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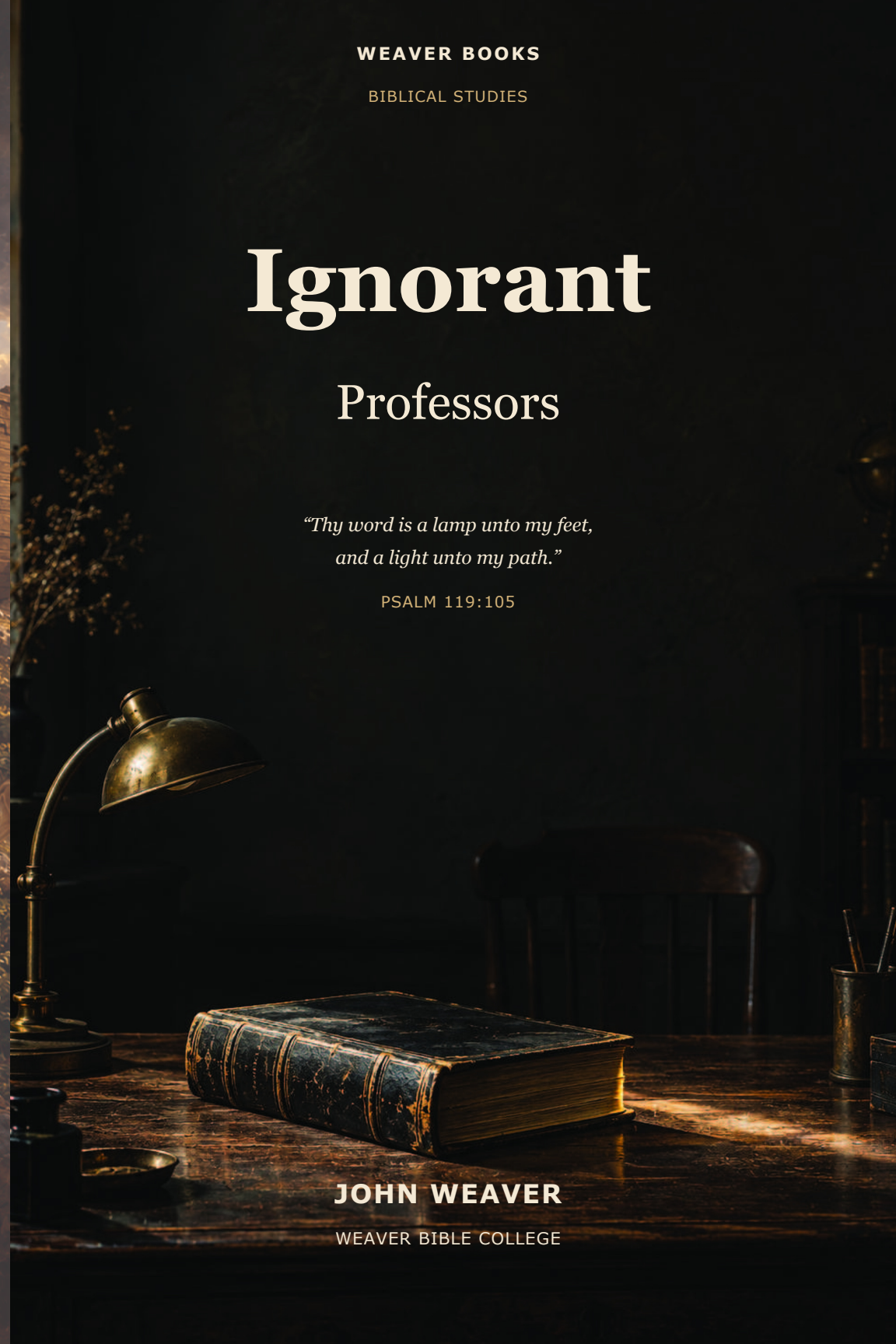
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Ignorant

Professors

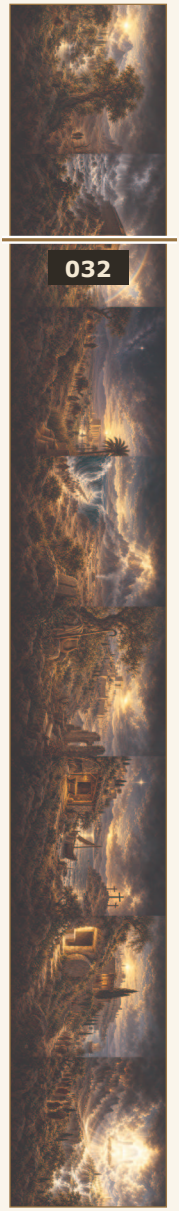
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



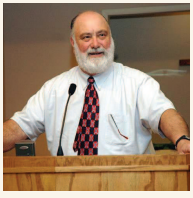
My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

HOSEA 4:6, EXCERPT

A profession of faith does not remove the need to know God's ways. John Weaver examines the consequences of spiritual ignorance and the connection between knowledge, holiness, and obedience. These messages urge believers to grow in understanding and to let that understanding shape a life worthy of the Lord.

“Wherever there is a desire for holiness and obedience, there will inevitably be a desire to know God's ways.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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

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CHAPTER 1

Ignorant Professors

Part One of Two

Introduction: Ignorance is Death, Not Bliss

Hebrews chapter 3, beginning with verse 7: “Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.”

The text that I am dealing with today and next Sunday, Lord willing, is found in verse 10: “Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.” I have said before, and I will say it again: if ignorance is bliss, we should be the happiest people on earth. But according to our text, ignorance is not bliss; it is death. The Israelites were ignorant of God and His ways, and they died in the wilderness. They did not enter Canaan.

Hebrews 3:10 is a quotation from Psalm 95:10: “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.” Thus I title this message, “Ignorant Professors.” God says they had not known His ways. In 1 Corinthians 10:5, the Bible simply says, “But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.”

Hebrews 3:17–19 says essentially the same thing: “But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” I always find it interesting when I read in the Bible, “But with many of them God was not well pleased,” for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

When you stop and think about this, the only individuals of the original men who came out and got into Canaan land were Joshua and Caleb. With many of them God was not well pleased; with all of them He was not well pleased except for those two. Notice again in verse 10 that God says, “They have not known My ways.” That is, they were completely ignorant of God and His ways.

When I read that verse recently, the thought struck me: I wonder how many professing Christians really know God. If we really know Him, we should also know His ways. If we do not know His ways, then we really do not know Him. In other words, His ways reveal who He is. They are the manifestation of His person and His character.

Knowing God Means Knowing His Ways

Let me put it to you this way, in order that you might think along these lines. As parents, we have loved and raised our children, and many of them are now grown. So you have to ask yourself this question: Do my grown children really know me? Do my grown children really understand my ways?

I submit to you that much conflict arises in families simply because families do not understand each other and do not know each other’s ways. That is true between husband and wife; father and

children; mother and children; brothers and sisters; cousins, aunts, and uncles. When we do not understand each other's ways, there is always conflict. When our ways are dishonored, disrespected, and disobeyed, trouble always arises. So God says these people did not know His ways. I have often wondered if any of my children really know me.

At times I think they do; at times I think they certainly do not. It is certainly a source of grief for any parent when a child acts contrary to what you have said, taught, and lived. If it hurts and grieves us when our children do not walk in our ways—and as godly parents we want godly children—how much more will it grieve our Heavenly Father if we do not walk in His ways? John the Apostle said in 3 John verse 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

And God said this concerning Abram in Genesis 18:19: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken concerning him." So God said, "I know Abraham." Abraham knew God, God knew Abraham, and Abraham knew God's ways.

But when we look at Isaiah 55:8-9, we have to understand that by nature we do not know God's ways, and by nature we do not know God's thoughts. God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Clearly, then, if by nature we do not think God's thoughts and do not know His ways, when we are converted, when we are saved by His grace, we have to learn to think as He thinks. We have to learn His ways and walk in them.

God's Ways Are Higher Than Our Ways

Now His ways are knowable and doable. In 1 Kings 3:14, as King Solomon was assuming the throne, God said this: "And if thou wilt walk in my ways, and keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days." If Solomon

wanted a long life, he had to walk in the ways his father David walked, because David walked in God's ways.

Interestingly, when Rehoboam, David's grandson, was king, the kingdom was, as you remember, rent in twain. Jeroboam took the ten tribes, and Rehoboam kept the southern tribes. There was not a godly king in all of northern Israel; they were all wicked.

Jeroboam was even one of the most wicked. Here is what God said to Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11:38: "And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that which is right in my sight, and keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; then I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee." So God came to Jeroboam and said, Look, all you have to do is walk in My ways and keep My commandments, and I will build you a sure house just as I told David. Of course, Jeroboam disobeyed. He was the one who built the two golden calves and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

When you get to Psalm 81:13, God made this statement: "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" In the Hebrew, this is a wish contrary to reality, a desire contrary to fact. God said, "Oh, that my people had hearkened to Me," but they did not; "and Israel had walked in My ways," but they did not. God is expressing a desire concerning this. The truth is, God desires that His people walk in His ways.

In Ephesians 5:1, the Apostle Paul said, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children." The word followers is a very interesting word. It is actually the word to be imitators, or to mimic. He said, Be ye mimickers of God; be ye imitators of God. Clearly, we must walk in His ways if we please Him. That is why, in Matthew 5:48, our Lord said, "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." When you consider that God has His ways and we have our ways, then you must understand what God said through the prophet Haggai.

During that time when they were rebuilding the temple, God said in Haggai 1, verse 5, "Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts,

Consider your ways." Then He repeated it again in verse 7: "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Consider your ways." What God is asking is that we consider our ways, and if our ways are not His ways, then we need to repent and turn back to Him. The reason is found in Psalm 145, verse 17: "The Lord is righteous in all of His ways, and holy in all of His works." All of His ways are right; they are righteous. In Revelation 15:3, the Bible says, "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb," saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." So again, God's ways are just and true.

Today I want us to look at just two points. The first one is this: we are commanded to walk in God's ways. I am going to show you a number of passages from the book of Deuteronomy. I could multiply the passages and take them basically out of any book of the Bible, but I want you to see the essence of what it means to walk in His ways. I want you to understand that everything He says is very plain, very clear, and straightforward—almost impossible to misunderstand.

Commanded to Walk in God's Ways (Deuteronomy)

Let us begin in Deuteronomy 8:6, and ponder this verse: "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him." What does it mean, then, to walk in His ways? First of all, it means to keep His commandments. Secondly, it means to fear Him. It is impossible to fear the Lord and not obey Him. Moreover, it is impossible to walk in His ways and then dishonor and disobey His commandments. Because if you are walking in His ways, you are walking in His commandments.

You have to remember that the Word of God, the entirety of it, is God's revealed will for our lives. Therefore, thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 says, "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy

heart, with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?"

What does the Lord thy God require of thee but to fear the Lord? What is fearing the Lord thy God? It is walking in His ways. And what does it mean to love Him and serve Him with all thy heart and all thy soul? It means keeping the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, which He commands for our good. Loving the Lord, serving the Lord, and keeping His commandments is walking in His ways.

Please take note of this fact: as we walk in His ways and keep His commandments, we honor Him. But doing that is not simply for His honor and glory; according to verse 13, it is for our good.

Deuteronomy 11:22 says, "If ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him." We have already pointed out that loving the Lord and walking in His ways involve obeying His commandments.

But I want you to note that He adds something: "For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave unto Him." So the question is, how do we cleave to the Lord? What does cleaving unto the Lord imply?

When we think of the word cleave, we think, of course, of holding on to and sticking close to someone. You can say, "That individual"—you see little kids, even little boys, especially when they are a year or two old; they do not want to leave Mama. They are cleavers. They cleave to Mama. They have to have Mama all the time. When we use the word cleave, that is normally what we think of, but it actually means more than to stick close to and to be close together. For instance, do you remember in Genesis chapter two and verse 24, God says this: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

The word cleave literally means to join together. Now stop and think about this. We are joined together with our Heavenly Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, in that He enables us, by His grace and mercy, to walk after His commandments and keep them and do

them. Let me say this another way: My faith is revealed and evidenced and manifested by obedience. Let me go a step further: To refuse to cleave unto Him is spiritual fornication.

Consider this passage in light of the Bible commanding us to cleave unto the Lord. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 13, he says, “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.” God has made our body for Himself. The body is not to be used in an unlawful manner. Verse 14 says, “And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise us up by his own power.” Now it begins, so look carefully.

Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? If we have been saved, our bodies are the members of Christ. Remember, He is the head, and we are the body. Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. Know you not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? For two shall be one flesh. There is cleaving. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?

For your bulk with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. So refusing to cleave unto the Lord as the one true and living God, as the Sovereign, as the Ultimate, as the Supreme One who has given us His Law and His Word to guide and direct our lives—to refuse to cleave unto Him—is spiritual fornication.

It is just that simple. If I am joined to the Lord, I cannot use my body in an unlawful manner. I cannot cleave to another God or profess any other God. I have to cleave unto Him alone, and I do so in faith and obedience. This is what our Lord said in John chapter 14 and verse 15: “If you love me, keep my commandments.” Then, in John 14, verse 21, He said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” Walking in His ways demonstrates that we are cleaving unto Him, that He is truly and genuinely our God.

Now, go back to Deuteronomy, but go to Deuteronomy 26 and look at verse 17. In fact, let us begin reading with verse 13. Let me just tell you about this chapter without reading the entire chapter. This is where the Israelites were coming to the priests, bringing their offerings and tithes to the Lord. In verse 13, they would make a confession.

Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away thy hallowed things out of mine house. Also I have given them unto the Levite—there is the Levitical tithe—and to the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widower; that is the poor tithe, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me. I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them. I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away aught thereof for any unclean use, nor given aught thereof for the dead, which would be idolatry. But I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me.

So here is the prayer request: Look down from thy holy habitation from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey. This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments. Thou shalt therefore keep to do them with all thine heart and with all thy soul. Now watch: thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, to walk in his ways and to keep his statutes and his commandments and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice.

Go back to verse 17: “Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God.” The word avouched is a very interesting word. We normally use the word vouch. Someone might ask, “What about David? Is he reliable? Is he a good worker? Is he honest?” I could say, “I can vouch for David.” All that means is that I am saying, yes, he is genuine, real, and true.

However, the word means even more than that. The Hebrew word is Amar, which means not only to speak, but also to say in one's heart, to think, and to promise. When we obey Him and do that which He has commanded, we are saying, thinking, and promising

that He is our God. The way everybody knows that He is our God is that we keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments.

So we are vouching that God is the Sovereign, the Supreme One, the Ultimate, and that there is none but Him. Let me show you something else. Look in your Bibles at verse 18: "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." Is that not amazing? As we have vouched God to be our God in obedience to Him, then God avouches the fact.

"You're mine because you're obeying me. You're walking in my ways. You're doing exactly that which I desire." Look in Deuteronomy 28:9: "The Lord shall establish the unholy people under by unto himself, as he is sworn unto thee, if keep the commandments of the Lord thy God and walk in his ways." How are we to be a holy people? How are we to demonstrate that we are His? The answer is by keeping His commandments and walking in His ways. In fact, walking in His ways is keeping His commandments.

Those who do not belong to the Lord are not interested in walking in His ways or keeping His commandments. Their lives evidence and manifest that they are not interested. Ignorant professors do not know Him; neither do they walk in His ways. Moreover, they do not want to know Him, and they do not want to walk in His ways.

About a week and a half ago, I was in Douglas, Georgia, waiting to get a haircut. There was one man in front of me, so I picked up a shopper to look through it. There was an advertisement: "We're starting a new church. We're putting the fun back in Christianity—parties every month, singing and dancing." I thought, Lord, have mercy. Where is preaching? Where is teaching? Where is obedience? We're putting the fun back in Christianity. I wonder what the first-century Christians thought was fun when they were being burned at the stake and thrown to the lions. Can you imagine?

That is why God said, "This is an ignorant people; they have not known my ways." Israel professed to be His, but they were totally, absolutely ignorant. They chose to walk in their own ways, not in the ways of God. This brings me to the second consideration: to depart from the ways of the Lord is wickedness.

Departing from God's Ways is Wickedness and Perversion

When one turns from the ways of the Lord, he automatically turns to his own ways. Essentially, turning to your own ways is turning from the Lord and away from His ways. What did God say in Hebrews 3:10? “They do always err in their hearts; they have not known my ways.” The reason we err, or make errors, in our heart is because we do not know the ways of the Lord. The problem is not a problem if you know what to do. You only have problems when you are ignorant, do not know what to do, or do not have the ability to work it out. God says we err because we do not know His ways, thus implying that our ways are ways of ignorance and wickedness.

David said it like this in 2 Samuel 22:22: “For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.” The same verse is quoted in Psalm 18:21. In both passages David is saying that when we depart from the ways of the Lord, it is wickedness.

Is it not grievous to us when our children depart from our ways? Christian parents desire holy, godly, righteous, obedient children—children that know the way of the Lord and the ways of their godly parents. Oftentimes, when our children sin, instead of confronting them, we make excuses for them. God is not like that; He points out sins very quickly.

God says in Jeremiah 4:22, “For my people is foolish. They are foolish. They have not known me. They are soddish children, and they have none understanding. They’re wise to do evil, but to do good, they have no knowledge.” God says, “For my people are foolish. They have not known me.” And if they do not know Him, they do not know His ways. They are soddish children.

I am going to explain the word sottish in just a moment. Usually we use the word sot for a drunkard, but that is not what this word means. You can take a child who is ugly, rebellious, stubborn, and will not listen, and usually we say, “That is a snotty little kid.” By that we mean he is mean and ugly, and we do not like to be around him. The word sonnish here actually means foolish and to play the fool. He says, “For my people are foolish, they have not known me; they

are soddish children." That is, they are foolish; they are playing the fool. The evidence that they are playing the fool is that they have no understanding.

They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. So they may be professors, but they are ignorant professors. God says they do not know Him; they have no knowledge. The only knowledge they have is to do evil and wickedness.

Now let me show you where Israel fell and from where they fell. In Deuteronomy chapter 4, Moses is speaking as God gives them the law after they came out of the land. He says: "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, 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?"

God says, "Keep my commandments. Keep my law. This is your wisdom. This is your understanding." And all the other nations will look around and say, "What nation is so great as this one? Look how close God is to them, how nigh God is to them in all things." There is not any other nation that has so righteous judgments and statutes.

And now, in Jeremiah 4 and verse 22, they have fallen so far that God said, "For my people are foolish, they have not known me; they are soddish children, and they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Ignorance and disobedience degenerated a wise and understanding holy people into a soddish, disobedient, and rebellious people.

If you look in Jeremiah chapter 9 and verse 3, here is what Jeremiah says, and God says, concerning these people: "And they bend their tongues like their bows for lies. But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth, for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord." So they are liars. They are not

valiant for the truth. They hate the truth. They do not care for the truth. They proceed from evil to evil, and God says, “They have not known me.”

If you will turn back to Isaiah 42 and look at verse 24, look at this question and the answer: “Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers?” Here is the answer: “Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient to his law.” So God gave them up to a spoil. God constantly and consistently cried out against their sin and their degradation, but they refused to listen.

In 2 Kings 17:13, we read: “Yet the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets and by all the seers, saying, Turn you from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.” God sent servants. God sent prophets. And they refused to listen.

When you get to Jeremiah 3, since you are not too far from there, go right back to Jeremiah chapter 3 and look at verse 13. In fact, we can read verse 12. Jeremiah was saying, “Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you. For I am merciful, saith the Lord, and will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree.” You have not obeyed My voice, saith the Lord. God said, “You just acknowledge that you have scattered your ways. You have not obeyed My ways.”

Of course, they refused. It is kind of like, “Well, you can see it for yourself.” I think it is in Jeremiah 8:6. In fact, you can read verse 5: “Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to seat. They refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright. No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into battle.” Wow! What have I done?

David speaks about those who turn aside to their crooked ways, pointing out that God will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. He said in Psalm 125:5, “As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.” Wow.

Departing from the ways of the Lord is sin, wickedness, and rebellion. But have you ever considered that it is more than that? It is also a perversion. We talk about perverts. Maybe I ought to preach a sermon on Christian perverts.

There is such a thing. Look in Acts chapter 13. The man doing this was not a Christian; obviously, he was Elymas, the sorcerer. Sergius Paulus was the deputy of the country. Paul was witnessing to him, and Elymas, a false prophet and sorcerer, sought to turn the deputy away from the faith.

Beginning at verse 6: “And when they had gone through the island of Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus, which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?”

Anyone who tries to lead people away from the Scriptures is a pervert. That is what Paul said to this false prophet. Why was Elymas interested in leading Sergius Paulus away from the Word of God? The answer is simple: he wanted to turn him to his own way. Isaiah used this illustration in Isaiah 53:6: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” When we turn to our own way, we are perverts, perverting the ways of God. When we walk in sin, wickedness, rebellion, and perversion, we despise God and His ways. Therefore, God commands us to consider our ways.

Applications: Living in Light of God's Omniscience and Our Ways

In light of this message, there are several important truths to consider, each from Scripture. First, Proverbs 5:21 says, “For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.” The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and God ponders all his goings. God is omniscient.

He sees all, and He knows all; there is no hiding from Him. You do not go out behind the barn from God. That is why Hebrews 4:13 says, “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open under the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” We need to consider the fact that we cannot hide from God. God knows every one of our ways. He knows our moves, our motives, and our motivations. We need to learn to live in light of God's omniscience, because God does indeed ponder all of our goings, and He ponders them to judge us.

Secondly, when we walk in our own ways, which are perverse, we are despising God. Back in May, I preached a message, “Christians Who Despise God,” from Proverbs 14:2. Let me give you the Scripture: “He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.” Obviously, when we walk in our own ways, we are despising God. But when we walk in our uprightness—that which is ethical, moral, and right according to God's laws—we are praising Him and fearing Him.

Thirdly, we need to be aware of the reality that simply because we do not see that something is wrong does not mean that it is right. I have heard people say many times, “I don't see anything wrong with it.” Regardless of whether you see something wrong with it is beside the point. If God says it is wrong, if God says it is wicked, it is wrong and wicked. Proverbs 16:2 says, “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.” Everyone likes his own ways better than everybody else's. But just because I do not see something wrong with my way does not mean that my way is right or biblical. Man always prefers his ways. Now, I want you to go back.

Turn to Jeremiah chapter 6. You remember that in verse 22 of chapter 4, God called His people soddish—foolish. They were playing

the fool because they were wise to do evil, but they had no understanding, no knowledge of God's ways. A soddish people are people who refused to listen, hear, heed, and obey.

Jeremiah 6:16 says, “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the all paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.” God said, “You ask for the all paths; you ask the good way. That is My way, and if you walk therein, you are going to find peace, prosperity, protection—everything you need if you will simply obey Me.” But they said, “We are not going to walk like that; we are not going to live like that.” Do you realize that the reason God brought destruction upon both the southern kingdom and the northern kingdom was that they refused to walk in His ways?

Isn't that amazing? They refused to walk in His ways. One last thing—and I will deal with this more next week, Lord willing. Look in Hebrews 3:10, our text where we began. I am not sure you caught the impact of this when I read it earlier: “Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.” Has it ever dawned upon you that not knowing God's ways and refusing to walk in God's ways grieves the heart of God?

You remember Ephesians 4:30: “And grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of your redemption.” There is a way to grieve the Holy Spirit, but here it is grieving the heart of God the Father. You remember Jacob and Esau. Esau was the oldest, and Esau married the daughters of Heth.

He married idolaters—unholy, unbiblical women—which the Bible says were a grief to Isaac. But Rebecca said, “I am weary of my life with these daughters of Heth. If Jacob marries one of them, I can't make it.” If our children act like that and grieve the hearts of parents, what must it be like for God's children, or at least those who profess to be His children, not to know Him and His ways?

I remember years ago, the first time I found out that my twins had lied to me. I remember it as though it were yesterday. I never thought they would lie to me. I know all men are liars, but I thought, “This is a relationship I have with them. I speak the truth to them,

and they speak the truth to me." When I found out they had lied, I was heartbroken and devastated. I confronted them; they acknowledged it and repented. It simply blew me away. I never thought they would lie to me like that. They would lie to anybody else, and I would understand it, but not to me.

Can you imagine what it must be like with God when He looks down and says, "Oh, that child of Mine, he is so foolish. He does not know Me. He does not know My ways. It breaks My heart"? He said that His people had hearkened to Him and Israel had kept His ways. We need to know His ways and walk in them.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We acknowledge, Lord, that we have failed to walk in Thy ways a multitude of times. We are sinners. We have sinned, erred, deviated, fallen short of, and transgressed. But, Lord, there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be desired. Lord, teach us Thy ways and help us to walk in them. May we not be soddish children, like those in Jeremiah's time who said, "We will not walk therein." Help us, Lord, to walk in Thy way and honor Thee. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Ignorant Professors

Part Two of Two

Introduction and Review

Hebrews 3:7–11 says: “Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.”

We are looking particularly at verse 10: “Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.” Ignorant professors abound. They were prevalent not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament, and they truly abound greatly in our day and time. Ignorant professors are those who profess to know God, but in reality do not know Him or His ways. The Apostle Paul describes such individuals in Titus 1:16: “They profess that they know God; but

in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny Him. The way they live, the way they act, the way they talk—their entire life—is nothing more than a denial of God. How can it be otherwise when an individual is totally ignorant of God and ignorant of His ways? When an individual is ignorant of His ways, he is also ignorant of God, for God is revealed by His ways. The only way that you can understand God is by His ways, and that is what reveals Him.

God's ways and God's thoughts are vastly different from ours. Isaiah 55:8–9 says: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." God's thoughts and ways are infinitely higher than ours. Therefore, if we wish to please Him and honor Him, we must turn from our ways to His ways.

Last week, by way of brief recapitulation, we considered two major points. First, God commands us to walk in His ways. I took you through Scripture and showed you a number of passages explaining what it means to walk in His ways. According to those passages, it means fearing Him, loving Him, obeying Him, cleaving unto Him, and walking in His commandments. That is, basically, what it means to walk in His ways. Second, we considered that not walking in His ways is wickedness. It is sin not to walk in His ways. First John 3:4 describes sin for us. The Word of God says there, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

So let me point this out and make it clear: every time you sin, you violate God's law. Sin is nothing less than a violation of God's law. Many times I have people email me, write me, or call me, and they ask the question, "Well, there's such and such a sin." My response is, "Is it contrary to God's law?" If it is not, then it is not sin. It may not be wise; it may not be practical; but it would not be sin. Sin is a violation of God's laws. Sin is a refusal to walk in God's ways. It is a transgression of His commands. Essentially, when we leave God's

ways, we turn to our own ways. When we turn to our own ways, we are leaving God's ways, and it is idolatry.

Our text in verse 10 says, “Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.” The reason we go astray, the reason we err, is because we do not know His ways. Thus our ways are ignorance and wickedness. You remember the passage I quoted last week in 2 Samuel 22:22. David said, “For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.” Anytime we depart from God's ways, it is wickedness.

I ended the message last week with a number of applications. Today I want to pick up where we left off and show you what you must consider if we are going to walk in God's ways. First, God commands us to walk in His ways. Secondly, departing from His ways is wickedness. Thirdly, departing from the ways of the Lord brings judgment and destruction.

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 23:9-12 (KJV)

Departing from God's Ways Brings Judgment

It is true that men sin against God. It is true that men rebel against God. It is true that people are disobedient all of the time. But there are consequences for doing so. There is no individual, there is no family, there is no church, there is no society or nation that can escape the consequences of their actions.

In Jeremiah 23, beginning with verse 9, God says: "My heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness. For the land is full of adulterers. For because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness. They shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord.

> "And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness. They are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah."
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> God spoke about the prophets being sinful and evil. He spoke about the people of the land being adulterers and swearing. And then He talked about the priests. So now you have the prophets, the priests, and the people, each one of them absolutely, totally wicked. They are corrupt transgressors. They are violating the Law of God.

God says, “Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness, and they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord.” What is their way? It is the way that they have chosen. They are not walking in God's ways; they are walking in their own way. Their ways are going to end up being slippery ways.

Each one of us has slid down. The funny thing—almost the amazing thing—is that if you fall or slip down publicly, one of the first things you do is look around and see who watched you fall, whether you are hurt or not. We can avoid slippery places if we see them and know them. I remember a long time ago, I was in Indiana preaching, and we were staying with a family whose room for us was upstairs. They had, I think, oak boards on their stairway, and I made the bad mistake of coming downstairs in my socks. The last thing I remember was seeing my feet at the ceiling as my lower back hit that stairwell, and I slid all the way down. I had a hematoma about the size of my fist that Alice had to drain for about two weeks.

It is one of those things that happen. But notice that God says they are going to be in slippery places, and He adds something else. Here is a double judgment: “Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery places in the darkness.” They are not going to be able to see danger; they are not going to be able to avoid or avert it. Then He says, “Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery places in the darkness, and they shall be driven on.” In other words, God will

drive them because of their choice of their own particular ways. It will be absolutely impossible to avoid this judgment.

In light of that passage, notice Deuteronomy 32:35: “To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence.”

"To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence." Now he is talking about the wicked: "...their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." Notice that he says, "...their foot shall slide in due time." Surely, their own slippery places. In other words, they have chosen their way; it is not God's way, and their foot shall slide.

I do not know if you remember the passage in Psalm 73, where Asaph writes about being envious of the wicked because he saw their prosperity. He said that they were not in trouble like other men, and that their voice ran through the heaven; they did whatever they pleased. Then he said, "Surely I have washed my hands in vain, and in innocence." In other words, what good has it done me to be holy and right when the ungodly are prospering? He did not understand it until he went into the house of God. Then he said, "Then I understood their end." When he came to verse 18, he said, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places." In other words, their foot shall slide in due time. Then he began to thank God that God had indeed saved him.

The truth I am speaking about is applicable to individuals, families, churches, societies, and nations. Follow me in Scripture, because God says, "they have not known my ways." Men choose their way, and that is what he was talking about in Jeremiah 23.

Go to Jeremiah 17:10: "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." God is going to judge and recompense us according to our ways, whether they are biblical ways or man's ways. We are going to be judged. Notice Jeremiah 18:11: "Now therefore go to, 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 every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good." So God says, "Listen, I'm going to judge you.

I'm going to destroy you. The best thing for you to do is turn from your evil way. Make your ways good, how? By coming back to God's way." But he said, "I'm going to judge you based upon your evil ways." It is amazing how often these prophets cried out against the people, and yet they refused to listen. In Ezekiel 7:4, God says, "And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am the Lord." Verse 9 says, "And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth." When I judge you, you're going to know it's me.

In Ezekiel 14:23, God says, “And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord.” In other words, he tells Ezekiel, you will understand when I do it; they had it coming.

In Ezekiel 20:21 he says, “Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness.” Notice what he said: “they walked not in my statutes.” In other words, they did not walk in his ways. They chose their own way.

Ezekiel 24:14 says, “I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God.” So God says, you are going to reap according to your ways. It is just that simple.

As you turn to Zechariah, the last book before Malachi, listen to Hosea 12:2: “The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.” Again, God says, I am going to judge you according to your ways.

This passage in Zechariah chapter 1 is a very interesting passage. I remember, at least thirty-five years ago, preaching a message from

this passage on Father's Day. Look at verse 4. The very first thing God told these people was, "Be ye not as your fathers." Isn't that amazing? On Father's Day we want to hold up fathers and say, "Emulate your father," but not this one. He said, "Be not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings."

"But they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord." God says, I do not want you to be like your fathers. How were the fathers? They would not heed, hear, listen, or repent. God says, do not be like that.

"Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" No. "But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?" You cannot outrun God. "And they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us."

Whatever God says is going to come to pass. When God says He will judge us for living according to our ways instead of His ways, then obviously it will happen. No man, no church, no family, no society, and no nation can escape the consequences of their actions or choices. Jeremiah 11:11 makes this plain: "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape. And though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them." God will bring His judgment, and they will not be able to escape it.

When God places our feet in slippery places, in darkness, and we are driven, as He said in Deuteronomy 32:35, "their feet shall slide in due time," it is only a matter of time. Think about the wicked of this world: their feet shall slide.

To depart from God's ways is wickedness, and departing from His ways brings judgment and devastation. Fourth, consider that the ways of the Lord are right and true ways and lead to obedience and holiness.

God's Ways Lead to Obedience and Holiness

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ, sent before Him to prepare His ways. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, said in Luke 1:76, “And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.” How did John prepare the ways of Jesus Christ? He prepared His ways by preparing a people to receive them. John came preaching the baptism of repentance. He said, “Repent ye.” When he saw the Pharisees come to his baptism, he said, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” John was saying that they had turned to their own ways and from God's ways; therefore, they needed to repent and turn back to God and His ways. John was teaching conformity to God's Word and rejection of man's ways.

That is how John was preparing the way of the Lord. David, a man after God's own heart, prayed in Psalm 25:4, "Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths." Have you ever asked God to show you His ways? If you walk in His ways, obviously you will follow His paths. Wherever there is a desire for holiness and obedience, there will inevitably be a desire to know God's ways.

It is impossible to be obedient and holy if you are ignorant, without knowing God's ways. Let me put it even more bluntly: an ignorant man can never be a holy man. When I say that, I am talking about someone who is ignorant of God's Word. You could have forty PhDs behind your name, and they could all be earned PhDs. You could be the most brilliant man on earth, but if you are ignorant of God and His ways, you still cannot be holy. It is just that simple.

Consider 2 Peter 3:18: "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." A cursory reading of that verse ought to tell you that if you are growing in grace, it is because you are growing in knowledge. You really cannot separate grace and knowledge.

There is a very important word in verse 18, a small word: "and." It is from the little Greek word kai, K-A-I. Kai is translated in our Bibles many times, but it is also translated another way many times. It is sometimes, and yes, many times, translated as "even." Thus,

verse 18 may be read, "But grow in grace, even in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." In other words, no one is growing in grace unless he is growing in knowledge.

Knowledge and grace go together. God's ways always lead to obedience and holiness. Turn to Hosea 4. In verse 6, he says, "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."

Since God's law is an expression of His will, and since children are an expression of our will, this is an example of the lex talionis, the law of retribution, where God makes the punishment fit the crime. God says, "You're not concerned with my will, I'm not concerned with your will."

Notice again: "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." In other words, if you don't know how to serve me, if you don't know how to obey me, if you don't know what my ways are, how can you live for me? It's impossible.

Now notice Hosea 14 and verse 9, the last verse in the book of Hosea: "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein." God says that if you're wise, if you understand, if you're prudent, you walk in His ways. It is that simple.

Now turn back to Isaiah chapter 2, because I still want you to see in this passage how knowledge is connected to obedience and holiness. Look at Isaiah 2 and verse 3: "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Notice what they say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways." There will be instruction.

The Blessed and Rejoicing Ways of the Lord

There will be knowledge imparted. When you have the instruction and the knowledge, “we will walk in his paths.” Where do we get the knowledge and instruction? “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” In other words, we get the knowledge and instruction from His word. That is how we know how to live.

Isaiah 35:8 says, “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” In other words, if you are walking in obedience to God's ways, you are not going to err. You must remember Hebrews 3:10: “they do always err in their heart.” Why? Because “they have not known my ways.” Now, when you are on the highway of holiness, you are not going to err therein.

“No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” As we walk the highway of holiness, we have to consider that God's ways are right and true, and they always lead to obedience and holiness.

God's Ways Are Blessed and Rejoicing Ways

You have to consider that the ways of the Lord are blessed and rejoicing ways. Deuteronomy 30:15 says, “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.” So you have two choices: life and good, or death and evil. How did God set before this people life and good and death and evil? Verse 16 explains: “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.” That is life, and that is good.

Here is death and evil: “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." God said, "I've set before you life and good and death and evil." Life and good is by obeying God's Word; death and evil is by disobeying. Life and good is walking in his ways; death and evil is walking in your own ways.

Many fail to grasp a simple fact: God has designed His Word and His law for our good. He says, "I want you to obey me, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee." Deuteronomy 5:33 says, "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess."

God says that if you walk in His ways, you are going to live—that is life. That it may be well with you—that is good. And that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord your God shall possess. Wow.

As Christians, we understand that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. That is no problem. But unless you are terribly sick and in an awful lot of pain, it is normal and natural to want to live. Anybody in this room want to die tonight? I do not. Even though I know to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, I enjoy life. I enjoy preaching, teaching, and a lot of things.

What did God just say? "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days." I want to live long, and I want to live a healthy life. In fact, when I die, I want to be so healthy people say, "Hmm, I wonder what killed him." I am serious. God says it is for our good.

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

the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us." Note verse 24: "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always."

Do you realize it is for our good that God said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"? It is for our good that God said, "Thou shalt not steal." It is for our good that God said, "Thou shalt not take my name in vain." It is for our good that God said, "Thou shalt not covet." All of this is for our good. It is not just for God's honor and glory; it is for our good as well.

Deuteronomy 10:12–13 says, "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" So God says it is for our good that we obey. Deuteronomy 12:28 says, "Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord thy God." Now God says that if we obey Him, it is not just for our good; it is even for the good of our children.

The point is simple: we have to consider that God's ways always lead to blessedness and rejoicing. Even David, the man after God's own heart, said in Psalm 128:1, "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways." In Psalm 138:5, he says, "Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord." That sounds like rejoicing. That sounds like being blessed.

In James 2, beginning in verse 8, we find an interesting passage. Whenever you begin to talk about the Word of God or the Law of God, so many people try to equate God's Law or God's Word with bondage, which is a complete fabrication. The flesh is bondage. The world is bondage. God's law is liberty. There is no liberty apart from the law of God.

James says, "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well." Note that it is called the royal law. "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever

shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." When you look at verse 8, God's law is called the royal law. Why? Because it proceeds from the King of kings. It is His law.

But when you look at the latter part of verse 12, it is called the law of liberty. True liberty is found in obedience to God and His ways. All else is slavery, bondage, and tyranny. Observe people and individuals. You want to talk about bondage? Look how many people are in bondage to cigarettes, alcohol, dope, pleasures, and self.

Our Lord said, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Stop and think about this. When this country was founded, it was founded upon God and His Word. Think of the true liberty and freedom that our forefathers enjoyed. Think now how far we have transgressed from those principles and where we are: now you need permission from a competent authority to do that which is absolutely normal, natural, and right. Thirty to forty years ago, I was in Fairfax, Virginia, and was horrified to find that, in order to cut down a tree on your own property, you had to have permission or a license from the city to do so.

I know one preacher's son who got arrested and thrown in jail for cutting down some dead trees on his own property because he did not get the proper paperwork and permission. Where do things like that come from? Look at the countries and nations that have gone far from God's Word. They may have religion, but it is a pagan religion, and they are all tyrannies. Liberty is not the ability to do as you please; that is licentiousness. Liberty is the ability to do as you ought and as you should. When we have liberty to obey God, and when you study 2 Corinthians chapter 3, what does the Scripture say? "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." If the Spirit of the Lord is not there, there is not liberty. The Spirit of the Lord always leads us in agreement with His ways. The blessed man is the man who walks in the ways of the Lord. There are ways of rejoicing, and there are ways of obedience.

Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. He preached to his people, but they would not listen, hear, heed, or repent. Jeremiah saw Jerusalem destroyed. He saw the people killed and his people enslaved, taken into bondage by Nebuchadnezzar. He saw the walls of Jerusalem broken down and the temple broken and ransacked.

Application: Search and Try Our Ways

He wrote in Lamentations 3:40, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." The wise man will heed and notice what is happening. If I see David stick his hand in the fire, and the next thing I see is flesh falling off his fingers, I do not think I am going to try that. I will learn from what he did and say, "I am not doing that." If I see Gary fall into a hole, I will do everything I can to go around that hole. I will try to help him out, but I am not going to step in it just because he stepped in it.

This is what he is saying: Look at the people that are dying. Look at the people that are enslaved. We better learn something when we see people dying, enslaved, and being destroyed. Then he says, “Let us search and try our ways.” God said in Jeremiah 26 and verse 13, “Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.” So what did God say? If you do not want to reap what you have sown, if you do not want His full judgment upon you, amend your ways, turn from your wicked ways, and come back to His ways. It is just that simple.

The second application is this: If we wish to avoid heartache, disappointment, and destruction, the wise course of action is to make sure that we do not leave or forsake the ways of the Lord.

Application: Prepare Our Ways Before the Lord

How do we accomplish that? The answer is found in the life of Jotham. The Bible says in 2 Chronicles 27 and verse 6, “So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.”

Stop and think about that. Jotham became mighty because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God. What does that mean?

What Jotham did was find out what God's ways were, and then he changed his ways to walk in God's ways. He became a mighty man because he prepared his ways before the Lord. He made sure that whatever he did was biblical and right. So if we really want to be blessed, rejoice in the Lord, and not dishonor our Heavenly Father, we need to learn to prepare our ways and make sure that each of our ways is His way.

Application: Obedience Brings Peace

There is an additional blessing to obedience that we hardly ever think of: peace. Not just personal peace, but peace in many areas as well. For in Proverbs 16 and verse 7, the Bible says, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Think about that. When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. An added blessing to obedience is peace. When we walk in His ways, we please Him.

Conclusion: Praying for Knowledge and a Worthy Walk

One last passage brings together everything I have been saying for the last two Lord's days. Look in Colossians chapter 1, verses 9 and 10. Paul is talking about his prayer for the Colossian Christians: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you." Note his particular request in prayer for these Christians: "And to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

You remember I told you earlier that it is impossible for an ignorant man to be a holy man. Paul says they were praying that the believers might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. What would be the result of that? "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."

Now watch: "Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." If you obey the knowledge that God gives you, and you walk worthy of the Lord and all-pleasing, God gives you more knowledge. You continue to increase in knowledge. Then verse

11 says, "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

All of this comes from walking in the knowledge of His will, or, let me put it bluntly, walking in His ways. Remember Hebrews 3 and verse 10: "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways." It grieves the heart of God when we do not know His ways and do not walk in His ways.

So if we do not want to grieve our Heavenly Father, we must learn to be obedient and to walk in His ways.

Father, help us in the name of Jesus Christ. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Teach us Thy ways, O Lord, that we might walk in Thy paths. Give us, Lord, understanding and wisdom and discernment that we may do that which is right and holy. Amen.

Source Notes

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