to be in grief, was soon to be troubled or tripled. He said to his boys, "You've made me to stink in the eyes of

the inhabitants of the land, and they'll soon gather themselves together and wipe me out."

Lessons from Dinah's Tragedy

Before I go farther, I want to make a couple of very clear points. When young people remove themselves from under the authority of their parents, they're asking for trouble. By young people, I don't mean a three- or four-year-old child. I mean teenagers and young people still at home, even if they are no longer teenagers, especially young women. When you remove yourself from that protection, you're asking for trouble. Every decent father and mother desire to save their children from heartache, grief, and trouble. Unhappily, most young people will never listen. You've seen that little wall plaque: "Attention teenagers: Run away now while you know everything and can do everything. You don't need anybody."

The truth of the matter is that most young people think they are grown up when they are not grown up. They think they are mature when they are not mature. If they really were mature, they would not be thinking the way they were thinking. I can honestly prove that light travels faster than sound, because the counseling advice I gave my children at eighteen, they never heard until they were forty.

Most young people, when they see their parents trying to protect them, help them, and keep them out of trouble, think their parents are old fuddy-duddies and old fogies. They do not understand until they are married and have children of their own; then they understand the protective nature of father and mother.

The second point is this: when you get mixed up with the wrong people in the wrong place, doing the wrong things, do not expect to come out unharmed. Do not go to stupid places with stupid people and do stupid things. You are always going to be the loser. Curiosity not only kills the cat, but it kills people too.

Some years back, not far from where we live, three young boys decided they wanted to find out what it was like to sniff gas. They opened the gas tank of a lawnmower and put their noses in it, and

two of the young boys died in their own vomit. It was the first time they had ever done it.

I have heard people say, "Well, I was just going to try this dope one time." Then they are hooked for the rest of their lives, or until they die, or until it kills them. Sometimes it kills them the first time. If you never start something like that, you never have to quit. So do not go to stupid places with stupid people and do stupid things.

The third point is this: you can win a battle, but you can lose the war. One battle is not necessarily the war. It was easy for Simeon and Levi to go in and kill all the men of the city because they could not fight back, but they could not kill all of the Hivites, Girgashites, and Jebusites. Therefore, consider not only our actions, but also their outcome and result.

This is why Jacob said, "You've made me stink. Now, all these people are going to environ me around and they're going to cut me off and they're going to kill us." It is best sometimes to consider the outcome of our actions before we actually do certain things.

Fourth, oftentimes heartache and danger are great incentives to draw us near to God. Jacob probably remembered how God had delivered him from distress the first time, when he was fleeing from Esau. He began to think, "You know, I better get right with God. Besides that, it's time for me to get out of Dodge. I just need to get away from here because these people will take care of me."

Repentance and the Journey to Bethel

Now look at Genesis 35:1: "And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." I read this passage and thought, Didn't God just tell him twice previously to do the same thing? Yes, He did.

There is obviously a difference between humans and God. If this had been my child, by this time I would have been exceedingly perturbed and said, "Haven't I already told you this two times? What's wrong with you? Are you deaf? Are you mentally handicapped? Can't you listen? Can't you pay attention?" God does

not say anything like that. He simply says to Jacob, “All right, arise, go to Bethel.” He had already told him twice.

I am pointing out that oftentimes, when we are in danger and distress, it is indeed time to get right with God. Look at verse 3: “And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.” Jacob recalled that God had helped him in trouble, and he was in trouble again; perhaps God would help him this time as well.

Jacob then asked his followers and family to put away their idols and false gods. Verse 2 says, “Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.”

"And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem." Can you imagine Jacob even allowing someone in his house to have strange gods? It was Rachel who stole her father's statue of a god. And why the earrings? Usually these earrings were dedicated to false gods and were being worn as what you and I would call lucky charms. There was a religious significance even to these earrings. So Jacob said, "Put away your strange gods. Wash yourself, get clean. We're going to go back to Bethel." Then he packed up his family and his followers and left. Look in verse 5: "And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob."

Where evil exists and men are away from God, nothing is right on any side, but only grace and mercy can overrule the evil and set things right. That's why God said, "Jacob, get up and do what I told you to do. Go back to Bethel."

The Protective Power of Divine Terror

It was nothing less than the terror of God that could keep Jacob safe. Think of all the heathen around him. When they heard that all the Shechemite men had been slaughtered, what would stop them from coming together and riding straight over Jacob and his family? Since Jacob and his family were traveling, that was an easy time to ambush them. It took nothing more than the absolute divine terror of God to protect them. The word "terror" here literally means terror or fear. The reason the Canaanites did not pursue Jacob was simply because the terror of God was upon them.

I do not doubt that they were exasperated at what Simeon and Levi did. I do not doubt that they wanted revenge or that they talked about it, but it was the terror of God that prevented them.

The way of duty is the way of safety. Understand this and write it down in your mind: while there was sin in Jacob's house, while there was disobedience in Jacob's life, and when there was wickedness in his family, he was afraid of his neighbors. But when he got right with God, repented, and put away his false gods, his neighbors were afraid of him. This shows how God can sovereignly restrain.

In Exodus 34, God tells Israel, as they enter into Canaan, to take a sword in their hand and utterly exterminate the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, and any of those seven nations. God says, "Wipe them out." The truth of the matter is that, although they killed a lot of people, they did not kill everybody; they enslaved those that they did not kill.

Here is the interesting thing: God demands that all the males in Israel appear before Him three times a year for those seven annual feasts. Usually the women and children would go as well, but they were not required to go. The men were required to go three times a year. So here is the question: with all the men up in Jerusalem worshiping God and doing as God commands, what is to stop those remaining Canaanites from overpowering the family, murdering them, taking their land, and taking their houses back?

No one was there to protect them. And if the women and children went, everything would be vacant. Anyhow, all they'd have to do is move in and just take it. Well, look what God says. Exodus 34:23: "Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel." Look what he said: "For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year." God says they will not only not attack, they won't even desire to have their land back. So God is very powerful in his restraining power.

The safest place for any child of God to be is right smack dab in the middle of God's will. When we are right with God, living in obedience to him and exercising dominion as he commanded, it is his terror that terrifies our enemies. Look in your Bibles to Joshua chapter 2. Rahab said to the two spies who came to her, "And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; and she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed."

"And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." The Bible says, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror..." Now it was really God's terror, but his terror was associated with his people. They identified his terror with his people. She said, "We know that God has given you this land."

We rejoice and thank God when his terror is against our enemies. We rejoice and thank God when God sovereignly protects us and preserves us. I do not know how many times God has preserved me. I can certainly name sometimes, but oftentimes he preserves us without our knowledge.

Divine Terror as a Two-Edged Sword

We should always be thankful for that. I have a very old book, almost falling apart, titled Remarkable Incidents and Marvelous Answers to Prayer. It is about this thick and recounts some of the most astounding things that have happened to the saints of God down through the ages. If I ever get discouraged or down, all I have to do is read a couple of pages in that book. I see the greatness and power of God clearly displayed.

We can realize God's preservation and protection, and thank Him for His terror upon our enemies and for subduing them. But may I point something out? God's terror is a two-edged sword; that means it cuts both ways. God can be a terror not only to His enemies, but also to His people when they sin against Him. If you look in your Bibles at Leviticus chapter 26, you will find this also in Deuteronomy 28. Leviticus 26:36 says, "And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth." This deals, of course, with the curses and the blessings.

SCRIPTURE READING - Ezekiel 21:1-7 (KJV)

> "And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies." God said if you disobey me, I will send such fear and faintness into your heart that a wind blowing a dead leaf, shaking it, will cause you to be terrified and scared out of your skin. You'll flee when nobody's pursuing you. You know, you'll just be simply weak and afraid and fainting.
>
> "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel, and say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all

> flesh from the south to the north: that all flesh may know that I the Lord have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath: it shall not return any more. Sigh therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes. And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh."
>
> "And every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord God." In other words, he's talking about judgment. He says, "What is going to precede my judgment? It's your heart is going to melt. Your hands will be feeble. Your spirit will be faint and your knees will be as weak as water."
>
> Sin is grievous, and it is especially grievous to the Lord God. It is far more grievous when it comes from one of his children.

Everyone knows that David was a man after God's own heart. Although David sinned with Bathsheba and Uriah, there was another sin: David numbered Israel. Israel was not to be numbered except in time of war, and when the people were numbered, the half shekel of the sanctuary had to be taken for them. David numbered the people when there was no war, and he did not take the half shekel.

He wanted simply to glory in the fact that he had many fighting men. Even Joab, as wicked as he was, knew that this was wrong. David prevailed, however, and Joab and some of the other men went out and numbered most of Israel, though they did not number the Levites. The Bible tells us that the thing was a stench to Joab.

God was about to judge David. In 2 Samuel 24:11, the word of the Lord came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer: "Go and say unto David, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee." Gad asked whether seven years of famine should come upon the land, whether David would flee three months before his enemies while they pursued him, or whether there should be three days' pestilence in the land.

David said, "I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." He would not make that choice; he would rather fall into the hand of God. God sent the pestilence, and, as verse 15 records, "So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba seventy thousand men."

Here was a man after God's own heart who sinned, and God judged him severely. I tell people that when I was a teenager, I talked back to my father—one time, just once. When he got through with me, I learned the lesson: you do not talk back to your father.

It was very simply done. The punishment that I got was very swift, very sure, and very severe. Do you realize that when God chastens us, as Hebrews chapter 12 teaches, it is for our good, that we might be made partakers of His holiness? Just as my father was not going to let me get away with something awful, terrible, disrespectful, and dishonorable, God is not going to let His children get away with anything like that, because the terror of God will cut two ways.

The Terror of the Lord as an Evangelistic Incentive

It will deal with us when we sin against Him. The terror of God is also used in the New Testament as an incentive for evangelism. In 2 Corinthians 5:11, the Apostle Paul says, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.” Why do we want to witness to our friends? Why do we want to witness to our families? Why do we want to witness to our children?

We know that there is a judgment. We know who the Judge is. We know what it is like to die without Jesus Christ. We know what it means to face the Judge of all the earth. We know what it will be like for unbelievers when our Lord returns. How do we know these things? Because they are very plainly taught in the Scripture.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, beginning with verse 7, we read: “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.”

When our Lord returns, He is going to come back in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. And so we know the terror of God. Therefore, the apostle said, "Knowing the terror of God, we persuade men."

We want them to understand: God is real, judgment is real, and destruction is real. There is a terror of man, and there is a terror of God, but man's terror is nothing compared to God's terror. The Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 3:14, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

Will the wicked try to terrorize us? Yes. But the Scripture says, "Be not afraid of their terror." Why? Because the real terror is the divine terror, not the human terror. Our Lord said in Luke chapter 12, verses 4 and 5, "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." Divine terror.

Applications: Living in the Fear of God

If we understood the terror of the Lord, I believe it would move us to greater obedience, greater love, and greater worship for Him. We understand that sin is exceedingly grievous, and we do not want to dishonor our heavenly Father or despise Him. Scripture teaches us that He sees and knows everything. There is no such thing as a secret sin with God. In Jeremiah 23:24, God asks, "Can

any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."

We cannot hide anything from God. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Therefore, if we are going to be right with God, we have to be right with God mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically, because we cannot hide our sins from God.

If we do not want to be chastened by God, we need to do what is right. When I was a boy, if I had to have a whipping, I would much rather my mother give it than my daddy. All I had to do was scream very loudly and cry very hard, and my mother would stop or greatly lighten up. Not my daddy. I learned, “No, I don’t want any more of that.” When God chastens us, we learn what is right and learn to be holy.

The second thing is this: the terror of God may be used for us, or it may be used against us. We ought to appreciate that God sovereignly protects and preserves us, terrifies our enemies, keeps them away, and prevents them from doing their worst to us. Yet it is strange that men fear men more than God and contemplate the fear of man more than the fear of God.

William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania and also a Quaker, said, “People are more afraid of the laws of man than the laws of God, because their punishment seems to be the nearest.” In other words, we think only about what is in time and not what is in eternity; we think about what man can do and not what God can do.

Man’s punishment may be nearer, but God’s is far more full, total, complete, final, and absolute. Therefore, we ought to fear Him rather than man. If we want divine terror on our side and working for us instead of against us, we must do as Jacob did: put away all our strange gods, strange sins, wickedness, and disobedience, and bring our lives into conformity with His Word. Divine terror is real and genuine.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We thank You for protecting and preserving us, for restraining our enemies, and

even for the chastisement You give us. Lord, I pray that it will lead to our holiness and obedience, that we would serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

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William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania and also a Quaker, said, "People are more afraid of the laws of man than the laws of God, because their punishment seems to be the nearest." In other words, we think only about what is in time and not what is in eternity. We think about what man can do and not what God can do.

But the truth of the matter is, man's punishment may be nearer, but God's is far more full, total, complete, final, and absolute. So we ought to fear him rather than man. And if we want that divine terror on our side and working for us instead of against us, we have to do like Jacob: put away all of our strange gods, our strange sins, our wickedness, and our disobedience, and bring our lives in conformity to his word. Divine terror is real and genuine.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to you this day. We thank you for your word and truth; for protecting and preserving us; for restraining our enemies; and even for the chastisement you give us. And, Lord, I pray that it will lead to our holiness and our obedience, that we would serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 29

The Camels Are Coming

October 9, 2022

SCRIPTURE READING - Genesis 24:63; Genesis 24:1-9 (KJV)

Introduction: The Camels Are Coming in a Bad Sense

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the eventide, and he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, the camels were coming."

"And Abraham was old and well-stricken in age, and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house that ruled over all that he had, 'Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell. But thou shalt go unto my country and to my kindred and take a wife unto my son Isaac.'

"And the servant said unto him, 'Peradventure, the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land. Must I needs

> bring thy son again into the land from whence thou camest?' And Abraham said unto him, 'Beware that thou bring not my son thither again. The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land, he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath, only bring not my son thither again.' And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.
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> So the phrase, "the camels are coming," can be interpreted either in a good sense or in a bad sense. I want to give you the bad sense first. If I am pronouncing his name correctly, it is Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, who happened to be the emir of Dubai. He reportedly said, and I'm quoting, "My grandfather rode a camel, my father rode a camel, I drive a Mercedes, my son drives a Land Rover, his son will drive a Land Rover, but his son will ride a camel."

Hard times will take away all of the technology and inventions that we depend upon. The emir who said this, according to the information I read, is worth over 18 billion Federal Reserve notes. You would think, how in the world would someone worth over 18 billion Federal Reserve notes fall into hard times so much so that his descendants are going to be riding camels instead of driving Mercedes and Land Rovers?

Many of you have seen the Zimbabwean note that was worth a hundred trillion dollars, quote unquote. But that Zimbabwean note could barely buy a loaf of bread in 2009. Paper money has absolutely no intrinsic value, and when confidence in it is gone, paper money is absolutely worthless.

One of my favorite illustrations of this truth is the hyperinflation in Germany between 1918 and 1923. It was during the Weimar Republic, and it was exceedingly horrible in 1923. A loaf of bread that cost 250 marks in January 1923 had risen to 200,000 million by November. Prices were out of control.

In fact, in 1923, it cost more to print a note than the note was worth. It is kind of like in Russia, where one counterfeiter kept counterfeiting the czar's money until the cost of printing ran above the worth of the paper. He had a picture of the czar in the center of his note, and in small letters he printed around it, "My money is worth more than yours."

That was exactly it. During the crisis in Germany, workers were often paid twice a day because, before they could get their money at noon, prices had already skyrocketed again. One of my favorite illustrations from that time concerns a German lady who had a wheelbarrow full of German marks. She was on her way to the bakery to buy a loaf of bread when she saw a fight in the street. Her curiosity got the best of her, so she set her wheelbarrow down and parted the people to see who was fighting. Once her curiosity was satisfied, she turned around and found that someone had dumped all the money out of the wheelbarrow and stolen the wheelbarrow. The wheelbarrow was worth more than all the money that was in it.

It is absolutely astounding when you understand the worthlessness of paper money. I read this concerning the Vanderbilts: When Cornelius Vanderbilt died at the end of the nineteenth century, he left a fortune bigger than the United States Treasury at that time. When his grandkids met less than a century later, there was not a millionaire among them. What can be built in two generations can be lost in two generations. Slothfulness, laziness, and a lack of understanding can destroy any amount of wealth, especially if that wealth is mere paper money.

I have a friend, now dead, who told me about a neighbor who had gotten a million-dollar settlement. In less than a year, he was totally broke. Paper money is paper money. Most of you know that our legislators just passed the Inflation Reduction Act, which is going to put another $700 billion into the economy, with over $80 billion going just to the IRS. The more paper money is printed, the less value the paper money in existence has. Inflation is not necessarily the rise in prices; that is just a symptom of inflation. Inflation is actually the worthlessness of the money continuing to bottom out. The more money you have, the higher the prices and

the higher inflation as well. The mere printing of more money in this country guarantees that the camels are coming in America.

The truth of the matter is, we will probably be blessed to have a camel to ride. During the frontier days in the Wild West, especially, the United States Army sought to have a camel brigade out West. It did not work out, but they did have camels. They certainly did not work the way they did over in Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, but they did have them as well.

So “the camels are coming” can be used in a good sense and a bad sense. In Genesis chapter 24, the phrase was indeed used in a good sense because the camels were returning from Laban with Rebekah to be the wife of Isaac. In this message, I want to share with you three truths and show you the absolute connection between them.

The Foresight of Faith

The Foresight of Faith (Abraham's Trust)

You cannot get to the third point unless you understand and apply the first two. To begin, consider number one: the foresight of faith. This is found in Genesis 24:1–9. Verse 1 says, "And Abraham was old and well stricken in age, and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." Abraham was dying, and he knew he did not have much longer on earth. Therefore, before he died, he desired to obtain a wife for Isaac.

In verse 3, Abraham takes his eldest servant and makes him swear an oath: "And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell, but thou shalt go into my country, into my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." No Canaanite woman was to be Isaac's wife. Note Abraham's calm and factual declaration: "but thou shalt go unto my country and to my kindred and take a wife unto my son Isaac."

There was no hesitation, doubting, or unbelief. Abraham knew that God was going to provide a wife for Isaac.

Undoubtedly, the servant in this passage is Eliezer, the eldest servant in Abraham's house. In Genesis 15:1–2, Abraham says to God, "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, 'Abram, fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.'" Then Abram says, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?"

The custom in those days was that if a man had no child or heir, everything he possessed went to his eldest servant or slave. That servant was Eliezer. Thus, in Genesis 24, Abraham makes Eliezer put his hand under his thigh and swear that he will not take a wife for Isaac from the land of Canaan.

Eliezer had a wonderful question, one that would have been foremost in his mind. In verse 5, he asked, “Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me into this land, must I needs bring thy son again into the land from whence thou camest?” Abraham answered, “Beware that thou bring not my son thither again. The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake to me, and sware to me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land, he shall send his angel before thee. And thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.”

Under no circumstances was Eliezer to take Isaac back into the land. Notice what Abram said in verse 7: the Lord God was going to give Isaac a wife. He said, “He shall,” that is, God shall send His angel before thee, “and thou shalt take a wife unto my son.” In other words, he was absolutely certain.

God had promised and had given His word; there would be absolutely no need for Isaac to go back into the land of Mesopotamia. Notice again what he said: “the Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred,” and, number one, “which spake to me.” He had God's word. Then he said, “and that sware unto me.” He had God's oath. God had promised that his seed would inherit this land. Therefore, he knew that God would provide a wife for his son Isaac. God would send His angel, and Eliezer would get a wife for Isaac.

In Genesis 24, beginning with verse 37, Eliezer is standing before Laban, Bethuel, and Rebekah's family, repeating what Abraham had told him: "And my master made me swear, saying, 'Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell. But thou shalt go into my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.' And I said unto my master, 'Peradventure the woman will not follow me.' And he said unto me, 'The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way, and thou shalt take a wife for my son, of my kindred, and of my father's house.'"

Abraham as the Father of All Who Believe

Eliezer is saying, in effect, that Abraham was believing and trusting God, knowing this would happen. The faith of Abraham is spoken of over and over throughout the Bible, multitudes of times. This is important because we need to see how Abraham's faith applies to us. Abraham is known not only as the friend of God, but also as the father of all who believe. Romans 4:3 declares, "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

It was not merely that Abraham believed God concerning salvation, or when God said, "Get out of the land." Abraham believed God concerning every area of his life. His faith was not limited to one particular matter or one particular command; he trusted God in every area. Romans 4:11 says, "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised." It continues: "that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also, and the father of circumcision to them, who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

Abraham, then, is the father of all them that believe. We should look carefully at what his faith means and how it applies to us.

In one sense, yes, Abraham is our father. Abraham is the father of all those who walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham. Romans 4:16 says, “Therefore, it,” that is, the promise, “is of faith; that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.” The promise is not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. So we find that the true seed of Abraham are actually the believers, because Abraham is the father of all them that believe.

Galatians 3:6 says, “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” This shows how Abraham is the father of all them that believe. Now look at verse 7: “Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” Who are the true children of Abraham? Those who are of faith, those who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham.

Galatians 3:16 shows how Christians are indeed the true seed of Abraham: “Now to Abraham and his seed,” note that it is singular, “were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” The true seed of Abraham is the Lord Jesus Christ, and since we are in Jesus Christ, we are also now the seed of Abraham as well. Verse 29 states it very plainly: “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Therefore, all of those promises that God gave to Abraham were actually given to the true seed of Abraham, which is Jesus Christ.

Since we are in Jesus Christ, we are also the seed of Abraham, because we walk in the faith of Abraham. We believe God. James 2:23 says, “And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.”

So we must believe God. We must have faith in His promises and in His Word. In fact, we must have faith in every detail, every area, and every sphere of our lives.

Faith Applied to Every Area of Life

I find this exceedingly interesting. When you look at Genesis chapter 24, the faith of Abraham was not in relationship to his salvation. Certainly, his salvation was there; that is for sure. But his faith in Genesis chapter 24 was that God would provide a wife for Isaac. In other words, his faith concerned his children.

When you stop and think about this, the only things we can do for our children are direct them, teach them, and live before them. The one thing we cannot do is live for them. It is impossible. I can teach my children to be careful, but I cannot be careful for them. I can teach my children to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but I cannot believe in Him for them. I can teach my children to be obedient, but I cannot be obedient for them.

What I must do is teach according to the Scripture and then trust my Heavenly Father to work it out according to His perfect will. This is indeed what I would call the foresight of faith. We have to be able to have faith in every sphere and every area of our lives concerning Him.

I remember when our youngest daughter had to go to high school. She started, I think, in the eleventh grade. We had had a Christian school, but then we cut back and no longer had the eleventh and twelfth grades. So she had to drive about forty miles one way to Christian school every day. The only thing I could do was provide the best car I could, one in great mechanical condition, and ask the Lord to protect her. I could not drive for her, go to school for her, or watch for her.

The Fervency of Fidelity

This is what you call the foresight of faith. Abraham said, “God spoke to me. God swore to me. He gave me His oath. I know He will provide a wife for Isaac.” So this is not just the foresight of faith; notice also the fervency of fidelity.

The Fervency of Fidelity (Eliezer's Faithfulness)

To me, this is absolutely astounding when you look at Eliezer. The Bible says in verse 9, “And the servant put his hand under the

thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter." Whatever they agreed upon, that is exactly what Eliezer was going to do. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4:2, "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Each of us are stewards before God, and therefore we must be faithful before God as well.

Notice his fidelity in frugality. In verse 10, the Bible says, "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed. For all the goods of his master were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor." Eliezer took ten camels. Here is his fidelity and frugality.

Could he have taken more? Absolutely. Genesis 24:2 says, "And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house that ruled over all that he had." The servant ruled over everything Abraham possessed. Yet he took ten camels, listen carefully, for a round trip of probably, at a minimum, six hundred to eight hundred miles, possibly a thousand. A camel could carry up to nine hundred pounds. That means ten camels would have carried almost five tons of supplies: tents, bedding, food, and presents for the family.

He just took ten. In Genesis 24:35, he told Rebekah's family, "and the Lord has blessed my master greatly, and he's become great. And he has given him flocks and herds and silver and gold and menservants and maidservants and camels and asses."

Remember now, this servant was over everything that Abraham had. He could have taken whatever he needed, but he believed he needed only ten camels, and that is exactly what he took. Our Lord said something in light of this in Luke 16:12: "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" Eliezer was faithful in that which belonged to Abraham. Here, then, is his fervency in his fidelity to Abraham. Note secondly his fervency and his fidelity to his friendship.

Genesis 24:11 says, "And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water." Then he prayed, "O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good

speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water."

He continued, "And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master." Before he had finished speaking, Rebekah came out, born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah, the daughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

The damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her. She went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. The servant ran to meet her and said, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." She said, "Drink, my lord." She hastened, let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. When she had finished giving him drink, she said, "I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking." She hastened, emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran again to the well, and drew water for all his camels.

I believe the Lord wanted a hard-working woman for Isaac. You say, how can you say that? Have you ever drawn water for camels? Stop and think about this. There were ten camels. Since camels are known as ships of the desert, they can drink and drink and drink. I have a 3,000-pound bull. I took a 55-gallon drum, cut it in half, turned it upside down, and filled both halves with water. I have seen this one bull come up to that 25- to 27-gallon drum full of water, put his mouth in, and, when he finished drinking, leave just a few inches in the drum. He drank about twenty-five gallons or better at one time. If a bull can do that, what do you think a camel can do? Rebekah was drawing water for all these camels.

The interesting thing is what he prayed. In verse 11, or verse 12, he said, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day." Yes, he wanted it; he wanted it to work out. But watch what he said: "and show kindness to my master, Abraham." Note what the Bible says: "and it came to pass, that he

had done speaking, before he had done speaking, behold, Rebekah came out."

He was not interested merely in getting a blessing for himself. He wanted God to show the blessing to his master, Abraham. His prayer was for Abraham's benefit; it was not selfish or for himself. Yes, he desired good speed, but what he really desired was a wife for Isaac. His fidelity was to his master, and so was his friendship.

The astounding fact is that before he could finish praying, God sent Rebekah out. She fulfilled every request he had made to God. She was the answer to his prayer.

Fidelity in Gratitude

Thirdly, see in Genesis 24 Eliezer's fidelity in gratitude. He was not someone who would simply receive the blessings of God and then ignore Him. He would not be blessed of God and then be ungrateful, unthankful, and unappreciative. He was thankful that God had worked for his master. Genesis 24:26 says, "And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord. And he said, 'Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth. I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.'" He is thanking God for His mercy to Abraham, not merely for His mercy to himself.

When you stop and think about this, I am afraid that most professing Christians are more like the nine lepers whom our Lord healed. He healed ten, but only one came back, bowed before Him, worshipped Him, and thanked Him. Our Lord asked, "Where are the nine? Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" He said, "There is not one but this stranger that has returned to show gratitude and thankfulness for what I have done for him."

The older I get, the more I understand what Jacob said in Genesis 32:10 as he prayed: "Lord, I am not worthy of the least of Thy mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast shewed me." Why did you not die last night? Why did you not die this morning? 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. We should learn to be thankful, grateful, and appreciative for everything, because everything we have, everything we are, everything we ever will have, and everything we ever will be is only by the grace, mercy, and goodness of God. When this worked out exactly the way he prayed, Eliezer bowed and thanked God for His mercy and grace to Abraham.

Fourthly, Eliezer was faithful in his mission and in his position. Look in Genesis 24:34. He is standing before Rebekah's family, and he says, "I am Abraham's servant." Isn't that astounding? "I am Abraham's servant." Now look at verse 35: "And the Lord has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great, and he has given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses."

Note what he did not say. He did not say, "I'm the eldest servant in the house. I have control over everything that Abraham owns." No, all he said was, "I'm his servant." You're talking about humility—the fact that he was willing to acknowledge that he was nothing more than a servant. His needs could wait. What was important was his master's will and his master's desire.

Have you ever stopped to consider your life and how often you put your lives, your desires, your wants, and your will ahead of God and ahead of the Lord Jesus Christ? Oftentimes we are willing to skip the public worship of God for simple reasons. We want to take a day off, go somewhere, or do something, and so we are more than willing to please ourselves at the expense of pleasing our Master. Our Lord said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these other things shall be added unto you." So many times we treat our Lord as if He is our servant, wanting Him to serve us and wanting to take His place as Lord. We want our will and desire our wants instead of that which He desires.

Solomon said, "I've seen servants upon horses and princes walking as servants upon the earth." In other words, everything's turned upside down. Instead of the princes riding horses and servants walking, the servants are riding and the princes are

walking. And that's basically what we've done in Christianity today. We've turned everything upside down.

I've had people tell me, “Well, I go to that church because I'm so blessed. I go to that church because I'm fulfilled. I go to church because I'm satisfied. I go to that church because I'm happy.” You don't go to church for what you get out of it. You go to worship the One True and the Living God. Paul rejoiced to call himself the servant of Jesus Christ.

In every book that the Apostle Paul wrote, he begins, “Paul, a servant of Christ.” The word servant is doulos, which means a bond slave. That's what he rejoiced in doing and being: a bond slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. Eliezer was not ashamed of the fact that he was a servant, and so many times we are ashamed of the fact that we are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord said, “Whosoever, therefore, will be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father and all of his holy angels.” If you're ashamed of me, I'm going to be ashamed of you. Eliezer was not ashamed to say, “I'm a servant. I'm nothing but a servant.” That's exactly what we are to be. We are called to be servants.

Fifthly, Eliezer was faithful in the completion of his mission for which he had been sent and for which he praised the Lord.

He talks to the family of Rebekah and says, “And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.” Then Laban and Bethuel answered, “The thing proceeded from the Lord, we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee. Take her and go and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken.” When Abraham's servant heard these words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth. The servant brought forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment and gave them to Rebekah. He gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

“And they did eat and drink, and he and the men that were with him and tarried all night. And they rose up early in the morning

and said, ‘Send me away to my master.’” Her brother and her mother said, “Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at least ten. After that she shall go.” And he said unto them, “Hinder me not, seeing the Lord has prospered my way. Send me away, that I may go to my master.”

Eliezer was not selfish. He could have said, “Ten more days without responsibility. I could just lie around out here and they'll feed me. They'll take care of me.” That was not his attitude. He said, “I came for a mission. My mission was to get this woman to be Isaac's wife. I've completed this mission almost now. Send me away. Don't hinder me.” The pressing object for Eliezer was to do his master's will. What is the pressing object in your life? Are you really truly eager and ready and willing to do the will of God in your life? How eager are you to obey God, to accomplish his will, to hear his word and respond obediently?

The Fruit of Fulfillment

The Fruit of Fulfillment (The Camels Return)

There was the foresight of faith in Abraham and the fervency of fidelity in Eliezer. That brings me to the third thing: the fruit of fulfillment.

Genesis 24, beginning in verse 61, says, "And Rebekah arose in her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man. And the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi, for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, 'What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?' And the servant had said, 'It is my master.' Therefore she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife. And he loved her, and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. The camels were coming."

The fulfillment became true because of faithfulness and faith. So many times we want to be blessed of God, but we do not want to be faithful. We do not want fidelity in our lives; we want to be off and on, up and down, here and there. It does not work like that. Moreover, we want God to bless us without exercising faith. As I said last week, the Scripture says, "He that cometh to God must first believe that He is, and secondly, that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him." We often expect the fruit of fulfillment without fidelity and faith. It is faith and fidelity that always precede fulfillment.

The world promises fulfillment, but it cannot deliver. The flesh promises fulfillment, but it cannot deliver. Sin and temptation promise fulfillment, but they cannot deliver. The only genuine fulfillment comes from God, through obedience to His Word. The Bible says in Psalm 145 and verse 19, "He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him, He will also hear their cry and save them." He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him. In 2 Thessalonians 1 and verse 11, the Apostle Paul writes, "Wherefore also we pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of His calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of His will and of His goodness and the work of faith with power." If we really want the fruit of fulfillment, there must be fidelity and there must be faith. Those two things precede fulfillment.

Applications: The Servant's Heart

Now, let me make some applications. The world, in its worldly view, would say that Eliezer was working against himself. How could Eliezer be working against himself? Remember, he had control over everything that Abraham possessed. Now he was going to bring back a bride for Isaac, which meant there would be grandchildren. It appeared that Eliezer, by being obedient and faithful to his master, was cutting himself out, so to speak.

The point I want to make is this: Eliezer was totally unselfish. All he wanted was his master's will. You remember when they came to John the Baptist and said, "He to whom thou gavest witness beyond Jordan, behold, all men follow him." You

remember what John said? "He must increase and I must decrease."

The only thing Abraham wanted was a bride for Isaac. The only thing Eliezer wanted was to please his master. He was not concerned about himself. Whether he prospered or not did not matter. All he wanted was to please his master.

Proverbs 11 and verse 24 says, "There is that that scattereth abroad and yet increaseth," and here is the opposite: "and there is that which withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty." God says there is that which scatters and increases, and there is that which withholds, thinking it will build itself up, and it increases poverty. I like the little couplet that Bunyan wrote years ago. He said.

"There was a man, and many did count him mad. The more he gave away, the more he had." That was certainly Eliezer's attitude as well. The point is simple: if we want real, genuine fulfillment in our lives, we must be concerned with our Master's will, His Word, His worship, His praise, and His honor. In one sense, we do not really need to be concerned about ourselves.

Yes, we should be thoughtful; we should ask. But our Lord said, "Take no thought for tomorrow. Tomorrow will take care of itself." He said, "Be not anxious for some of these things." You know what David said in Psalm 37:25? I love this passage. David said, "I've been young and now I'm old yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." I've never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread.

In other words, if we are faithful to our Master, our Master is going to be faithful to us. Now, let me tell you one of the big problems with Christendom today—the big problem in every church, in every life, in your life, and in my life: we have lost a servant's heart.

You remember John 13? The Bible says our Lord took a towel, girded Himself, and washed His disciples' dirty feet. What did our Lord say? "Behold, I am among you as one that serveth." We've developed a generation of Christians who want to be served instead of being servers, a generation that wants to be masters

instead of servants. We've lost the servant's heart, the heart willing to do whatever is needed for the honor and glory of our Master.

When God is pleased again to give us a servant's heart, I believe He will be pleased again to give us an awakening and reviving. Being a faithful servant makes dying easy. The Apostle Paul said, "The time of my departure is near. I'm now ready to be offered. I fought a good fight. I finished my course. I've kept the faith. Henceforth, there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

What did he say? He had been faithful. Being faithful makes dying easy, and it gives assurance that there is laid up for each of us a crown of righteousness. If we want genuine fulfillment, there must be faith and there must be faithfulness, or fidelity. The camels are coming, but they are coming for those who have faith and those who are faithful.

Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus, we bow to thee this day. We thank thee for thy word and thy truth. We ask, Lord, that thou wouldest indeed make us servants and give us servants' hearts. May we be willing not only to wait upon thee, but to wait upon others. For thou didst say that God is not unrighteous to forget our labour of love, in which we have ministered to the saints and do minister. Father, we ask for thy grace and mercy in our lives and hearts. Make us exercise faith to be faithful, and then, and only then, look for fulfilment. Give us thy grace. In the name of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 30

Responsibility and Responding

January 3, 2024

Introduction: R&R Redefined

The Scripture says, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” He hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.

The title is “Responsibility and Responding.” I initially thought of calling it R&R, as in the military phrase “rest and recreation,” but this has nothing to do with rest and recreation; it concerns responsibility and responding.

The Myth of Government Protection

Here is an interesting question: Who is responsible to protect your life, your family, and your property? Many take the position that it is the job of government to protect them and therefore do absolutely nothing to prepare themselves. Neither do they even

think about protection for themselves, their family, and their property. A few believe that the police, deputies, and sheriffs will protect them, their family, and their property. You must remember that when such protection is needed, they are only thirty minutes away or longer.

Usually, law enforcement arrives in time to secure the crime scene, which means it's over, you're a victim, you're dead, or your family's dead, and your property is stolen. I want you to listen to this quote. This is by Darren L. Hutchison, who happens to be a professor and associate dean at the University of Florida School of Law. Here's what he said. Quote, "Neither the Constitution nor state law imposes a general duty upon police officers or other governmental officials to protect individual persons from harm, even when they know that harm will occur. Police can watch someone attack you, refuse to intervene, and not violate the Constitution. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the government has only a duty to protect persons who are in custody." So if you think that police are required to protect you, you are mistaken. So here then is a biblical truth, and that is you're responsible for your life, your family, and your property. You are the first responder, and not the cops, not the firemen, and not your neighbor.

You Are the First Responder

So you are responsible, therefore you must learn how to protect, and not only how to protect, but also to have the means to protect as well. There's a gentleman by the name of Burris, no first name given, but here is his quote. He says, "When you don't think of yourself as your own first responder, your destiny is first victim." So here's a recent headline. Terrorist activity within the continental United States and general violent crimes are increasing exponentially and are likely to get much worse.

The situation is so discouraging that our leftist media is deliberately and desperately underreporting all violent crime because it makes their Democratic darlings look bad. Look in verse 8 of 1 Timothy chapter 5, because here the Scripture says, “But if

any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, he's worse than an infidel."

Notice two things about any passage: you should always take notice of the remote context and also of the immediate context. Before we begin looking at 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 8, we must first consider the remote context. If you look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 15, you will notice the theme of this book. The Apostle Paul writes Timothy, who was a pastor: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Remote and Immediate Context of 1 Timothy 5:8

Paul said, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God." I'm simply pointing out that although we look at 1 Timothy 5:8 and think of our physical family, there is also a spiritual family. There is that which is known as the household of faith in the Bible as well. And so God tells us that we need to provide for our own—that would be our physical house—but also our spiritual house as well.

Now let us consider the immediate context: "Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God."

"Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless."

First, note that in verse 7 the Apostle Paul says to Timothy, "And these things give in charge." What does that mean? The word "charge" comes from the Greek word "paraggellō," translated in our Bibles as charge, command, and commandment.

In 1 Timothy 1:3–5, Paul tells Timothy, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither

give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." Thus, the word "charge" in verse 3 refers to commanding that some teach no other doctrine.

"Thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." It is exactly the same Greek word found in 1 Timothy 5:7. It is the word "paraggellō," literally translated as "charge" in this verse.

In 1 Timothy 1:5, the apostle says, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." If it is the end, you have to reverse everything: first there would be unfeigned, or unhypocritical, faith, producing a good conscience, out of which charity would flow from a pure heart.

But note what he says: "Now the end of the commandment." What commandment? Verse 3 says, "And I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge," or command, "some that they teach no other doctrine." Thus, when he says "the end of the commandment," he is speaking of the end of the command to teach pure doctrine.

so, I'm pointing out the fact that this one word, "charge," is also translated as "command." Now, go back in your Bibles, if you would, to 1 Timothy chapter 5, and look again at verse 7. Notice he says, "And these things give in charge," or give in commandment, "that they may be blameless." So we can ask this question: Why was Timothy to give this in a commandment? And the answer was, and still is, that we may be blameless. And "anepilēptos" happens to be the Greek word, and it actually means to be blameless, to be unreproveable. It means to be without censure. It means simply to be without rebuke or reproach. Now let me just quote a passage for you in Philippians chapter 2 and verse 15. The Apostle Paul wrote, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." So he says that we may be without rebuke, that we may be blameless, that we may be harmless. So the commands that he's given here certainly need

attention so that we can be blameless in following them and obeying them. Now, let me deal with verse 4

before I get to verse 8. So look at verse 4 again. He said, "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God." Now I hope you see this picture. If you don't, I'm going to spell it out for you. The children and the nephews are to show piety at home.

We must ask, What does that mean? The word “piety” happens to be another word for godliness. The children and nephews are to show piety at home by requiting their parents. What does it mean to requite? It means to pay back. Your parents took care of you when you were unable to take care of yourself. They fed you, clothed you, took care of your health needs, cared for every need that you had, and educated you. Now God says that when there is a widow around, or when there is a parent unable to take care of himself or herself, it is the responsibility of the children and nephews.

The point I am trying to make is this: it is not just the immediate family; it is also the extended family, because the extended family would include nephews. I had an uncle who was a widower, and my wife and I took care of him for years until he moved near my daughter and her husband. They took care of him until he died. I am simply pointing out the fact that God is telling us it is the responsibility of the

Families are to take care of their own. We normally understand that the husband and father is the head of the house, and God has also designated him as the provider. First Timothy 5:8 says, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

When we hear the word provision, we normally think of food, clothing, and shelter. Certainly, those are basic requirements; everybody requires them. But the word provide, and the word provision, cannot be limited to food, clothing, and shelter.

The Meaning of 'Provide' (Pronoeō)

This is what started me on this message. I took the time to look up the Greek word for provide: pronoeō. It is made up of two Greek words. Pro is a preposition meaning before. The second word is noeō, meaning to understand, perceive, consider, and think. Noeō simply means, “I think,” “I ponder,” or “I consider.” It comes from the noun nous, which refers to the mind.

When pro-noeō is put together, it literally means to understand and think beforehand. Thus, providing for one’s house is far more than food, shelter, and clothing. It is something done when you think beforehand. It would include what we call education, a biblical work ethic, protection, preservation, and many other things. Let us take it as far as we can and think about providing for our house.

Provision Includes Defense and Protection

It is not just food, shelter, and clothing. Our family also needs protection and preservation. Have you provided for the defense and protection of your family? Have you pondered and considered beforehand what would be needed for that protection? Your family needs protection as well. How would you respond to what we would call a criminal attack or even a terroristic attack? Not only how would you respond, but would you be able to respond, and would you have the tools with which to respond properly?

Denying the Faith by Neglecting Responsibility

Look back at verse 8 again: “But if any provide not for his own, especially for those of his own household.” What? “He hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” In other words, you are no longer blameless. This hit me like a ton of bricks. Do you realize that the only thing an individual Christian has to do in order to be classified as an atheist, an unbeliever, or someone who has denied the faith is to deny personal responsibility? Isn’t that amazing? Stop and think about that. He said that you might be blameless. So if you do not provide for the lives, safety, and protection of your own family, then he said you have denied the faith and are worse than an infidel. Evidently, our Lord does indeed place a high

standard, and very high esteem, upon what I am going to share with you now. Let me give you a couple of quotes.

Harry Brown said, "The police can't stop an intruder, mugger, or stalker from hurting you; they can pursue him only after he's hurt or killed you. Protecting yourself from harm is your responsibility, and you're far less likely to be hurt in a neighborhood of gun owners than in one of disarmed citizens, even if you don't own a gun yourself." That is true. Pastor Jack Potter was a former Confederate soldier.

He was chaplain to the 26th Texas Cavalry. He was also a Methodist circuit-riding preacher, and after the war was over in 1865, he said this: "I'm not so anxious to wear a martyr's crown as to sacrifice my life when God requires me to use means to preserve it. It is no evidence of a preacher's want of trust in God when he carries a gun to shield his life in the time of peril. It would be the most sinful presumption not to do so. Indeed, I do not carry a gun because I'm afraid to die, but because it is a duty to use means to preserve life."

Biblical Basis for Self-Defense and Community

And that is certainly true. The sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," has as its positive duty, "thou shalt preserve life." To show you how high a value God places upon provision for the family in every area and every sphere, consider Luke 11:21: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." First of all, note that He said "a strong man." That means one who is strong in body and mind. Secondly, He said "a strong armed man." The Greek word for "armed" is "kathoplizō," and it literally means to be furnished with arms. He has more than one.

He has an armory, so to speak. Third, he keeps and guards and protects himself and his goods. That is what He said in verse 21: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." He is protecting himself. He is protecting his goods. He is protecting his property. Now here is another provision that must be made, and I am using the word "provision" exactly the way the Bible does in 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 8. It means to think beforehand, to ponder before, and to consider beforehand. So look

at verse 22 of Luke chapter 11. Then He says, "But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

Would it not be proper, and would it not be right, for you and I to consider the fact that there are people stronger than we are, people better armed than we are, and times when we may be outnumbered as well as outgunned? The question would have to be, What could be done in this instance? I am simply pointing out the fact that there is safety in numbers. May I remind you

The early settlers and frontiersmen protected themselves through community or neighborhood. In other words, if you were alone, you were simply an easy target. However, when they were grouped together, they had much more protection because they had more people helping them.

We have lived in relative safety for so long that we do not even think things like this could ever happen to us. What is going on in the Middle East? That could never happen here. At least, that is the mentality most people have. Here is a headline from October 24, 2023, in the Highland County Press of Ohio: “A Real Threat.” The subheadline reads, “Experts Warn of Hamas-Connected Terrorist Crossing the U.S. Border.”

Here are the first three short paragraphs: “Hundreds of immigrants on the federal terror watch list have been caught at the southern and northern U.S. borders in recent years, and national security experts say there is a real threat of a terroristic attack on American soil as a result. With the conflict between Israel and the Gaza-based terrorist group Hamas escalating, the threat has only grown. U.S. Customs and Border Protection's San Diego field office warns that Hamas may attempt to send individuals to the United States through the southern border.”

The truth of the matter is, they are already here. I do not know if you watched or heard about the broadcast from November 1, where the Republican Party had a speaker and the FBI and Department of Homeland Security were warning about terroristic attacks here in America. Some of these illegal immigrants have already been captured with IEDs in their possession—improvised

explosive devices. When I read this, I thought, They know they are crossing, so why are they not capturing them? Yes, they are capturing some, but probably not most.

And it is not just Hamas that is here. We have Chinese communists pre-positioned here as well. Based upon Luke 11:22, what in the world would you do when you were outnumbered and outgunned? It is one thing to fight off one or two men; it is quite another to fight off twenty or thirty at one time. Have you ever thought about a team? Have you thought about a community watch? Have you thought about a community, period? Do you?

Do you know how to help? Can you help? Are you able to help others? Scripture teaches that we are not only to help protect ourselves but to help others as well, and the Bible teaches that there is safety in numbers.

Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour." If I am able to pick cotton—perhaps one bale a week—and Clay comes over to help me, so that together we pick two and a half or three bales, both of us are better off. I make more money, and he makes more money. That is what he is saying: two happens to be better than one.

But wait a minute. Let us keep going. Verse 10 says, "For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

So God is saying, basically, that there is safety in numbers. Now Frederick Bastiat—if you have not read his little work, "The Law"—this was written in 1850.

Here's a good quote from Bastiat: "If every person has the right to defend—even by force—his person, his liberty, and his property, then it follows that a group of men have the right to organize and support a common force to protect these rights continually." That is true. If Clay, Gary, Steve, and I all have the right to protect ourselves, then we have an equal right to come together and say, "We're going to help each other. We're going to fight together. We

will protect together." This is a thought that we must understand. Two are better than one—that's obvious.

Remember 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 8. The Bible says, "He that will not provide for his own"—using the word "provide" in the standard and sense given in Scripture: to think beforehand, ponder beforehand, and prepare beforehand. If you are going to help each other as a church, as believers, or even as a physical family, how are you going to communicate? How can you get in touch with each other? How can you reach each other? Handheld radios may be small, but they are convenient and inexpensive.

Practical Preparedness: Communication and Medical

Consider the protests involving BLM and Antifa. They always have radios; they know what is going on and how to contact each other. In the latest news, when an old man ran through the protesters, they got on their radios, chased him down, used four-wheelers, set up a roadblock, pulled him out, and beat him. How did they respond so fast? They had communications.

If we are going to say that we will help each other, we have to be able to communicate with each other as well. If we are going to gather together as like-minded people, we are going to be strong and strengthened. But if we stand alone, we will be targeted and become easy prey. Therefore, we must, in one sense, have community. We must take responsibility. We must be our own responder.

You may think that what I am saying today is not needed. If you are thinking that, you need to get your head out of the sand. Consider what would happen if an EMP came against this country.

Consider an electromagnetic pulse attack: one bomb, up in the air, destroying all communications. The electrical grid is gone; cars are down. Sunspots, sun flares, and solar flares do the same thing. Read up on the Carrington effect, when, in the last century, a number of communications and electricity were basically destroyed. It was all gone.

If the electricity is gone, there is not going to be any gas pumped or any stores opening. Once the stores are broken into and looted and the food is gone, what are hungry people going to be doing? Looking for other houses to break into. If you have a garden, they are going to assume that you have food and that you have food put back. Look what happened in Louisiana and Texas during the hurricanes. Look at what is happening now in these fine jewelry stores and clothing stores, where mobs break in, steal, destroy, and walk out, and no one is able to stop them. Why? Because no one is willing to shoot them. That is a daily occurrence on the news.

Colonel Jeff Cooper is dead now, but he left a lot of wise sayings. He said, "One cannot legislate maniacs off the street. These maniacs can only be shut down by an armed citizenry. Indeed, bad things can happen in nations where the citizenry is armed, but not as bad as those which seem to be threatening our disarmed citizenry in this country at this time."

He also said, "You can say 'stop' or 'alto' or any other word you think will work. But I have found that a large bore muzzle pointed at someone's head is pretty much the universal language for stop." I agree with that.

Senator Larry Craig said it like this: "The first right of every human being is the right of self-defense. Without that right, all others are meaningless. The right of self-defense is not something the government bestows upon its citizens. It is an inalienable right older than the Constitution itself. It existed prior to government and prior to the social contract of our Constitution. We do have an inalienable right to protect ourselves, our lives, and the lives of others. It is a God-given right."

As mentioned earlier, this is based upon the sixth commandment. We are required to preserve life. That is why the Bible in Psalm 82 and verse 3 says, "Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy."

Look back at 1 Timothy 5:8, because I want to emphasize this word “provide”: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, he is worse than an infidel.” The word “provide” means to perceive with the

mind beforehand—to understand, think upon, heed, and ponder, all prior to. So here is another question: Are you listening? Have you provided, or seriously thought about and prepared for, medical emergencies?

Do not begin to complain, saying, “But I’m not a doctor. I’m not a nurse. I’m not an EMT. I’m not a paramedic.” Most folks are not, and neither am I. However, I do know how to suture, pack a wound, and stop bleeding. I know a number of things that require a little medical knowledge. I know that we need medical supplies and that we must be prepared to take care of ourselves and our families. Anyone can take CPR courses and basic medical classes at tech schools. Have you considered the fact that during a war, or what you and I would call a really grid-down situation, there will not be any hospitals, emergency rooms, or clinics? How in the world did women ever have babies before there was a hospital? How were broken bones set before there were hospitals? How did men deal with wild animal attacks when there were no doctors and no emergency rooms?

If you do not remember the message I preached a good while back on Christian mountain man Jedediah Strong Smith, I would encourage you to go back and listen to that message. I will give you a quote because Jedediah Smith was attacked by a grizzly bear. On his second expedition, the bear came out of the thicket and mauled Smith violently, throwing him to the ground, smashing his ribs, and literally ripping off his scalp. When the attack was over, the scalp was hanging on to his head by an ear. Smith instructed Jim Clyman to sew it back on. Clyman did the best he could, but thought nothing could be done for the severed ear. Smith insisted that he try. According to Clyman, "I put my needle sticking it through and through and over and over, laying the lacerated parts together as nicely as I could with my hands." After two weeks of rest, Smith resumed his duty as captain of the party.

I wonder where the lidocaine was at that time, or where the antiseptics were. There was nothing. It was probably a crude needle and crude thread; it was not a suturing needle. This was an expedition out in the mountains.

Hugh Glass, another mountain man, was mauled by a grizzly bear and left for dead by his companions. He was not quite dead, but they were pretty sure he was going to die, and, for fear of an Indian attack, they left him. When Hugh Glass came to, he pulled himself to a stream, got some water, washed his wounds, and crawled until he found leftover meat from a dead carcass that the wolves had not eaten. He ate some of that meat, got grasses and mosses, and covered his wounds. He crawled, walked, and staggered 200 miles to Fort Kiowa before he could get help.

They do not make men like that today. What are you going to do if you cannot take care of yourselves? You are going to be up the creek without a paddle when there is nothing. You can buy medical books, including "When There Is No Doctor" or "Where There Is No Doctor," and "Where There Is No Dentist." You can buy the books by Dr. Joe Alton and—I forget Dr. Cynthia's last name. She has a wonderful book. There are all kinds of materials that you can buy and use to teach yourself. You know that you are going to need supplies, short-term and long-term medical supplies. Get them.

Whose responsibility is it to ensure that your family is fed and clothed, sheltered, protected, and taken care of? It is not the government's responsibility, nor your neighbor's. It is your responsibility. You are to be the first responder.

It is not your responsibility to feed the world, or to feed sluggards and lazy individuals. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."

It is your job and responsibility to take care of yourself and your family and provide for every need. Yes, there is biblical charity, but it is not charity to support those who are so indolent and slothful that they will not work. Hungry men will do one of two things: they will either learn to work or they will steal. If they are willing to work, you may be willing to share. If they are willing to steal, you must be willing to protect.

You cannot provide for everybody, but you are responsible to provide for your family. In all things, we must trust the Lord Jesus Christ to make us wise, to lead, guide, and direct us, and give us a mind to think beforehand of what we will need to prepare ourselves and our families so that we may continue to serve Him. He must give us that grace and wisdom.

David pointed this out beautifully in the Psalms. In Psalm 7:10 he said, "My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart." In Psalm 31:2 he said, "Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me." So he is begging God to save him.

Trust in God and Use of Means

Let me ask you a question. Was David a warrior? Yes. Did David fight? Yes. But he was still trusting in God. In Psalm 59:9, he said, “Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence.” I am sure that every one of you has heard this old adage: “Trust in God and keep your powder dry.” What does that saying imply? It implies, first, that our real protection is in God himself. But secondly, it implies that it is our responsibility to use the means that God has ordained to protect ourselves.

The truth of the matter is this: all of our preparation and all of our plans are useless without God. 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.” That does not mean that there is no need for watchmen or weaponry. It does mean that our total trust and reliance must be on God, because he is our divine protector. We must use the means that God has ordained.

Listen one more time to 1 Timothy 5:8: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” The word “provide” means that you are thinking in advance of whatever you need to take care of your family. To deny our responsibility to prepare is to be worse than an infidel and to deny the faith. That is why God said in Proverbs 6: “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which provideth her meat in the summer, that

she may have in the winter." Our preparation must be done with trust in God and with the seeking of his blessing to make it successful for our lives and our families.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. Let this, Lord, sink into our hearts and our minds, that we are responsible and are to respond to our responsibility. All it takes to be worse than an infidel and deny the faith is to deny our responsibility before thee. Give us thy grace. Teach us. Build us up in the most holy faith, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 31

How Did We Get There

April 27, 2024

How Did We Get Here?

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 19:1-15 (KJV)

Introduction and Scripture Reading

Jeremiah chapter 19, verse 1: "Thus saith the Lord, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people and of the ancients of the priests, and go forth into the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee. And say, Hear ye the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, which whosoever heareth his ears shall tingle. Because they have forsaken me and have estranged this place, they have burned incense in it unto 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.

> "They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives, and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of heaven and for the beasts of the earth.
>
> "And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing, everyone that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of the plagues thereof. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege, and straitness wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives shall straiten them. Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee. And shalt say to them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Even so will I break this people and this city as one breaketh a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again."

"And they shall bury them in Tophet till there be no place to bury. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet. And the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto the host of heaven and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods. Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the Lord had sent him, to prophesy. And he stood in the court of the Lord's house and said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that are pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks that they might not hear my words."

Have you ever wondered how we arrived at the place in which we find ourselves today in this nation? It is much like traveling

with children. Many parents in times past took lengthy trips when their younger children would sleep most of the way. Once the children went to sleep, the next thing they knew, they were at their destination. Their first question was, "How did we get here?" They did not know about the stops, traffic, or problems. They simply went to sleep and woke up there.

The Question of National Decline

How in the world did Jerusalem get to the place where God said, "I am going to destroy this place"? How did they arrive at national destruction? A good question is, how did we get to the place that we are in? And are we next in national destruction? We are no longer living in Mayberry. Things are not black and white as they used to be.

We have to agree that times have certainly changed. Society and culture have changed. We are no longer living in a time when life is precious and protected, when personal privacy and profit are valued, or when God is honored. We are no longer living in a time when the Word of God is respected, families work together and help each other, or people value each other and friendship.

It seems as if we went to sleep in one nation and awoke the next morning in a completely different nation. I want to give you two illustrations. You may not see their value, importance, or connection right now, but before I finish today, I hope that you will, because these two illustrations are vitally connected.

Two Illustrations: Puppies and a Baby

Some months back, Alice was coming down the road toward our house. She looked in the ditch and saw four starving puppies someone had thrown out. They were wormy and so malnourished that two could not even walk correctly. Instead of walking on their hind feet, they had to lie down on their haunches, with their whole back legs basically holding them up. Alice picked up the puppies, brought them home, washed them, fed them, warmed them, and took care of them. Today those puppies are fine and healthy, and we are looking for homes for them. They are beautiful pups, but

someone simply threw them out. Why in the world would people do something like that? That is a good question.

The second illustration is this. Recently, I had a defensive handgun class. A young couple named Gage and Rose were in that class. Rose is the daughter of Alan Barber Stoffer, who have been friends with us for a long time. They were married about a year ago and had just had their first baby, who was only a couple of months old. They came to my class, and Rose's sister came to take care of the baby while she was in class. When we came back in for the noon meal, after only a few hours over the range, I looked over and saw Rose and Gage, her husband, pick up the baby and hold the baby in their laps.

They began to kiss and cuddle the baby. I just sat there and marveled, because you have to remember how old I am. I had not been around a young couple with a first child in a long, long time. It reminded me of Alice when we had our first daughter. Then I got to thinking about our daughters and their first child. I simply marveled at the fact that I had not seen a young couple with their first child in ages and ages. It astonished me to see the attention and love they were lavishing upon that child.

You may not see the connection between these two stories yet, but before I get through, I hope that you will.

The Potter and the Clay (Jeremiah 18-19)

Jeremiah chapters 18 and 19 actually go together. In chapter 18, Jeremiah is commanded to go down to the potter’s house. There God would demonstrate a truth to him, which he was to proclaim. This truth was not only in relationship to the nation of Israel; it was also in relationship to any nation, and any individual as well, because nations are made up of individuals.

In Jeremiah 18, beginning with verse 2, God tells Jeremiah, “Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter, so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then

the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter, saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

“At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it. Now look at this. If that nation, not just Israel, if that nation against whom I pronounce turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it. If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.

“Now therefore go and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you. Return ye now everyone from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.”

In this passage, God is the potter and we are the clay. That is true. Here, God was the potter, and Israel happened to be the clay. But, as He pointed out in verse 18, this applies to any nation or any individual. In Jeremiah 18, the potter is working with the clay on the wheel. He may have been intending to make something extremely beautiful, like a vase.

You probably know the difference between a vase and a vase: about 200 bucks. The potter may have intended to make a beautiful vase, but the Bible says that the clay was marred in the hand of the potter. Something went wrong with the clay, and the potter made the vessel into a different kind of vessel than he originally intended. That would be the potter’s prerogative. Instead of making a beautiful vase, he made it into a spittoon, or what we would call a honeypot, slop jar, or bedchamber. It is his prerogative. He is in control of the clay and can do with it exactly what he wants. That is exactly what he is saying concerning these nations: He may do exactly what he wants to do.

In this context, we are talking particularly about Israel. In the Old Testament, God specifically chose Israel to be His peculiar treasure. The Bible explicitly states this in several places. In

Exodus chapter 19 and verse 5, God says, “Now therefore, if—notice that word if—now therefore if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people, for all the earth is mine.” God said, if you will obey me, you will be a peculiar treasure.

Then Deuteronomy chapter 14 and verse 2 says, “For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God. And the Lord has chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself above all the nations that are upon the face of the earth.” Deuteronomy chapter 26 and verse 18 says, “And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments.” Psalm 135 and verse 4 says, “For the Lord hath chosen Jacob for himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.”

God had chosen Israel, but what did Israel do? She rebelled against God, revolted against God, and turned her back upon God. She became idolatrous, worshiping all kinds of gods—the queen of heaven, Baal, Moloch, and whatsoever. In light of this, God rejected those people.

Here is what God said in Jeremiah chapter 12, beginning with verse 7: “I have forsaken mine house”—that would be His temple—“I have left my heritage”—that would be His people. “I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.” Then, in verse 8: “My heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest: it cries out against me”—that is, their rebellion—“therefore have I hated it.”

Verse 9 continues: “My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird. The birds round about are all against her. Come ye, assemble all the beasts in the field, come to devour.”

Then, in Hosea chapter 9 and verse 15, God is repudiating them because of their sin: “All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them for the wickedness of their doing.” God had forsaken His house, left His heritage, and given His dearly beloved into the hand of her enemies. His heritage had become as a lion crying out against Him and as a speckled bird surrounded by hostile birds. Therefore, He called the beasts of the field to devour.

"I will drive them out of mine house. I will love them no more. All their princes are revolters."

When you get back to Jeremiah chapter 19, there is a difference between Jeremiah chapter 18 and Jeremiah chapter 19. In Jeremiah chapter 18, God has a work on the wheels, and he can make it into any kind of vessel that he wants to make it into. When you get to Jeremiah chapter 19, the vessel is already made. It has already been cooked in the fire, cooked in the oven. It is already hardened. Once it has been made, it can either be usable or it can be destroyed.

The truth of Jeremiah chapter 19 is that God is going to destroy them to the extent that they are not going to be usable and they are not going to be salvageable. In Jeremiah 19:10, we read: "Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee." In other words, the bottle is to be burst into pieces. "And shalt say to them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Even so will I break this people and this city as one breaketh a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again."

True Israel and the Seed of Abraham

"And they shall bury them in Tophet till there be no place to bury. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord, and to the inhabitants thereof, even make this city as Tophet. And the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto the host of heaven and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods."

Now, God basically destroyed the nation of Israel in 70 AD. Let me put it to you very plainly. You may disagree, but that is fine. The nation that was formed in 1948 is not Israel. It is a Zionist state. I do not care what they call themselves. They still hate God. They still hate his word. They still hate his son. The Bible teaches that only those who are in Jesus Christ are the true sons of Abraham. Let me show you that in the Bible.

Look at Galatians 3:16. The Bible says, "Now to Abraham and his seed"—notice that is singular—"Now to Abraham and his seed

were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." So how many seeds does Abraham have?

He had Isaac, he had Ishmael, and then he married again, married Keturah, and had a whole host of others. Abraham had plenty of physical seed, but that is not the true seed. Now, it is true that when you get to Romans 9, Isaac is a type of Christ. That is for sure. But the Bible says in verse 16, "And to Abraham and his seed were the promises made." All the promises that God gave to Abraham were actually given to the true seed of Abraham, which is Jesus Christ. That is why the Bible in the New Testament begins with Matthew 1:1: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

Galatians 3:29 says: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." So what then makes us the seed of Abraham? It is the Lord Jesus Christ. If we belong to Him, we are Abraham's seed, and we are heirs according to the promise. Everything that God promised Abraham was in Jesus Christ, and when we are in Jesus Christ, we are heirs of all those promises.

Galatians 6:16 says, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be with them, and mercy upon the Israel of God." Who in the world are the Israel of God? It is those who walk according to this rule. The word "rule" in the Greek is the word kanon. It is where we get our English word "canon," C-A-N-O-N, not C-A-N-N-O-N, that is the kind that shoots. When we talk about the canon of Scripture, we are talking about the Old Testament canon and the New Testament canon. The word kanon actually means a measuring rod or a measuring stick. So how do we measure who in the world the true Israel of God is? We use His measuring stick.

And he said this in verse 16: “And as many as walk according to this rule”—that is the word of God, the canon of Scripture—“peace be upon them, and mercy upon the Israel of God.” So the Israel of God are those who walk according to the rule of God. They are the ones in Jesus Christ. That is why, in the book of Philippians, he said, “We are the circumcision who serve the Lord Jesus Christ and have no confidence whatsoever in the flesh.”

There are two passages in the New Testament that show that we who are in Christ are His peculiar treasure. In Titus chapter 2, verses 13 and 14, the Scripture says, “Looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Note the phrase, “a peculiar people.”

In 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9, he says it again: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

The interesting thing is that the Greek word in both texts happens to be peripoiesis, which means a possession, a private possession, belonging to oneself. I could say that Alice is my private possession. She could say that I am her private possession. That is what the word actually means. The word laos for “peculiar people” means a people, a group of people, a tribe, a stock, or a nation of the same stock and language.

We are definitely of the same stock and language if God is our Father, for the Bible says in James 1, verse 18, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits.” He begat us; we are of the same stock.

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 32:28-36 (KJV)

The Valley of Hinnom and Its Abominations

Jeremiah was to go down to the valley of the son of Hinnom and take this vessel and break it to pieces in front of the ancients, the elders, and the priests as well. The Valley of the Son of Hinnom is known by several names. Sometimes it is called Tophet. It is also called the Valley of Slaughter and the Valley of the Sewer. This was the valley where Baal and Moloch were worshipped.

Jeremiah chapter 32, verse 28: "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it. And the Chaldeans that fight

> against this city shall come and set fire on this city and burn it with the houses upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth. For the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the Lord. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day, that I should remove it from before my face. Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 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 abominations in the house"—that is in the temple—"but they set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech, which I commanded them not. Neither came it into my mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin."
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> "And now therefore thus saith the Lord, the 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."

Jerusalem's Hinnom Valley marked the western and southern edges of Jerusalem. This is where they worshiped Baal and Moloch and a lot of other false gods as well. This is where King Manasseh sacrificed his own children unto Baal and Moloch. Manasseh is also the one who had prostitutes, both female and male, in the temple. It is where they wove hangings for the grove there in the temple and polluted it and defiled it, as God says, over and over.

This was a horrendous place. The word Tophet actually means “to roll as a drum.” Moloch was usually represented by a huge image made of brass, with his hands stretched upward. The bottom was empty, and in the bottom they built a roaring fire. Those who were going to sacrifice their children to Moloch came and placed them in his hands. As they placed them in his hands, the drums began to roll. The child then rolled down out of the hands or arms into the belly of Moloch, where he was consumed. The roll of the drums drowned out the screams of agony of the child. This was how they worshiped Moloch, giving him the child sacrifice as well. This valley also became a huge garbage dump.

It was where the sewer was, so to speak. With the garbage, there was a perpetual fire going all the time. It was called the Valley of the Sewer, and it was also called the Valley of the Pagans because of all the pagan activity that went on there. In the time of our Lord, the Valley of the Son of Hinnom became a byword for hell. In fact, you will find it translated as Gehenna in the New Testament. The word Gehenna refers to hell. It would be a picture of all the burning, all the stench, all the paganism, and all the filth that went on there.

Here is what Calvin said concerning the valley of the son of Hinnom: “Enter into the valley of the son of Hinnom. This valley was in the suburbs and was called Tophet. It is thought that this name is derived from the drums, because they did beat drums when infants were killed, lest their cries should excite any feelings of humanity. But here there was a double crime.”

They left the temple and sought to obtrude upon God's sacrifices against His expressed will. Another crime was still more atrocious: they devoted their children to Balaam, or to Baal, and not only to the true God. This was why the prophet was commanded to go to that place. The detestability of that service to God appears in the prophets' giving the name of hell to the Valley of Hinnom, in Hebrew, Gehinnom. At the time of Christ, it was a common name for hell; when Christ speaks of Gehinnom, He uses the word according to its common acceptation at that time.

The word has been corrupted by the Greeks, for it is properly Gehinnom. But what does the word mean in the Gospel? Hell

itself. And whence was its origin? We know how great and incurable was the madness of those who gave themselves up to their own superstitions. Though the prophets strongly condemned the place, the people proceeded in their usual idolatry. It was therefore necessary to give the place a disgraceful name, rendering it more abominable.

Modern Baal and Moloch Worship

When you think about Baal and Moloch worship, the average Christian today would say, "How atrocious. Who would be so stupid as to do something like that? Who would be so unthinking as to do something like that?" But the truth of the matter is that we still have Baal worship and Moloch worship in America today. All you have to do is consider the countless numbers of babies murdered through aborticide. A lot of these babies have been sacrificed to the god of convenience. It is not convenient to have a baby at this time; it might interfere with a career or a lifestyle. And so they simply murder their baby. Abortion is murder.

I do not care how you cut it. It is murder, because life begins at conception. If it did not, there would not be any growth. You ask, "How in the world is this Baal worship and Moloch worship?" The word Baal means "lord." The word Moloch means "king," and Moloch worship was an aspect of Baal worship. It was indeed a power religion, the religion of the state—in other words, the religion of the government. The state or government in America states that it is correct and all right to murder your own baby. So it is a veiled worship, a Moloch worship, because we are not worshiping the one true and living God. We are going by the power and authority of the state or government rather than the authority of God and His Word.

A lot of times these babies were not consumed by the fire. Some people would take their baby and pass it over the hands of Moloch. You will find it spelled Moloch, Molech, Milcom, and Malcham in the Bible. It is all the same. Sometimes they would simply pass the child over the fire as an act of purification or dedication. In other words, that baby then became the ownership and property of

Moloch or Baal. It was just that simple, because it was that dedication.

What we have done is this: those who have not sacrificed their children physically in aborticide have dedicated and purified their children to humanism and secularism through public and governmental education. Vladimir Lenin said, “Give me a child for the first five years of his life and he will be mine forever.” Another quote of Vladimir Lenin is this: “Give me four years to teach the children and the seed that I have sown will never be uprooted.” If you give your children to humanism and secularism through public or governmental education, do not be surprised if they are unable to think biblically, use common sense, or have a biblical work ethic.

When you stop and think of the problems in this country—when we are talking about BLM, Antifa, and all these progressive revolutionaries—they have all been educated by the state and by the government. When you look at the communistic dupes we have in Washington, DC, they have all had governmental education. It is a totally different mindset, a completely different mindset.

It upsets me when I see parents upset because their kindergarten and first-grade students are being taught perverted sex education, sodomy, transgenderism, and fifty-seven different genders. Why in the world would you subject your child to that to begin with? It is there; take them out. That is common sense. If I do not want my child taught those things, I should take him out and teach him myself.

Every parent is capable of teaching a child. He may not be capable of teaching calculus or trigonometry, but he is capable of teaching that child to read, write, and know what is true and what is not true. God requires—God commands—Christian education. Read Deuteronomy chapter 6 and Ephesians chapter 6, and read over and over how God commands us to teach our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren as well. Moloch worship and Baal worship are still with us today.

Why in the world did God destroy Judah and Jerusalem? Why did He destroy Israel? Why did He send the Babylonians, the

Assyrians, and finally the Romans in 70 AD to wipe them off the face of the earth? Here is the answer. Jeremiah 19:15 says, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this city and upon all her towns, all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks that they might not hear my words.”

The Root Cause: Hardening the Neck

Let that truth sink in. God said they had hardened their necks that they might not hear His words. They did not want the Word of God. They did not desire to listen, to change, or to repent. They did not want God. They wanted what they had, and that was it. They stiffened and hardened their necks so they would not hear.

Here is a principle, and I will show it to you from Scripture before I close: If you and I are not going to hear the least truth and obey it, we are not going to hear the greatest truth and obey it. If we cannot be faithful in that which is least, we are certainly not going to be faithful in that which is greatest. Our Lord said that Himself.

The Lesser-to-Greater Argument from Animal Care

Now let me show you the significance of the two illustrations I gave you. I told you about the four puppies that Alice found by the roadside. With the exception of two of our dogs, all the rest of them are rescues. Those are people thrown away—people who did not want them, leaving them to starve. Alice found four, brought them home, nursed them, washed them, fed them, and doctored them. They are fine now.

The second illustration was my marveling at the love and affection Rose and Gage were showering upon their first child. What in the world is the connection between these two things? I want you to turn, first of all, to Leviticus chapter 22, verse 28. There is a reason for this, which you will find out momentarily.

But God is talking about His sacrifices. Look at what He says in Leviticus 22:28: “And whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day.” He then goes on to speak about

offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving. If you are going to offer a cow and a calf, the offspring of the cow, you may not kill them on the same day or offer them to Him on the same day. If you have a ewe, a female sheep, and a lamb, you are not to kill them both on the same day. God says, "I don't want them offered to Me on the same day." You cannot kill them both on the same day.

Why? Let us go in our Bibles to Deuteronomy 4, beginning with verse 39. God says, "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath"—there is none else. "Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes and his commandments which I command thee this day." Now look at why: "That it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee forever." God says that you need to keep His commandments so that it may go well with you, may go well with your children, and that you may prolong your days upon the face of the earth.

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

Isn't that astounding? God says that if you see a mother bird sitting on her young or on eggs, you can take the young or the eggs, but you have to let the mother go. The eggs would not hatch without the mother anyhow, and the young could not survive without her. So it is the same principle as Leviticus 22: do not kill the mother and the young on the same day.

Note particularly the promise that God gives: "that it may go well with thee and that thou mayest prolong thy days." In Exodus 20:12, God says, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." There is the promise of long life.

Deuteronomy 5:16 gives the same command: “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” That is a wonderful promise. Then Ephesians 6:1–3 gives the passage you know: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

Notice what God says. First of all, you need to keep His commandments, that it may go well with thee; and, second, that thou mayest live long upon the face of the earth. He gives you the same promise in relationship to the animals, and He gives you the same promise in relationship to mankind. The promise concerns both the well-being that follows obedience and the prolonging of life.

Let me spell out the connection between these two illustrations. This whole thing is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If God requires you to respect the families of animals, how much more does He require you to respect the families of mankind? If you do not regard the families of animals, you are not going to have any regard for the families of mankind either.

Our Lord said it like this in Luke 16:10: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” People who are unfaithful in their care of animals, and unfaithful in regarding the families of animals, will not regard the families of mankind.

Inevitably, if they will mistreat an animal, they will mistreat a human. You know what the Bible says in Proverbs 12:10? “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” So let me try to tie this together for you.

How did we get here? When Alice picked up those animals, it was out of respect for the animals and for the love of life. When I saw Gage and Rose go over that baby and kiss that baby, it was not only thankfulness, but respect for life and a demonstration of love.

How did Judah and Jerusalem get to the position where God destroyed them as a nation?

Call to Repentance and Warning of Judgment

You remember Jeremiah 19:15? They stiffened their necks so that they would not hear. If you will not hear that which is the least, you are not going to hear that which is the greatest. If we continue to stiffen our necks as a nation, may I remind you of Proverbs 29:1? "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

That is exactly what happened to Judah and Jerusalem, and to Israel. God sent the Assyrians against the northern kingdom, the Babylonians against the southern kingdom, and then the Romans against all of them. Why? Simply because they would not hear. We have a nation full of supposed leaders who will not hear, and a nation full of people who will not hear.

Now let me make another application. You may not be an animal lover like I am, and that is fine. You may have no special love for animals and may not want a bunch of them. But that does not mean you should mistreat, abuse, or hate them. I want to show you something from the Bible. This may surprise you: God demands that we go out of our way to help animals, not to harm them.

One thing I despise is seeing animals needlessly slaughtered. We have these big old animals called gopher tortoises, or land tortoises. When I was a boy, I used to stand on their backs, and they would walk away with me on them. I weigh two hundred pounds today, and I can still stand on one; it will walk away with me standing on it.

They do nothing except eat grass and dig holes. They do not hurt anybody or anything. Yet I have seen car tracks on the road where someone purposely left the road to run over an old tortoise, just to kill him. Why? There are reasons in the Bible why we may lawfully take the lives of animals. Number one is for food. Number two is for protection.

If a snake is striking at me, I am going to shoot him if I can. If a lion is coming at me, I would shoot that lion, because my life is worth more than the lion's or the snake's. I may defend myself. The third reason is that the animal is hindering dominion. I do not eat rabbits, but if rabbits were eating up my garden, I would shoot them. I try to give them to someone who would eat them. You understand what I am saying.

There are three reasons why God gives us in the Bible that we can lawfully and legitimately take the lives of animals. But the point I am trying to make right now is this: you must go out of your way to help and not to hurt. There is a principle, and there is a reason.

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

“Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.” So God says, if you see your brother's horse stuck in a mud hole, he cannot get out. God says you cannot hide yourself from that animal; you have to help get him out. If you see a cow out on the road, you do not simply say, “Well, it is not my cow, I am sorry.” No, God says you stop and help save that cow's life. You get that cow back in.

You may say, “I am willing to do that. You are talking about my brother. I would help my brother; I would do that for my brother.” Really? Then look in Exodus 23:4. God says, “If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under

his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." Would you see a cow having trouble delivering a calf? God says you are to help, even if it belongs to your enemy. Why in the world is God telling us this?

Once again, it is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If we have the responsibility to help the families of animals, how much more do we have the responsibility to help the families of mankind? If we have the responsibility to go out of our way to help an animal, even an animal of our enemy, how much more responsibility do we have to help our enemy when he is in trouble?

So you have to ask yourself this question: How do we get here? The answer is, we will not even hear that which is least. I saw a short video for which I am really thankful. One man in a very nice station wagon stopped beside the road, went to the back, opened the door, and let a beautiful, grown German Shepherd out. Then he went around, got in the car, and drove off. The German Shepherd was chasing him.

No, he was just throwing him out. Thankfully, it was on camera. The tag was on camera, and the man was arrested. How you treat animals will inevitably demonstrate how you treat mankind. Those who love life, even the lives of animals, will love the lives of mankind. Alice loved the puppies and saved them. Rose and Gage loved their baby, which they should.

But I am simply saying, folks, Judah and Jerusalem got to where God destroyed them because they would not hear. We are at that place where people just will not hear. They do not want truth. They do not want what God demands. They do not want one word from God. But the truth is, they will hear. If you read through the book of Ezekiel, it is a book on judgment, and seventy-three times God says, "And they shall know that I am the Lord." Each time, it deals in judgment. That is one way men will find out who God really is: when he judges them, when he destroys them. Now would be the time to turn back to him.

Obey in the least, and we will obey in the greatest. If we disobey in the least, we will disobey in the greatest.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word and your truth. We ask, Lord, that you would indeed speak to our hearts and bring this nation back to thee. Grant us repentance, O Lord. May we, Father, once again act as thy people. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 32

What About Your Children and Grandchildren?

December 1, 2024

What About Your Children and Your Grandchildren?

Introduction and Reading of Genesis 10:1-5

We will be looking at a number of passages, but we will be staying with Genesis 10 for a while. The title of the message is, What About Your Children and Your Grandchildren? Look in Genesis chapter 10, verse 1.

Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And unto them were sons born after the flood. The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. And the sons of Gomer; Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah. And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

Children as a Heritage and the Painful Truth

The word of God tells us that children are the heritage of the Lord. In fact, that is what he said in Psalm 127 verses 3 and 4: "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." And so children are indeed the heritage of the Lord.

But the Bible also says in Proverbs chapter 17 and verse 6, "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers." It is true that grandfathers dote over their grandchildren. We love our children, and our grandchildren especially. We adore them. I have often said, since I had four daughters, if you hurt one of my daughters, I could hurt you real badly. But if you ever hurt one of my grandchildren, I could chew you up and spit you out and smile while I was doing it. Children, grandchildren especially, are precious. Grandparents enjoy spoiling those grandchildren and giving them right back to their parents.

The message today is one that must be preached. Yet it is not a very enjoyable message. It is a truth that must be taught, and it will convey a truth that will hurt in time, but it will certainly be cleared up in eternity as well. For now, in time and history, there will be pain. You may not comprehend the impact or the implications of what I am sharing with you right now, but by the time I get to the end of the message, I think you will understand it.

Biblical Definition of a Nation

Genesis chapter 10 gives us the divisions of the sons of Noah. After the flood, Noah, his sons, and his grandsons populated the earth. They were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These were the sons of Noah, and these sons and their families were given specific territories based upon their languages and upon their families.

I know that the Tower of Babel incident is not recorded until Genesis chapter 11. However, Genesis chapter 10 reflects that incident in the sense that different tongues, or different languages, are mentioned here. For instance, in verse 5 of Genesis chapter 10,

we read, “By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.” Now skip down to verse 20: “These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.” Now skip down to verse 31: “These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations. These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.”

It is interesting when you look back at verse 5: “By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands.” Matthew Poole makes an excellent comment on the word “isles.” He says the word “isles” here signifies all the countries that had the sea between them and Judea. He lists a number of Scriptures, and then he says also that the word “isles” is oftentimes put for the inhabitants of the land, just as sometimes the word “land” and “earth” also reflect the inhabitants of the land.

But before going any further, the significance of the word “nation” must be noted, because over and over in chapter 10, we read the word “nation,” for instance, in verse 5: “every one after his tongue, after their families, and after their nations.” You will see this all the way through. So, what do we mean when we talk about our nation? What in the world do we mean when we talk about a nation? Look at it in the Scripture. Albert Barnes defines a nation in these words: “In their nations, we here note the characteristic of a nation. Here are the characteristics of a nation.”

First, a nation is descended from one head. Others may be occasionally grafted in on the original stock by intermarriage, but there is a vital union subsisting between all the members and the head, in consequence of which the name of the head is applied to the whole body of the nation. When we talk about Esau, the Edomites, Esau is Edom, the Bible says. Every nation has one head.

Secondly, a nation has a country or land which it calls its own. Thirdly, a nation has its own tongue. This constitutes at once its unity in itself and its separation from others. Many of the nations in the table may have spoken cognate tongues or even originally

the same tongue. Thus the Canaanite, the Phoenician, and the Punic nations have the same stock of languages with the Shemites, but it is a uniform law that one nation has only one speech within itself.

Fourthly, a nation is composed of many families, clans, or tribes. These branch off from the nation in the same manner as it did from the parent stock of the race.

In Genesis 25:16, the Word of God says, "These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations." When we talk about a nation, remember that it descended from one head and has its own land and language.

Genesis 25:22 says, "And the children struggled together within her." We are talking about Rebecca. "And she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb." We are talking about Jacob and Esau. "And two manner of people," in other words, two different people, "shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." When she wondered what was happening inside her womb, God said, "Two nations are in there."

Usually, a nation descends from one head. It has its own land, country, and tongue. There may be many different families or clans in that group, but they still descended from one head. What I am trying to show you is simply this: multiculturalism, multilinguistics, and aliens do not make a nation; they destroy a nation. They are not descendants of the same head, they are not of the same soil, they do not have the same language, and they are not of the same family, religion, or values.

What we are seeing in the invasion of America is not its strength in diversity; it is its destruction. Deuteronomy 32:8 records what God has done: “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 divided the nations, separated the sons of Adam, and set the bounds of the people. He is the One who sovereignly placed

these people in their nations. That is why the Oriental people were in the Orient, and the Western people are in the West.

God's Sovereign Division of Nations

In other words, God did this purposefully and deliberately. The same truth is given in Acts 17:26: “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.” Before the world actually began, God appointed the boundaries of every nation, as it amounts to. Without dwelling on this issue, God did determine the land and boundaries of all the nations. He placed every nation within its bounds according to Deuteronomy 32:8, based upon the children of Israel.

Notice, then, that these families or nations are usually made up of one family head. They have their own land and their own tongue. When you invade another land to conquer it, what you are basically doing is destroying that nation, because everyone wants to have something that they can control that nation in and by.

Anytime there is an invasion into a nation, it is the destruction of that people. Look at what the king of Assyria did to the Israelites in the northern kingdom. In 2 Kings 17:6, the Bible says, "In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."

The king of Assyria had conquered Israel, the northern kingdom. He took them out of the land and placed them in Assyria. Then, in verse 24, we read, "And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel. And they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof."

Notice what he had done. He took the inhabitants of the land out and placed them in a foreign country. They were surrounded by people with a different language, culture, and values. He took these strange people and placed them in the land of Israel. As you read the rest of the chapter, you find that they all had their

separate gods and spoke separate languages. There was absolutely no unity.

So here is my question: How could there be a rebellion against the king of Syria when there was absolutely no unity? No one could speak the same language. No one had the same values. Since they had been moved out of their land and their place, there was nothing worth fighting for anyhow. This was a means of destroying a people.

Because of all the intermarriage and all that had happened since the children of Israel came out of Babylon, Nehemiah records: “In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.” Here is absolute total confusion.

There cannot be any resistance to anyone or anything when you do not have the same language, the same religion, or the same family. You are no longer a nation; you are simply an individual there. Look at what has happened in England. They are now fighting each other in the streets. The same thing is true in Ireland. The same thing happens to be true in France. And look at Dearborn, Michigan.

There is no assimilation of these people into our culture. There is no assimilation of them in taking Christianity upon themselves. Instead, what they want to do is impose their culture and their religion upon us and demand that we submit to what they think, how they live, and how they believe. So we must understand that nations are usually formed from one head, one family, one language, and one culture. That is exactly what happened: being able to control them and enslave them.

And anything that is introduced into a nation that's contrary to those things is technically called war, because you're basically destroying the nation is what it is.

What I want you to do today is think about the title of this message: What about your children? What about your grandchildren? Are they saved? Are they righteous and obedient

before the Lord? Do you pray for them? Do you seek to have influence upon them? Do you seek to instruct them in the ways of the Lord?

The Hard Question: Are Our Children Saved?

I realize that when you have grown children, they are on their own, and their parents themselves, usually, have very little opportunity to direct their lives after they leave home. However, have you thought about this fact? And if you come to this realization—I told you it's a hard message—that your children and your grandchildren may die unsaved? That's a hard thought, because as parents and as grandparents, we want what is best for our children and especially for our grandchildren as well.

As Christians, we desire to see them reared in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. In fact, the word of God tells us in Ephesians chapter 6 that the fathers are to raise them in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. But yet we know, based upon the words of our Lord, that not everyone's going to be saved. Our Lord says, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Now skip down to verse 21. Here's our Lord speaking again: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." In Matthew chapter 25, our Lord separates the sheep from the goats. In verse 41 He speaks to those on the left: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in. Naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him,

saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Let me point something out. I told you this was a hard message. It is difficult to think that our children or grandchildren might not be saved or might die unsaved. I am going to tell you something even harder: our children and grandchildren might turn out to be enemies of Jesus Christ and enemies of the Word of God, and even our own enemies as well. If I were to ask you to name three of the greatest enemies of Israel in the Old Testament, when Israel was God's covenant people, I am sure you would name Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria. I will give you a surprise concerning Assyria. Here is a quote from Bill Thederer, and then I am going to show it to you from the Bible.

Israel's Enemies Came from Noah's Family

He said, and I'm quoting, "The name Assyria is derived from Asshur, its ancient capital, sitting on the Tigris River, named after its founder, Asshur, the son of Shem, the son of Noah." Now, if you look back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 10, go to Genesis chapter 10. And here's an interesting thing. It's kind of just thrown in the mix all of a sudden. So, notice if you would, verse 11, the Bible says, "Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah." Asshur, now skip down to verse 22. "The children of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram." Wow! Asshur, one of the sons of Shem, built Nineveh. So Assyria originally was started by the son of Shem, which was the son of Noah.

Now, let me point something out. Assyria was a great great country. It was a big country. And so you had then Western Assyria. So Western Assyria, that was a mouthful. And so instead of calling it Western Assyria, it was shortened in the Bible to just simply Syria. Does that ring a bell to you? You remember Abraham told Eliezer his servant, you're not going to take a wife out of

Canaan for my son Isaac. You're going to go back and you're going to get someone from my country, my kindred. Well, if you look in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 25 and verse 20, let's see that. "And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian." So it was Isaac married Rebekah the Syrian, but then Aram, the land of Aram. Ah. Well now look in your Bibles if you would to chapter 28 and verse 5. "And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother." Then if you will look in

your Bibles, you've got to see this verse in Deuteronomy chapter 26. Look at this confession that had to be made when you came to offer a gift unto God. Look at this. Deuteronomy chapter 26 and verse 5. God tells them exactly what they have to say. Deuteronomy 26 verse 5. "And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father."

"And he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous." Note, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father." You have to remember now that Asshur was a son of Shem. He initially and originally founded Nineveh in the Assyrian Empire. Yet the Assyrians turned out to be a vehement enemy of Israel in the Old Testament. It is true that when you talk about Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria, they were great enemies. They conquered the Israelites, that is for sure, and subdued them.

Were there more enemies of Israel in the Old Testament? The answer is yes. Were there more enemies? There were enemies continually, where Israel was constantly fighting them. Egypt still attacked every now and then. Babylon and Assyria did as well. Yes, there were great captivities, but that was God's judgment. Just stop and think about all the other enemies that they had in the land, whom they were fighting constantly and perpetually.

Can you name some of them? There were the Philistines, for sure. We could just say Canaanites in general, because all of these people lived in Canaan, in Canaan land. But they were indeed the Philistines, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the

Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. You could also call the Amalekites, the Moabites, and the Edomites as well.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Judges, chapter 10. Let us begin reading with 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." There were the Midianites. The hand of Midian is an interesting matter also, because the Midianites came from an interesting place. The Ishmaelites were Midianites, but Abraham married again after Sarah died; he married Keturah, and one of her sons was Midian. "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 strong holds. 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."

The Midianites encamped against Israel and destroyed the increase of the earth as far as Gaza, leaving no sustenance for Israel—neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. They came with their cattle and tents, as grasshoppers for multitude, and their camels were without number. They entered the land to destroy it, and Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; so the children of Israel cried unto the Lord. When they cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, the Lord sent a prophet unto them, saying, “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.”

He was saying, “I told you not to do this.” But note that he was talking about the Midianites and the Amorites. In 1 Samuel 7:7, when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together at Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel.

First Samuel 14:47-48 says, “So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab,” that is, the Moabites, “and against the children of Ammon,” the Ammonites, “and against Edom,” the Edomites, “and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.” Thus, in this chapter, we have talked about the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the Philistines, and the Amalekites. They were constant enemies of Israel.

In 2 Samuel 8:10-14, you will also find that David fought against Syria, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Amalekites, and the Edomites.

Now here is a question that I have got to ask you: Where did all these people come from? Who birthed these people? How is it that the people of God had so many enemies on every side, who hated them perpetually, constantly, and continually? Where did they originate?

Before I answer that, I am going to ask you again: What about your children and your grandchildren? Do you cry for them?

Do you pray for your children and grandchildren? Do you seek to reach them for the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you ever considered that they may die unsaved, or even become obstinate enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ and His people?

It is true that God usually places His elect in families. Psalm 68:6 says, "God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land." Yet godly parents do not always sire godly children, and godly grandparents do not always have godly grandchildren.

I have taught in Christian schools from the fourth grade through college, and I have seen young people raised in church, attending Christian school every day and graduating from one, who turned out to be reprobates. I have also seen children who attended government schools, never went to church, and whom God saved, making them extremely godly and holy. I personally know one

young man whose parents divorced when he was young. His mother was a bar hopper and dragged him from bar to bar for years; he literally grew up in bars. Yet God saved him, called him to preach, and he is actively preaching even now.

When you consider this, and even the kings of Judah, you have to ask yourself this question. The northern kingdom and its kings need not be considered, because there were no godly kings there.

How could an ungodly, reprobate king like Ahaz—who saw the altar in Damascus, had the priest make one like it, put it in the house of God, worshiped all the gods, and placed all kinds of false gods in the house of God—produce a godly son like King Hezekiah?

Then you would have to ask yourself this question: How could a godly king like Hezekiah sire such an ungodly reprobate as Manasseh? It simply blows your mind. So I ask, where did all these people come from? Go back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 10. Let us begin reading with verse 6.

By the way, Japheth was the older son. We always say Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and that is how it is recorded in the Bible, but the Bible does say that Japheth was the older; he was the elder. Genesis 10, verse 6: "And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan. And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan. And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth."

He was the first tyrant, a mighty hunter before the Lord, literally against the Lord. "Wherefore it is said, 'Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.'" The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

Now here we have Asshur: "Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city. And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, and Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (out of whom came Philistim,) and Caphtorim. And Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth." Are you looking?

"And the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite, and the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, and the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad." Has anything registered in your mind at this particular point? In verse 20, he says, "These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations." All of these enemies that we read about throughout the Old Testament came from Ham, the son of Noah. In other words, all of these enemies of God's people were Noah's grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They were descendants of Noah. That is mind-boggling.

Moreover, if you look in Genesis chapter 19, you will find where the Moabites and the Ammonites came from. Beginning with verse 30: "And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters."

"And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab."

"The same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day." So the Moabites and the Ammonites were sons of Lot through incest. Lot, of course, was the nephew of Abraham. What about the Amalekites?

Genesis 36:12 may surprise us. The Amalekites actually were related to Esau, who was the son of Isaac. Notice the passage: “And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek: these were the sons of Adah Esau's wife.” Amalek, and therefore the Amalekites, were the grandchildren of Esau.

Israel's enemies were of their own family. One way or the other, they were all related. Esau was just as much a son of Isaac as was Jacob, and Ham was just as much a son of Noah as were Shem and Japheth.

Salvation Is Not of Blood, Flesh, or Will of Man

With this in mind, turn to John chapter 1. This is a passage many can quote, but consider its meaning. John 1:11-13 says: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Let me deal with these negatives first. The Bible says, “which were born, not of blood.” “Not of blood” speaks of ancestry. Neither Grandpa Abraham nor Daddy Isaac could save Esau. Uncle Abraham could not save the Moabites and the Ammonites. The fact that your father or grandfather was a preacher does not matter. Being a direct descendant of Abraham does not matter. Esau was a direct descendant of Abraham—his grandson.

You remember what our Lord said when someone came to Him: “Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.” Our Lord asked, “Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?” Then He answered, “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” What was He saying? The earthly ties are gone. When those Jews came to be baptized by John the Baptist, he told them, “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”

He said, “Your ancestry means nothing.” So many people think today, “Those folks over in Israel, they are the descendants of Abraham.” First, they are not the descendants of Abraham. Secondly, if they were, it would not amount to a hill of beans. It does not count for one thing. Our Lord said it is not of blood. Then, in verse 13, he says, “nor of the will of the flesh.” The will of the flesh speaks of natural generation. In other words, we cannot ride on the coattails of our parents and grandparents.

It also refers to anything and everything that the corrupt heart could imagine or suppose to do. It is useless. I heard a preacher on the radio ask at the end of his message, “Will you make your decision for Christ?” You can make all the decisions you want to; that does not amount to a hill of beans. It is not the flesh. The will of man is obviously this: I cannot will myself into salvation, and you cannot will yourself into salvation. None whatsoever.

Those who are saved are saved of God. John 1 says, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Those who are saved are born of God. Salvation is of God alone.

The flesh, blood, and ancestry—none of that means anything. If God does not save us, we are unsaved, period. Man cannot do anything and will not be able to do anything to save himself, much less anyone else, much less his children or grandchildren.

Wrestling with God and the Reality of Eternity

We must come to the conclusion and realization that only God can save our children and grandchildren. Therefore, we cannot be content with education, training, human desire, or sentimentality. I know that the Word of God says, “Train up a child in the way he should go.” I know that the Bible says, “Fathers, bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” I know that the Bible requires Christian education. But no amount of education is going to save anybody, whether Christian or not Christian, because Jesus Christ is the Savior.

Yes, we must educate our children in truth. But we cannot depend upon that education to save them. We must ask God to bless that education and use it to lead them to Jesus Christ, who can save them. So many times we say, "We're going to teach our children right," and hang on to that verse, "Train up a child in the way he should go." "And when he is old, he will not depart from it." I know a lot of them who were trained and taught, and they did depart. That is a general promise. It is saying that, with the blessing of God in their lives, they will not. But if the blessing of God is not there, they're going to go away from the truth. That's all there is to it.

So the point I'm trying to make is this: remember how Jacob wrestled with God? The angel said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." And Jacob said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." That is the attitude we have to take concerning our children and our grandchildren. We have to wrestle with God and say, "Lord, please, please have mercy upon my children, upon my grandchildren."

Here is a good question: Will we know our children and grandchildren in eternity, those who die lost and unsaved? I could give you my standard stock answer: We're not going to be any more stupid there than we are here, and if we know them here, we're certainly going to know them there. I'll show you. Look in your Bibles at Luke 16, beginning with verse 19: "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 16:25-31 (KJV)

> But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham. But if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

The rich man knew Lazarus. He knew that Lazarus was comforted, and he knew that he was tormented. The rich man knew Abraham. He knew his five brethren who were lost. They both also knew that there was a great gulf, or a great gap, a great chasm, that could not be bridged between those who were blessed and those who were cursed.

I told you it is a hard message. But here is the hard truth: our lost children, our lost grandchildren, and our lost great-grandchildren will be condemned. We who are saved will stand with Jesus Christ against our own flesh. We will side with Him. We will declare His righteousness, His holiness, and His justice, and we will uphold His determination.

Will we weep for our lost children and grandchildren, knowing the absolute justice, righteousness, and holiness of Jesus Christ? The answer is probably yes. That is why Revelation 21:4 says, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." There have to be tears for God to wipe them away.

What happens to families, societies, and nations that forsake the Lord can happen in one generation. Judges 2:7 says, "And the

people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old."

"And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim." One generation.

And the whole nation was gone. One generation: the loss of a family, the loss of society, the loss of a nation. You remember that passage in Acts chapter 20, where the Apostle Paul met with the elders? He tells them that they should beware. In Acts chapter 20, beginning in verse 28, he tells the elders, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.”

And then he says this: “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” After Paul was gone, wolves would come in, and some of them would begin teaching error just to get followers. In one generation, everything can be destroyed.

Hope While There Is Life

As long as our children and grandchildren are alive, there is hope. God may be merciful to them right up to the very last minute. There is one deathbed conversion in the Bible, and only one: the thief on the cross. God gives us one deathbed conversion so that none will presume upon the mercy and grace of God, but he gives us one that none may lose hope. Just as God saved that dying thief at the last minute, he may choose to save our lost children and grandchildren at the last minute.

I had a dear friend whom I buried many years ago. His wife and he were dear friends of ours. Alice and I called him Mama and Papa, although we were not related; he counted us both as his children. God saved him when he was older. Until then, he was a drunk. He was a worker, but he was drunk.

He also played the saxophone beautifully. One of his favorite songs, which he played over and over, was "Wasted Years, Wasted Years, Oh, How Foolish." He often said to me, "I just wish I knew when I was a young man what I know now." He regretted his sins and his drunkenness for so many years.

I looked at him and said, "Papa, let me explain something to you. If you had heard this truth when you were young, you would not have listened. God determined when you were to be born again, and that is when you were born again." The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 1, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace." Paul said that, just as God sovereignly determined the day and hour he was born physically, God also sovereignly determined the day and hour he was born spiritually. That day and hour could be up to the very last minute.

I am simply saying that, as long as our children and grandchildren are alive, there is hope. It is a hard truth, and you do not want to think about these things. But if you really understand this, it should make you cry to God for mercy on your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. If God does not save them, they will never be saved.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray for these, our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Lord, have mercy upon them. We ask, Father, for a godly seed. We recognize that our enemies can come from our own loins, just as they did in the Old Testament. Father, give us understanding. Help us to wrestle with thee for our children and grandchildren. We ask for your grace and mercy in their lives. Help us reach them, teach them, and endeavor to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

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