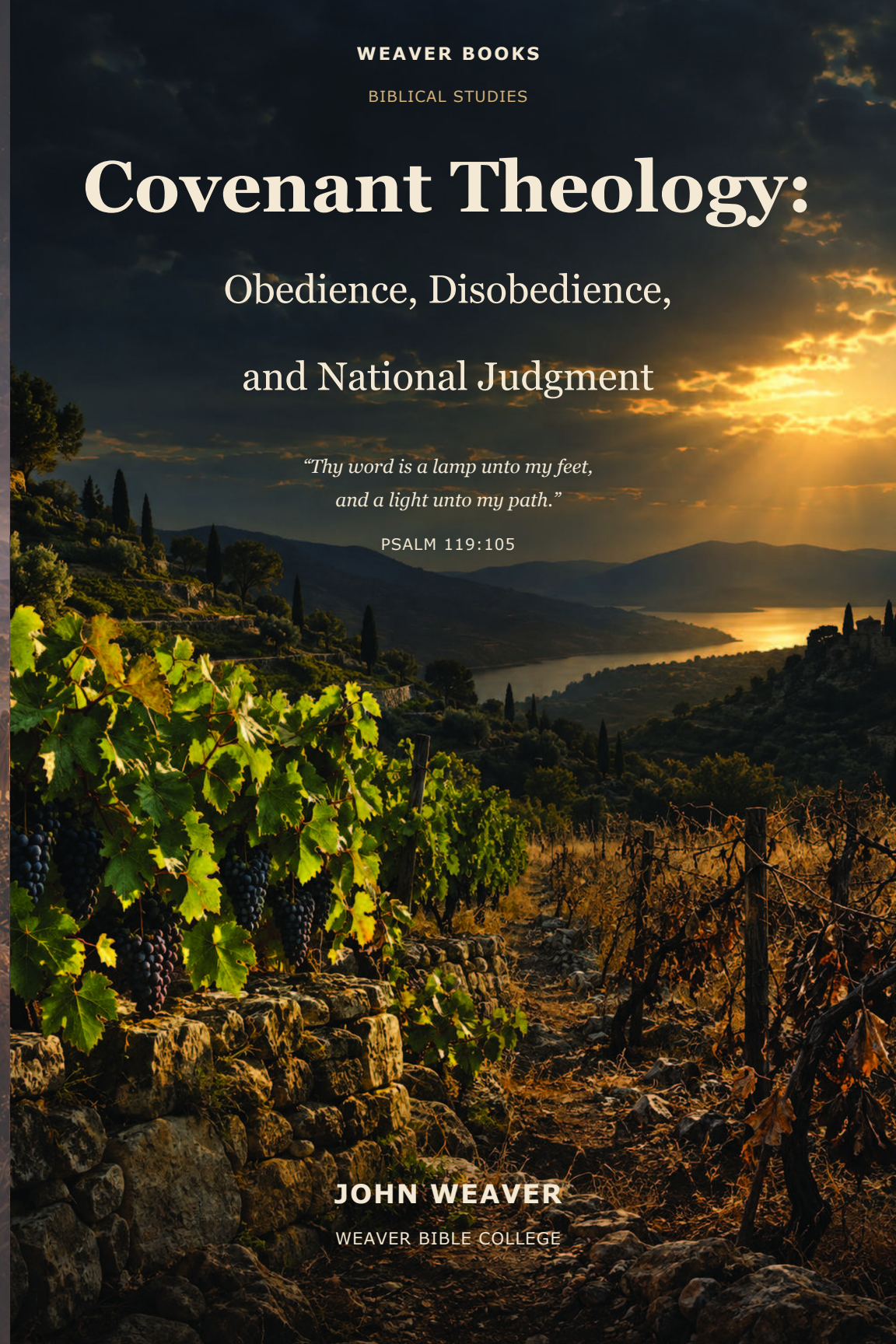
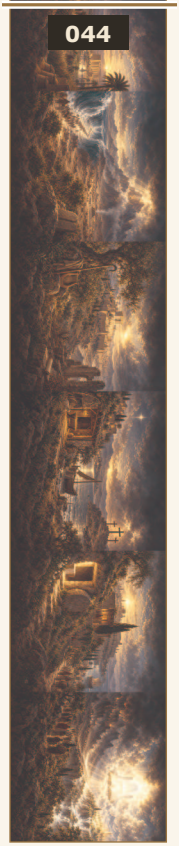

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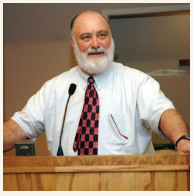
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JOHN 14:15

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Covenant Theology: Obedience, Disobedience, and National Judgment

John Weaver

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CHAPTER 1

Richard Cameron

Richard Cameron, the Lion of the Covenant

SCRIPTURE READING - Hebrews 11:32-40 (KJV)

Introduction: The Faith of the Martyrs

Hebrews chapter 11, verse 32:

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

> sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."
>
> There are a number of these martyrs named, especially in verse 32: Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. Not only martyrs, but men of faith. Then, in verse 36, the Scripture says, "and others"—that would be a multitude of others—"had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." And then he says, "they were stoned." That is, they were martyred. They were killed. They were sawn asunder—sawn in two. This is a reference to the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah was supposedly sawn in two. They were tempted. They were slain with the sword.

Not every hero of faith is listed by name in Hebrews chapter 11. There were many others who suffered and lived in New Testament times, who suffered and died for their faith in Jesus Christ, but who are not listed in Hebrews 11. Likewise, since New Testament times, there have been a multitude who have stood firm for their faith in Jesus Christ and for the gospel of Christ, witnessed a good confession of faith, and died in the faith. One such martyr was an individual by the name of Richard Cameron, who was known as the Lion of the Covenant. Unhappily, most of us have never heard of Richard Cameron, nor the phrase "the Lion of the Covenant," nor do we know any history surrounding Richard Cameron.

The problem is that we live in a day when principles and convictions are a thing of the past. Those few who hold some principles and convictions today tend to think that those principles and convictions are really not worth suffering for, and especially not worth dying for. Thankfully, not all men hold such compromising and sinful thoughts. The truth is, by nature, we all abhor suffering, and we certainly do not want to suffer.

We judge others also by ourselves because we like it cool and comfortable, so to speak. We think others are likewise the same. Yet Scripture teaches us a principle: if we live godly, we shall suffer

persecution. That is what the Apostle Paul wrote: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” One reason we are not suffering more than we are is probably that we are not living as godly as we should be.

The Call to Suffer for Christ

The right way is not always the easy way or the pleasant way. Hebrews chapter 11 shows us another principle in the example of Moses. The Bible says, “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter;” Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. What does that mean? He would have been next in line to be the ruler of Egypt. The Bible continues: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, 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 in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

We should look carefully at verse 25. The Bible says concerning Moses, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Moses deliberately chose to suffer. Note that the reason he chose this was based upon his estimation of Christ in verse 26. Here is why he chose suffering: "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

Egypt at this time was the most powerful and probably the richest country in the then known world. Moses chose to suffer because he esteemed the reproach of Jesus Christ greater than all the treasures in Egypt. Philippians 1 verse 29 is one that we do not like to think about. Look what the word of God 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." Did you hear what was just read? Watch it carefully: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ"—that is, for Christ's sake, for Christ's glory—"unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

Note two things. First, just like faith is God's gift, so likewise suffering is God's gift. He said, "unto you it is given not only to

believe on Christ, but also to suffer for him." Suffering is the gift of God. What an unusual gift. Secondly, just as there are degrees in faith—you read in the Bible about a little faith and about a great faith—there is that medium or normal faith in between. So just as there are degrees in faith, there are also degrees in suffering. God does not give everyone the exact same ministry of suffering. Some suffer enormously, and those who do so are given greater grace and greater consolation. But he says, "unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

Paul as a Chosen Vessel of Suffering

God says concerning the Apostle Paul, "Go thy way," the Lord said unto him, "go thy way: for he"—that is, Paul—"is a chosen vessel unto me,

Every one of us would say, “Lord, I sure would like to be a chosen vessel. I would like to be used like the Apostle Paul.” It is true that God calls him a chosen vessel in verse 15, but look what He says in verse 16: “For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” All of a sudden, we do not want to be a chosen vessel, because in this instance being a chosen vessel involved extreme suffering.

For instance, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 24, the Apostle Paul says, “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.” So four of the five times Paul was beaten to the maximum extent of the law. In all five times, the Apostle Paul was innocent of any wrongdoing. He was beaten unjustly and probably unlawfully. He says, “Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned”—and left for dead, by the way—“thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

“Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” The Apostle Paul knew what it was to suffer not only physically, but mentally, emotionally, and

spiritually as well. Finally, the Apostle Paul lost his life, for his head was cut off with a Roman axe.

Richard Cameron was much like the Apostle Paul. Not only did he suffer in life, his life was also ended by the hands of the enemies of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Richard Cameron is sometimes referred to as “Ritchie” Cameron, as the hillmen called him, but Richard Cameron was a Scottish Covenanter. What in the world was a Covenanter? Let me tell you.

Historical Background of the Scottish Covenanters

The Scottish Covenanters were Scottish Presbyterians in the seventeenth century who gave their support to the National Covenant of 1638. The whole land of Scotland, or at least most of it, subscribed to what was known as the National Covenant, recognizing Jesus Christ as the true King and the true Head of the Church.

They subscribed because King Charles Stuart of England was trying to force upon the Scottish Covenanters an episcopal form of government. In other words, he was going to make Scotland, basically speaking, an Anglican country, as England was ruled by the Anglican Church, with the king being the head of the church. Most of those Scottish pastors absolutely refused to do that.

They were driven from their pulpits, kicked out, and called non-conformists. They were not even allowed to preach in their own churches. To preach in your church, you had to take a license from the king, pay the king a tax, and agree to preach what the king wanted you to preach. These nonconformist pastors then started holding conventicles, or field meetings.

They would literally convene out in the fields, meeting without a license and without paying the tax. The king would send his dragoons, not just to break up the meeting, but to kill the pastor, all who opposed them, and all who stood in the way. The tax that was applied was called the cess, C-E-S-S. In Webster's 1828, cess refers, as a verb, to a tax laid on; as a noun, it is simply a tax.

I wonder if that is where we get our word "cesspool" from. It is a possibility. This was a tax that the pastors, preachers, and people

were supposed to pay, and many refused. Some paid at the point of a bayonet; others did not. When the taxes were not paid and permission was not taken from the king to preach, he sent his dragoons to plunder, steal, and kill. It was kind of similar to the IRS and ATF. The king was going to get his taxes and his authority recognized one way or the other.

Many suffered. John Gavan had his ears cut off and was banished to Barbados for his beliefs. Donald Cargill, James Guthrie, John Nisbet, David Hackston, and a multitude of others lost their lives. Richard and his younger brother Michael were together in their death. They also had a sister named Marion, whom the dragoons killed as well.

Richard Cameron preached the gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that his memory was long treasured after he was killed. He was willing to die for the right of Jesus Christ to rule His church. His convictions emboldened others to persevere and hold out, saying, “Look, Jesus Christ is indeed the king of the church, and we need not recognize the king as the head of the church, nor need we take his permission, his license, or pay his tax.” Richard's life not only rebukes our lukewarmness and apathy; it also demonstrates what can be done for God's honor and glory when we are willing to die for the truth's sake and stand even to the end.

Henry Inglis wrote a little couplet that summarized Richard Cameron's life:

"Cameron of the Covenant stood and prayed the battle prayer. Then with his brother side by side, took up the cross of Christ and died upon the moss of Ayr."

The Sanquhar Declaration

Sanquhar town, June 12, 1680: a band of about twenty horsemen clattered up the high street to the town cross. The people began to gather, running and hollering, "It's Ritchie, it's Ritchie, it's Ritchie, and the hillmen!" Richard Cameron, the Lion of the Covenant, had come with his brother Michael and a few other men on horseback. As they dismounted at the town cross, the first thing they did was form a circle. Then they sang a psalm and prayed.

After the prayer, Michael, Richard's younger brother, read the famous Sanquhar Declaration. He declared that although they were for government and governors such as the Word of God in their covenant allowed, they, for themselves and all who would adhere to them as representatives of the true Presbyterian Church and covenant nation of Scotland, considering the great hazard of remaining under such a sin, did disown Charles Stuart, who had been reigning—or rather tyrannizing—on the throne of Britain. They declared him to have no right, title, or interest in the crown of Scotland, having forfeited it by his perjury, breach of covenant to God and His Church, and usurpation of God's crown and royal prerogatives.

They further declared that, under the standard of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of Salvation, they were at war with such a tyrant and usurper, with all who followed his practices as enemies of Christ, His cause, and His covenants, and with all who had strengthened him. They also disowned the reception of the Duke of York, a professed papist, as repugnant to their principles and vows to the Most High God.

These men had gathered and said, "We disown Charles Stuart. He's a liar and a perjurer." Why? Because Charles Stuart had formally signed the National Covenant, and now he was against it, persecuting and destroying men who were trying to stand for the truth. The Duke of York, of course, was a Roman Catholic, and they despised him. He had sneeringly threatened to make Scotland like a hunting field. The Covenanters referred to him as the devil's lieutenant.

It was Thomas Campbell who took and nailed the Declaration to the wall. Then the hillmen rode off into the hills. They understood that they were now in what you and I would call a heap of trouble. What had they done? They had cast off the usurped authority of a tyrant. They had not done it mischievously, in anarchy, or in blatant revolt. They had made their declaration a religious act.

They prefaced and followed their oath of rejection of King Charles by the worship of the One True and Living God. They had disavowed King Charles in the interest of King Jesus. They disowned the unworthy ruler that they might obey the supreme and sovereign

ruler, Jesus Christ. Basically, they had chosen a theocracy over despotism. Actually, what they had done was a reversal of 1 Samuel chapter 8. Do you not remember that the people refused God and wanted a king to rule over them? Now they said, “No, we do not want the man, the king, the tyrant to rule over us. We want the one true and living God to rule over us.” Remember, this was 1680.

Eight years later, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of England, with the Estates of Scotland, expelled King James Stuart and installed William and Mary—William of Orange—in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Did you know that Richard Cameron said this concerning his banner? “Ours is a standard which shall overthrow the throne of Britain.” And it did, within eight years after his death, because his standard was none other than Jesus Christ.

Our country today is directly connected to the Scottish Covenanters. In fact, everything we are is intimately connected with Charles I. His oppression drove out the Puritans and many of the Scottish Covenanters, and they came to this country. Our country might have been settled by the Spaniards or the Portuguese, who were all Roman Catholics; then we could have been just as dark and ignorant of the truth as those South American countries are today. But God in His mercy sent some of the finest expositors of Scripture to this country. God's people ultimately only suffer just to reign. It was not only the Puritans who came over here, but some of these Covenanters as well.

King Charles Stuart forced these people to leave. As Scripture says in Genesis 50, Joseph said to his brethren, “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.” King Charles I meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.

There would have been more boatloads coming over, but Charles I imperiously forbade any more ships to flee to America. Had he known, he would have been delighted to let other ships go, because on board one ship set to sail were two men by the name of Oliver Cromwell and John Hampden. Since the king forbade their sailing, Oliver Cromwell and John Hampden stayed in England. Once again, it was Oliver Cromwell and John Hampden who reproved Charles I, and he lost his head as well as his throne. The persecution brought good and godly men to America.

Allan Cameron was a believing merchant in Falkland, Fife. He had three sons: Richard was the oldest, Michael, I believe, was the youngest, and Alexander was in the middle. He also had a daughter by the name of Marion, a fine, godly Christian woman who was also murdered by the king's dragoons. After his university days, Richard Cameron was just a schoolmaster, just a teacher.

Cameron's Ministry and Prophecy of Martyrdom

He occasionally went out to hear the field preachers whom Charles I had thrown out of their churches. At first he listened just to be listening. Then one day God opened his heart, and he listened to life, believed the gospel, and was converted. Afterward, he began preaching with such fervor. They said he was quite hot, and his fervor stimulated others. Since Richard Cameron understood the issues, he had little use for those who were lukewarm. Even before the gallows drew near, everyone professed to receive great blessing from his preaching.

The persecution grew so hot and heavy for him that he had to flee to Holland for a while. Many of the Scotlanders fled to Holland. The Puritans who came over here on the Mayflower first fled to Holland themselves. It was while he was in Holland that he was ordained to the ministry.

He had been preaching before he got over there, but now he was ordained by three men: Pastor Brown, Coleman, and a Dutch minister, the great McWard. After the ordination service, McWard left his hand upon Richard Cameron's head. After everyone had lifted their hands, McWard kept his hand upon Cameron's head and said, "Here is the head of a faithful minister and servant of Jesus Christ who shall lose the same for his master's interest, and it shall be set up before the sun and the moon in the public view of the world." That was a Scottish Covenanter minister's ordination. He was predicting that Richard Cameron's head would be cut off and set up in front of the sun and moon for the whole world to see.

Richard Cameron returned to Scotland in October of 1679, and soon his name was linked with Cargill, Wellwood, and some of the other blessed martyrs. John Wellwood, who was martyred, came out of his cold den on the last day, looked, and said, "No more night nor

darkness for me." He knew it was his last day. Then Richard Cameron's ministry took off like a meteor. It was bright and shining, and a huge price was placed upon his head. Incessantly they looked for individuals who would betray him, but very few wanted to betray Richard Cameron, and his brother Michael was always by his side.

His sermons were full of words of welcome and love from the Lord Jesus Christ for poor, helpless sinners. He asked, "Will you take him? Tell us what you say. These hills and mountains around us witness that we have offered him to you this day. Angels are wondering at this offer. They stand beholding with admiration that our Lord is giving you such an offer today. They will go up to report at the throne what is everyone's choice." He preached memorably from such texts as Jeremiah 3:19: "How shall I put thee among the children?"

Among the texts from which Cameron preached were Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; Isaiah 32:2: "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest"; Isaiah 49:24: "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?"; and John 5:40: "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

In the midst of all his sermons, it is said that he made a contract between human hearts and Christ. Oftentimes he fell a-weeping, and crowds wept with him. Their hearts tendered as the man of Calvary was preached unto them. As Cameron's preaching was, so was his praying, and so was his practicing. Just after this magnificent Sanquhar declaration, the hunt for Cameron and his clan was intensified.

The Battle of Airds Moss and Cameron's Death

Less than three weeks before the fierce battle at Airds Moss, Richard Cameron said, "I shall be but breakfast to the enemy shortly. I shall be but a breakfast to the enemy shortly." Three weeks later he died. After a day of prayer, twelve days before the end, he said, "My body shall dung the wilderness within a fortnight."

He knew they were after him, but very seldom did he pray privately, with his family, or at a church gathering without requesting that he might wait with patience till the Lord's time came. On the last Lord's day of his life, he preached from Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God." On the next Lord's Day, Cargill preached his funeral sermon from the text, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" It was indeed a time of the eating of the bread of affliction. The last week of Richard Cameron's life was lived with about sixty others. Among them was Patrick Walker, the Covenanter peddler, the Covenanting John Bunyan, who said they were of one heart and one soul and always basically stayed together. Some were armed and some were not; about twenty had horses. Some think these Scottish Covenanters were wrong even to take up arms. I want you to understand something.

Many of these individuals had seen not only pastors murdered, but innocent people tracked down or shot through mercilessly by the King's Dragoons. One pastor, when he stepped forward to defend his people, had a gun pressed to his head; the trigger was pulled, literally blowing his head off, and his wife caught his head in her hands. That is how they dealt with these people.

While some were willing to suffer and lose their lives for Christ's sake, they were not willing to see others suffer so needlessly. Thus they took up arms, not only to defend themselves but to defend others.

May I remind you that the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," certainly implies, to say the least, the obligation to defend ourselves? If we have the obligation not to kill, we have the obligation neither to kill ourselves nor to allow ourselves to be killed. Deuteronomy chapter 22 certainly contains the obligation to help save and preserve the lives of others.

Thus, while some Scottish Covenanters were willing to suffer, bleed, die, and give their lives, others said, "I'm willing to die if that is what God would have me to do. But until that time, I will defend myself and the lives of others as well."

So Richard Cameron, the Lion of the Covenant, spent his last night at Meadowhead farm, in the home of William Mitchell. In the morning, he washed his face in the old stone trough. As he dried himself, he placed his hands upon his face, looked at Mrs. Mitchell and her daughter, and said, “This is their last washing. I have need to make them clean, for there are many to see them.”

At this, Mrs. Mitchell and her daughter began to weep. Richard Cameron told them, “Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for yours, and for the sins of a sinful land, for you have many melancholy, sorrowful, and weary days before you.”

McWard said, “Here’s the head of a faithful servant of Jesus Christ who shall lose it for the interest of his master. It shall be set up before the sun and the moon for all to see.”

It was about four o’clock in the afternoon, and the little Bible-reading, praying, and preaching band was meeting in the desert place of Airds Moss. Richard Cameron was giving his last sermon when they looked up and saw a body of the king’s dragoons coming against them, outnumbering and outarming the little band. They stood. Richard gathered all his men around him and three times in prayer appealed to the Lord of the harvest to spare the green and take the ripe. Then, looking at his younger brother, he said, “Come, Michael, let us fight it out to the last. For this is the day that I have longed for, to die fighting against our Lord’s avowed enemies. And this is the day that we shall get the crown.”

To his beloved fellows he said, “Be encouraged, all of you, to fight it out valiantly. For all of you who fall this day, I see heaven’s gates cast wide open to receive you.” Then, with eyes turned to heaven in calm resignation, they sang their last song to the God of their salvation.

The dragoons, emboldened by better arms and better numbers, attacked at once. The wanderers, as they were often called, defended themselves bravely. David Hackston gives this account:

"The rest of us advanced fast on the enemy, being a strong body of horse coming hard on us, whereupon when we were joined, our horse fired first and wounded and killed some of them, both horse and foot. Our horse advanced to their faces, and we fired on each

other. I being foremost after receiving their fire, and finding the horse behind me broken, I then rode in amongst them and went out of the side without any wrong or wound. I was pursued by several with whom I fought a good space, sometimes they following me, sometimes I following them."

At last, they ganged up on David Hackston. With a treacherous and unfair blow from the back, they cut him down. They did not kill him, but he gave himself up to the man in front of him as his prisoner. Hackston wrote, "They gave us all testimony, being brave, resolute men."

Nine were slain of that poor party that occasionally met at Airds Moss only for the hearing of the gospel. Stop and think. What had these men done? Nothing but preach and pray. Among those who were killed were Richard Cameron and his brother Michael. Michael and Richard were always inseparable in life, and they were inseparable in death as well. Someone has written this little poem, which I want to read in light of what happened at the Battle of Airds Moss:

"For the righteous had fallen and the combat was ended. A chariot of fire through the dark clouds descended. Its drivers were angels on horses of whiteness, and its burning wheels turned on axles of brightness. A seraph unfolded its doors bright and shining, all dazzling like gold of the seventh refining, and the souls that came forth out of great tribulation have mounted a chariot and steeds of salvation."

Richard was less than thirty-two years of age when he died. His brother Michael was even younger. They gave their lives for Christ's crown and covenant. Six prisoners were taken that day: William M'Millan, John Vallance, John Pollock, David Hackston, John Malcolm, and Archibald Alison. From the severity of his wounds and the treatment that he received, William M'Millan died as he was being carried to the prison. From the same causes, John Vallance died the day following. John Pollock, who was cruelly treated but in the midst of all was steadfast and cheerful, died after he was tortured.

He was banished as a slave to the American plantations. May I remind you that the first slaves of this country were white, and they were Christians, and they were sent as slaves for their faith in Jesus Christ.

If that makes you ask, "From whom, then, did the black slaves of Africa hear the gospel?" the answer is, from those Scottish Covenanters who were already over here as white slaves. Think of all the old Negro spirituals. Where did those Negroes get those spiritual songs? There was nothing like that in Africa. There was no gospel in Africa. There was no word in Africa. Interestingly enough, some of those old Negro spirituals are almost like the metrical or metered psalms that the Covenanters sang. So undoubtedly, the black slaves heard the preaching from the white slaves who had been captured and sent over here.

There are three other prisoners who were executed: David Hackston, whom I am going to tell you about last of all, John Malcolm, and Archibald Alison. As he was executed, John Malcolm said this concerning Christ: "Let his cause be your cause in will and in woe"—that is, in blessings, in good times and bad times. Then he said, "O noble cause, O noble work, O noble heaven, O noble Christ that makes it to be heaven. And he is the owner of the work I lay down my life, not as an evildoer, but as a sufferer for Jesus Christ."

Archibald Alison said before he was executed: "What think ye of heaven and glory that is at the back of the cross? The hope of this makes me look upon pale death as a lovely messenger to me. I bless the Lord for my lot this day." He was about to be executed, yet he said, "I bless the Lord for my lot this day. Friends, give our Lord credit. He is good, but oh, he is good in the day of trial, and he will be sweet company through the ages of eternity." Of those who escaped from Airds Moss that day, many wept that they had not died that day. But Patrick Walker writes, "Those eight who died on the spot went within with right and longing for the day of death."

Aftermath: The Treatment of the Martyrs

After they had killed Richard Cameron, the dragoons came and cut off his head and his hands. They then cut off the head of John Fowler, thinking it to be his brother, Michael. They took Richard

Cameron's head and hands and John Fowler's head, put them in a sack to take to the bloodthirsty council of Edinburgh, and, passing through Lanark, met a young woman named Elizabeth Hope, who had the audacity to ask what they had in the bag. The dragoons asked her whether she wanted to buy some calves' heads.

She replied that she did not know and would have to see them. At night, they emptied the heads of Richard Cameron and John Fowler onto the ground and began to kick them up and down as one would kick a soccer ball, at which Elizabeth fainted and passed out. On reaching Edinburgh, the dragoons put the heads of the rebels upon halberts. They took the halbert and stuck it through Richard Cameron's mouth, out of which had proceeded such great, glorious, and gospel words.

As Robert Murray delivered Richard Cameron's head and hands and John Fowler's head to the council, he said, "These are the head and the hands that lived praying and preaching and died praying and fighting." Remember, there was a huge reward for Richard Cameron.

Before the hangman set the head and hands of the blood-stained martyr on the Netherbow Port, with the hands on either side of his head, there was one other little trick of torment to perform. In the prison was an elderly man named Allan Cameron, the father of Richard and Michael. Allan was imprisoned because he had been helping the field preachers and the conventicles, those meeting without the king's permission. They took Richard Cameron's head and hands to his father and thrust them before him, saying, "Do you know these?"

Allan Cameron took his son's head in his hand, kissed his severed head, and said, "Yes, I know them. I know them. They are my sons. My own dear sons. It is the Lord. Good is the will of the Lord who cannot wrong me or mine, but has made goodness and mercy to follow me all the days of my life. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

They then cruelly took the head and the hands of Richard Cameron and placed them on the Netherbow Port, for all to see, the sun and the moon. David Hackston, who wrote of the account of the battle, who was with Richard Cameron and was taken to prison, met

a horrible and excruciating death eight days later. As he was with Richard in life, so he joined him in death.

Remember, he was guilty of hearing the preaching of the gospel. The council gave this order: “That his body be drawn backward on a hurdle to the Mercat Cross; that there be a high scaffold erected a little above the cross, where in the first place, his right hand is to be struck off, and after some time, his left hand to be struck off; then he is to be hanged up and cut down alive, his bowels to be taken out, and his heart shown to the people by the hangman; then his heart and his bowels to be burned in a fire prepared for that purpose on the scaffold; that afterwards his head be cut off and his body divided into four quarters; his head to be affixed on another pole, one of his quarters with his hands to be affixed at St. Andrews, another quarter at Glasgow, a third at Leith, and a fourth at Burntisland; that none presumed to be in mourning for him, or any coffin brought; that no person be suffered to be with him on the scaffold save the two baillies, the executioner and his servants; that he be allowed to pray to God Almighty, but not to speak to the people; and that Hackston’s and Cameron’s heads be fixed on higher poles than the rest.”

Application: Standing for Truth Today

Thus died men who stood for Jesus Christ. It is hard for us to envision this now, but wait a little while. Our Lord says, “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.” They shall put you out of the synagogues—“yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.” Did you know that Charles I was an extremely religious man? He was married to a Roman Catholic wife.

It was not easy to stand for truth in the New Testament. It was not easy to stand for truth in the 17th century. And it's not easy to stand for truth in the 21st century. With the rampant charge of humanism in this country, if God is not merciful to us, the time of eating the bread of affliction is coming again.

When we understand that “he that killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” In other words, we're getting rid of you crazies. Notice how God's people are called rebels, when in reality, the ones

who are rebellious are those who oppose Jesus Christ and His righteousness. Does not the life of Richard Cameron shame us? Does not the courage of his father condemn us? If God would give us the grace. And how many of us murmur and complain because it's too hot or too cold, or things not—

We ought to leave this building today thanking God for what He has done for us, what He has given us, and how He has spared us. On the other hand, we ought to ask God to give us courage to be willing to suffer, to die, and to fight for truth and righteousness.

Let us pray.

Father, we ask You, in the name of Jesus Christ, that You would encourage us and build us up in the most holy faith, that should make us godly. Lord, when we hear of men that Thou hast used, yet who suffered so greatly, we are ashamed and condemned because we have suffered nothing. We are not as godly as we ought to be. We pray for godliness, holiness, grace, and strength to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

What it Means to Hate God

Introduction: The Unthinkable Concept of Hating God

In the book of Exodus, chapter 20, we find the giving of the Ten Commandments. Those of you who were here last week will remember that I preached a message entitled “Death Wish.” In that message, I repeatedly quoted Proverbs 8:36, where our Lord said, “He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.” As I was preaching last week, the thought came to me: I wonder if most people know what it means to hate God? That is the subject before us today: “Hating God,” or “What It Means to Hate God.”

Many of you will recognize that this is the giving of the Ten Commandments. In verse 5, God says concerning idols, “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them. For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.”

I will return to this text shortly, but notice the phrase in verse 5: "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Hating God is an unthinkable and almost an unutterable concept. Who in his right mind could or would hate the Most High—the Creator, the Savior, the Redeemer, the Sustainer, and the Preserver?

Yet Scripture tells us over and over that men do hate God. Turn to Romans, chapter 8, and consider verses 7 and 8. Once again, this is a text that declares man's enmity against God. Romans 8:7–8 presents the truth that the carnal mind is enmity against God and that those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The Bible says, "Because the carnal mind"—the word "carnal" refers to that which is fleshly or natural. You could read it, "Because the natural mind," that is, the unconverted or unregenerate mind, or because man by nature is enmity against God, "for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." The Bible says the carnal mind is enmity against God. Man not only hates God by nature, but his very nature, the cause of sin and rebellion, is enmity itself against God. "Enmity" is an extreme word for an extreme hatred. Because of his sin, rebellion, wickedness, and enmity against God, man by nature harbors extreme animosity against God. So then, because of this enmity, those who are in the flesh—that is, man by nature—cannot please God.

His hatred so influences his attitude and actions that he cannot please God. Therefore, his nature is completely and totally unacceptable to God. Unless he is born from above, as our Lord told Nicodemus in John chapter 3, he will in no wise enter into the kingdom of God. Very few men would be bold enough publicly to state their hatred of God. However, there have been a few notable infidels who have done so. It is amazing to discover that many of those who deny the existence of God spend a great deal of their time, effort, and money expressing their denial and hatred of God. If I did not believe that God really existed, why in the world would I waste my time fighting Him? Yet those who deny God are the ones who fight Him the most.

There is a difference between an intellectual atheist and a practical atheist. Most people are practical atheists; there are very few intellectual atheists. An intellectual atheist says, “According to my reasoning abilities, according to my rationalizations, and according to my powers of thinking, there is no way that I can deduce or discover God. Based upon my reasoning abilities, God does not exist.” That is an intellectual atheist. A practical atheist may admit that there is a God, and may even confess that God is, but he lives as if God does not exist and as if God’s truth and Word have no relevance to his life. While he may acknowledge God, his life is totally opposite: he does not recognize God’s sovereign authority over him.

While most would never verbalize their hatred of God—you do not walk down the street every day and see men clenching their fists and gritting their teeth, saying, “I hate God, I hate God”—most people would never verbalize their hatred of God. And yet they demonstrate their hatred of God privately and publicly by living a life that manifests that extreme hatred, a life that indicates, manifests, and reveals their hatred of God. They are practical God-haters. They may not be intellectual God-haters, but they are practical God-haters.

There are two points to cover: first, the reality of man’s hatred of God; and secondly, the manifestation of man’s hatred of God. The second point will be far more developed than the first.

The Reality of Man's Hatred of God

First of all, the reality of man’s hatred of God. Scripture is exceedingly clear when it expresses man’s hatred of God. It is useless to attempt to water down the concept of man’s hatred of God, and you cannot soften the meaning of the term. Every time you come to the word “hate,” it is the Hebrew word “sone.” That word occurs 146 times in our Bible, and 136 of those times it is translated as “hate” or “hatred.” The rest of the time it is translated either as “enemy,” “foe,” or “hateful.” It is therefore a strong word used in reference to God, and it is also used in reference to man. You cannot soften its meaning. When the Bible says that men hate God, it means that they are real, genuine haters of God. Therefore, they are the enemies of God; they are the foes of God.

Now, in this first point, follow along as I show you a number of Scriptures. From these Scriptures we will mine and bring forth the doctrine of man's hatred of God. When I get to applying the truth, I will not necessarily use every one of these Scriptures, though I will use a good many of them. I want you to see how many times this concept occurs over and over in the Bible. Having read Exodus chapter 20, let us look first in our Bibles at Deuteronomy chapter 7, verses 9 and 10. Deuteronomy 7, beginning with verse 9.

The Bible says, "Now know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keepeth his commandments to a thousand generations, and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack to him that hateth him. He will repay him to his face." Note especially the words, "and repayeth them that hate him to their face," and again, "He will not be slack to him that hateth him." So very obviously, there are some who hate God.

Deuteronomy 32:41 says, "For if I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." Note the words, "them that hate me." God says that He will render vengeance to His enemies and reward them that hate Him. There are a number of people that hate God.

In 2 Chronicles 19:2, Jehu, the son of Hanani, the seer, went out to meet King Jehoshaphat and said, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." Jehu asked Jehoshaphat a simple question: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord?" Then he asked, "Shouldest thou love them that hate the Lord?" There are people who hate God, and God's wrath is upon those who love them.

Psalm 21:8 says, "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies. Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee." Those who hate God are referred to as God's enemies. The Scripture says, "Thine hand shall find out all mine enemies, thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee."

The Bible says, “Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered. Let them also that hate him flee before him.” “Let them also that hate him flee before him.” I hope you are beginning to see that there is a teaching in the Bible that some people hate God. They are referred to as God’s enemies.

Look at Psalm 69 and verse 4. Psalm 69 verse 4. This verse, of course, is applicable to the Messiah: “They that hate me without a cause”—and this is used of Christ in John 15 and verse 25—“are more than the hairs of my head. They that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.” Notice the words, “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head.”

Look at Psalm 81 and verse 15. Psalm 81, verse 15. The Bible says, “The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever.” “The haters of the Lord.” Isn’t that an awesome phrase? “The haters of the Lord.” Psalm 83 verse 2 says, “For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.” “They that hate thee have lifted up the head.”

It will be interesting to discover what that means. Look in Psalm 129 and verse 5: “Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.” I realize this does not say “that hate God,” but you remember Zion is a city of God. As I take you through these verses, I want you to know that each one contains the word “hate.” I have not chosen verses that merely allude to the fact that men hate God, or illustrate it, or indicate it through parables. The verses I have chosen actually say that men hate God. They use the word “sone,” which is the word for “hate.” Look in Proverbs 8, verse 36. I quoted this verse last week. I quoted it at the beginning of our message today.

Our Lord says, "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death." In Psalm 139, verse 21, David says, "Do not I hate them that hate thee, O Lord? Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies." "But do not I hate them that hate thee?" So there are men who hate God. David's words are direct: he speaks of those who hate the Lord as enemies, and says that he hates them with perfect hatred. This is David's own

confession before the Lord, and Scripture does not present hatred of God as an unusual possibility; it identifies people who hate him.

In Matthew 6 and verse 24, our Lord says, in the context of God and Mammon, "No man can serve two masters, for he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon." No, you will hate the one and love the other. So men who love Mammon hate God. It's just that simple.

In John 7 and verse 7, our Lord tells his brethren—not his disciples, but his half brothers—"The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil." The Bible says the world hates Christ. In John 15 and verse 18, our Lord is talking to his disciples: "If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you."

I hope you can put two and two together. The reason Christians are so hated in this world is because people hate Christ. In John 15, beginning with verse 23, our Lord says, “He that hateth me hateth my Father also.” Oh, did you hear that? “He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin. But now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.” So our Lord says, whoever hates Him hates the Father.

In Luke 19 and verse 14, the Word of God says, “But his citizens hated him and sent a message after him saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.” Here is a passage we will come to a little bit later. Now, one last passage: Romans 1 and verse 30. Look at the phrase that is used, describing the unregenerate, describing the pervert. God says, “Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents.”

Out of all these verses in the Old and New Testament, I hope you have come to realize that there is such a thing as hating God. There are a great many people who hate God.

The Manifestation of Man's Hatred: Introduction

The question has to be asked: How do we know who hates God? How do we know whether a man is a lover of God or a hater of God? That

brings me to the second point, the manifestation of man's hatred. I want to spend the rest of my time in this message today showing you from the Bible how man's hatred of God is manifested, how it is evidenced.

Most of us have heard the old expression, "I can't hear what you are saying for the way you are acting." What does it mean? It means your actions are betraying your profession. Your actions are totally opposite from what you are saying. So the Bible is going to teach us that it is really our conduct, our attitude, and our actions that communicate what we truly believe.

Our Lord said it very simply in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 20: "By their fruits, ye shall know them." It does not matter what they say; it does matter what they do. By their fruits you shall know them. You remember Solomon, the wise man, who in Proverbs 23 and verse 7 said, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Ultimately, what you genuinely and truly believe is going to be manifested in your conduct. Man's hatred of God, I believe, is manifested in at least four specific ways. I am going to call these four specific ways an irreducible minimum. I am sure that if we went through the Bible, we could probably find many more ways in which men's hatred of God is manifested. However, I do not believe you could reduce the number to any less than these four and still accurately convey the concept of man's hatred of God.

So, how do we know whether or not men hate God? The answer is that we look at their fruit, their conduct, and their actions. We live in a day and time when professing Christians are so easily deceived and duped that it is almost unbelievable. All a movie star or a politician has to do is say that he is a Christian, perhaps quote a few verses of Scripture or use a little Bible terminology, and the multitude of professing Christendom is absolutely convinced that those individuals are genuine children of God, while their entire lives are contrary to what God says. A case in point is the politicians who have gotten on the born-again bandwagon.

Look at their voting records and how they vote for abortion and sodomy and socialism, welfareism. In other words, their conduct and their actions totally speak differently from their profession.

Look in 1 John, chapter two. I want to show you a passage that I have quoted many times in the past. I am going to emphasize it several times today, and I want you to be extremely familiar with it. Let us read verse three and then verse four. Verse four is the first that I really want to emphasize, but verse three shows the context: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” Now look at verse four: “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar. And the truth is not in him.”

How is it that so many politicians, movie stars, and other people can make a profession of faith, and gullible Christendom believes them even when their lives are contrary to Scripture? Note what God says: “He that saith, I know him”—he that makes a profession of faith, he that says he is a Christian—and yet keeps not God's commandments. What does God say? That man is a liar.

"And the truth is not in him." What does that make our politicians? What does that make our professing movie stars? I am not saying that you cannot be a politician and be a Christian, nor that you cannot be a movie star and be a Christian. But I am saying this: if you are a politician or a movie star, and you live by the word of God, you are not going to be in office long, nor a star very long.

It is very important to hear what our Lord said: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

How does man's hatred of God express itself? In four ways. First of all, a rejection of His person. Clearly, this should be an obvious manifestation of hatred. You do not cling or cleave to the one that you hate, nor do you desire to be near or around the one that you hate. I am sure that every one of us can think of people that we detest, whom we dislike intensely. Do we want to be around them? Of course not. Why? Because we dislike them, despise them, and detest them. The same thing is true with God. Whenever there is a hatred of God, there is rejection of His person.

Manifestation 1: Rejection of His Person

Go back in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 19. I told you that we would come back there. Here Jehu the son of Hanani asked King Jehoshaphat a question. Notice verse 2: "And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat." Now look at the question: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." Or, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, or love them that hate the Lord?"

These questions refer to Jehoshaphat's teaming up with King Ahab, the most wicked and vile king in Israel. Jehoshaphat was king of the southern kingdom, and Ahab of the northern kingdom. Ahab summoned Jehoshaphat and said, "Know ye not that Ramoth Gilead is ours, and we be still, and do not take it?"

In other words, the Syrians have control of this land. “This is our land. Will you go with me and help me recover this land?” Look in chapter 18 and verse 3: “And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and we will be with thee in the war.” I do not understand how Jehoshaphat could say this to Ahab. “I am as thou art, and my people as thy people”? No, they were two totally separate peoples, and Jehoshaphat was not like Ahab.

What Jehoshaphat was saying was, “I’ll go with you to battle.” But he made this statement before he inquired of the Lord. Therefore, verse 4 says, “And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, of the word of the Lord today.” He should have inquired before he agreed. Verse 5 says, “Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear?”

“And they said, Go up; for God will deliver it into the king’s hand.” Here are four hundred prophets saying, “Go up, Ahab. God is going to deliver Ramothgilead to you. It is all yours.” But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, besides, that we may inquire of him?” Here were four hundred prophets, but they were not prophets of the Lord. They were prophets of Baal. Ahab had

murdered the prophets of God, driven some out of the land, and imprisoned and tortured what few were left.

Jehoshaphat says, “I want a prophet of the Lord. I don’t want a prophet of Baal. Is there not a prophet of the Lord that we may inquire of him?” The king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, “There is yet one man.” God always has a man. He continued, “By whom we may inquire of the Lord, but I hate him. Why? For he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil. The same is Micaiah, the son of Imlah.” And Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say so.” The king of Israel called for one of his officers and said, “Fetch quickly Micaiah, the son of Imlah.”

How did Ahab know who Micaiah was? Don’t you remember that the Spirit of the Lord oftentimes took these prophets hither and yon? How did Ahab know exactly where Micaiah was? He had already said, “I hate him. He never prophesied any good concerning me. Always evil.” And, of course, Jehoshaphat, Christ of past vibes, says, “Let not the king say so.”

All the prophets prophesied, saying, “Go up to Ramoth Gilead, prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it in the hand of the king.” The messenger went to call Micaiah and said, “Behold, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one assent. Let thy word, therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good.” Micaiah answered, “As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.”

When he came to the king, the king asked him, “Micaiah, shall we go up to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?” I wish I knew the intonations and inflections Micaiah used, because he said this so sarcastically that the king immediately knew he was mocking him: “Go ye up and prosper. And they shall be delivered into your hand.” The king said, “How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?” He knew Micaiah was mocking him. Then Micaiah said, “I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountain as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, These have no master.”

"Let them return every man to his house in peace." The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell thee he would not

prophesy good unto me, but evil?" Again, he said, "Therefore, hear the word of the Lord." Micaiah declared how God had sent lying spirits into the mouths of the false prophets, that He might get Ahab up to Ramoth-gilead and kill him.

Remember what Ahab said: He was never going to speak anything good concerning him, but evil. "There's one man," he said, "but I hate him." I ask you, how did he know where Micaiah was? How could he tell his man, "Fetch him quickly"? Watch for yourself. In verse 25, the king of Israel said, "Take ye Micaiah and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son, and say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction until I return in peace."

Micaiah said, "If thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the Lord spoken by me." Where did he get Micaiah from? Out of the prison. He knew where he was because he had him imprisoned. Now what did he say? He said, "I hate him."

How can a man who hates God manifest his hatred of God? He cannot climb to God's throne, shake his fist in the face of God, or intimidate God. Simply saying, "I hate you," is not sufficient. No, he demonstrates and manifests his hatred of God by evidence of his hatred of God's representative, which is God's man. In other words, he hates God's prophet; he hates God's preacher.

Our Lord said in Matthew 10:40, “He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.” When you receive Christ’s disciples and messengers, you receive Christ; and when you receive Christ, you receive the Father who sent Him. The opposite is also true. When you refuse to receive the prophet of God, you refuse Christ; and when you refuse Christ, you refuse the Father.

Remember 1 Samuel 8, when Israel rejected God and would not have Him reign over them. God said to Samuel, “As they have done to me, so now they do also unto thee.” In other words, they have rejected Me, and they are going to reject you. Whenever a person rejects God or God’s representative, it is a manifestation of hatred against God.

Look in your Bible at 2 Chronicles 36:15–16: “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending”—why?—“Because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place.” What did they do? “But they mocked the messengers of God and despised his words, and misused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, till there was no remedy.” Therefore, He brought upon them “the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword,” and the house of their sanctuary, “and had no compassion upon young man, or maiden, or old man, or him that stooped for age.” He gave them all into his hands.

When they hated God, they mocked, misused, and abused His prophets. How do we know that men reject the person of God? They reject His messengers, His preachers, and His prophets. The first manifestation is a rejection of God’s person.

A king rules by his law. That is true of an earthly king, and certainly true of the divine King. Wherever there is a rejection of the King, there is always a rejection of His law. How does man’s hatred manifest itself? First, in a rejection of God’s person.

Refusal to Obey God's Precepts

Manifestation 2: Refusal to Obey His Precepts

Secondly, man's hatred against God is manifested in a refusal to obey His precepts. When God's person is rejected, so is His law. If you have no regard for the person, you certainly will not respect His word.

Men are like Pharaoh of old. In Exodus chapter five, Moses came to Pharaoh and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go." Pharaoh's response was a classic one: "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." When there was a rejection of this person, there was a refusal of his precepts. He was saying, "I don't know God. I don't receive that God. I reject that God. That God has no authority over me. Therefore, I refuse his precepts. He has no right to tell me what to do."

Remember the unjust judge in Luke chapter eighteen. What did he say? "Though he feared not God, nor regarded man." When there is no fear of God—in other words, when there is a rejection of God's person—no one is going to obey the precepts toward man or toward anybody. Thus the second manifestation of man's hatred against God is refusal to obey His precepts.

Those who love the Lord, those who receive His person, also receive and obey His precepts. Look at Exodus chapter twenty and verse five. God says, in reference to those idols, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children of the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

“And showing mercy on the thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.” Do you see the distinction? Those that love Him keep His commandments; those that hate Him refuse His precepts.

Look at Deuteronomy chapter 5. You will see the same truth taught again. Deuteronomy 5, verses 9 and 10, says: “Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them. For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and show mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”

Now look at Deuteronomy 7, verse 9: “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keepeth his commandments to a thousand generations, and repayeth them that hate him to their face to destroy them.” He will not be slack to him that hateth him. He will repay him to their face. “Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which I command thee this day to do them.” In other words, you do not hate God; you love God. Therefore, you keep the commandments and the statutes. Is that not clear?

The exact same truth is taught in the New Testament. God does not change, neither does His truth. John 14:15 says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Verse 21 continues: “He that hath my

commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

Note what He said: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." One of the things that I have told you over and over is that every positive has a negative. So if He says, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," what does it mean negatively? He that does not keep His commandments does not love Him. He hates Him.

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. If you do not love Me, that means if you hate Me, you will not keep My sayings. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings. And the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.

Romans 13:10 says, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." What is love? Love is the fulfilling of the law. So if I love God, what do I do? I obey His law. I keep His commands.

First John 5:2 says, "By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commands." How do I know that I love the children of God? I act obediently toward them. I keep God's commandment toward them. "For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not grievous." What is the love of God? The love of God is that we keep His commandments. So if we love Him, we obey Him. If we hate Him, we will not obey Him.

First John 2:3 says, "Hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments." How do I know that I'm genuinely born again? How do I know that I've been genuinely converted? Here's how: God's grace enables me to obey Him. As my life is being brought into more and more conformity to the Word of God, I have assurance.

If I say I'm a Christian, and you see me out running around with my wife, or getting drunk, or stealing, you are going to figure out something is wrong. He said, "Hereby do I know that I know him if I keep his commandments." Therefore, verse four gives the opposite:

“He that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar.”

"And the truth is not in him." So if I am telling you I am a Christian and am running around violating all of God's law constantly, consistently, incessantly, I hope you understand that I am not a Christian. Revelation 12:17 says, "And the dragon," which is symbolical of Satan, "was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Who is the devil after? Those who keep the commandments of God and those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 14:12 says, "Here is the patience of the saints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Who are the saints? Those that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Having given you all of these passages, I think you can understand clearly Mark 12:28–34: "And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength. This is the first commandment, and the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast well said, for there is one God, and there is none other but he. And to love him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, with all the strength, and to love thy neighbor as thyself is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

"And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question." What does it mean to love the Lord? It means to obey. It means to keep His commands. If you love God, you will honor Him and obey Him, and you will treat your fellow man right, because you will be treating that fellow man the way God says he ought to be treated.

Manifestation 3: Regarding That Which God Prohibits

How does man's hatred manifest itself? In a rejection of God's person and in a refusal to obey His precepts. We must understand what our Lord taught us: it is not by a man's profession that we may know him, but by his fruits—that is, by his life, action, and conduct. All who say they know Him, while their lives are completely contrary to the Word of God, are liars, and the truth is not in them.

Here is the third way that man's hatred manifests itself: not just in a rejection of God's person and a refusal to obey His precepts, but in regarding that which God prohibits. In Jeremiah 44:4, while expressing His disdain and detestation of sin, God says, "O do not that abominable thing which I hate." God hates sin. He says, "Don't do that abominable thing which I hate."

The Bible says in Habakkuk 1:13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." God is so holy and pure that He cannot look upon evil condoningly or upon iniquity approvingly. In other words, it is an abomination to God. God hates it and despises it. But what do men who hate God do? They regard and revel in that which God hates. They are so perverted that they call evil good and good evil. When men call evil good, it is simply a manifestation of their perversion and hatred of God.

You hear people who have gone out and gotten drunk, or committed adultery or fornication, say the next day, "Boy, we had a good time last night, didn't we?" What are they doing? They are calling evil good. Isaiah 5:20 says, "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, and put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." "Woe unto them" is a curse. Calamity, a woe, comes upon those who call evil good and good evil, bitter sweet and sweet bitter, and light darkness and darkness light. God says they simply revel and glory in that which He hates and despises.

God's admonition for those who love Him is found in Psalm 97:10: "Ye that love the Lord hate evil." Those who love the Lord are to hate evil—despise it the way God despises it and detest it the way God detests it. God also says in Amos 5:15, "Hate the evil and love

the good." These are commands. If we love Him, we hate that which is contrary to Him and love that which is in conformity to Him.

Therefore, I am not going to sit down and watch a movie or television program that glorifies sodomy, or anything else that I know is absolutely contrary to God and His truth. We are not going to call evil good, nor are we going to call good evil. The very fact that men love that which God hates manifests their hatred of God, for had they loved God, they would hate that which was contrary to God and His holiness.

Manifestation 4: Rebellion to His Position

How do men manifest their hatred? First of all, there is a rejection of His person. Secondly, there is a refusal to obey His precepts. Thirdly, there is a regarding of that which He prohibits. Fourthly, there is a rebellion against His position. All of these points fit together like a glove; in reality, it is impossible to separate them. When one rejects the person of God, at the same time he refuses to obey His precepts. At the same time, he regards that which God prohibits. In doing that, it is nothing less than rebellion against His position.

What is God's position? The answer is very simple: He is God. He is the sovereign, the Lord, the only God of the universe. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He alone has rightful authority to rule and reign. The very fact that men refuse to bow to His sovereign position is a manifestation of their hatred.

Psalm 2 is directed mainly to kings and rulers. Verse 1 asks, "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" Verse 2 continues, "The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us."

In other words, they are trying to rebel against God. They do not like God's boundaries, His limitations, or His sovereign control. They do not like God's saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." And so they rebel against Him.

Psalm 81:15 says, "the haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him." Those who hate God are not in submission; they are rebelling against Him and against His position of sovereign

authority. Psalm 83:2 says, "For lo, thine enemies make a tumult. They that hate thee have lifted up the head." What does lifting up the head mean? It speaks of arrogance, pride, and haughty rebellion: "You're not going to tell me what to do. You're not going to order my life. I'll do what I want to do. I'll say what I want to say." So they are in rebellion to God.

Remember what those people said in Luke 19:14: "But the citizens of that country hated him, and they said, We will not have this man to reign over us." That's rebellion. Now, why do men not bow to God? The answer is very simple—not just because they are rebellious, but because they want to be God themselves. It is the age-old temptation found in Genesis 3:5. The serpent told Eve, "For God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The word "knowing" is a very emphatic word in the Hebrew, and it literally means "determining": "Ye shall be as gods, determining good and evil."

In other words, once you eat this fruit, says the serpent, you do not have to have God tell you what is right and wrong. You can judge what is right and wrong for yourself. You can be your own God, make your own rules, and make your own law. Men who reject God's sovereign authority do so that they may elevate themselves to the status of Godhood and do what they think best.

Rebellion against God's position is a manifestation of hate. Our Lord said it best in Matthew 12:30: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” Having understood the concept of hating God, we could paraphrase that verse this way: He that rejects Me, refuses to obey Me, or rebels against My position is the one who hates Me. Instead of gathering with Me, he regards that which I hate and despise, and therefore he scatters abroad. Our Lord makes it very simple. The issue is cut and dried: you either love Him or you hate Him.

Applications and Conclusion

Let me make three illustrations or applications. First, men do hate God. The Word of God declares it to be so. Some hate Him privately; others hate Him publicly. Whoever hates Him, privately or publicly,

always hates Him positively and practically. There is always a practical manifestation and demonstration of hatred.

Love is always practical and demonstrable. First John 3:16 says, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” It then shows that practicality: “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” If I love you, what do I do? I demonstrate it in a practical way. If you are hungry, I feed you; if you are thirsty, I give you water; if you are naked, I give you clothing. There is a practical application to the doctrine of love, and likewise to the doctrine of hate. Those who hate God despise the gospel, do not walk worthy of it, and disclaim and discard the doctrines of the Word of God.

They cast off God's yoke and maltreat His people. They love that which God hates. All hatred of God is manifested in a practical way: by rejection of His person, refusal of His precepts, regarding that which He prohibits, and refusing to bow to His position.

Those who offend Christ do the greatest wrong to themselves, to their own souls. Let me quote Proverbs 8:36 again: "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death." When people hate Christ, they wound their own conscience. They bring a blot and a stain upon their own souls, rendering themselves odious in the eyes of God, unfitting themselves for communion with God, and deceiving themselves. They disturb themselves and destroy themselves. As our Lord said, it is a wronging of their own soul. God may righteously say to them, as He did to those in Hosea 13:9, "Thou hast destroyed thyself." Hating God is nothing less than self-destruction.

The great question is, do you hate God? You may answer, "No, I don't hate God," but your life can betray you. When Peter was denying our Lord, they asked him, "Do you know this man?" He answered, "No, no, I don't know that man." They said, "Surely you're one of them for your speech betrayeth you." You have got to be a Galilean.

We may say, "No, I don't hate God," but our lives can betray us. If our conduct, attitude, and actions are not brought into conformity with the Word of God, what does our Lord say? "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Our Lord summarized it well in Luke 6:46: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?" If Jesus Christ is truly our Lord, we will demonstrate it by obedience. If He is not our Lord, we will demonstrate it by rebellion, wickedness, and sin. If you do not love Him, you hate Him.

I am not saying this to be funny, but to make a point. Being saved is like being pregnant: either you are or you ain't. There is no in-between. It is just that simple. We either love Him or hate Him. If we love Him, we will manifest it; if we hate Him, we will manifest it. But remember this: there are people who hate God, but thankfully, there are also some who love Him.

Father, we are thankful for Jesus Christ. We're thankful for the love of God that has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, enabling us to bring our lives in conformity to his word. We are what we are only by the grace of God. We do not keep by law. We do not obey thy word in our own power, in our own initiative. But Father, by the regenerating grace of God and the converting grace of the Holy Ghost, we are brought to love thy law and delight in it. And we delight in honoring and obeying thee. Help us, Father, to continue in your love. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Why God Does Not Answer Most Prayers

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 22:1-20 (KJV)

Introduction and Scripture Reading

Josiah was 8 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem, and his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adiah of Boschath. 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 Mishael and the scribe, to the house of the Lord, saying, Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum up 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, 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, and 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 Ahicham the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king, saying, Go ye and 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 to the words of this book, to do according to all that which is written concerning us. So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahicham, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shalom, the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhash, 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 this 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 you say unto 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, and that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes and wept before me, I have also heard thee, saith the Lord. I will gather thee into 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.

The title of this message is, Why God Does Not Answer Most Prayers. If I could answer why God does not answer prayer specifically in every instance, I could become a wealthy man. Many people would pay good money, not only to get their prayers answered, but also to find out specifically why their prayers were not answered. Of course, if one could find out why his prayers are not answered, then he could correct that so the prayers could be answered.

Prayer as Duty and Privilege

Praying is a duty as well as a privilege. We are commanded to pray in the Bible. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, the Bible commands us to pray without ceasing. In Luke 18:1, God said that men ought always to pray and not to faint. Since prayer is a command, it is a duty. Since prayer involves our Heavenly Father and a relationship with Him, it is also a privilege. Moreover, the opportunity to commune with our Heavenly Father through the marriage of the Lord Jesus Christ is certainly, or at least should be, appealing to every child of God.

Prayer should not be, and it is not, an attempt to change the mind and the will of God. Prayer is not simply a means to get what we want. Prayer, in and of itself, is an instrument to accomplish the will of God. God has not only ordained the end; He has also ordained the means to that end, and one of the means that God has ordained is prayer.

The truth of the matter is this: we must pray regardless of whether or not our prayers are answered. Why? Simply because God has ordained prayer and commanded us to pray. Prayer, first and foremost, is to be done in obedience to our Heavenly Father. Our

prayer life is not to be judged by how many prayers we have answered, but by how well we pray. God has simply commanded us to pray. Therefore, we are obligated to pray, and since it is prayer to Him, it is also a privilege.

Before considering exactly why most prayers are not answered, we must understand some basic prerequisites concerning prayer in the Bible. If our prayers are to be heard according to Scripture, certain prerequisites must be met. What are they? Let me give you at least six. First of all, there must be a proper association.

Six Prerequisites for Answered Prayer

What do I mean by that? Our Lord said in Luke 11:2, "And when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven." In order to really have our prayers answered, we must be children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, it is true, according to the Bible, in Matthew 5 and verse 44, that God blesses the just and the unjust in certain general areas. He causes the sun to shine upon the just and the unjust alike. He causes rain to fall upon the just and the unjust alike. But the truth of the matter is this: there is a covenantal bond that exists between our Heavenly Father and His children. And that bond does not exist between God and the unregenerate. Do you not understand that you will always be more tender and more gracious and more kind towards your own children than you will to the children of a stranger?

In Luke 11, our Lord Himself illustrated this point. He said, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" What is He saying? He is saying, no, you do not treat your own children that way. Therefore, He said, "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?" If you know how to be good to your own children, do you not think your heavenly Father certainly knows how to be good to His own?

So there must be a proper association. That is why the Bible says in 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 16, “Now, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, who has loved us, has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.” We must be children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Secondly, there must be a proper approach.

Not only must there be a proper association, there must be a proper approach. In John 14, verse 6, our Lord said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” How can anyone get to the Father? Only through Jesus Christ.

I do not care how many people pray or how often they pray. The truth of the matter is this: no one and no prayer ever reaches the Father except through Jesus Christ. That is what the Bible teaches. The Bible also teaches this in Ephesians 2, verse 18: “For through him, that is through Jesus Christ, we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” In reality, the proper approach is through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. So how do we come to God? It is always through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

One must understand that we simply do not rush into the presence of God any way that we please. There are many examples in the Bible, but the leading example, of course, is in the Old Testament. The tabernacle, and later the temple, was divided into the court, the holy place, and the most holy place. What would have happened to any Israelite who rushed into the most holy place? He would have been killed. Even the high priest could not enter that most holy place except once a year, and then not without the sprinkling of blood.

The Bible teaches in Hebrews 10, verse 19, that now we can come into the presence of God, but only through Jesus Christ: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through his veil, that is to say his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance.”

What is he saying? He is saying that the proper approach to God is always through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ alone gives us boldness to

come into the presence of God, and His sacrifice alone is acceptable unto God. When we come to God, we do not depend upon our works, merits, good deeds, or the goodness of our lives. We do not depend upon saints, angels, ancestors, or anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ. If you come to God depending on anything other than Jesus Christ, your approach is wrong.

What does the Bible say in 1 Timothy 2 and verse 5? “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” The only way you can ever get to God the Father is through Jesus Christ.

So there must be a proper association, a proper approach, and, thirdly, a proper attitude. In Matthew 21, verse 22, the Word of God says, “In all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” Mark 11, verse 24, says, “Whatsoever things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.”

What is the proper attitude? The proper attitude is faith. No one is ever going to receive anything from God if he comes to God with an unbelieving and doubtful attitude. Hebrews 11 and verse 6 says, “Without faith, it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh unto God must first believe that he is, and secondly, that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” You cannot come to God except through faith. Faith is the proper attitude.

The proper approach is through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit, but the proper attitude is a believing attitude. James 1:5 says, “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.”

If we lack wisdom, what are we to do? Ask of God. It does not matter what wisdom we need, whether it is wisdom about our health, wisdom about what we are to do, how we are to go, or which way we are to turn. God said that if we need wisdom, we are to ask of Him who gives to all men liberally, that is, God is willing to give and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.

But look at verse six: “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 anything

of the Lord." You must ask in faith, nothing wavering. If you waver, that man is not going to receive anything.

The proper association is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The proper approach is through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. The proper attitude is that of faith. Fourthly, there must be a proper asking. We must ask in the name of Jesus Christ. In John 14:13–14 our Lord says, "And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." In John 16:26, our Lord said, "At that day, you shall ask in my name."

I want you to see how these things flow together: a proper association, a proper approach, a proper attitude, and a proper asking. Do not think that your prayers will be heard just because they are multitudinous and vigorous. Our Lord said 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 the vigor of our prayers that has merit. The merit is found only in Jesus Christ.

You may say, "Brother Weaver, I can pray for hours." Well, you may pray for hours, but the truth is, just because you pray for hours does not mean that your prayer is going to be answered. Asking in the name of Jesus Christ refers to absolute and total dependence upon His person, His works, and His merits. He is our only plea.

Now, let me show you. Let us suppose I walk down to one of the local banks in town and present them with a check made out to cash, signed by me, for a million dollars. I say, "I'd like a million dollars, please." They look at that and say, "Now, wait a minute. Do you have any money in this bank?" "No, sir." "Do you have an account here?" "No, sir." "Well, do you expect us to give you a million dollars?" "Well, I'm asking for it." Are they going to give it to me? No. I am asking for it, but I have no claim upon the bank.

But let us suppose Henry gives me a check for a million dollars. Henry is a multimillionaire, and Henry has it all in the bank. I take that check to the bank, and it is made out to me. Now I am asking for the same million dollars, but I am asking for it in Henry's name. I would receive the money because Henry has plenty of it.

The truth of the matter is this: when we come to Christ and to God the Father, we cannot ask in our name. We must ask in His name and in His name alone. To ask in the name of Christ implies that we have nothing, that we are nothing, and that we can do nothing. If anything is ever accomplished, it will be accomplished only because of Jesus Christ. There must be a proper association. There must be a proper approach. There must be a proper attitude. There must be a proper asking. Look in your Bibles at James chapter 4, because this goes right along with the proper asking.

A Proper Apprehension in Prayer

We must only ask in Christ's name, but we must not ask selfishly and greedily, merely for our own lusts. Notice James chapter 4, beginning with verse 1: “From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust and have not. You kill and desire to have, you cannot obtain, you fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, why? Because you ask amiss, that is, you ask wrongly, that you might consume it upon your own lusts.” We must not only ask in Christ's name, but we certainly must not ask selfishly, greedily, and lustfully.

Now, fifthly, there must be a proper apprehension. Look in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 5, and let us begin reading at verse 14: “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him.”

The key phrase in this passage is, “according to His will.” When we pray, we certainly want to pray in the will of God. How can we be assured that our prayers are heard, and how can we be assured that our prayers are according to the will of God? The answer is very simple. If our prayers are in agreement with the revealed will of God—that is, His written Word—then certainly they are in line with the will of God.

Scripture assures us that when you and I pray biblically, when we pray scripturally, God hears us. Scripture also assures us that when we pray biblically and scripturally, God not only hears us, but we

know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him. So here we have absolute certainty, absolute confidence, and assurance in prayer. When we pray according to the will of God, there is no doubt as to His hearing our prayers and answering them.

Someone may say, “Yes, but Pastor, sometimes I may not know sufficiently the Word of God on a particular subject, so that I would know how to proceed in prayer.” Well, that is one reason we are taught in Luke 11, verse 2, to pray, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

Also involved in this is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Notice Romans chapter 8, verses 26 and 27: “Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, For he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

There may be times when we have problems so complex and complicated that we do not know which way to go. There are times when we are so burdened and broken that we cannot even think straight. What does the Bible say? When we pray, we not only come to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Spirit, but sometimes we come in our groanings. The Holy Spirit translate those groanings and carries them to Christ, who brings them to the Father, and He does that in accordance with the will of God.

There have been times in my life when I have not known which way to go or which way to turn. When I have gone to pray, all I could do was lie there and weep and groan and say, “Oh, God, help me.” That is what is known as the ministry of the Spirit. If we have a clear passage concerning which we can pray, that is wonderful. But when we do not know and cannot find a clear passage, we can rest upon the fact that the Holy Spirit will make intercession for us according to the will of God.

There must be a proper association, a proper approach, a proper attitude, a proper asking, and a proper apprehension. If we know the Word of God, we pray according to its revealed will. When we do that, we know that our prayers are heard, and we know that we have

the petitions desired of Him. Just that simple: if you want your prayers heard, pray according to the will of God; if you want your prayers answered, pray according to the will of God.

Someone may ask, “Well, Brother Weaver, here is someone dying.” I have prayed for the sick, and they have gotten well. I have also prayed for the sick, and they died. Do you understand that it is not God's will to heal all of the time? It is God's will to heal most of the time, because all of us have been sick and gotten well repeatedly. But if it were God's will to heal all of the time, every time, no one would ever die. When you pray for someone, there have been times when I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that the person was going to recover. But there have been other times when I prayed, and I did not know. All I could say was, “Lord, your will be done in that person's life.” There are some things you do not know and must leave to the will of God.

Sixthly, there must be a proper affection. Colossians 3:1 says, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” We are to set our affection on things above, not on things of the earth, for we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. If you are risen with Christ, set your affection on things above.

If we truly love the Lord, His Word, and His will, we will want His will above anything and everything else. We should always seek His honor and glory, worship, and adore Him. What is the very first petition we are taught to pray in the model prayer? “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.” That is, may Your name be worshiped and glorified. We should want that in all of our lives.

If there is an improper association, approach, attitude, asking, apprehension, or affection, our prayers are not going to be answered. My basic assumption is that the average Christian knows these truths; and if he does not, he certainly should. These are basic requirements, basic prerequisites, of having our prayers answered. But the message today is not on the prerequisites. The message is why most of our prayers are not answered.

The Example of Josiah

To answer that question and show you that truth, you need to go back to 2 Kings chapter 22, our text, because it is very clearly revealed in this passage. In 2 Kings chapter 22, you read about Josiah. Thankfully, Josiah was basically a godly man. He was a young man brought up in the ways of the Lord. He began to reign when he was eight years old, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem.

Look what the Bible says in verse 2: "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." In other words, he found out what was right and stuck to it. He did not deviate. Here was a tremendous young man who had the character to do that which was right.

However, one problem did exist: the law of the Lord had been lost. I preached a message not too terribly long ago entitled "The Lost Law" from this text, but it is important for us to understand again that the law had been lost in the house of the Lord. In this chapter, it was lost in the temple. They were cleaning and repairing the temple, and they found a copy of the law. Unhappily, that is where the law of God is lost today. Just like our Lord in Zechariah 13:6, who was wounded in the house of His friends, His law has been lost in the house of His friends as well, because it is the average church that denies, denounces, and denigrates the law of God. So the law was lost.

When a copy of the law was found by Hilkiah the priest, he delivered it to Shaphan the scribe, who read it. Then he took it and read it to King Josiah.

"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, and 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."

When the king had heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahicham the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah the servant of the king, saying, "Go ye and inquire of the Lord for me, and for all 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 to the words of this book, to do according to all that which is written concerning us."

The very first thing he does is rend his royal clothes. He gets rid of them. He says, "We've got problems. We have violated this law in our land. We violate this law in our kingdom, in our government. We've got a real, genuine problem." Then he says, "Here's what I want you to do: Go ye and inquire of the Lord for me." Josiah said, "You find out what God's will is for me." So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahicham, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shalom, the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of a wardrobe.

Huldah dwelt in Jerusalem in the college, and they communed with her. What is significant about the fact that they went to Huldah the prophetess? The Bible even says that she dwelt in the college there in Jerusalem. Note that the king did not send the priest to Huldah; the priest went to Huldah. In verse 13, all the king says is, "Go ye, and inquire of the LORD from me, and for the people, and for all Judah." Then, in verse 14, Hilkiah and these men went to Huldah the prophetess.

Why did the priest and these men go to Huldah? First, it could have been because of the king's earnest affection, his strong desire to get this business resolved, and the fact that his order was to be carried out hastily. They went to this woman who dwelt in Jerusalem. In other words, she was already there. Moreover, evidently she was well known, and her husband was a member of the royal court.

Secondly, if you study your Bibles, you will find that two other men prophesied during the reign of Josiah: Jeremiah and Zephaniah. So why did they not go to Jeremiah? Why did they not go to Zephaniah? Why were they not consulted? Jeremiah lived in Anathoth, which was relatively close to Jerusalem, but he could have been at a far-off corner of the kingdom; he was not necessarily close by.

Jeremiah certainly knew Josiah, because he lamented over Josiah's death. Second Chronicles 35:25 says, "And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah. And all the singing men and all 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." Josiah probably knew of Jeremiah, and certainly Jeremiah knew of Josiah. So why was Jeremiah not consulted?

Why did they go to Huldah the prophetess? Zephaniah also prophesied during Josiah's reign, but his ministry may not have commenced until a later date. The obvious truth is that neither Jeremiah nor Zephaniah were consulted, and they are not even mentioned in the text.

Third, let me point this out: the statement that they went to Huldah the prophetess, I believe, is a most singular circumstance and very revealing. I believe that it demonstrates the depth of apostasy and the state to which the kingdom has sunk. You say, What are you talking about? Let me demonstrate it. Jeremiah certainly was a prophet in Israel, and yet he was not consulted. It may be that he could not have readily been consulted. Zephaniah may not have prophesied or had begun his ministry of prophesying at that time. What do I mean when I say it is revealing, showing the state of the kingdom and the depth of the apostasy?

Do you remember who the high priest was? Hilkiah. Without turning there, let me read to you from Malachi 2:7: "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." Who was responsible to know the will and the Word of God? Hilkiah. And yet he had lost the law in the Old Temple.

Moreover, there was Shaphan the scribe. Do you know who a scribe was? Someone who wrote, someone who was there. Shaphan, the scribe, should have been conversant in sacred affairs simply to have been fit for his office. You know what the Bible says about Ezra? Ezra was a scribe. Let me compare Shaphan, just for a moment, with what Scripture says about Ezra. In Ezra 7:6, the Bible says, “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.” What does that mean? It means Ezra knew the Word of God. The interesting thing is, moreover, Josiah was helpless in and of himself.

Now he is twenty-six years old. He has tried to do what was right, but he knew nothing of the Law of God. Yet, according to Deuteronomy 17, the king was obligated to have his own personal copy of the law and read therein every day. Now here it is; let me try to tie it together for you. The secret of the Lord was neither with Hilkiah the high priest, nor Shaphan the scribe, nor the king, nor any of the servants of the king, nor the ministers of the temple. And yet Huldah, a prophetess about whom we know absolutely nothing save this circumstance, is consulted on the meaning of the Book of the Law.

Tradition simply says that she prophesied among the women of the court, being herself one of the court ladies. The point, I believe, is this: God never, ever leaves himself without witness, because he will never leave sinners without excuse.

When those who should rule, should know, and should exercise dominion refuse to do so, power and authority will always shift to those who will. All that is needed to have a matriarchal society is for the men to do nothing.

I am thankful for all of the godly, knowledgeable women that I know. But it is a shame that most of them became that way apart from their husbands. In other words, it should be the husband's leading, teaching, and directing, saying, “This is the way, walk you in it.” But is it not sad that, oftentimes, when you find a godly woman, you will find either an ungodly husband or one who is so indifferent and apathetic that he does not care one way or the other? These men, who should have known the law of God, knew nothing, and so the power shifted down to the woman.

The point of this message is not to deal with all this prophesying, but to emphasize God's answer to Josiah and demonstrate why God does not answer most prayers. Consider verse 18: “But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you 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 curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me, I have also 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.”

The Lex Talionis Principle

Do you see in those short verses why God does not answer most prayers? Probably you do not, so let me point it out specifically. Look in verse 18: “But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire 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.”

Josiah listened to the words of God, and God listened to the words of Josiah. Every positive has a negative, and every negative has a positive. What is the opposite of the fact that Josiah heard God's words and God heard Josiah's words? Here is the opposite: when we do not hear God's words, God does not hear our words. This principle is shown throughout Scripture.

This is known as the Lex Talionis. The Lex Talionis simply means the principle of retribution. It is repeated over and over in the Bible: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, foot for foot, a burning for burning, stripe for stripe, life for life. What is God saying? God always makes the punishment fit the crime. This is perfect justice.

When you do not listen to me, I do not listen to you. First Samuel, chapter two and verse 30, shows this principle. God is speaking to Eli, who was a wicked man, although he was a priest: “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.” God says, If you want to honor me, I will honor you. If you want to despise me, I despise you. That is the Lex Talionis, a principle of justice.

Hosea 4:6 is a passage that most of us can quote, at least the first part of it. But the same principle is involved in this verse. God says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Everybody can quote that part. But look at the rest: “Because thou hast rejected knowledge, that is God’s knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me.” Now watch: “Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”

In other words, when we reject the knowledge of God, God rightly and justly rejects us. When we forget God’s law, God rightly and justly forgets our children. What? Look at verse 6 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. Seeing thou hast forgotten the law by God, I will also forget thy children.”

You know what God’s law is? God’s law is the expression of His will. You know what our children are? They are an expression of our wills. God says, “You forget my will? I’ll forget your will. You don’t honor my law, I don’t honor your children.” See that principle? It’s the Lex Talion. It’s the same thing. God is saying, “You don’t listen to me, I’ll listen to you. You want to forget my law, I’ll forget your children.”

Psalm 66, verse 18, shows why God does not answer most prayers. Look at the passage: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” David said, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not what? Hear me. Now, what is iniquity?

It is another word for sin, lawlessness, and rebellion. Would you like to know what sin is? First John 3:4 says, "Whosoever commits sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law."

What did David say? If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. What is he saying? If I do not hear God, God is not going to hear me. We cannot harbor sin, lawlessness, and iniquity without violating the law of God. When we harbor sin and iniquity and lawlessness, all that demonstrates is that we are not listening to God; we have not heard God. If we had listened to God, we would not have that in our lives.

Hearing God's word does not simply mean that you sit down and read your Bible every day. It does not mean that you merely go to church every Sunday, or that you just have a tape recording going while someone reads Scripture to you. Look in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 15. This is a passage with which you should be exceedingly familiar.

Saul had disobeyed God and spared Agag, the best of the Amalekites, along with all the sheep and the oxen. That which was wicked, wrong, and refuse he utterly destroyed. After Saul told Samuel that the people spared the best so that they might sacrifice it unto God, Samuel said, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?"

Then he declared, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is a sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is iniquity and adultery." Go back to verse 22: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice."

God had rather have your obedience than anything else. He said, "To obey is better than sacrifice." But look what He said: "And to hearken is better than the fat of rams." Do you know what the fat of rams was? The fat of any animal was the chief part of the sacrifice. It was always given to God. The point is that to obey and to hearken are equivalents. They are one and the same. He said, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken is better than the fat of rams."

In other words, God is not interested in you and me merely having an audible hearing of His Word. He wants an internal application in which we obey His Word. Let me put it like this: no one ever really

hears the Word of God until he obeys the Word of God. You only hear when you obey.

Hearing Means Obeying

Now, if you think what I am saying has no merit, if you think what I am teaching you is not serious, and if you think that somehow you can continue with known sin and rebellion in your life and still have God hear your prayers, look in Proverbs 28 and verse 9. Look at what God says: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination."

You know what the word abomination means? It means a stench in the nostrils. God says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination"—a stench in the nostrils. What is God saying? "You do not listen to Me; I will not listen to you. In fact, your prayer stinks. I will not have it," said God. "I will not hear it." It is an abomination because you refuse to listen to God.

I want to make one other application of this. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Mark, chapter 4. Here Scripture shows why most professing Christians never mature in the faith, why most Christians remain stunted, deformed, and childish for much of their lives. Beginning with verse 24, Jesus says, "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 away even that which he hath."

Now listen to what he said: "Take heed what you hear, and what measure you meet it shall be measured to you." God is going to measure truth to you just as you study. "And unto you that hear shall more be given." In other words, to you that obey shall more be given. Why in the world would God give you any more truth if you are not going to obey the truth He has already given you?

Do you know why most Christians never progress in their Christian life? They do not obey the truth they know. They do not apply any of God's truth that they know to their individual lives. It is

the same principle: God says, “You do not hear Me? I do not hear you. You do not hear Me? I do not give to you.”

Application to the Unregenerate

I want you to see that this same principle also applies to the unregenerate. Look in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs, chapter 1. Here is a passage that is so plain it certainly should not need any explanation. Wisdom, of course, is Jesus Christ. Look what wisdom cries in verse 22: “How long you simple ones, would you love simplicity and the scorners delight in the scorning and fools hate knowledge? Now, look, turn you at my reproof.” That is, “Listen to Me,” says God. “Behold, I will pour my spirit upon you. I’ll make known my words to you.” That is it: “Listen to Me. I’ll teach you.”

Then he says in verse 24: “Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but you have set at nought all my counsel, would have none of my reproof. I will also 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. Well, I will not answer. They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.” Why? “For they hated knowledge. I did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would have none of my counsel.”

“They despised all of my reproof. Therefore, shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices.”

You know what God is saying? Salvation is of the Lord. Men erroneously think they can be saved whenever they want to be. They think the key is in their hands, that they can repent of their own will, believe of their own will, and that when they call upon God, God is obligated to answer them. God says, “Let me tell you something. Salvation is not in your hand. Salvation is in my hand. If you are not converted in my time and in my way, and if you will not hear my words, there will come a time when you cry to me, and I will not hear you.” It is the same principle: perfect justice.

Conclusion and Prayer

Why are most prayers not answered? The truth is that most people give no heed to listening to God. They do not hear God's Word, and they do not obey God's Word. If they will not hear God, why should God hear them? I certainly do not want to encourage disobedience or rebellion.

But I am so thankful that God is gracious, and oftentimes He does hear us even when we are not what we ought to be and should be. Yet if God held us to His strict principle of justice, do you understand? If we refuse to hear Him, why should He hear us? “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.” If more Christians realized that the way to have their prayers heard and answered is to hear and apply the Word of God in their lives, would that not make common sense?

If you had two sons, one a drunkard and a reprobate, and the other orderly, kind, helpful, and obedient, and it came time to bless one of them, which one would you bless? Be honest with yourself. You worked hard in your life. Would you leave your inheritance to a drunk, even if he were your son? I would not.

Common sense will tell you that if we want to be heard by our Heavenly Father, we must hear Him, because he that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.

Father, we bow to Thee this day. We thank Thee for Jesus Christ, for His grace and mercy. Help us, Lord, to hear Thee, to listen to Your Word, to apply Your truth, to become more and more obedient in our lives, and to conform our lives to the Word of God. Make us what we ought to be and should be by the grace of God in Jesus Christ is our prayer. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

The Marks of a True Christian

The Mark of a True Christian

Open your Bibles to Deuteronomy 33. We are going to read the first three verses. The message today is entitled, “The Mark of a True Christian.” The Mark of a True Christian. Deuteronomy 33, verse 1: “And this is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them, He shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints.”

Introduction: The Question of a Christian's Mark

“From his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people. All his saints are in thy hand, and they sat down at thy feet. Every one shall receive of his words.”

Let me begin today by asking a couple of questions. First, how would you describe a Christian? If I ask you to designate one mark, one characteristic that would be prevalent in every true Christian,

what would be your answer? And then the second question would be this: once you gave me the answer, how could you be sure that you had the right answer?

The Principle of Fruit as Evidence

I want you to hold Deuteronomy 33, but look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 7, because our Lord has certainly given us a principle that you and I can go by. Matthew 7, beginning there with verse 17. Most of you are familiar with this passage, but notice our Lord says this. Matthew 7, verse 17: "Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."

"Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them." Now, it's very important that you pay attention to verse 20. "Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them."

Our Lord has just said that a good tree will inevitably produce good fruit, while a corrupt tree is inevitably going to produce corrupt fruit. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, and a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit. So the principle is, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Pay particular attention to verse 20, because our Lord did not say, "By their profession ye shall know them." He said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." It is critical at this point that you remember Titus 1:16. Paul wrote, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Here are people who profess that they know Him, but in their works they deny Him. Let me put it very pointedly: a profession without commensurate fruit is absolutely worthless. Our Lord said, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The Danger of Undiscerning Profession

I am constantly amazed at the lack of discernment among Christians and their ability to be suckered by politicians and Hollywood movie stars. It appears that professing Christians will accept anyone as a Christian as long as he says he is a Christian. It does not matter

about their lifestyle, their actions, or their blasphemies. Just so a man says he is a Christian, then inevitably he must be a Christian.

If you take that position, such a position is not only naive; it is certainly unbiblical as well as blasphemous, because it is a denial of the power of the gospel. What does the Bible say in 2 Corinthians 5:17? "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." In other words, when Christ saves someone, He changes them. That is very obvious.

The Mark Defined: Teachableness and Love for the Word

In Deuteronomy 33, one trait, one characteristic, one fruit is given to us of a true Christian in this passage: teachableness. You might call this teachability. When anyone is too busy to hear, read, study, and apply the Word of God, something is vitally wrong with his or her life. Their profession should be suspect. Why? Because for a true Christian, the Word of God is our food, our sustenance, and our life.

The Apostle John divided Christians into three categories: babes, young men, and fathers. Consider the food and nourishment of a baby. First Peter 2:1 says, "Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envies and evil speakings as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby." Have you ever seen a living baby who did not want milk? Who did not want food? Who did not want to be fed? The very evidence that a child is alive is not only that he cries, but that he eats. So, as newborn babes, what are you to desire? The sincere milk of the Word. If you are a babe in Christ, the most natural thing is for you to desire the Word of God.

Let us suppose you are a young man. Psalm 19:9 says, "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey in the honeycomb. Moreover, by them as thy servant warned, and in keeping with them, there is great reward."

Now, David, as a young man, said that the fear of the Lord is clean. It endures forever. He says that God's Word is much more desired than gold, even than fine gold, and that it is sweeter than honey and honeycomb. What did he want? He wanted the Word of God. Do you remember the passage he wrote in Psalm 119, verses 9 through 11? He said, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. O let not my heart wander from thy commandments, when my whole heart have I sought thee." Where shall a young man clean his conscience? It is by keeping the Word of God. It does not matter if you are a babe; it does not matter if you are a young man: you desire the Word of God. Then, if you look in Jeremiah chapter 15, you will see Jeremiah as a father, as a mature man, I might say.

Here is someone who understands not only the justice of God, but the mercy of God as well. In Jeremiah 15:16, Jeremiah says, "Thy words were found and I did eat them. And thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. For I am called by my name, O Lord God of hosts." He said, "My words were found and I did eat them." They were the joy and the rejoicing of his heart.

It does not matter where you are in your Christian life—whether you are a babe, a young man, or a father. That which is most important is the Word of God. Why? Because you must have the Word of God. It is your food, your nourishment, and your life.

Exposition of Deuteronomy 33:1-3

Now, if you go back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 33, understand that this passage—in fact, all of Deuteronomy, you could say—is a summation of when God gave His law to His people, especially Deuteronomy 33:1–3. The word Deuteronomy is made up of two words, Deuteros and nomos. Deuteros means two or second, and nomos is the Greek word for law. Deuteronomy means second law, or the second giving of the law. The law was given the first time in the book of Exodus, and here it is repeated in the book of Deuteronomy.

Look at verse 1: "And this is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death." The Bible specifically says that this is the blessing with which Moses, the

man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death. What did he do to bless them? He quoted and gave them the law of God a second time. In other words, he gave them the Word of God.

God's law, God's Word, is given to us as a blessing and to be a blessing. It is turned into a curse only by sin, disobedience, and rebellion. God gave His law initially to be a blessing.

Look at verse 2: "And he said, The Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them. He shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints. From his right hand went a fiery law for them." Please understand this: verse 2 does not speak of God's origination.

Everyone has heard the childish question, "Where did God come from?" Someone came to me recently and said, "Preacher, I know where God came from." I asked, "Where?" He quoted this verse: "Well, He came from Sinai." But this verse has nothing to do with God's origination. God is eternal. God never began and therefore God never ends. He was never born, and He never came from anywhere. Why? Because He is everywhere at once in the totality of His person. He is the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, eternal God who always was. Therefore, He says, "I am," not "I was," nor "I once will be," or "I shall be." He always has been, and He always will be God.

Since verse 2 does not refer to God's origination, how do we explain it? Very simply: the movements or places mentioned—Sinai, Seir, and Mount Paran, or Paran—describe God's dealings with His redeemed people. The children of Israel had already been bought by the blood, and they came to Mount Sinai, where God gave them an expression of His love. He gave them His law. In fact, verse 3 says, "Yea, He loved the people." Remember, God is a jealous God. So what did He do to express His love? He gave them His Word.

Secondly, the Bible says, "He rose up from Seir unto them." Look back to Deuteronomy chapter 1. How long did it take the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land? Forty years. How long was the journey supposed to be? Not forty days. Deuteronomy 1:1 describes where Moses spoke to Israel: "These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan, in the wilderness, in the

plain over against the Red Sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab." Then verse 2 says, "There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh-barnea." They could have entered the Promised Land in eleven days. Why, then, did it take forty years? Because of their sin and disobedience.

God had told them to go up, but they refused. You remember how they lied against God and blasphemed Him. There was another instance at Mount Seir: the people murmured, complained, griped, and bellyached. God said, "I'm so sick of this." What did God do? He sent fiery serpents among them; they bit the people, and they were dying. That was when Moses raised the brazen serpent. Our Lord said, "Whosoever looketh upon this serpent shall live."

When the Bible says He moved from Sinai to Seir, He was still showing that He protected and had mercy upon His people, while at the same time leading and guiding them. Then Deuteronomy 33:3 says that, not only from Sinai and Seir, He shined forth from Mount Paran.

What in the world does that mean? In Numbers 10:11–12, the Bible says, "And it came to pass on the 20th day of the second month in the second year that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel took their journey out of the wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud rested where? In the wilderness of Paran." God had led them by a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. What was God doing? God was still leading, guiding, and protecting His people. There had been a brief period when God asked for love offerings for the materials to build the tabernacle, and the people supplied those materials abundantly. The tabernacle was set up, and God was leading and directing them. This was before their real rebellion took place.

Verse 2 demonstrates God's providential guidance and protection of His people, especially in relation to His divine purpose in their lives. It is not verse 1 or verse 2 that I am particularly interested in today; it is verse 3. Having worked our way down there, look at verse 3: "Yea, he loved the people. All his saints are in my hand, and they sat down at my feet."

The Construction of Verse 3: Love, Security, and Reception of the Word

"Everyone shall receive of thy words." Now, let us go back to the original question. If I were to ask you to express one real, genuine, identifying mark of a true Christian, what would your answer be? Baptism? Love? Obedience? Worship? Sacrificial? Humble? Suppose I could give you one mark that would not only cover all of those things, but a multitude of other characteristics that you might come up with as well. What would be my answer to the question, "What is the mark of a true Christian?"

My answer would be this: A true Christian will be a man of the Book, a man of the Bible, a disciple of Christ. Look at verse 3 and watch this carefully. "Yea, he loved the people. All his saints are in my hand, and they sat down at thy feet. Every one shall receive of thy words." Now let me show you how this verse is constructed. First, the Bible tells us that He, God, loved the people. How do we know that God loved the people?

Love is always demonstrable—always. The Bible does not tell us, "And we know that He loved us because He told us that He loved us." In 1 John 3:16, Scripture says, "Herein" or "Hereby perceive we the love of God." To perceive means to comprehend, to understand, and to lay hold on. We comprehend the love of God, not because He told us He loved us, but because "he laid down his life for us. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up the bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." If someone sees that his brother has need and shuts up his bowels of compassion upon him—in other words, he merely says to his brother, "I love you," but does not supply his need—God asks, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" God says, "Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." He loved us. How do we know that He loved us? Scripture says He gave His only begotten Son. He laid down His life for us. Thus, the Bible says that love is always demonstrable.

This verse in Deuteronomy 33:3 begins by stating that God loved us. Remember, love is always demonstrable. Second, the Bible says, "All his saints are in thy hand." When we hear that all His saints are in His hand, our minds should go to John 10:28–30. Our Lord speaks of His people, His sheep: "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

When Jesus Christ says that we, His people, are in His hand, and that we are in God the Father's hand, what is He talking about? He is speaking of absolute protection and absolute security. No man, nothing, can take us out of His hand.

That is a wonderful truth. But may I point something else out? If we are in His hand, it could also mean that we are at His disposal. He may use us or not use us; that would be totally up to Him. Since we are in His hand, He has us at His disposal, and He loves us.

Thirdly, we have to ask this question: How will God manifest His love to us, and how will God dispose of us? Verse 3 says, "Yea, he loved the people. All his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words."

How do we know that God loved Israel? How did God, in this instance, demonstrate His love for His people? He gave them His law. He gave them His Word.

God did not give His Word to the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Hivites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, or any of those other people. He gave His law only to His people, Israel. Romans 3, beginning in verse 1, asks, "What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." That is the main difference. How did God express His love to His people? He gave them His Word.

Now that we are in His hands, what does He dispose us to do? According to verse 3, He disposes us to sit down at His feet. What does that mean? He gives us a teachable spirit, an inclination to sit, study, and hear His words.

It is interesting that the Bible says, “And they sat down at thy feet.” Do you remember when, in 2 Kings chapter 2, Elijah was going to be taken away from Elisha? Elisha was a student of Elijah. The sons of the prophets kept coming to Elisha and saying, “Knowest thou not that the Lord will take thy master away from thy head today?”

What kind of a question is that? What does it mean? What does it imply? Do you realize that in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, students sat at the feet of their teacher? When the prophet said, "Knowest thou not that the Lord will take thy master away from thy head," that was a picture of Elijah sitting down and Elijah standing up, with God removing his teacher. May I remind you that in Acts 22 and verse 3, the Apostle Paul said that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. What was the Apostle Paul doing? Sitting and being taught.

Every one of you remembers that great passage in Luke chapter 10, where Martha, the sister, complained of Mary and said, "Lord, make her get up and help me serve." And you know what our Lord said? "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but only one thing is needful." The Bible says that Martha had that sister, and that sister is called Mary. She sat at Jesus' feet, listening to the Lord teach, and Jesus said that good thing would not be taken away from her.

So when the Bible says in Deuteronomy 33 verse 3, "and they sat down at thy feet," he is teaching us that he gives to his people a teachable spirit. They want to learn. They want to hear. They want to know. Now, if you were to ask me, what is the mark of a true disciple of Jesus Christ? Or what is the one mark that would distinguish every true Christian from the multitude of professing Christians? My answer would be this: They are students of the Book. They are disciples. They have a teachable spirit.

Look what the Bible says. I am not making this up. I am not exaggerating. Look in Deuteronomy 33 and verse 3. "Yea, he loved the people. All his saints were in thy hand and they sat down at his feet." Are you looking now? "Everyone shall receive of his words." Not that everyone might receive, or that everyone possibly may, or that everyone might merely look into them. No. It says they shall

receive of His words. Everyone shall receive of His words. It is impossible to be a real Christian and not receive the words of the Word of God. It is impossible.

Now, here is an instance of God's special kindness. The Bible says in verse 3 that He loved the people. But go back to verse 2: "And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law." What are the last two words?

Even the law that was written in stone was meant to be a blessing. It was not meant to be a curse. They were to learn it, study it, and apply it. In Deuteronomy 6, verse 1, Moses says, "Now, these are the commandments, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God commanded." What are those next words? "To teach you." Why? "That you might do them in the land where you go to possess it, that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and all his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life, and that thy days may be prolonged."

"Hear, therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it." Why should we listen to God, obey His Word, and be taught? Here is why: "That it may be well with thee, and that you may increase mightily as the God of thy fathers hath promised thee in the land that floweth with milk and honey."

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

Did God give us His Word just to be a curse for us, because He was a mean, hateful God who did not want us to do a bunch of things? No. He gave us His law for our good. Do you realize it is for our good that we are not adulterers? It is for our good that we are not whoremongers. It is for our good that we are not thieves or murderers. It is for our good that we are not covetous, hateful

gossipers. It is for our good that we hear God's Word, honor Him, obey Him, and worship Him.

Old and New Covenant: The Law Written on the Heart

What was the evidence of God's special love for His people? He gave them His law. What is the gospel promise? Has God changed? Is God any different in the New Testament than He was in the Old Testament? What did God do in the Old Testament to demonstrate His love for His people? He gave them His law.

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 31:31-33 (KJV)

> Let me show you the gospel promise of what will happen in the new covenant, so that we can see the special love of God for His people.
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> "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they break." That is that covenant written in stone. "Although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord, but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law on their inward parts and write it in their hearts and will be their God."

“And they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know ye the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord. And I will forgive their iniquity. And I will remember their sin no more.”

What did our Lord say He was going to do in His new covenant? He was going to write His law in their hearts. It would not be on stone; it would be in their hearts. Look in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel, chapter 36, beginning in verse 25. This is still the gospel promise in the Old Testament.

God says, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put

within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes."

"And ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Now, wait a minute. What did God say? In the new covenant, He was going to give us a new heart, put a new spirit within us, put His laws in our hearts, and cause us to walk in them. That is in the New Covenant.

Now turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 3. I want you to see how the Apostle Paul explains the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. I preached on this passage several years back in detail, but notice verse 1: "Do we begin again to commend ourselves, or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?" "Epistles," that is, letters of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you. Do we need to carry letters around saying that we are all right, that we are true preachers? No, said Paul, we do not. Why? "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men."

Paul writes that believers are "the epistle of Christ, ministered by us," "written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." Through this passage, the Apostle Paul contrasts the Old Covenant with the New Covenant and shows that the New Covenant is so much better because now we have the law written in our hearts. This is the gospel promise, and it shows that God has not changed.

Hebrews 8 repeats what we read in Jeremiah and Ezekiel: "For this is a covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts." "And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Isn't that amazing? But that's not all.

Hebrews 10 repeats it again: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord. I'll put my laws into their

hearts and in their minds and I will write them and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

What is the gospel promise? The gospel promise is that God is going to write His law in our hearts and in our minds. He is going to cause us to understand. He is going to cause us to know Him. He is going to cause us to obey Him. What did God do in the Old Testament to express His love? He gave them His law. What did He do in the New Testament to express His love? He gave us the law—not now in stone, but in our hearts. You know, an interesting thing is this.

This is a gospel call, a passage that shows the effectual call of God upon His people. In John 6:44–45, we see that effectual call. Jesus says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him at the last day." Man in himself does not have the ability to come to Christ. He says, "No man can come unto me." If no man has the ability to come to Christ, how does he get to Christ? The answer is that the Father draws him.

How do we know whether we have been effectually drawn by the Father to Christ? Jesus continues, "It is written in the Prophets," that is, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, "and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, what cometh unto me?" How do we know that we have been drawn? Because God writes His law in our hearts, and we come to Christ in faith, believing that it is indeed the Word of God.

The law of God written in our hearts is certain evidence of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. We have to reckon God's law. All of God's Word is law, because it is the Word of a King, and a king's word is law. We have to reckon all of the Word of God to be one of the gifts of His grace.

Deuteronomy 33 says that He loved the people. Actually, it means He embraced the people; He laid them in His bosom. In other words, the Word signifies His dearest love. What does He do to express His love? He lays us in His bosom, gives us His law, gives us a teachable spirit, and ensures that we shall receive His Word.

The Love of God Shed Abroad as Obedience to the Word

Something struck me about Romans 5:5 this past week. I have read this passage hundreds of times, but it never clicked like this until this past week. It is a passage with which everyone is probably familiar, and many can quote it. The Bible says, “And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.” What exactly is it that the Holy Ghost is shedding abroad in our hearts? Scripture says it is the love of God. What is the love of God?

Is it a warm, fluffy feeling? Is that what He does? Does He shed this warm, fluffy feeling abroad in our hearts? Does He shed gushing sentimentality? Does He just shed something that makes us want to say, "I love you, I love you"? What is the love of God?

The Bible says that He sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts. Turn in your Bibles to 1 John 5. As you turn there, remember Romans 13:10: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Love is the fulfilling of the law. So love is not feelings. It is not gushy sentimentality. It is not a warm, fluffy feeling. It is not just something that makes you say, "I love you, I love you, I love you." No. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Now, if you look in 1 John 5:3, the Bible tells us explicitly what the love of God is: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not grievous." If the love of God is the keeping of His commandments, and the Holy Ghost sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts, what is He shedding abroad in our hearts? The knowledge of God and His Word.

How do I know that for sure? Look at the negative in 1 John 2:4. That was the positive; now you have the negative: "He that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him." Did you hear that? He that saith, "I know him," and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Where does that put all the disobedient, rebellious, sinful, ignorant, unlearned, professing Christians that fill our churches today? Where does that put them? Lost. Lost. That's what he said.

Those are not my words: "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

The Holy Ghost sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts. What exactly is He shedding abroad? Not warm, fluffy feelings, but the Word of God. He is writing the law of God in our hearts, teaching us His truth, and enabling us to bring our lives into conformity with His Word. Look at John 14:21: “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.”

Notice the connection: he that hath Christ’s commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Him. How do I know that I love Christ? I keep His commandments; I obey Him. The Bible says that if I love Him, I will be loved by the Father, and Christ says, “I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” How will He manifest Himself? Through His Word, by His Spirit, as that Word is continually being shed abroad in our hearts.

Now consider the opposite in verse 24: “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.” Our Lord has said it positively: if you love Him, you will keep His commandments. If you do not keep His commandments, it is evidence that you do not love Him.

How can a truth so simple be misunderstood when our Lord states it both positively and negatively? He says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”; negatively, if you do not keep them, you do not love Him. How can it be misunderstood when He says, “And this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”? And how can it be misunderstood when He says, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him”?

Positive and negative—it cannot be misunderstood. A true Christian is going to be a disciple of Christ, a student of the Book. That does not mean he will be a preacher, a theologian in depth, or someone who knows everything. But he will not be an ignorant individual either. He will know something about that Book, something about Christ, and something about the Father. There will

be a desire to learn, a teachable attitude, and a willingness to listen to and be taught by the Word of God.

Continuing in the Word as the Mark of True Discipleship

Look in your Bible at John 8:30. I find this so amazing: “As he spake these words, many believed on him.” Now, you will remember what I told you at the opening of this message. Our Lord said, “by their fruits you shall know them,” not by their profession, but by the manifestation of their lives. Now watch: “As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” Then He goes on to say in verse 32, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

“If you continue in my words, then are you my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” The word indeed is the Greek word alethos, which means “of a truth,” “truly,” “surely,” “indeed,” “most certainly.” If you continue in my word, then you are certainly my disciples—surely my disciples, truly my disciples.

What is the mark of the true disciple? Continuing in the Word of God. That is why our Lord said, “and you shall know the truth,” because the Word of God is truth, and the truth will make you free. What was our Lord telling these people? They said, “Oh, we believe, we believe, we believe.” Our Lord said, “It’s not just in your profession. It’s whether or not you really continue in my word. Whether you really listen, whether you really learn, whether you really apply the truth. If you’re my true disciples, the mark of it is you will continue in my word.”

It is not that you will go to Bible school for one year or go to college for four years. You will be a student of the Word regardless. You will read that Word, study that Word, and listen to that Word being taught. You will want to understand and comprehend it, have your questions resolved, and understand things that most people are not even interested in.

In John 17, the high priestly prayer of Jesus Christ, He is praying for His own—those who have been saved, those whom the Father has given Him. He says in verse 6, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word." Then, in verse 7: "Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee." In verse 8: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and they have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."

Those that you have given me, I gave them your words. What did they do? They received them. They believed. What does the Bible say in Deuteronomy 33? "Everyone shall receive of thy words." To show you the distinction, look what our Lord said in verse 9: "I pray for them. I pray not for the world. But for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine."

Which ones is he praying for? The ones who received his words and the ones who kept his words. He said the rest are worldly. Isn't that amazing? Jesus Christ is saying that his true disciples are those who kept his word and received his word. What is the mark of a true Christian? He is one who is willing to be taught and willing to listen. If you can show him anything in the Word of God, he is willing to receive it as it is indeed in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh in you who believe.

Applications: Being a Man of the Book

The first application is this: the clearest mark and the clearest characteristic of a Christian is that he is a man of the book. He reads it. He studies it. He applies it. He lives by it. Scripture is everything to him. The true Christian understands that if he pleases his Heavenly Father, he must be obedient to what his Heavenly Father has commanded him. Isn't that simple?

The real, genuine mark of a true Christian is that he is a man of the book. That does not mean he is going to understand everything, and it does not mean he is going to know everything. But he is going to be in that book, reading it and applying it to the ability that God gave him.

I teach all over this country. I have taught classes that have had hundreds of students. I have taught classes that had seven or eight students. I have even taught classes that had one student. I want to show you what God says in light of this. In 2 Timothy chapter 2, Paul writes to Timothy in verse 1: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Verse 2 says, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou."

Paul told Timothy, "The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." If you want to be taught, I do not have to beg you to come. You will be faithful to the Word of God. This is why I am trying to tell you that the mark of a true Christian is that he wants the truth and is willing to be faithful to get the truth.

It is not hit and miss—not once a year at a Bible conference and then forgotten. You want the truth consistently. You will want to be taught, and you will want to be where the Word of God is. The clearest and most concise mark of a true Christian is that he loves the Book and wants to be taught.

Secondly, like the disciples of old, we need to learn to sit at our Lord's feet. Sitting implies time and patience. You are not going to learn in one year what it has taken me forty years to learn, nor am I going to learn in one year what it has taken you forty years to learn. We must learn to sit. Our Lord said of Mary, "She's chosen that good part, and it's not going to be taken away from her." If we learn to sit daily, read our Bibles, and say, "Lord, speak to me," then, when we see something we do not understand, we should look it up. If we cannot, we should seek help. Learn! That is the impact of this message: learn! "Everyone shall receive of thy word."

Thirdly, we must count it a privilege and an honor to sit at our Lord's feet, and to have the Holy Ghost shed the love of God—which is obedience to His Word—and the knowledge of His Word abroad in our hearts. You cannot obey what you do not know; you can only obey what you do know. The evidence of God's love in the Old Testament was that He gave His Word to His people. The evidence of God's love in the New Testament is that He gives that same Word, but now writes it upon our hearts, ensuring that we know it and know Him. If we are true disciples, we will continue in that Word.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us. Build us up in the most holy faith and make us students of Thy Word. Enable us, Lord, to honor Thee and to bring our lives in conformity to Thee, to be all that we can be by Thy grace. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

When God's People Become His Enemies

Introduction: The Strange Work of God

I do not always look forward to the last message. The reason is that I have so much I want to preach, and only one message remains. Before service, I was thinking that I had four messages I would really like to preach. One is entitled, "Why God Does Not Answer Most Prayers." Another is entitled, "I Feel Just Like Jeremiah." And another is entitled, "Will It Happen Again?" But by God's grace tonight, I am going to preach from Isaiah 63, under the title, "When God's People Become His Enemies."

Look at Isaiah 63:10 and mark this passage, because we certainly will come back to it. The Bible says, "But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them."

Now turn back to Isaiah 28:21. I am not preaching from Isaiah 28; I want only to point out one verse by way of introduction. The Bible says: "For the Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, he shall be

wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act."

I was preaching a message to our people from Job 31 and Isaiah 28 entitled "The Strange Work of God." It is called the strange work of God because he was judging his people. While I was preaching that message, the thought came to my mind: When do God's people become his enemies? I thought to myself, even as I was preaching, I need to examine that. That is exactly what I did.

The Modern Church's Decline

There's absolutely no doubt in our minds that the professing church has fallen far below the norm and standard of the Word of God. I receive complaints and lamentations from believers all over this country that it is impossible to find a biblical church, or a church in their area where the true Word of God is really preached. A number of believers I have talked to have confronted their pastors and elders about their unbiblical actions, both in and out of the pulpits, and their unbiblical interpretations. Most who confront elders and pastors lovingly and kindly are simply looked on as rabble-rousers, troublemakers, and bigots. I have known individuals who took a biblical stance and were kicked out of the church for being biblical, because the church did not want that. It appears that modern-day Christianity as a whole has absolutely no desire to return to biblical Christianity.

Vance Havner is now dead. He was a Southern Baptist evangelist who summed up our situation very well: “Christians have been subnormal for so long that when one becomes normal, everyone else thinks they're abnormal.” That's certainly the truth. The New Testament church today is vastly different from the church in the New Testament era. We have fallen away doctrinally, practically, and ethically, and we have become pragmatic. All you have to do is look around, because the average attitude of the average church is, “If it works, we're going to do it.”

The Church's True Purpose vs. Pragmatism

It does not really matter if it is biblical or scriptural; if it works, we are certainly going to do it. Look at all the extra unbiblical programs,

games, and entertainment, and the blatantly unbiblical attitudes and actions that occur regularly. The Church of Jesus Christ was never intended to be an entertainment center, a babysitting service, a psychological den, or a feel-good-about-yourself society. It was never intended to be an arm of the state or federal government, nor simply a political action committee. The church of Jesus Christ was ordained by God the Father to exalt His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; to proclaim His gospel; to edify His saints; to call sinners to repentance; and to worship and praise Him alone.

The truth of the matter is, the modern church has failed and is failing in most of those areas. We have become basically everything except that which we should be. Let me say it like this: the modern church has become the enemy of God.

God Fights Against His Rebellious People

Is it possible for God's people to become his enemies? Is it possible that God actually fights against his people? Is it possible that the reason the church of Jesus Christ as a whole is defeated, discouraged, downtrodden, and dominated by our enemies is because the one true and living God is fighting against us? The answer to all of those questions is yes.

Look back in Isaiah 63, beginning at verse 7. See how clear this is: "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses."

"For he," that is God, "said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie. So he was their Savior. In all their afflictions, he was afflicted. And the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity, he redeemed them. And he bared them and carried them all the days of old." Here it is: "But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit. Therefore, he was turned to be their enemy and he fought against them."

Do you realize that when Israel rebelled against the Lord, they became God's enemy and God actually fought against them? You

have to remember that God is immutable. God does not change. As he was then, so is he now. Malachi 3:6 says, "For I am the Lord, and I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever." Since God does not change, if he fought against his covenant people in the Old Testament because they rebelled against him, certainly he will fight against his covenant people in the New Testament if they fight against him as well.

Biblical Examples of God Fighting His People

Jeremiah 21 shows how God actually fought against Judah and Jerusalem. King Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah because Nebuchadnezzar had come up, and he wanted Nebuchadnezzar gone. The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent unto him Paschur, the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Messiah, the priest, saying, "Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us. For Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, maketh war against us. If so be the Lord will deal with us according to all of his wondrous works, that he," Nebuchadnezzar, "may go up from us."

Then said Jeremiah unto them, "Thus shall you say to Zedekiah, Thus said the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith you fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them in the midst of this city, and I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand, and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and great wrath, and I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both men and beasts, they shall die of a great pestilence."

Zedekiah said, "Pray, Jeremiah, that maybe the Lord will let Nebuchadnezzar leave us." God says, "No. I'm not going to let him leave you. Let me tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to turn back the weapons that are in your hands. I'm going to take Nebuchadnezzar. I'm going to take his men, and I'm going to assemble them in this city. And what is more," said God, "I personally will fight against you." God fought against his own people because his own people had rebelled against him.

Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations. Look at what Jeremiah reveals concerning the fall of Judah and Jerusalem. There are five chapters in the book of Lamentations. Actually, there are five poems, and each one of these poems views the fall and destruction of Jerusalem from a different aspect. In Lamentations 1, the first poem begins with verse 1. Let us read the first nine verses: "How does the city sit solitary that was full of people?"

How has she become as a widow? She that was great among the nations and princes among the provinces, how has she become tributary? She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her. They are become her enemies. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction and because of great servitude. She dwelleth among the heathen. She findeth no rest.

All her persecutors overtook her in the straits. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feast. All her gates are desolate. Her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. Her adversaries are the chief. Her enemies prosper, and the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions. Her children are gone into captivity before the enemy, and from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed. Her princes are become like harts, they find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries, all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell in the hand of the enemy, and none did help her. The adversaries saw her, and did mock her sabbaths. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore she is removed. All that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness. Yea, she sigheth and turneth backwards. Her filthiness is in her skirts. She remembered not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully. She had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy hath magnified himself.

Did God's professing people become his enemies? Absolutely. Undoubtedly, this is also a picture of the modern-day church. The modern-day church has lost its power, its position, and its

prominence. Do you realize the Church of Jesus Christ in this country was once a force to be reckoned with?

There were statesmen in those days who would do nothing without consulting the pastor or the church and seeking the blessing of the Lord upon their positions, offices, or undertakings. But today the modern church is absolutely ridiculed and disparaged. The truth is, the modern-day church is helpless, worthless, and useless.

The story is told about a Catholic priest speaking to a Baptist pastor. The priest smiled and smugly said, “We no longer have to say, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’” The Baptist pastor dropped his head and said, “That is true. But no longer can we say, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’”

We've lost our power and our position. How can the church—how can professing Christendom become the enemies of our Lord? Exactly the same way the professing people of God in the Old Testament became his enemies.

The Apostle Paul gives us a little hint in Colossians 1:21: “And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now be reconciled.” Notice that he said, “you were enemies in your mind.” When we think unbiblically, when we think humanistically, we become enemies in our mind, because that is the way the old man always thought. According to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are not to be old men. In Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3, we are to put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness.

How We Become God's Enemies: Rejecting His Law

What we've forgotten is that thinking and acting go together. What does the Bible say in Proverbs 23? “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” The Apostle Paul said it like this in Philippians 3:18: “For many walk, of whom I have told you, and even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.” When you begin to think wrongly, you begin to act wrongly. When you think unbiblically, you walk and talk unbiblically as well. When we think and act unbiblically, for all practical purposes, we're fighting against the Lord and become His enemies, regardless of our profession.

It doesn't matter what we say. We can stand and say, "I love the Lord" all day long, but as long as we're thinking unbiblically and acting unbiblically, we are becoming His enemies.

How did Israel become the enemies of God? We become God's enemies the same way they became God's enemies: by rejection of and disobedience to His law. Here is a very simple truth: a king rules by his law. That is true of earthly kings. That is true of the one true and living God, who is the King of heaven and earth. The law happens to be an expression of God's will.

In 1 Samuel chapter 8, the people were willing to trade God for a man. You cannot really comprehend what is going on in 1 Samuel chapter 8 unless you see it as a transition from one law structure to another. They were rejecting God and rejecting His law, and now they had a human king. This human king was going to establish his law. God said, "Alright, I'm going to let you have this man, but I'm going to tell you the manner of the king that shall rule over you."

You cannot reject God and God's law without at the same time becoming an idolater, because when you reject God and God's law, you're going to bow to man and man's law.

Hosea chapter 4 points this out clearly: "Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel. For the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land." Think about this. You want to fight against God? You want to argue with God? You want to get into a controversy with God? I don't think I would. But the Bible says that God has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. Why does God have a controversy? Here's why: "Because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land." God said, I'm willing to fight over those things. I'm willing to have an argument over those things.

Watch what happens in verse 2: “By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood touches blood.” So you have to ask yourself this question: Why do you have all the lying, swearing, killing, stealing, and committing adultery? The answer is because there is no truth, no mercy, and no knowledge of God in the land. They have forsaken God's law.

Look, if you would, in verse 3. Here is the result. Here is what happens: “Therefore shall the land mourn, and everyone that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of the heaven, yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.” By the way, man's sin also affects his environment.

Watch verse 4: “Yet let no man strive or reprove another, for the people that strive with the priest. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.” That is, I am going to take care of the nation. I am going to destroy it.

Look what he says in verse 6. Everyone can quote this verse: “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.” Now, God said, seeing you have forgotten my law, I will also forget your children.

This is the lex talionis. This is the law of retribution. This is perfect justice. Do you know what God's law is? God's law is an expression of His will for your life. God is telling you exactly how He wants you to live. This is His law; it is an expression of His will for your life. What are your children? Your children are an expression of your will. Mom and Dad, you wanted them. You had them. God gave them to you. Now what God said is this: here is perfect justice. You reject my law, which is a manifestation of my will; I will reject and forsake your children, who are a manifestation of your will. When you forget God's law, it is the same as forgetting God. When you reject God's law, it is the same as rejecting God. You cannot separate God and His law.

Look in Deuteronomy chapter 8. Let me show you this about forgetting God. Begin there with verse 10. In fact, there is a message just on this chapter on forgetting God. Notice Deuteronomy chapter 8, beginning with verse 10. Here is what God says.

“When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware! Here’s a warning. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes,

which I command thee this day. Lest, when thou hast eaten, and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein, and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage."

When you and I are in a state of desperation—when we are hungry, broke, sick, hurting, or needful—it is easy to remember the Lord. We want to be healed, supplied, and taken care of. But God said there is a danger: many times you are going to have plenty and be blessed beyond your imagination. Therefore, take heed lest you forget Him and forget His law.

What have we become? I am talking about God's people. We have become an unthankful, ungrateful, and unappreciative people because we have basically rejected and forsaken God and His law. I know Christian people who will never bow their heads in a public restaurant and thank God for their food. Why? Maybe they are ashamed. I do not know.

I never will forget one of my pastor friends telling me about Pastor Richard Wurmbrand. You remember the book Tortured for Christ? He spent fourteen years in a Romanian prison. He was at our house and preached in our church. My girls were young, and my twins had some gerbils. After dinner, they brought them out and said, "Look, Mr. Wurmbrand, gerbils." He said, "Rats." They said, "No, gerbils." He said, "Rats."

"I know what they are. I had to eat them for 14 years just to stay alive." One of my pastor friends told me he was up north with a whole lot of other pastors who took Richard Wurmbrand out to a restaurant for dinner. They were all sitting around talking when the waitresses brought out all of that food and set it on the table in front of them. Wurmbrand immediately dropped to his knees in the restaurant and began, in a loud voice, to thank God and praise God. My pastor friend told me, "I was so embarrassed." Then he said, "I got embarrassed because I was embarrassed. You know, if I'd eaten rats for 14 years, I think I could learn to appreciate a little food too." Just stop and think about that.

Look how often we go day after day without thanking God for life and health and rest and sleep and bread and food and everything that God gives us. In Isaiah chapter 5, beginning with verse 1, God says, “Now will I sing to my well beloved the song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard and a very fruitful hill.” This vineyard happens to be Israel, and Judah and Jerusalem happen to be His pleasant plants.

Verse 7 says, “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant.” Now watch: “He looked for judgment, but behold, oppression, for righteousness, but behold, a cry.” In other words, here is everything that they were not supposed to be, and that is what they were. They were violating God’s law.

Verse 24 says, “Therefore,” says God, “as the fire devoured the stubble, and the flame consumed the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust, because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against His people, and He hath stretched forth His hand against them, and hath smitten them, and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.”

Why was God so angry, and why was He judging His people so heavily? Because they despised the Word of the Holy One of Israel and cast His law behind their backs.

In Jeremiah, chapter 5, verses 1 and 2, God tells Jeremiah, "Run you to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see now, and know, and speak in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any, that executes judgment and that speaketh truth, and I will pardon it." If Jeremiah could find one man in Jerusalem who actually executed judgment and sought truth, God would pardon the entire city. Then He tells him, "And though they say the Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely." In other words, they were hypocrites. They knew how to say things with their mouths, but their lives were totally, absolutely different.

In verse 7, God asks, "How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods. When I have fed them to the full, then they committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlot's houses. They were as fed horses in the morning, every one nayed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

In verse 23, God says, "But this people have a revolting and rebellious heart. They are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his season. He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things for you. For among my people are found wicked men. They lay wait, as he that setteth snares, they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit. Therefore they become great and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine. Yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked. They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper. And the right of the needy, do they not judge? Now watch! Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord?"

“Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and a horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests there rule by their means, and my people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end thereof?”

Here are a people that disobeyed God. They loved ear-tickling preaching. They loved to profess, but they did not like to live and obey. And God said, “I'll fight against you. I'll wipe you out. I'll destroy you. What will you do in the end thereof?”

When we reject the law of God, when we disobey the law of God, we're fighting against God, and God in righteousness and holiness then turns and fights against us. And by the way, when God fights against us, He wins and we lose. This is so astounding.

“Forsooth was it that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other

gods." Let me ask you a question. How do we know that they feared other gods? We know they feared other gods because God said so. That's true. But what is the manifestation of the fact that they feared other gods?

Here it is in verse 8: "And they walked in the statutes," or the laws, "of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel which they made." Every king of Israel was a reprobate king. There were no godly kings in Israel. Jeroboam began with the two golden calves, and every king who followed him in Israel continued worshipping them.

They substituted God's law with the laws of the heathen and with the laws of the heathenistic kings of Israel. Even Judah and Jerusalem were obeying those laws. They were not obeying God or God's law. In this chapter, God gives the reasons why He sent the children of Israel into captivity: they rejected His law and took the law of man. They did not obey God; they obeyed man.

Look in verse 9: "And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God. And they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the Watchman to the fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill and under every green tree. And there they burned incense in the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them, and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger. For they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. Yet the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah, by all his prophets, by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my service to the prophets.

"Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their necks like unto the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected His statutes, and His covenant that He made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He testified against them. And they followed vanity," that is, idolatry, "and became vain, and they went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them. And they left all the commandments of the Lord

their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the hosts of heaven, and served Baal."

And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with the Israels, and removed them out of His sight. There was none left but the tribe of Judah only. But Judah also kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked to the statutes of Israel, which they had made.

You would think that people would put two and two together. You would think that Judah would say, "Look what God did to those ten northern tribes. They rejected His law. They disobeyed His law." And then Judah turned around and did the same exact thing until God removed them as well.

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

Why is God going to judge them? Here is why: "For the statutes," or the laws, "of Omri are kept." Omri was the father of Ahab. He was also a murderer. God says, "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and you walk in their councils, that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof a hissing, therefore you shall bear the reproach of my people." God said, if you want to obey man's law, have at it. I'll just destroy you. You reject Me, you reject My law, and yet you are going to honor these heathenistic laws and statutes? No. I'll reject you.

When God's people forsake, reject, and forget God's law, they are fighting against God. And when they do that, God, in defense of His honor and glory, must fight against those who are fighting against Him. And in fighting against His own people,

He destroys them for their sins. We become God's enemies when we forsake and disobey His law. His law is an expression of His will for our lives. In fact, 1 Thessalonians 4 says, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in honour.”

Secondly, we become God's enemies by offering Him hypocritical and ritualistic worship. John 4:24 says, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” God requires that we worship Him in spirit and truth. God's worship is bounded on one hand by truth and on the other hand by spirit. I have a whole series of messages on biblical worship, but here are the two boundaries: it must be in truth and it must be in spirit.

How We Become God's Enemies: Hypocritical Worship

What happened to Israel was this: Israel fell into the trap of ceremonialism and ritualism. Instead of worshiping God in spirit and truth, they turned everything into a ritual and a ceremony. Do you realize that is exactly where most churches are today? You go to the average Baptist church, especially a Southern Baptist church. Most people run into the average Southern Baptist church with a quarter in one hand and a quarterly in the other, fifteen minutes late. They have their quarter to put into the offering and their quarterly in their Bible. When they sit down in church, put a few cents in an offering plate, sing a few songs, and listen to a little sermon, somehow they think they have worshiped God. They are now free to go out and live as they please because they have given God this little teeny bit of recognition for just a few minutes.

Look in your Bible to Isaiah 29, beginning with verse 13. Also find Matthew chapter 15, because we will go there next.

Isaiah 29:13–14 says, “Wherefore, the Lord said, for as much as this people draw near to me with their mouth and with their lips to honor me, but remove their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men. Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work

and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

The Hebrew word for "marvelous" here literally means something wonderful, something extraordinary, something surpassing, something distinguished by action. The word "wonder" also refers to an act of God's judgment. God said, "I'm going to do something that's going to be wonderful. I'm going to judge them, and it's going to be an absolutely surpassing, extraordinary, wonderful act of judgment." Why? Because this people honor Him with their lips and with their mouth, but their hearts are far from Him.

Now, look in Matthew 15, because our Lord quotes from this passage. Without reading the entire passage, look in verse 7. Our Lord says, "You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Look, but in vain," that is, it is useless, it is worthless, "but in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Our Lord is quoting from Isaiah 29, and it should be noted that He calls such worship hypocritical, because only hypocrites offer such worship. Their heart, their love, their affection, their spirit were elsewhere. They were not interested in God's worship. They could care less. All they were interested in was a little ceremony, a little ritual, getting in and getting out.

If people ever really got in with God, they would not care what time they got out. I have been in only two or three meetings in my entire fifty years of preaching that came down to that. I was preaching in a little church in Illinois, and God gave great liberty and freedom. When the service was over, everyone was standing around talking. I jokingly said, "Well, if I had known everybody was going to stand around, I'd preach again." They sat down, and I preached again. When I finished the second time, their pastor preached. When he finished, they asked me to preach again. It was about two o'clock in the morning before we got out. Nobody left; everybody simply stayed.

Our Lord said that only hypocrites think pure ritualism and ceremonialism are sufficient. He calls such worship vain—that is, useless, fruitless, and worthless. He demonstrates this in verse nine:

"But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines and commandments of men." In other words, you have substituted my law for man's law.

I am trying to show you that we become God's enemies when we offer Him hypocritical and ritualistic worship. Look at Isaiah chapter 1, beginning with verse 10. When God is talking to Sodom and Gomorrah here, He is talking to Judah and Jerusalem. "Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom. Give ear unto the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. I delight not in the blood of bullocks, and of lambs, and of he goats."

"When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain"—that is, useless and worthless—"oblations. Incense is an abomination to me. The new moons and the Sabbaths, the calling of assembly, I cannot away with it. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul, hate it! They are trouble unto me."

"I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash you. Make you clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek judgment. Relieve the oppressed. Judge the fatherless. Plead for the widow."

What did God say? You have come offering these sacrifices. Do you think I merely want the blood of bulls and goats? Do you think I want you to go through a little ritual and then turn around and live the way you please? No. Did not God appoint those new moons and Sabbaths? Yes. Did not God appoint those sacrifices? Yes. Did not God appoint the calling of the assemblies? Yes. But they turned everything into a mere ritual and ceremony. Their heart was not in it. Their mind was not in it. It was empty, vain, useless, and worthless. And God said, "I hate it. I will not have it. I cannot stand it. I will not receive it."

God says in Amos 5:21, "I hate, I despise your feast days. And I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer me burnt

offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them. Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs." He said it is just noise; you are singing.

"Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy vows. But," he said, "let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." Then he asked, "Have you offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness, forty years, O house of Israel? But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch, and shewn your images, the star of your God, which you made for yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts." God said, "I despise your feast days. I will not have it."

God said, "Here's what I want. I want judgment to run down like waters. I want righteousness to the mighty stream." I don't care which passage you look at. What God is saying is this: the foundation of worship is obedience to His law, obedience to His Word. If you and I are living ungodly, unrighteous lives, we cannot render unto Him the worship that is due His great name. We cannot, and we must not, claim to be God's people if we are worshipping Him, offering Him, or giving Him what you and I would call defective, worthless, useless, and unacceptable worship.

David said it like this in Psalm 103: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, in all that is within me, bless His holy name, and forget not His benefits," who daily loaded thee with good things, who feedeth thee, and he goes on down and enlists everything. But what did he say? "Bless the Lord, O my soul, in all that is with me." You don't sit there like a nut on a log. You bless the Lord in your mind and in your heart. You praise Him. You thank Him. You ignore Him. And you do so according to His Word and according to His Spirit.

Obedience is the foundation of worship. Unless our lives are obedient lives, we're offering defective worship to God. Read the book of Malachi. God got a hold of those people because they were offering defective sacrifices. You know what God said? "Offer this sick, initiated lamb to your governor. See if he'll eat it. See if he'll take it." And then God said, "I'm a great king. Don't give me that kind of worship."

We become God's enemies when we forget and reject His law. We become God's enemies when we offer Him defective worship, when our worship becomes just pure ceremonial and ritualistic. Third, we become God's enemies when we befriend the world. We become God's enemies when we befriend the world.

James 4:4 says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." The world in this context does not refer to God's creation, but it does refer to the world system that is in opposition to God and His Word. He says, "Know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God." The word "enmity" there is a very strong word. It is the Greek word echthros, and it means to be a foe, to be hostile, to be hateful, or to be opposed to. God said, "If you're a friend of the world, if you're a friend of this world system, you are the enemy of God."

How We Become God's Enemies: Befriending the World

Now, look at it in the context. Let's begin with verse 1. God asks, "From which come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts that warn your members? You lust and have not. You kill and desire to have and cannot obtain. You fight in war, yet you have not because you ask not. You ask and receive not because you ask amiss that you may consume it upon your own lust. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

"Do you think that the Scripture saith in vain, The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore, he said, God resisted the proud, but gave the grace to the humble. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw an eye to God, and he will draw an eye to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be afflicted in morn and week. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up."

God, in this context, is talking about being a worldly individual. According to James chapter 4, a worldly individual is covetous, lustful, proud, arrogant, quick-tempered, aggressive, and desirous of everything opposed to God. He lives for himself, his own pleasures, will, and desires. He wants to get ahead in life and is willing to do whatever is necessary to get ahead, without caring whether it is right or wrong, good or bad. God's remedy, according to James chapter 4, is to draw near to God, repent, close your hands, and submit to the Lord. Unless we do so, we remain in a state of enmity against Him.

It is one thing to be in the world and quite another to be of the world. God's people are in the world, obviously, but we should not be identified with the ungodly world system. King Jehoshaphat of Judah was basically a good and godly man, but he did some stupid and downright wicked things. He helped Ahab, the king of Israel, and joined affinity with wicked Ahab. When he returned to Judah, God sent Jehu, the son of Anani, the prophet, to him. Jehu said, “And Jehu, the son of Anani, the seer, went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is there wrath upon you from the Lord.” Ahab was a wicked reprobate, yet Jehoshaphat stupidly said, “My people are your people. My horses are your horses.”

Our Lord made it clear in Matthew 12:30: “He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not scattereth abroad.” We cannot befriend the world system that hates God and His righteousness without becoming an enemy to God. We become God's enemies by rejecting and disobeying His law.

By giving Him ritualistic and ceremonial worship instead of worshiping Him in spirit and in truth, and when we become the friend of the world, we make ourselves enemies of God. You know what our Lord said in John chapter 15 and verse 14: “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Wow. So here is my question: Do you want to be a friend of our Lord Jesus, or a friend of the world? Do you want to befriend Christ, or do you want to befriend Caesar?

If we are going to say that we are friends of Christ, we must live like it, act like it, walk like it, and talk like it. We will demonstrate that we are His friends by obedience in our lives and by giving Him

the worship that He demands and is worthy to receive. I love reading in the book of Revelation where those four and twenty elders fall down, cast their crowns at His feet, and say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour and glory and power. For Thou hast created all things, and they are created for Thy pleasure.”

Conclusion: Choose Friendship with God

What has happened? You look around—I do not care whether it is a Baptist church, Presbyterian church, Methodist church, congregation, most churches, or most professing Christian people—and you see that they have become the enemies of God. We will never prosper if God is fighting against us. If we do not want God to be our enemy, we must submit to Him, obey Him, and give Him the honour and glory that He needs, deserves, and demands.

Years ago, I had a good friend who is now dead. He was a bodybuilder, strong, about six foot five. I am not exaggerating: he had shoulders that wide on each side. He would have made Charles Atlas look like a weakling. I saw him one day standing on a street corner talking to someone. At that time, I was having a problem with my back and had a back brace on. Since he was a friend, I stopped the car and walked across the street to greet him. He looked up, saw me, smiled, and said, “How are you today?” I said, “I’m glad you asked, because when I woke up this morning, I woke up on the wrong side of the bed.”

I felt so mean that I just wanted to whip somebody. When I saw you standing on this street corner, I made up my mind: “You’re the man I want to whip.” And I said, “I was on my way over here to whip you until I just felt this back brace that I’ve got on. Now I’m going to have to cancel the fight. I’m going to have to put it off.” He looked at me and laughed and said, “Well, thank goodness you’ve got that back brace on.”

I said, “Brother, you couldn’t pour me on you if I was water. I don’t want any part of you.” You say, well, that’s common sense. I’m not going to jump on a man like that. Yet people are willing to fight against the sovereign, omnipotent God of heaven and earth, and they just don’t know who they’re fighting against. We can become His

enemies by disobedience, disrespect, and living dishonorable, ungodly lives.

I don't want to fight against Him, and neither do you. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth. Deliver us from our sins and from being enemies to Thee, O Lord. Deliver us from being forgetful and disobedient to Thy law, from giving Thee ritualistic and ceremonial worship instead of worship in spirit and in truth, and from being friends of this world system, which is absolutely opposed to Thee and Thy law. Give us grace to be obedient and submissive. Teach us to serve Thee with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Christians Who Despise God

Introduction: The Problem of Despising God

Look in 2 Chronicles chapter 36. One of my students in fourth grade, multitudes of years ago, was Hal Wiggins. He was a mischievous little boy, cute as he could be, who despised God. Hal was always getting into something. I sat down at my desk, and the first thing Hal did was raise his hand. Notice verse 15: “Now the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, that is, the preachers, the prophets, rising up in times and sending because he had compassion for them.” You need to make sure that you put this down in your mind and in your heart.

Do you know how you can tell when God has compassion upon people? He sends them messengers. My little brother gummed it all the way to school. I said, “Just hand it in anyhow, that'll be good, son.” The answer is, He sends them, though maybe a little brother will not gum it up, that is for sure.

The messengers of God were despised, His workers were misused, and His prophets were rejected, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought

upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with a sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young men or old men or him that stood for age. He gave them all unto his hand.

Now go back to verse 16. We already saw in verse 15 that God sent His messengers. He sent messengers, plural. Watch verse 16: “But they mocked the messengers, plural, of God and despised His”—singular—“God's words.” The messengers were proclaiming God's Word, and what they were despising was the Word coming through God's preachers.

Some are old and some are new, but I want to deal with some things. I hope there will be a blessing to you. Look in Proverbs chapter 14, verse 2. The message I want to bring tonight is entitled, “Christians Who Despise God.” Proverbs 14:2 says, “He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.” It would probably be something of a shock if I told the average church, “One of the problems that you have in your church is that you despise God.” You ask the average professing Christian, “Do you despise God?”

And you're going to get a resounding negative. In fact, you might get more than a negative. You may even be looked at in a very hard and incredulous manner, or you may even get hollered at or cussed out—in a Christian manner, of course. But most people will certainly profess to love Him, and certainly they would never ever admit to despising Him. However, there is a vast difference between what you and I would call a profession and an action. Each of us has used the old adage, “I can't hear what you're saying for the way that you are acting.”

Our Lord made that exceedingly clear in Matthew 7:16 when He said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” And then He asked, “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” He repeated the same truth in Matthew 7:20. So let me put it like this: in the strictest sense of the word, it really does not matter what your profession is.

Listen to this application: it is how you live that counts. Is it possible for Christians to despise the one true God? Because your actions, who has revealed himself in the Lord Jesus Christ, and your

conversation will always reveal what you really believe. Is it possible to despise the One whom you profess to love and serve? The answer is absolutely yes, because everything comes out of the heart.

Biblical Definition: Walk Reveals Fear or Despising

The Bible says in Proverbs 4:23, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Now, if you look very closely at our text in Proverbs 14:2, he says, “He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.” Your walk is your life; it is your conduct, your action, and how you live. The individual who walks in uprightness, doing that which is right and righteous, ethical and moral according to God's law, demonstrates the reality that he fears God, obeys Him, and submits to Him. But he that is perverse in his ways despises Him.

A man's ways, once again, are his conduct. It is his walk; it is how he lives. God says that the man who lives erroneously and disobediently, the man who is crooked, forward, and perverse, is evidencing the fact that he does not fear God. He has no regard for God, no regard for the Word of God; therefore, God says he despises Him.

The interesting thing is that, when you look at verse 2, if he had committed something worthy of death and there were two witnesses, he was actually put to death. That was it. There was no appeals court. Those who scorned and treated Moses' law as contemptible died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Now watch the argument, verse 29: “Of how much sorer or worse punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who trodden under foot the Son of God, and encountered the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, as an unholy thing, and done despise of God,” holding God in contempt and counting Him as vile and worthless.

If I were to tell you tonight that some of you despise God, you would probably get very upset with me and be shocked that I would even say such a thing. And yet, you and I understand that the world despises God. In fact, let me show you. Look in your Bible in the Old Testament, under Moses, in Isaiah chapter 49. Isaiah 49, verse 7: look what God says concerning His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God: “Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy

One, to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth"—and the word abhorreth is a strong word for AIDS—"to a servant of rulers; kings shall see and arise; princes also shall worship. Because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, He shall choose thee."

The World Despises Christ

Notice how the Bible says that men despise the Lord Jesus Christ and nations abhor Him. They hate Him. That is, they scorn Him as absolutely worthless, vile, and contemptible. They have no use for Him and no regard for Him.

Everyone in this room is familiar with Isaiah 53 and verse 3: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."

The Bible says concerning Jesus Christ, "He is despised and we esteemed Him not." Do you know what the word esteem means? He is despised, and we did not even think it worth thinking about. We esteemed Him; in other words, it did not bother us. It was not on our plate. We had other things to do. That is basically the way it is today. Men despise Jesus Christ, and we do not think anything about it. He is despised, and we esteem Him not.

It is obvious that the world does indeed despise Jesus Christ. Unbelievers despise Jesus Christ. Nations despise Jesus Christ. But is it possible for a real, genuine child of God to hold the Lord Jesus Christ and His Heavenly Father in such contempt, and treat Him with scorn, derision, and disdain? Is it possible for a real, genuine child of God to treat God as vile, contemptible, and worthless?

Christians Can Despise God

The answer to those questions is unqualified: yes. The fact is, most Christians do it regularly. Some do it daily, and some many times a day. Our Lord makes it very clear in the Bible that we are either going to love Him or hate Him. We are either going to serve Him or deny Him. In Matthew 6:24 He said, "No man can serve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other, or else he

will cling to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Our Lord says, you are either going to love Me or hate Me. You are either going to cling to Me or despise Me. It is just that simple.

I am talking about something that most of you have probably never even considered. You are going to say, "Brother Weaver, I know what you are saying, but I just do not think it is possible for a real, genuine Christian to despise God." Perhaps it would help if I showed you an example in the Bible of a real, genuine Christian who despised God.

David: A Man After God's Heart Who Despised God

David, of course, is known as a man after God's own heart. The Bible says very distinctly and very clearly in Acts chapter 13 and verse 22, in reference to David, what God thought of him: “And when he, God, had removed him, that is Saul, he, God, raised up unto them David to be their king, to whom also he gave testimony and said, I found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.” Notice that God specifically said that David was a man after His own heart.

So let me put it to you like this: If it is possible for David, who was known for his love and obedience to God, who was known as a man after God's own heart, and who loved God, to despise Him, how much easier is it for you and me, who do not love Him the way David did, to despise Him as well?

Where did David despise God? Look in 2 Samuel chapter 11. I am sure that you know the story. David, in this particular passage, committed adultery with Bathsheba. He had her husband, Uriah the Hittite, murdered with the sword of the children of Ammon, and then he tried to hide it.

Notice, in 2 Samuel 11, verses 26 and 27: “And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. And when the mourning was passed, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.”

Understand the word displeased. God was not at all pleased with what David had done. God was extremely displeased and upset. Now, you know the story: God sent Nathan to David, and Nathan gave him this story in chapter 12, beginning in verse 1: “And the Lord sent Nathan unto David, and he came unto him and said unto him, There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor.”

Nathan tells David about a rich man who took a poor man's little lamb, which had been raised in his own bosom and was like a daughter to him. The rich man spared his own flock and killed the poor man's lamb for a traveler who came along. After David declared, “The man that done this thing shall surely die,” and that he should restore fourfold, Nathan said, “Thou art the man.”

In 2 Samuel 12:7, Nathan said unto David, “Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul. And I gave thee thy master's house and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah. And if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?”

"Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with a sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart out from thine house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of the sun. For thou didst this thing secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun."

Note what God said in verse nine: "wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of God?" What did David do? He despised God's commandments. The seventh commandment is, "thou shalt not commit adultery." The eighth commandment is, "thou shalt not steal." The tenth commandment is, "thou shalt not covet."

We know that David coveted. We know that David stole. He stole Uriah's wife. We know that he committed adultery. He also committed murder. The sixth commandment is, "thou shalt not kill."

Before you can ever violate any commandment, especially commandments five through ten, you have to violate the first commandment: "thou shalt have no other gods before me." David despised God's commandments. He despised the law of God. That is the problem today in our land: people despise God and they despise His law. That is why they are not ashamed or afraid to sin openly and violently against God.

Not only has God said in verse nine, "wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight." In other words, it did not bother David right then that he was doing that which was wicked and wrong. In verse ten He says, "now therefore the sword shall never depart out of thine house because thou hast despised me."

I thought David had despised God's commandment. He did, but now God is saying, "you've despised me," because God and His law cannot be separated. They are one. And when you

When you despise God's commandments and God's law, you are despising God—the God who gave that law. You are saying, “I have no regard for the commandment. I have no regard for the God who gave that commandment.” You are treating the commandment as vile, worthless, and contemptible, holding it in scorn. Likewise, you are holding God in scorn, treating Him as vile and contemptible, and saying, in essence, “If you knew anything at all, you would never have given this commandment.” You are lifting yourself up above God.

God and His Law Are One

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” You have just elevated yourself above God. What does the Bible say in Psalm 138:2? David said, “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” If God's word ever fails, then God is not

God. You cannot maintain one attitude toward the word of God and a different attitude toward God Himself. God and His law are one.

Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to John 12:48 and look at what our Lord Jesus Christ says. He puts all these things together for us. You cannot say, “I love the Bible, but I do not love Jesus Christ,” or, “I love Jesus Christ, but I do not care about reading or studying my Bible.” You may say it, but it is not accurate. John 12:48 says, “He that rejecteth me, that is the living Word, and receiveth not my words, that is the written words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” Just as God and His law are one, Jesus Christ and His Word, or Jesus Christ and His law, are one as well. When a Christian refuses to obey God, he is guilty of despising God's law and equally guilty of despising the God who gave the law.

Now, let me show you something that ought to really sink into your hearts. If I were to call you Esau, you would be very upset. And you should be. Esau was a profane man. He was a fornicator. I want you to look at that passage. I want you to look in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 12. And by the way also find in your Bibles 1st Corinthians chapter 6. 1st Corinthians chapter 6 will go there after we go to Hebrews chapter 12. I want to show you something in Hebrews chapter 12 beginning there with verse 16. Then we'll go to 1 Corinthians 6. I want you to watch this. Hebrews 12, notice if you would please, let's begin with verse 15.

Esau as a Fornicator and Profane Person

God says, "looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and thereby many be defiled." I have two messages on the sin of bitterness. And the sin of bitterness always affects multitudes of people. He says, "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you." And then he says, "thereby many be defiled." And then he says, "lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."

"For you know how that afterwards when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected. For he found no place of repentance, though he sought it, that is, the blessing, carefully with tears."

Now, it's interesting that God called Esau a fornicator and a profane person. You know, I did a study several years back, and I went through the Bible and I dealt with fornication. It's interesting that when you find and when you study the word fornication in the Bible most of the time, most of the—I would say 99 times out of 100—the word fornication deals with spiritual idolatry, not just the physical act. When we think of a fornicator we think of the physical act. God is calling Esau here a fornicator, and not necessarily because he committed an act of fornication, but because he committed spiritual fornication. Now, what in the world am I talking about spiritual fornication?

Well, let me show you something. Go back in your Bibles. Hold Hebrews 12. We're coming back there. Go back in your Bibles. First Corinthians chapter six. First Corinthians chapter six. And let's begin reading there verse 13. First Corinthians six verse 13. God 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." So God made our bodies for himself. He did not make our bodies for fornication. "And God has both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by his own power." Then he says, "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid."

He is using a physical illustration to give a spiritual truth. If you are saved, you are a member of the body of Christ. "Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. What? Know you not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? For two saith he shall be one flesh, but he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication, every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." He continues, "What know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God, you're not your own for you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's."

He speaks of the spiritual aspect of a physical act. When a genuine Christian commits physical fornication, since Christ is our head and

we are his body, we are actually guilty of joining Jesus Christ to that harlot, or joining Jesus Christ into that sin.

In fact, God complained of Israel, saying, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins." Fornication is an unlawful use of the body. In Hebrews chapter 12, God calls Esau a fornicator. Esau was the eldest son, and he despised his inheritance, selling it for a morsel of bread, meat, or pottage. As the eldest son, he was to receive a double portion of the inheritance because he was to care for his aging parents.

That would be his responsibility, his duty, his obligation, and, I might add, his privilege. He would also become head of the clan, the patriarch, so to speak. It was also through this individual that the seed, the Messiah, was to come. That was part of the inheritance. The Bible said he despised that inheritance. He despised his obligations, duties, responsibilities, and privileges. He was going to use his body for a mess of pottage. Do you realize we are fornicators against God anytime we use our bodies in an unlawful manner?

It does not necessarily have to do with sex. God also called him profane. Do you know what a profane person is? I have a message entitled “Preaching Profanity.” I demonstrate from the Bible that most preachers actually preach profanity. Profanity is more than taking God’s name in vain. It is far more than merely using slang words. We get our English word profane from the Latin profanum.

Phanum means temple, and pro means before or in front of. Actually, a profane person is someone who is outside of the temple, or outside of the law of God. It amounts to being outside of recognizing God, obeying God, and submitting to God. That is a profane individual. God was calling Esau not only a fornicator, but a profane person. When, like Esau, we refuse to obey God and fulfill our duties, obligations, and responsibilities, we are fornicators and profane, because we are treating God as though He has no control over us and no say in our lives. We say, “I can live my life the way I please. I can do what I want to do. It does not matter what You say.” That is fornication. That is being profane.

Israel was to be a peculiar people, yet they constantly and consistently despised God and His law. In Leviticus, chapter 26,

beginning with verse 13, God charges Israel with despising Him: “I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt.”

Old Testament Examples of Despising God

"that you should not be bondmen, and I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you to go upright. But if you will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments, and if you despise my statutes, and if your soul abhor my judgments, so that you will not do all my commandments, but that you break my covenant, I will do even this unto you." So God says, when you disobey Him, you are despising His commandments. Has it ever dawned upon you that when you despise the word of God, you are despising God?

Has it ever dawned upon you that when you refuse to hear, heed, and obey the word of God, you are despising God? One of the problems we have in our land today is that Christians despise God. They take the attitude of those wicked people in Luke 19 who said concerning Jesus Christ, “we will not have this man to reign over us.”

Leviticus 26:43 says, “The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths while she lieth desolate without them. And they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity. Why? Because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred or hated my statutes.”

Are you talking about people who hate God—people who despise God? In Numbers 11, notice verse 20. This is where they were crying for meat. They had grown tired of all the manna. God said, “And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and you shall eat flesh. For have you 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 days neither ten days nor twenty days but even a whole month until it come out of 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?”

When we murmur and complain and bellyache and gripe about the providence of God in our lives, when we do not like it and we are chafing at the bit, that is a despising of God. That is exactly what these people did: "Why did we ever leave Egypt? We had it made in Egypt."

"We had fish and leeks and onions and garlic. Why did we leave Egypt?" Most of us never stop and think about whining against God's providence. I am reading through the book of Job now again, and I am so astonished at the piety of Job. Can you imagine Job being one of the richest men in the East? In one day, all of his camels were stolen, his asses were stolen, his sheep were stolen, his servants were killed, and then he lost ten children—ten in one day. Yet the Scripture says, "in all this, Job sinned not with his lips, nor charged God foolishly." Isn't that amazing? Any little thing that happens to us that we do not like, we bellyache and complain against God and accuse Him of not loving us.

Of course, they despised Canaan land. They refused to go in it. God said, "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." Despising God's gifts is despising God as well. In Numbers 15:29, God says, "ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them. But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people, because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him." Did you see that? Because he had despised the word of the Lord. You can despise God's Word, and when you do, you despise the God who gave the Word.

It is amazing how many times God says this over and over in the Bible. Isaiah 5:20 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. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight. Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink,

which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him.

Therefore, as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust, because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them, and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of their streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Why? Because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One.

Now here is what a lot of people are going to say: "Ah, Brother Weaver, all that is in the Old Testament." And you know what I always say? We have one Bible, not two, and we have one God, not two gods. The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. Do you realize that God oftentimes teaches us by examples? In fact, I have a series of messages on how are you being taught. God is going to teach us one way or the other.

New Testament Warnings and Applications

You may say, "That happened to Israel in the Old Testament. That has nothing to do with me." Really? Romans 15:4 says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, that's the Old Testament, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Isn't that amazing? God said everything written aforetime was written for our learning. So God says we had better learn from what happened in the Old Testament.

Look at 1 Corinthians 10, beginning with verse 1. The Apostle Paul writes, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all of 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." I would not want to be

ignorant either, and I do not want God's people ignorant. Therefore, listen to what he says.

Now, we are talking about Israel in the Old Testament, are we not? We are talking about the exodus and the wilderness wanderings. Watch verse 5: "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." I cannot help but smile every time I read this verse. Many of them? Of the original 603,550 men who came out of Egypt, how many entered Canaan? Two: Joshua and Caleb. The rest died in the wilderness. Yet God says, "with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Now watch verse 6.

"Now these things were our examples." Isn't that amazing? Paul is making an application of what happened in the Old Testament to the Corinthian church. He said, "but these things were our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they lusted, neither be ye idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." You can read all these things in the Old Testament where God killed them. "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them for ensamples or examples, and they're written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come." What's Paul saying? You better learn from people who despise God. You better hear what God is saying.

Do you realize that there are warnings scattered throughout Scripture concerning despising God and His Word? Look in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 1. "How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I will pour my spirit upon you. I will make known my words unto you."

"Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded. You have set at nought all my counsel, that is, you despised it and would have none of my reproof. I will also 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. Why? For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel and despised all of my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices."

Let me tell you something, folks. You despise God's Word, you despise God. You despise God's way and God's will. And God in absolute justice will let you have your will and your way.

Consequences and Call to Honor God

And it will be destruction. Proverbs 13:13 says, “Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.” That is almost Proverbs 14:2 again: “Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.”

Proverbs 19:16 says, “He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul. But he that despiseth his ways, that is, God’s ways, shall die.” You keep God’s commandments, and you keep your own soul. You despise God’s ways, and you die.

There is a general principle that God lays down in 1 Samuel 2:30: “Them that honor me I will honor, and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” If you want God to hear your prayer, if you want God to honor the work of your hands, and if you want God to honor your family, you need to learn to honor Him. You need to learn to obey His Word and submit to His law.

Let me ask you a question. Is it any wonder that oftentimes, most of the time, our prayers are unanswered? When you stop and think how we despise God and dishonor Him, who wants to bless a disobedient child? Who wants to honor a dishonorable child?

One of my favorite stories concerns my two oldest grandchildren. They were two years old; they are now twenty-eight. Each one wanted a pair of cowboy boots, but they could not say “cowboy boots.” They called them “cow boots.”

The truth was that I had twenty dollars to my name, and we needed to buy groceries. Alice and I took the two grandbabies to the

store just to let them try on some cowboy boots. We were going to come back later and buy them. We put the boots on, and they walked around in them, looking and smiling. Then we took them off, put them back in their boxes, and marked them because we intended to return for them.

I picked up the little boy, and Alice picked up the little girl. Just as we started walking away, Casey, my oldest grandson, looked with that look in his eyes and said, "Bye-bye, cowboots." I looked at Alice and said, "Get them; we'll go hungry."

If that child had jumped on the floor, pitched a fit, slammed the floor, and hollered, "I want them, I want them, I want them," I guarantee you he would never have received them from me. No one wants to honor a dishonorable child. No one wants to bless a disobedient child. The same thing is true with our Heavenly Father.

Do you know what He asked in Malachi chapter 1 and verse 6? He was talking to the priest: "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I then be a father, where is my honor? If I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name." Here is what God is saying: "I'm not going to honor you if you despise Me." "He that despiseth me shall be lightly esteemed."

I have already shown you from Scripture what David did and how David despised God. You may say, "I don't think we can do that in the New Testament." Of course you can. Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:1. Paul says, "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk"—remember, he that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord—"and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." That deals with the seventh commandment, the eighth commandment, the tenth commandment, and also the first commandment. He continues, "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel, that is his body, in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles or the pagans which know not God, that no man go"

CHAPTER 7

Grieving God

Introduction: The Reality of Grief

Psalm 95:9–11 says, “When your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work, 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, and whom I swear in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest.”

Grief is something that we all experience. We grieve over our spouses, our children, our finances, our pets, and a host of other things. Even the marriages of our children can cause an unknowable amount of grief. It certainly was the case with Esau and his parents, Isaac and Rebekah. Genesis 26:34–35 says, “And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Bere the Hittite, and Bashamath the daughter of Elam the Hittite, which were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.”

In fact, grief became so great in Rebekah’s life because of her daughters-in-law that she reached a point of desperation. Genesis 27:46 says, “And Rebekah said unto 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?" In other words, she was at the point of death. She simply could not take it any longer. If Jacob married a wife like that, she said, her life would be over.

Human Examples of Grief and Vexation

Most people do not understand that when you marry, you do not normally just marry an individual; you also marry a family. That is why marriages in the Bible were usually a family affair. With this in mind, you can understand why the families had to know each other and be able to communicate and fellowship.

When the father gives the bride away, he is transferring the headship that he holds over that woman to another young man from another family, and he is creating a new family. Thus, once again, three families will be interacting. When it comes to marriage and spouses, each of us knows individuals who have lost spouses, and the remaining spouse literally grieved so greatly that the cost was ultimately the life of that spouse. One of my dearest friends lost his wife a few years ago after sixty-seven years of marriage. He is still alive, and he still grieves every day.

He tells me, "I can't live without her," but he can. He is anxious to go home to be with the Lord and, of course, to be with her. Likewise, animals that have had longtime masters who died will oftentimes grieve themselves to death because the bond is so remarkably strong. Alice had an aunt who died one night, and she had a little dog that had been with her for years. The next night, the little dog died under the bed. It simply could not live without its master.

When we talk about grief, everybody understands this in one sense of the word. However, the grief that Rebecca experienced stems from what we would call absolute frustration and despair. It can also arise from what we would call sheer aggravation and frustration.

Samson faced the same thing with the constant whining and nagging of Delilah. Listen to what the Bible says in Judges 16:16: "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him so that his soul was vexed unto death." She would not

drop it. She kept going and going, and finally the Bible says that his soul was vexed unto death. In other words, that is why he told her all of his heart. He simply could not put up with it anymore.

That is a certain kind of grief. Again, another grief arises when there is an incorrigible, uncorrectable, and rebellious attitude, especially in a loved one. How often have we grieved and wept over our own children? I have literally known families that had to give up on a child. The child was supposedly mature, and yet still did not understand responsibility or accountability.

They would not listen, they would not heed, and they would not obey. When you look around today, you find many children who are addicted to drugs, sex, gambling, games, and who knows what else, and they have grieved their parents exceedingly. Only the parents of a wayward child like that know the heartache and grief they experience. Likewise, when you have a wayward spouse, only the faithful remaining spouse knows the heartache and grief experienced in such instances.

Oftentimes, spouses and parents reach a point where they are at their wits' end. Basically, they end up saying, “No more. It is over. I am through. I do not wish to see you again under these circumstances.” I could sit here and describe this kind of grief, vexation, and agony for hours, but the truth of the matter is that each of us really and truly understands it. It has been present either in our families or among our friends, and we are quite aware of it.

Here is my question: If you and I understand the grief, hurt, frustration, and desperation inflicted upon us by our children, friends, or loved ones, why is it that we do not seek to understand the same in relationship to the sovereign God of heaven and earth? Here is an interesting question: Has it ever occurred to you that God could be grieved? Has it ever occurred to you that your actions and your attitude might be grieving the very heart of God?

God's Grief in the Old Testament

Israel certainly grieved God. In Psalm 95:10, He says, “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.” Psalm 78:40 expresses the same truth somewhat differently: “How often did they provoke him

in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert?" The Hebrew word for "grieve" in Psalm 78:40 is asab. It should be very understandable to us because it is translated "grieve," but it also means to displease, hurt, vex, cause pain, and even cause torture. Therefore, there have been plenty of individuals, especially parents, who have been grieved, vexed, and even tortured over their children. Likewise, wayward spouses cause grief, vexation, and torture.

The truth of the matter is, this same word is translated as vexed in Isaiah. Look at Isaiah 63, verse 10. This is an interesting verse because it shows basically how grieved God actually became. The Bible says, "But they," talking about Israel, "but they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit." Therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.

The word vexed here is the same word as grieved. They did to God what our wayward and rebellious children do to us. They vexed Him and grieved Him to the extent that He actually became their enemy and ended up fighting against them. It was like a parent who would say to that wayward child, "No more. I'm not going to help you. You're not going to live here. You're not going to act like that. You have to go."

So think about this: They grieved God. If you look back at Psalm 95, verse 10, it was not the fact that they just simply grieved Him whatsoever now and then. It was not the fact that they grieved Him occasionally. The fact is, they grieved Him constantly and continually. That is why it says, "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation." Forty years!

Psalm 78, verse 17, gives the same truth: "And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness." They continued to sin more and more. It was not just a simple once in a while; it was something that they did absolutely continually.

Would you not consider it the height and epitome of unthankfulness, ungratefulness, and ingratitude if your children absolutely, totally, and completely rebelled against you, would not listen to you, would not love you, would not help you, and would not do one thing for you? Here you have spent all your life and your

money raising these children, and you think, “What inconsiderate, rebellious kids I’ve raised.”

The same is true in reference to God. In Isaiah chapter 1, beginning with verse 2, God says, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth." He calls the heavens and the earth to act as witnesses. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken," and here is what He says: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." Of course, God delivered Israel out of Egypt. He found them in their own blood and filth. He saved them, brought them, delivered them, sustained them, and supplied their needs.

Now verse 3 says, "...the ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib. But Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider." Let me spell this out: they were dumber than an animal. Even an animal knows where its feed comes from. But God said, "My people doth not know, they do not consider."

In verse 4 He begins to describe them: "O sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupted, They have forsaken the Lord. They have provoked the Holy One of Israel into anger." They were going away backward. Why should they be stricken anymore? Discipline was not helping them; chastening was not helping them. They would revolt more and more. The whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there was no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. They had not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Wow!

Grieving God in the New Testament

God simply lays it out. He calls them a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corruptors, and those that have forsaken the Lord. They provoked God. You and I can sit here and say, “I am thankful that I was not in that crowd back then. I would never, ever want to treat my Heavenly Father like that. I would not want to grieve Him.” And I would say, really? Really? Did you know that it is just as possible to grieve Him today? Do you realize that many Christians grieve Him in exactly the same way?

Look in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4, and hold this passage because we will come back to it. We are talking about grieving God in the Old Testament. When you get to the New Testament, Ephesians 4:30 says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of your redemption."

The Greek word lupeo for grieve literally means to grieve, to make sorrowful, to cause heaviness, to affect with sadness, to offend, and to cause grief. You could read the verse this way: "Do not make sorrowful, or do not grieve, or do not cause heaviness, or do not affect with sadness the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed on the day of your redemption." In other words, He is the same God in the New Testament that He is in the Old Testament. Just as He could be grieved in the Old Testament, likewise He can be grieved in the New Testament, since God is a person.

You have to remember this: God has not changed. He is immutable and therefore He cannot change. Whether you are looking at Psalm 95, Psalm 78, or Ephesians chapter 4, the meaning is clear. It is the attitude, actions, and conduct of the people that cause pain, sorrow, and grief to the heart of God. Just as our rebellious children or rebellious spouses would hurt and grieve us, so likewise we hurt and grieve Him.

The Bible says that they provoked Him. These provocations had an effect. God is not insensible, and therefore He is said to be grieved. His holiness could not find pleasure in their sins. His justice was displeased with their injustice and their unjust treatment of others. His truth loathed their falsehood, and His righteousness recoiled at their unrighteous deeds.

Notice Psalm 95:10: "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation." When we looked at Psalm 78:40, we saw what the word grieved meant there. In Psalm 95:10, however, grieved is a different word. Literally, this word is translated as "loathe," and it means to nauseate or to make disgusted. It is translated as "loathe" three times in Ezekiel and as "grieved" two other times in the book of Psalms. When the Bible says, "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," it expresses God's strong abhorrence of their attitude, actions, and conduct.

So let us put it this way: “Forty years long was I nauseated with this generation.” God said, “They make me sick. They make me want to throw up.” We have said that concerning other individuals, and that is exactly what God said concerning them. They made Him sick.

The questions that must be asked are, How did they grieve God? And why did they grieve God? The answer to both questions is revealed in Psalm 95:10. First, He tells us how they grieved God: “Forty years long was I grieved with this people, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart.” That is how they did it. That is how they grieved God: they erred in their heart.

How Israel Grieved God: Erring in Heart

The Hebrew word for err here literally means to go astray, to wander, to stagger, to be deceived, to be led astray, to be seduced, and to stagger as a drunken man. All of us have seen drunken men driving down the highway, sometimes drunken women, with the car going this way and that way. You have seen drunken men walk; they cannot walk a straight line. They walk this way and that way. This is exactly what the word means. They erred. They wandered out of the way. They were deceived. They staggered like a drunk man. In other words, they were seduced and led astray.

The Hebrew word for heart is labab, which literally means and refers to the mind, the understanding, the heart, and the soul. When you read this word heart, it means more than just what we would call the affections. It certainly includes that, but it refers to their thinking, their understanding, and their affections. It does not refer simply to intellectual ignorance.

Each of us is intellectually ignorant to some extent. I do not know how to deliver a baby; I am ignorant. I do not know how to fix a motor; I am ignorant. We all have our intellectual ignorance. To the degree that we are ignorant, we are deficient in a lot of areas, and we do not know how to cope or function. Everybody is intellectually ignorant. Even the Apostle Paul claimed ignorance. In 1 Timothy 1:13, he says, "...who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." The Apostle Paul thought that he knew, but he did not know. He was ignorant and did not realize it.

The Pharisees thought they knew, but they did not know. That is why our Lord said to them in Matthew 22, "ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." So that is where they erred.

We must remember the advantages that Israel had over all the other nations. There was absolutely no excuse for their ignorance. The reason is set forth in Romans 3 and Romans 9.

Paul asks this question, "What advantage then hath the Judahite, or what profit is there of circumcision?" And then he answers this, "...much every way, chiefly," here's the main advantage, "...chiefly, because unto them were committed the oracles of God." They had the Word of God. If you would turn over to Romans chapter 9. Romans 9, look in verse 4. Romans 9 verse 4, now he says it like this, "...who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises."

So obviously, they had all of the advantages, and there's really no reason, or cause, or excuse for them to be ignorant, yet they were. They did not understand, they did not apply, And they did not practice the truth of God. Even worse, they really did not desire it, and they really did not want to know it. They did not value it. They did not want it. And the truth is, it was an impediment to their lifestyle. Now, I want to show you something.

If you would turn to the book of Hebrews chapter 3, And look, if you would please, at verse 10. Hebrews 3 and verse 10. You're going to see this same verse quoted in the New Testament with the exception of one word. In Hebrews 3 and verse 10, the Bible says, "...Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways." Psalm 95 and verse 10, God says, "40 years long was I grieved with this generation." Well, this generation was there and now it's past tense and now it's that generation. But notice if you would, He's saying exactly the same thing in Hebrews 3 and verse 10 that He said back in Psalm 95 and verse 10.

But here's the thing, when we talk about ignorance, most of us just think of intellectual ignorance. Let me show you how broad the word ignorance really is. If you would turn in your Bibles to the book

of Ephesians chapter 4, Ephesians chapter 4, and look at verses 17 and 18, because you're going to see that the word ignorance is used very broadly to describe depravity, wickedness, and rebellion. So here it is. Ephesians 4, verse 17, Paul writes, "This I say therefore and testify of the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind." Now watch. Let's go back to verse 17 a minute. "This I say therefore and testify of the Lord, that you," that is you Christians, "henceforth walk not as other Gentiles," that is like the unsaved, "walk in the vanity of their mind." Now he's going to describe the vanity of the 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." Here, the ignorance that is in them is another word, term, or expression for depravity, corruption, perversity, and wickedness. Ignorance is not simply a mental state. In 1 Peter 1, Peter shows again how the word ignorance is used; it refers to our lost condition, what we were before God saved us. Beginning with verse 13, he 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." Verse 14 says, "...as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." He says that you do not act as you acted when you were unsaved, and he calls it "the former lusts in your ignorance." Thus, ignorance refers not merely to intellectual stupidity, but to perversity, depravity, and rebellion.

When you look back at Psalm 95 and verse 10, where he says that forty years long he was grieved with this generation and said, "It is the people that do err in their heart," the erring in the heart was not simply intellectual error. It was an erring by which men go astray through the corruption and depravity of their nature. This era of mine was so averse to God and so alienated from God that they had no desire for Him, nor love for Him. They did not want Him in any way, shape, form, or fashion.

Psalm 78 and verse 37 explains it: "For their heart was not right with God, neither were they steadfast in His covenant." Their heart was not right with God and had never been right with God. The way you can tell is by their conduct and by their actions.

They did not know His ways. Psalm 95, verse 10, says, “They have not known My ways.” That tells you how they grieved Him, and here is why. Why did they do what they did? They really did not know the way of God. They did not walk in His ways. They did not know His ways, love His ways, or desire His ways. I will be very blunt: they hated His ways. Very clearly, they hated His ways. This ungrateful people did not approve of God’s ways; they did not enter into God’s designs.

Why Israel Grieved God: Not Knowing His Ways

They did not conform to His commands. They paid no attention to His miracles. They did not acknowledge the benefits they received from His hands. His works, His wonders, and His deliverances meant nothing to them. They were not thankful for any of His works or mercies.

John Calvin comments on this passage: “…the reason is subjoined that they would not attend to the many works of God brought under their eyes, and more than all to His Word. For the Hebrew term Derek, which I have rendered ways, comprehends His law and repeated admonitions, as well as His miracles done before them. It argued, amazing infatuation, that when God had condescended to dwell in such a familiar manner among them, and had made such illustrious displays of Himself, both in word and works, that they shut their eyes and overlooked all that had been done.

“This is the reason why the psalmist, considering that they wandered in error under so much light as they enjoyed, speaks of their stupidity amounting to madness.”

These people saw firsthand the power, mercy, and grace of God. They experienced those miracles, and yet they shut their eyes to everything. So the question has to be asked: How could someone be so mad, so stupid, and so rebellious? David speaks of pride as one reason the wicked will not seek after God and one reason they err from God's commandments. Psalm 10:4 says, “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. God is not in all of his thoughts.”

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. He does not think he needs God. God is not in all his thoughts. He could care less. He would never consult with God or ask God. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.

Psalm 119:21 says, “Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from my commandments.” Why do they err? Why do they leave and stagger out of God's commandments? Because they are proud. They do not think they need God, and therefore they refuse His commandments.

Interestingly, when one, through pride, will not seek after God or obey God, he is, in essence, lying against God. Do you realize that you can call God a liar without ever using those words? If I am not going to seek after God, His law, His will, or His way, here is what I am saying in essence: My will is better than God's. My way is better than God's. I prefer myself to God. God evidently is not omniscient, because if He were omniscient, He would know and recognize that my way is better than His. That is not only pride; that is blasphemy, and it is lying against God.

Look at verse 29 of Psalm 119. David says, "...Remove from me the way of lying, and grant me thy law graciously." If you are following the way of lying against God, you do not have God's law. David said, I would rather have God's law and not lie against God.

Here again, God accuses Israel of lying against Him. Isaiah 59:13 says, “In transgressing and lying against the Lord and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.” You may not utter them from the mouth, but you utter them from the heart. He says, “in transgressing and lying against the Lord.” How do you lie against the Lord? By transgressing. By departing from Him. By saying, “My way is better, my will is better, what I think is better.” God calls that lying against Him.

James 3:14 says, “...but if you have bitter envying and strife in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth.” If a man has bitter envying and strife in his heart, he is lying against the truth. Jesus Christ was standing before Pilate, and Pilate asked, “What is

truth?" My response has always been that the truth was standing right in front of him, and he did not realize it. God the Father is called the God of truth. God the Son, Jesus Christ, said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh in the Father but by me." The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth.

When you are lying against the truth, you are lying against God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. That is why God said in Isaiah 59:13, "in transgressing and lying against God." You are, in essence, saying that God is not God, that I am God. You are setting your way, your will, and what you think above Him. So God rightly charged these people with having not known His ways.

God's ways are supernatural ways, while our ways are natural. God's ways are holy, while our ways are unholy. God's ways are righteous, while our ways are unrighteous. Isaiah 55:8–9 makes this exceedingly clear: "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." Here is man way down here, and here is God way up here; the difference is between heaven and earth. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His ways are higher than our ways. When the Bible says that they have not known the way of the Lord, the word way refers to His direction, His road, His path, and His journey.

The Nature of God's Ways and Our Response

It relates to our manner of life, habit, and actions. It refers to the moral, upright character which He ordained that we walk therein. Not knowing His ways means that you do not know Him, and you do not know what He has outlined and ordained for you; therefore, you are basically lying against Him.

In Psalm 145:17, notice what David confessed: "The Lord is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works." If the Lord is holy in all of His works and righteous in all of His ways, then if we are not following His ways but following our ways, our ways are unrighteous. Only God's ways are righteous.

We must understand that the way of God is the way of holiness and righteousness. Whenever we conduct ourselves in an unholy or unrighteous manner, we are departing from God, grieving Him, and lying against the truth. David 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 and lead you in His paths? That is what David prayed. David also told us who the blessed man was in Psalm 128:1: "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways." If you fear the Lord, you are going to walk in His ways.

I would encourage you, when you get home this afternoon, to take the time to read all of Psalm 119. I know there are 176 verses there, and that it is the longest Psalm in the Bible. But understand this: Psalm 119 is about the ways of the Lord and the word of the Lord. We can only discover the ways of God in His Word. I do want you to turn to Psalm 119, and I want to go over very quickly just the first twelve verses.

If you are looking at your Bible, you see a little letter above verse 1, and then at verse 9 another letter, Beth. At verse 17 is Gimel, and at verse 25 is Daleth. The letters are Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, He. Psalm 119 is an acrostic. In the Hebrew, the first eight verses all start with the letter Aleph, the next eight with Beth, and the next eight with Gimel. It is not like that in our English Bible, but it is like that in the Hebrew. You are going down the Hebrew alphabet. Every verse under Aleph would start with Aleph in the Hebrew. It is simply an acrostic psalm.

Look at verses 1 through 12. Verse 1: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way." Who are the undefiled? "Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity, they walk in His ways." If you are walking in His ways, you are not doing that which is evil and wicked. If you are not walking in His ways, you are doing that which is evil and wicked. The blessed man walks in the law of the Lord, keeps His testimony, and seeks Him with the whole heart; these do not do iniquity because they are walking in His ways.

Verse 4: "Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy precepts diligently." Then he makes this prayer request: "O that my ways were

directed to keep Thy statutes." That is what I want, Lord. I want to be obedient. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all Thy commandments." "I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned Thy righteous judgments. I will keep Thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly."

Now watch verse nine: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" You want to live a holy life? You want to live a godly life? "By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee. O let me not wander, let me not err, let me not stagger from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes." So David says, if you want to be holy, if you want to be godly, you must have His Word in your heart, that you would not sin against Him.

Grieving the Holy Spirit in the New Testament

Now, turn in your Bibles back to Ephesians chapter four. I have been teaching you about grieving God, and I showed you in the Old Testament how they grieved God. They grieved Him by their attitude, their actions, and their conduct. They grieved Him by disobeying Him and rebelling against Him. In Ephesians 4:30, the Bible says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed in the day of your redemption." You can grieve God in the New Testament exactly the same way that the Israelites grieved God in the Old Testament. To understand this, begin reading at verse 20. Ephesians 4, verse 20. Watch carefully.

"But ye have not so learned Christ." This is an absolutely amazing thing: you must really learn Jesus Christ. It does not come naturally; it is supernatural. You have to learn Him.

Now watch verse 21: "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." You must put off "concerning the former conversation or conduct, 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." The old man has to be put off. Notice that he said, "that ye put off concerning the former conversation or conduct": all the old habits, all the old ways, all the

old thinking, everything you had before you were converted. Now you are renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Now watch what the new man is going to do: “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 labor, working with his hands a thing which is good, that he may 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 verse thirty says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed in the day of your redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

In this context, how do we grieve the Holy Spirit? We grieve Him by not putting off the old man, by living the attitudes and actions of the old man before we were converted. God says to put away lying and speak the truth; put away theft and put on honesty; put away anger and bitterness and put on loving each other, being tenderhearted, and forgiving one another. In other words, we can grieve Him in the New Testament exactly the same way the Israelites grieved Him in the Old Testament: by living a rebellious, unholy, ungodly life. We have to put off the old man and put on the new man.

Consequences and Applications

Go back to Psalm 95. Verse 10 says, "40 years long was I grieved with this generation and said, it is the people that do err in their heart and they have not known my ways." What finally happened to those individuals who grieved God for so long? He put up with their hateful attitudes and actions for forty years. Then verse 11 says, "...on whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest." They grieved Him and vexed Him for forty years. What did God do?

He killed them all in the wilderness. The only two who got in were Joshua and Caleb; the rest died.

We may say, "I am glad I was not in that generation. At least that is over with." It is true that it was over with them. But what we do not understand is 1 John 5:16. Look there: 1 John 5:16 is an interesting passage, and I want to call your attention to this verse.

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.” But the rest of the verse says, “There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it.” There is a sin unto death. That is what happened to these Israelites: they sinned unto death. God was so vexed and grieved with them that He said, “That is it. You are not entering the Promised Land.” They wanted to die in the wilderness, and He let it happen. They died, every one of them.

Is there a sin unto death in the New Testament? Of course there is. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, the people were violating the Lord’s Supper, taking it and acting inappropriately. He says in verses 30–32, “…For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

What did he say concerning these Corinthian Christians? “…For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” That is, they died. There is a sin unto death. There comes a time when God will say even to His child who continues to thumb his nose in his Father’s face, “That’s it. I will not put up with it anymore. It’s over.” Just as you and I may say to a rebellious child, “It’s over. Don’t call on me anymore. Don’t come here anymore. I don’t want to see you.” There is a sin of death.

The second application is this: If we genuinely love our Heavenly Father and desire to please and honor Him, we must ask ourselves, What must it be like to genuinely grieve the heart of the God of love? Scripture tells us that God is love. Have my children ever grieved me? Yes. Have my grandchildren ever grieved me? Yes. Yours have grieved you as well. Do I love my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? Yes. My great-grandchildren have not grieved

me because they are not old enough, but I am sure that when they get old enough, they probably will.

As loving, kind, and gracious as I have been to my children and grandchildren, it hurts. If it hurts me, oh, Lord, how much worse could it be to a holy, righteous God who is love? It is only His great love and mercy that we have not all been destroyed, and that each of us is still alive today.

We are in the desert where we need our God. Let us not make it a wilderness of sin by grieving Him. If we love Him, we must honor Him, worship Him, adore Him, and obey Him, giving Him the praise and glory due unto His name.

They grieved Him in the Old Testament. That is why, in the New Testament, He said, "And grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed on the day of your redemption." It is possible to grieve the heart of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Thy Word, truth, love, and mercy; for allowing us to live, move, and have our being; and for Jesus Christ. We ask forgiveness for times we grieve Thee, vex Thee, and sin against Thee. Teach us Thy ways, that we might walk therein. In Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

The Sin Every Christian Admits Daily

The Sin That Every Christian Commits Daily

Introduction: The Sin of Not Hearing

We were singing the song, “Oh, How I Love Jesus,” and just this past week I read about a brother who was dying. He was on his deathbed, and another pastor came up and said, “Well, brother, do you love Jesus?” He said, “Well, yes, I do.” The pastor said, “That’s great.” He said, “But I can tell you something even better than that.” The pastor asked, “What?” He said, “Jesus loves me.” And so I’m certainly thankful for that.

Open your Bibles to Jeremiah, chapter 13. Keep your fingers limber tonight because we are going to be looking at a lot of Scripture. Look in Jeremiah chapter 13, beginning with verse 1.

“Thus saith the Lord unto me, Go get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water.” Watch, if you would. He said, “So I got a girdle according to the word of the Lord, and put it

on my loins. And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock. So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me. And it came to pass after many days, that the Lord said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there. Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it: and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing. Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.

“This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing. For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.”

The Sin That Every Christian Commits Daily

"Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word; Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine: and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine? Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness. And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord."

"I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them."

The sin that every Christian commits daily is refusing to hear the word of God. We might name many sins: lust, covetousness, prayerlessness, lack of study, sins of omission, and sins of commission. There are a multitude of sins that we probably commit

daily, but there is one main sin that covers all those sins and a host of others.

This horrendous sin is not committed only daily; it is also committed on Sunday, especially by Christians on the Lord's Day. We attend the preached word, sit and listen, and somehow never really hear. We are not changed by the word of God, and our lives are not changed.

The Historical Sin of Judah and Jerusalem

We do not grow in grace or knowledge. We are not more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, nor are we transformed into obedience to His word. Thus, in truth, we are not hearing the word of God.

This seems to be a historical sin, committed down through the ages. In our text, God speaks specifically of Judah and Jerusalem. Judah and Jerusalem were supposed to be the peculiar people of God.

The northern kingdom had already apostatized and had been judged. For a while, the southern kingdom, Judah, particularly with its capital at Jerusalem, seemed to remain faithful to God. They deemed themselves the covenant people of God, and they had the law of God. In fact, they had distinct advantages.

The apostle Paul delineates the advantages that Judah and Jerusalem held above all other people. In Romans 3:1-2 he says, “What advantage then hath the Jew?” or the Judahite? “Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” Paul said there were many advantages that the Judahites had, but the main advantage was that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Judah was the southern kingdom and certainly a tribe of Israel. Romans 9:4-5 says, “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

Here are all of these advantages that the Israelites had, but particularly the Judahites, because that was where the tabernacle

and the temple were located. The priesthood was there, and that was where the sacrifices were offered. They had all of these distinct advantages, but Paul said their particular advantage was that they had the Word of God. God did not reveal His Word then to the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, and all the other "ites." He gave it to the Israelites and to them alone. And yet we are going to find out that they really and truly did not hear the Word of God.

You may object, "But wait a minute, Brother Weaver. How can you say that this is a sin that I commit daily, especially on Sunday, because I genuinely hear the Word of God?" Let me remind you that, according to Scripture, there are two distinct types of hearing. There is external and audible hearing, which you are doing now and do every time the Word of God is preached. Then there is internal and spiritual hearing. One may hear externally and outwardly and never genuinely hear internally and spiritually. That is basically where 99% of professing Christians are, because their lives are never changed. They never become more and more obedient. They hear physically, but they do not really hear spiritually.

Two Types of Hearing

So answer this question: How can we come to church so often, hear so much, and know so little? How can we experience the same problems over and over? How can there oftentimes be no discernible difference between the unsaved and the saved when it comes to problems?

Years ago, a brother and his wife came to me for counseling. I loved them; they were dear friends. I counseled them, they came back, and I counseled them again. This continued for months. Finally, the man came into my office and said, "Pastor, I need to talk to you." He began discussing the same matter he had gone over month after month. I interrupted him: "Brother, could I stop right now and tell you what I would really like to do to you?" He said, "Well, yes." I replied, "I would like to take your shirt in my hand, hold you against the wall, and slap you silly."

When I said that, you should have seen the expression on his face. I added, "If I thought it would help, that is exactly what I would do."

Then I told him, “I can tell you the answer to your problem over and over and over. But unless you hear, unless you apply, unless you obey, you are going to continue having the same problem. Do you understand?”

He looked at me and shook his head. He said, “Finally, finally.” Then he walked out of my office. He and his wife have never had those problems again. Why? Why was he continuing to have those problems month after month after month? The answer is simply that he was not listening.

Hold Jeremiah 13. We are certainly coming back there. But look in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 15. It is important that you see this. You know the story of how God sent Saul to war against the Amalekites. Saul spared Agag the king, the best of the oxen, and the best of the sheep. Then, of course, Saul tried to blame everything on the people. When Samuel came to see Saul, Saul said, “Blessed be thou of the Lord. I have obeyed the Lord.”

And about that time, something went bad. Samuel said, “If thou hast obeyed the Lord, 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, for God told him to kill it all. Then Saul had to blame it on the people. He said, “But the people spared the best… in order that they might sacrifice it unto God.”

Look in your Bibles at 1 Samuel chapter 15, verse 21. Saul 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.” Now watch verse 22. “And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.”

“Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.” Now, look at verse 22. The question is, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?” God would rather have your obedience than anything you could ever give Him. He would rather

have your obedience than a million dollars or a hundred acres of land. He said obeying is better than sacrifice.

He goes on to say, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The fat of rams was the chiefest part of the sacrifice; it was always given to God. So he said, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken is better than the fat of rams.

In this verse, hearkening and obeying are synonymous. No one really hears the word of God until he obeys. Since Saul heard externally what God wanted him to do, all you have to do is read the first of this chapter, because God gave him explicit directions. He heard audibly; he heard externally. But notice what God says in verse 23: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." His disobedience, his non-hearing, was considered a rejection of the word of God.

Obedience, he said, is better than sacrifice, and to hearken is better than the fat of rams. The obvious implication is that Saul did not really hear. He heard, but he really did not hear. You remember what our Lord said in Luke 6:46? Our Lord asked, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" The word "Lord" is the Greek word kurios, which literally means boss, master, owner, sovereign. Why are you calling me sovereign? Why are you calling me Lord if you are not going to obey me?

Our Lord says, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" In other words, if I am your Lord, you are going to obey me. If I am not your Lord, you are not going to obey me.

He explains what He means: "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock."

"But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great." The man who did not obey heard as well, but he only heard externally.

The absence of obedience indicates that you did not hear. Our Lord is making this exceedingly clear: those who genuinely heard His words did them. Those who said they heard and did not obey did not genuinely hear. Do you remember what our Lord said in John chapter 10? “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” The difference between a sheep and a goat is that a sheep will follow when a goat will not.

God's View of Those Who Refuse to Hear

We have two types of hearing: an external and audible hearing, and an internal and spiritual hearing. Go back in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 13, because I want to ask you a question. I want you to see how God thinks concerning people who hear but do not obey. Does this apply to you?

In Jeremiah 13:10, God says, “This evil people”—and He is talking about Judah and Jerusalem, not the heathen—“which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.” Notice that God says they are an evil people.

What was God's original purpose for them? He says, "For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord; that they might be unto me for a people," that is, they should be his people, "and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory."

But they would not hear. God said, "I intended them to be my people. I intended them to be a name, and a glory, and a praise, but they would not hear." Do you realize the problem that God had with his people in the Old Testament? They just refused to hear. They would not listen, they would not hear, and they would not obey.

Scriptural Evidence of Refusal to Hear

In 2 Chronicles 36:15 we read, "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place." Whenever God has compassion upon a people, he always

sends his preachers. He always sends his prophets. He sends someone to preach and to teach his word.

The pastor told me he was reading through the book of Judges. I find it interesting that when the people began to cry out because of the oppression and persecution they were suffering from the Midianites and others, the Bible says, "And the Lord sent them a prophet." He did not send them a warrior. He sent them a prophet. When God is going to have compassion upon a people, he always sends someone to declare his word.

Watch it again in verse 15: "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

"Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand." God had compassion on the people and sent His preachers, but they mocked the messengers of God. They despised God's word. That is, they refused to hear, refused to listen, and refused to obey.

In Jeremiah 7:25-26, God says, "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers." Yet they hearkened not unto Him, nor inclined their ear. They would not listen.

Again, in Jeremiah 11:7-8, God says, "For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart."

Therefore, He says, "Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did

them not." Jeremiah 25:3-4 declares, "From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear." Jeremiah 26:4-6 continues: "And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; then

"Will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth."

Look in Jeremiah chapter 29 and verse 19. Again, God says, "Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the Lord."

Look in Jeremiah 32 and verse 33. Again, he says it very plainly: "And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction." They turned to God the back and not the face. You know what it is like when someone turns their back on you? You really do not hear.

I had a good friend who is now dead; I buried him a few years ago. I am hard of hearing, and he was hard of hearing. We would talk face to face, but he would turn around to walk away while still talking. I could hear sound, but I could not make out what he was saying. I would put my hand on his shoulder, catch him, and spin him around: "Don't turn around and talk. I can't hear you. Don't walk away talking to me." Occasionally I would say something to him and turn to leave, and he would put his hand on my shoulder and say, "Don't turn your back to me, I can't hear you."

This is exactly what God is saying: "They turned their back to me." They were not listening; they made sure they could not hear.

Jeremiah 35:15 says, "I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now

every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers."

"But ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me." You would not listen. One last look at Jeremiah 44, beginning with verse 4: "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. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods."

Over and over throughout Jeremiah, and throughout the rest of Scripture, God commands, begs, pleads, threatens, admonishes, and exhorts the people to incline their ear, hear His word, and obey His commandments. Over and over they ignore, refuse, fail to hear, fail to heed, and fail to obey. What did God do? God judged them, chastened them, whipped them, and delivered them over to their enemies again and again.

Judgments for Not Hearing

They still would not hear. Have you ever stopped to think about this? Many of the judgments that come upon us—not only as a family, but as a church, and even as a nation—are because we fail to hear and obey God.

Look in Amos chapter 4, beginning with verse 6. I want you to see some of the things God did to get the attention of His people. God says, "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places:" That is, famine. "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord."

That did not get their attention. Verse 7: "And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." Drought did not get their attention. Verse 9: "I have smitten you with blasting and mildew:

when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased,

"The palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." All kind of plagues. He said in verse 10, "I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." War did not get their attention. Pestilence did not get their attention.

Verse 11 says, "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God." What is He saying? "I have done this. You would not pay attention. You would not hear. You would not listen."

Do you not consider it unnatural for a people not to hear their God, or for a child not to listen to his father? Stop and think about this. One of the most revealing passages in the Bible is found in Isaiah 1:3: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but God's people do not know or consider.

I cannot even walk out in my pasture without all the cows running to me. But Allison, I will work on fences. Usually there's some cow rubbing up against me, and she has to watch my back. Some of them have horns, and some of them do not. I've got a 3000 pound bull that likes to rub up against me too, and I have to be very careful. Why? Because they know me.

Illustrations: The Rechabites and King Jehoiakim

Do you realize what God is saying? Sometimes animals have more sense than His people. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but my people doth not know, they do not consider," saith the Lord. They won't listen. They won't hear.

In Jeremiah 35, there is a very important lesson. “The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites; and I brought them into the house of the Lord, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door: And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

“But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any.”

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 35:1-19 (KJV)

> But all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord.
>
> The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment:

> notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.
>
> And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever." Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, "Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord."

There are a number of observations that we must make on this passage. First, drinking wine or offering wine to someone is not sinful in and of itself. If you say it is, then you have a real problem, because it was God Himself who commanded Jeremiah to offer this wine to the Rechabites. He had them in the temple.

No alcohol is sinful in and of itself. Let me rephrase this: nothing material is sinful in and of itself. Matter is not sinful in and of itself. Whenever we begin to place sin in anything material, we have fallen into Greek dualism, into what is known as Gnosticism. Gnosticism is an ancient heresy.

The Gnostics in the New Testament are called Gnostics because the name comes from the Greek word ginosko, which means “I

know." They claimed to have special knowledge. There were actually two types of Gnostics. One was the Docetic Gnostics, from the Greek word dokeo, which means "I appear," or something that appears. The Docetic Gnostics always said that matter was inherently evil. This pulpit would be evil, my arm would be evil, and that water would be evil. Anything that is matter would be evil in and of itself.

The Apostle John is writing in 1 John against the Gnostics, particularly against the Docetic Gnostics. Since they said that matter was inherently evil, they said that Jesus Christ did not have a real flesh-and-blood body. He was nothing more than a divine apparition. If Jesus Christ had a body, He had to be sinful because sin is in matter.

So 1 John 1:1 says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Then he goes on, but 1 John is written against these Docetic Gnostics.

Any time you place sin in something material, you have fallen into Greek dualism. You are saying, "Here is spirit, and here is matter. Matter is evil; spirit is good."

If you try to tell me that alcohol is sinful in and of itself, then you have a problem with Jeremiah chapter 35, because God told Jeremiah to bring the Rechabites into the temple and offer them wine. The Bible tells us plainly in James 1:13–14, "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." Sin is not in anything material; sin is in the heart. Because man is fallen, he can pervert anything. Drunkenness is a sin.

Years ago, I was in New Jersey, not simply to preach, but also to help in the ordination of a good friend. I was preaching the ordination sermon. The afternoon before the service, we were

walking, and he was coughing and hacking a little. He reached into his pocket, brought out a little bottle of cough syrup, took a swallow, capped it, and put it back in his pocket. I was teasing him. I said, "John, why don't you just buy a bottle of wine, drink the wine, and forget all that cough syrup?"

He said, "I would never do that." I asked why. A bottle of wine is either 8 or 10, sometimes 12 percent alcohol—a whole bottle. I asked to see the little bottle of cough syrup. It contained 30 percent alcohol. I said, "No wonder you don't want to drink wine. You don't want to cut down on your intake." I was teasing, but if alcohol is sinful in and of itself, you cannot take medicine, because most medicine is alcohol-based. You could not take herbal tinctures, because they are alcohol-based.

You cannot locate evil in anything material. It is in the human heart. God said, "All right, Jeremiah, bring them into the temple and offer them wine." Wine was used in offerings unto God as well. Therefore, sin is not in anything material.

Secondly, I want you to understand something. The Rechabites did not drink wine, period. They also did not build houses. They also did not plant vineyards. They also did not have olive yards. They did not have gardens. If the Lord allows me to live till September, I'll be seventy-four. I have never in my entire life had a beer. Never.

When I was 70, someone said, "Well, you ought to have one." I said, "No, I've made it 70 years without one, I believe I can make it a few more years." I have no desire for it. These people did not drink wine. They were nomads. They did not live in a house. They lived in tents moving from place to place.

Now, let me ask you a question. Is it wrong? Is it sinful to have a house? I hope you would say no, because most of you live in houses. Is it sinful to have a garden? No. Is it sinful to have a vineyard? No. Is it sinful to have fruit trees? The answer is no. What is the point of this? Here's the point that God is trying to make to his people.

These Rechabites honored the instructions of their father. They obeyed and kept his commandments, even though his commandments were impractical, difficult, and of mere human origin. Their father said, "Don't ever build a house. Don't ever have a

garden, don't ever have fruit trees, don't ever drink wine." They said, "Yes, sir. Yes, sir." These commands were impractical and exceedingly difficult, and yet they obeyed. Here is God, giving commandments that are holy, righteous, godly, and for our good, and yet they would not hear or obey. That is why God says, "Listen, you don't understand."

Look back in Jeremiah 35. Look in verse 14 again. He said, "The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me." They listen to that man, but you won't listen to your God. And God says, "Because of this, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to really, really judge you because you refuse to obey."

Jeremiah was also put into prison. While he was in prison, he could not preach, so he called his amanuensis, his scribe, his secretary, Baruch, and said, "You write down everything I tell you." Baruch wrote it down and read it to the princes. The princes said, "The king's got to hear this." Jehudi then read the roll before the king. Jeremiah 36:20 says:

"And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king."

"Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words." Isn't that amazing?

Of course, God had Jeremiah write it again. But the king was not concerned. The Chaldean army was already surrounding them, but he refused to hear. Do you not think it strange that the Lord's

professing people will not hear Him? Do you not think it strange that they will not obey Him? Would you like to know what God thinks about His professing people who refuse to hear Him and obey Him? Let me show you. Go back in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 13. In this passage, God instructed Jeremiah to do something very strange.

The Marred Girdle and Good-for-Nothing Christians

He told him to get a new girdle, put it on his loins, not wash it, take it off, and go to the river Euphrates and bury it. Later, He told him to go back and get that girdle. When Jeremiah dug it up, it had rotted. It was rent. It was absolutely worthless. Look in verse 7, Jeremiah 13: "Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it: and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing." If you really want to know the meaning of this exercise, you have to keep reading.

Why did God command Jeremiah to do this? It was a sign to Judah and Jerusalem. Look in verse 8: “Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, After this manner”—that is, just the way that girdle was marred—“after this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.”

I think it is proper to talk about good-for-nothing Christians. What does that mean? It means we are worthless, unprofitable, and useless because we will not hear. We will not hearken.

John Gill, the Baptist commentator, commenting on this verse, says: “As they were corrupt in their practices and were become useless and unserviceable to God, so they would be carried captive into a foreign country where they would be inglorious and unprofitable and uncomfortable in themselves and of no use to one another.” Matthew Poole, another Puritan commentator, says: “God expounds himself what he meant to teach the Jews by this, that he did intend that they should be consumed by the people beyond the river of the Euphrates as that girdle was marred.”

He also shows that their own sins, disobeying his word, and following the imaginations of their own heart—particularly their idolatry—had brought this sore judgment upon them. God said, "This evil people, who refused to hear my words, shall be as this girdle, which is good for nothing."

Remember verse 11. God intended these people to be for a name, for praise, for a glory, and to be his peculiar people. Howbeit, because of their rebellion, deafness, lack of hearing, and lack of obedience, God would bring reproach upon them. They would become a byword. Whenever we fail to hear the Lord and walk according to his word, we end up walking after the imagination of our own heart.

You do not have to bow down to an idol of stone, gold, or silver. If you are walking after the imagination of your heart, that is idolatry. Instead of obeying God, hearing Him, and listening to Him, you are doing what you think best. You have elevated your thoughts and desires above God, saying in essence, "I'm smarter. I know what is best. I do not have to listen to God."

God called them "this evil people" who walked after the imagination of their own heart. We could accurately speak of good-for-nothing Christians, but truly there are no good-for-nothing Christians. They are always good for something: they are good for an example of chastisement and judgment. That is exactly what God did to these people. He judged them and destroyed them.

He said He was going to mar their pride. "Thus saith the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem." Our pride will either be marred to the extent that we humble ourselves before God, listen to Him, and admit, confess, and acknowledge that God is right and we are wrong; or it will be marred when God takes our nose and just rubs it in our pride and destroys us.

God takes notice of the degrees of pride in the heart of man. All pride is sinful, but there are those who have great pride. God says, "I'm going to mar it. I'll bring it down to nothing." In light of what has been preached, you need to make up your own mind and heart.

You need to determine that you are not going to be a good-for-nothing Christian.

Application: Hear and Obey

It is not necessarily what we do not know that troubles us; it is what we do know. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Most of us know better. We know what is right; we just refuse to do it. We refuse to listen to God, turn our ear away from Him, and give Him our back.

We are saying, "I'm not listening." You can come to this church building and hear sermon after sermon. They may be the greatest expository sermons in the world, brought by the greatest orators in the world, but unless you obey, you have not heard. Unless your life is changed, unless you are brought into greater conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ and greater obedience to the word of God, you have not heard.

Look at Jeremiah chapter 16 and verse 12. God says, "And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me." When you do your thing and ignore God, His word, and His truth, you are walking after the imagination of your evil heart.

Do not commit this sin. Listen, hear, and obey. Bring your life into conformity to the word of God. The greater the conformity to the word of God, the greater will be your blessings and your peace. One verse that has always broken my heart is John 8:29, where our Lord said, "For I do always those things that please him." I have often thought, "O God, if I could only do those things that always please You, how blessed my life would be." Our goal should be to be like Jesus Christ and always do those things which please the Father.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your word and Your truth. O Lord, we have to confess that we have failed to hear and obey, and failed to bring our lives into conformity to Jesus Christ. Although You have told us in Romans chapter 8 that we have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and have told us that we are to obey, forgive us, Lord, for not listening and hearing. Forgive us for turning

our backs unto Thee and shunning Thy truth and Thy word. Give us hearing ears, a hearing heart, a humble heart, and an obedient heart. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

Leading Christ into Captivity

Introduction: The Captivity of Jesus Christ

Alright, I want you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Luke chapter 22. But if you would, please go ahead and find 1 Corinthians 6, Ephesians 1, Colossians 1. Mark those passages. I've got a lot of ground to cover today. I'm going to be quoting a lot of Scripture in order that I can get everything in this particular message. Luke 22, we're just going to read one verse. We will come back to this verse. There will be a lot of foundation to be laid before we get to it. But Luke 22 and verse 54, the Bible in reference to Jesus Christ says, "Then took they Him and led Him, and brought Him unto the high priest's house, and Peter followed afar off." The title of the message is "Leading Christ into Captivity."

Here is a subject that we never consider: the captivity of Jesus Christ. One immediately will answer and object and say, "But it's impossible to lead the sovereign, omnipotent, almighty God into captivity." Yet the truth of the matter is He was led into captivity. And He is still being led into captivity, not only by His enemies, but by His friends as well. And I'll make this clearer just shortly. But when we think of captivity, we normally recoil at the thought of

captivity because we understand that for us, it's not only a loss of life, a loss of livelihood, but a loss of liberty as well. In captivity, we are made to serve. In captivity, we do that which is demanded of us, not that which we desire. When we think of captivity, one of the first thoughts that comes to our mind is the captivity of Israel in Egypt. In fact, the Bible says in Exodus chapter 1 and verse 13, "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor." Now, the word "serve" in Exodus 1 and verse 13 is the Hebrew word "abad."

The Meaning of Captivity and Service

Now, I want you to listen carefully, because I'm going to give you the definition of the word. It literally means to cause to serve, to labor, to be subject, to be compelled to work for another, and to serve another by hard labor. So, I want you to remember this word "abad," and I want you to remember this definition, because I'm going to come back to that just shortly.

So the truth of the matter is this: when you think about captivity, all peoples, all nations, all ethnic groups have been captive or enslaved at one time or the other. It's not just black folks that have been enslaved—white folks, red folks, every nation, every people have been enslaved and held captive at one time or the other. I also want you to note that it is God's judgment upon His people for their disobedience, oftentimes, that brings captivity and enslavement.

Captivity as God's Judgment for Disobedience

Look in your Bibles through the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 28, beginning with verse 45. Look what God says: “Moreover, all these curses shall come upon thee, and they shall pursue thee and overtake thee till thou be destroyed, because thou hearkenest not unto the voice of the Lord thy God to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee. And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder and upon thy seed forever.”

Now watch carefully: “Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things, therefore thou shalt serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness,

and in want of all things. And he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee."

When God sends captivity as a judgment, we learn the difference between the service of God and the service of man. In captivity, we discover who is far more gracious, kind, generous, giving, and merciful—God or man. The captivity of man makes us see clearly that the service of God is a blessing and not something to be chafed at. We must also understand that there are different kinds of captivity. Usually, when we think of captivity, we immediately think of physical captivity.

Various Kinds of Captivity

However, there is indeed mental and emotional, economic, and spiritual captivity. For instance, Proverbs 22:7 says, "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." The man who borrows, the man who is in debt, is a slave. The word "servant" literally means slave, bondslave, or manservant. Borrowing money and being in debt is economic slavery, because once you borrow money, you are no longer working for yourself. You are working for the other man until you pay that debt off.

Of course, there is also a captivity of sin. Our Lord said in John 8:34, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." The Apostle Paul said it like this in Romans 6:16: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

In each of those passages and many other passages, the Greek word is doulos, which literally means slave or bondslave. So our Lord said, "Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin." Paul said, "To whomsoever ye yield your body as a servant, you are that slave."

The interesting thing to me is that I have heard men boast all my life concerning their sins: "Well, I can just quit any time I want to." Isn't it amazing that those who say they can quit any time they want to never want to quit? I heard one man say, "Quitting smoking is easy. I've already quit a thousand times." Obviously, it was not easy.

We always say we can stop something, but usually we cannot, because there is a servitude to our habits and to our sins.

God Made to Serve with Our Sins

I do not have to dwell on the captivity of the mind. The Bible tells us very plainly that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Basically, it is our mind that controls our lives. If we think wickedly and wrongly, obviously we are going to act wickedly and wrongly.

Before I come to the part of the message I want to reach, let me return to the objection mentioned at the very beginning. Someone says, “But it is impossible to lead the sovereign, omnipotent God of heaven and earth into captivity.” Really? Look at Isaiah 43, verse 24, and see what God said to His people. He is talking to Israel: “Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.”

God said to His people, “Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins.” Would you like to take a guess at why I asked you earlier to remember the Hebrew word abad and its definition? It means to force to serve, to make to serve, to do hard labor. It is the same word used here in Isaiah 43, verse 24. God said, “You forced me to serve with your sins.”

The point is this: we do not understand the implications of a covenantal relationship. Israel was in an external covenant with God, and yet they did not obey Him. But since He was covenantally united to them, when they sinned, they made Him to serve with their sins as well. That which is true in the Old Testament is equally true in the New Testament, and it is made even clearer.

The Believer's Union with Christ and Sin

Consider 1 Corinthians 6:15: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” Remember that He is our head, and we are His body. The passage continues: “Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is

one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 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."

Here is the simple truth: Jesus Christ is our head, and we are His body. When we sin, we unite Jesus Christ to that sin. That is why He said, "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." Since Jesus Christ is our head and we are His body, when we sin, we make Him to serve with our sins. Sin is no laughing matter and no joke. Sin makes a holy, righteous, and just God to serve with our sins. No wonder, then, that we are chastened and judged.

Christ's Absolute Authority and Delegated Powers

We never think of the implication of a covenantal relationship. I am endeavoring to lay this foundation because I want you to see another type of captivity: a political and governmental captivity of Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we believe and confess that Jesus Christ is God and Lord. "Lord" is the Greek word "kurios," which means boss, owner, master, sovereign. We also confess and acknowledge the truth of Matthew 28:18, where Jesus Christ said, "All power"—or "all authority"—"in heaven and in earth is given unto me." God the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead, made Him Lord, and gave Him all power and all authority.

Paul writes in Ephesians 1:15–23: "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 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: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he

wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.

"The fulness of him that filleth all in all." Jesus Christ is the head of the church. We are His body.

Colossians 1:15–19: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist"—or have their being. "And he"—that is Jesus Christ—"is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."

We must understand this truth: Jesus Christ is the head of His church. He has absolute jurisdiction, absolute and total authority. No man, ruler, politician, government, or entity has any right to rule, run, manage, or direct the church of Jesus Christ. It is His church. He has declared in His Word how He is to be worshipped, praised, and adored; how we should act in church; and how we should live outside of the church.

In other words, He is King. He is Head. He is Lord of lords and God of gods.

Here is another truth that is very simple: Jesus Christ is not simply head of the church; He is head of everything, because He is God. He is absolutely sovereign. He has all power and all authority, and no person, organization, or institution can exist apart from Him. Any authority, power, or jurisdiction that any individual, organization, or institution has is delegated by Him. He gave that authority. That means its jurisdiction and authority are limited.

God has not abdicated His throne. God has not ceased ruling. God has not thrown aside His power, His authority, and His jurisdiction.

He has not turned His church or His world over to a handful of petty bureaucrats or billionaires to do with as they please. No, God is still on the throne, and He is still in charge.

In Proverbs chapter 8, Jesus Christ is wisdom personified. “By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.” It is only by Him that judges, princes, and kings rule. Psalm 75 makes it no plainer: “Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” God is the judge; He puts down one and sets up another.

Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Sennacherib, Haman, and a host of others learned this truth the hard way. God is the judge. God is sovereign. He puts up and takes down as He pleases. Delegated power, delegated authority, and delegated jurisdiction cannot usurp, overrule, override, or overthrow absolute power, authority, and jurisdiction. God alone has unlimited authority. God alone has unlimited power. God alone has unlimited jurisdiction. All power and authority outside of God are limited, delegated, and finite.

Here is a principle that I have taught for years. In light of what is happening—and what will probably happen—you need to know this and have it in your heart: God has created only three institutions. He created the family, which is a ministry of education; the church, which is a ministry of grace; and civil government, which is a ministry of justice. To each institution He gave a limited sphere of authority. Each is to function in its proper sphere, and once it leaves that sphere, it does not carry its authority with it. Once it steps outside its God-ordained jurisdiction and God-appointed authority, it no longer possesses that authority.

Civil government has no authority to dictate to families how they are to raise their children. It has absolutely no authority to dictate to the church when, how, or where it can meet; what it can do or cannot do; what it can worship or cannot worship. Civil government has no authority to tell the church how many may attend, when they may attend, or how they may attend. It has no authority to tell the church whether it can sing, or whether it may carry a Bible. The power of

civil government is limited to justice according to the Word of God. This is sphere authority.

Likewise, the church cannot look at civil government and say, "You cannot execute that murderer." Yes, it can. God gave civil government the sword and said, "Use this sword." I cannot say to civil government, "You cannot put someone to death." Each sphere has authority, but only in its own sphere. I may be a husband and a father, but I cannot go to Gary's house and tell him how to run his house, tell his wife what to do, or tell his daughter what to do.

I have no authority to do that. I cannot tell Steve how to control Lorraine; it would not do any good anyhow. I cannot go to Effie and say, "You need to raise your children this way." I might be a husband or a father, but that authority is only in my sphere. When I leave my sphere, I cannot exercise that authority. I might give counsel or explain biblical principles, but I cannot tell you how to run your house. Even as a pastor, I cannot tell other pastors how to run their churches. I cannot go to a church and say, "You must do this, and you must not do this." That is not my sphere of authority. My sphere of authority is where I am, and if I leave that sphere, I do not carry that authority with me. That is very simple and very clear. Every institution that God ordained has limited, delegated authority within its proper sphere.

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

When it leaves that sphere, it leaves its authority. With this in mind, when we look at Luke chapters 22 and 23, we see Jesus Christ led into captivity. Our Lord was betrayed by one who had been with Him for three years. Judas betrayed Him with a token of affection, a kiss, and in the place where He most often resorted, usually for prayer. How did Judas know where He was? John 18:2 says, "And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples." Judas knew where Jesus went. He knew His habits, when He was praying and when He was not, and where He prayed. Therefore, he knew the place.

I know that Judas was an enemy of Jesus Christ. I know that he pretended to be a follower, and that he was not a real friend of Jesus Christ. When he came to betray our Lord, our Lord did not call him a

personal friend. In Matthew 26:50, when Judas came to betray Him, our Lord said, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?”—or, actually, “Friend, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” The word “friend” is the Greek word “hetairos.” It is not from “phileo,” meaning “I love,” or “philos,” our English word for family. It is “hetairos,” meaning acquaintance, someone that you know.

In fact, "hetaira" in the feminine was used of the prostitutes in Bible times. They were strangers to the family, but they were acquaintances to some individuals. In calling Judas "hetairos," our Lord was calling him an acquaintance, even a prostitute, because his love was not real, and neither was it genuine. So Judas had come to betray Christ into the hands of His enemies.

Jesus Christ had already been captured. Luke 22:54 says, "Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off."

Why was He led to the house of the high priest? The answer is that they were there anxiously awaiting His arrest. They had sent to have our Lord arrested. In John 18:3, the Bible says, "Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons." They had sent a band of men and officers to arrest Him. Once He was arrested, He was taken to the house of the high priest.

Why was He led to the house of the high priest? You could properly answer that the high priest was the leading religious leader of his day, and that certainly would be correct. But here is a secondary observation: this house into which Jesus Christ was led was probably not the high priest's private abode. It was probably a much larger building.

Jesus Before the Religious Authorities

How can I say that? Matthew 26:57 says, "And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled." How many men were in the Sanhedrin? Seventy. So wherever the high priest was, probably the seventy were there, not counting the officers and the other men who went to arrest the Lord Jesus Christ.

This house may have been a special or designated place and not necessarily his private abode. Therefore, it had to be large enough to accommodate a large number of people. During the night, Luke 22:63-64 records, "And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee?"

"And many other things blasphemously spake they against him." So He is taken to the high priest's house, where He is interrogated, mocked, ridiculed, and blasphemed. Calvin, commenting on Matthew 26:57, writes: "But they who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas. Though the Jews had been deprived of what is called a higher jurisdiction"—that is, the ability to execute someone—"there still lingered among them some vestiges of that judicial authority which the law confers on the high priest, so that while they had lost the absolute authority, they retained the power of administering moderate correction. This is the reason why Christ is brought before the high priest to be interrogated." Not that a final sentence would be pronounced upon Him by this tribunal.

Jesus Christ is brought to the house where all of these scribes and elders are. Probably the whole Sanhedrin is there, along with the officers who went to arrest Him. Everybody is there. During the night He is interrogated, mocked, and ridiculed. There is no rest and no respect given Him.

As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, the chief priests, and the scribes came together. Some did not stay all night, and some did. They led Him into their council, saying, "Art thou the Christ? tell us." He answered, "If I tell you, ye will not believe. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go." So now He is led not just to the high priest's house, but into their council.

The council was already fixed. It had already determined its outcome. It was there that our Lord was officially and religiously condemned as an imposter and a blasphemer. The council was not interested in the truth, in Jesus Christ, or even in the people. What were they interested in? They were interested in preserving their own power and their own position. And that was it.

How can I say that? Look in John 11 and read verses 47 and 48: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

The council feared losing its power, party, rule, position, place, and usefulness. They reasoned that either everyone would believe on Jesus and leave them, or the Romans would come and take their place and nation away. Thus, they determined to take care of Jesus Christ and get Him out of the way.

The truth is that many denominations, churches, and seminaries condemn Jesus Christ in one way or another. Often, Jesus Christ does not fit into their doctrinal understanding. I read within the last two weeks of a Southern seminary requiring every student who attends to sign a pledge, an oath, stating that he will obey anything the civil government tells him to do. Really? How can that be biblical? How could anyone do that? Some people simply do not understand sphere authority, nor do they understand that God created only three institutions. But here is what happened.

Jesus Delivered to Pilate and the State

They led Him to the high priest. He was interrogated, mocked, and ridiculed. They took Him to the council, and then the whole multitude arose and led Him to Pilate. Thus, He went from the house of the high priest to the council, and from the council to Pilate. The religious leaders and establishment turned Jesus Christ over to the civil authorities. Religious iniquity had only to lean on civil government to finish the wickedness it had itself taken the lead in. Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea.

Jesus Christ was standing before Pilate. The chief priests and officers cried out, saying, “Crucify him, crucify him.” Pilate saith unto them, “Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”

Why did they not look at Pilate and say, “Thank you. We will take him and put him to death”? There are many answers to that, but I

am not going into them right now. Of course, the prophecy was that He was to be crucified. He was to be hanged and numbered with the transgressors. What they were saying was, "We do not have the official authority to crucify Him."

Under Roman rule, they had lost their power officially to execute. That surely did not stop them from stoning Stephen to death in Acts chapter 7. You see, what they wanted was our Lord officially condemned by the Roman rulers. They wanted them to do the dirty work. They delivered Him over to them so that they could crucify Him.

Our Lord stood silent before Pilate. Pilate saith unto him, "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." Pilate said, "I have the power." Our Lord said, "No. The only thing you have is what you were given." Can you see this?

Here is a limited, delegated, finite, authoritarian figure elevating himself over an absolutely sovereign, omnipotent God who has total authority and jurisdiction. I want you to understand something. The wise man said, "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth." Everything is turned upside down. Here is that picture as well. The whole point is that the powers delegated by our Lord, the jurisdictions delegated by our Lord, and the authority delegated by our Lord were all used to condemn Him.

Modern Parallels: Delivering Christ to the State

In condemning Him, they establish themselves as the higher power: "We're over you." As preachers, denominational leaders, and religious charlatans today, they cry out that we must obey. We must all be vaccinated, get vaccine passports, and do everything that comes down the pike. A brother told me this morning that a leading pastor in Jacksonville, Florida, when asked about fetal cells in the vaccination, said he saw nothing wrong with it because Jesus Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice. He said it twice. In other words, it did not matter to him that aborted fetal cells were in the vaccine; it was

simply a matter of sacrifice. They were sacrificing themselves so that we could have this vaccination.

All I am trying to point out is this: consider the churches that were recently shut down by civil government—not only contrary to the Constitution of the United States, but contrary to the Bible. Civil government has absolutely no authority over the church unless the church is violating the law of God. It may investigate a murder inside the church building, just as it can investigate one outside the church building. But unless the church is violating the law of God, civil government has absolutely no authority or jurisdiction over the church.

Look at what is happening in Canada. Pastors are being arrested, and churches are closed and walled off. In one instance, two fences were built around one church to stop people from meeting. The pastor and the people had to go to a secret location to hold church. When another church continued meeting, 200 officers were called out to circle the building and stop them from entering and using it. Now the Canadian government, contrary to the Charter of Rights, is saying that it has every right to enter a church building while a service is going on, shut it down, and lock it down.

It will not be long before it is here. If we do not understand the principle I am enunciating today, then, in our politically correct Marxist and socialistic society, the state—the civil government—is being touted as God, and our religious leaders are delivering the church of Jesus Christ bound into captivity to the state. In doing so, they are delivering Jesus Christ into captivity, because Jesus Christ is the head and we are His body. You cannot deliver the body without delivering the head. Wherever the body goes, the head goes as well.

Consider some historical truth. All of us know about the persecution in the Roman Empire. Many Christians were put to death there, but they were not put to death simply because they were Christians. In the Roman Empire, you could believe whatever you wanted to believe. If you wanted to believe in Aphrodite, have at it. If you wanted to worship Baal, go for it. If you wanted to worship Ashtoreth, fine. If you wanted to worship Jesus Christ, no problem. All you had to do was once a year swear by the genius of Caesar and

say, "Caesar is Lord." The Christians refused because Jesus Christ is Lord. Consequently, they were put to death as treasonous to the Roman Empire and to the emperor cult.

The very first baptismal formula found in the Bible and in history consists of three Greek words: "Jesus is Lord." When you were baptized in the first century and said, "Jesus is Lord," you were placed on the hit list of the Roman Empire. You were hunted down, your goods were confiscated, and your house was burned to the ground.

You were either thrown into a dungeon, or you were executed. It was that simple. In other words, it cost something to be a Christian in the first century, and it cost something to confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. It may be coming to that again.

Augustus Caesar followed Julius Caesar. We do not understand the emperor cult, or the Caesar cult, unless we understand that Caesar claimed to be God. The Roman Empire claimed to be a godlike empire based upon the Caesars. Augustus Caesar had his image stamped on his coinage. When they tempted Jesus, He said, "Show me a coin." They gave Him a coin, and He asked, "Whose image is on this coin?" They answered, "Caesar's."

Under Augustus's image were the words, "Caesar Divi Filius," translated, "son of God, the son of the divine Caesar." It meant that he was claiming to be God.

An inscription found in Priene, modern-day Turkey, refers to Caesar Augustus: "The birthday of Augustus has been for the whole world the beginning of the gospel concerning him." The word "gospel" is "euangelion" in the Greek, the same word used in the Bible. But this was the gospel of Caesar, not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

An inscription on a government building dating from 6 BC gives further insight into Caesar worship: "The most divine Caesar. We should consider equal to the beginning of all things."

It ascribes eternality to him: "For when everything was falling into disorder and tending toward dissolution, he restored it once more and gave the whole world a new aura. Caesar, the common good

fortune of all, the beginning of life and vitality. All the cities unanimously adopt the birthday of the divine Caesar as the new beginning of the year. Whereas the providence which has regulated our whole existence has brought our life to the climax of perfection in giving to us the Emperor Augustus, who being sent to us and our descendants as Savior, has put an end to war and has set all things in order; and whereas having become God manifest, Caesar has fulfilled all the hopes of earlier times."

The Roman Empire was built upon the godhood of the Caesars. For Rome, the goal of true morality and piety was the subordination of all things to the state. The religiously pious man was the one who recognized at every point the life and centrality of the state. Rushdoony wrote:

"The framework for the religious and familial acts of piety was Rome itself. The central and most sacred community, Rome, strictly controlled all rights of corporations, assembly, religious meetings, clubs and street gatherings, and it brooked no possible rivalry to its centrality. The state alone could organize; short of conspiracy, the citizens could not. On this ground alone, the highly organized Christian church was an offense and an affront to the state and an illegal organization readily suspected of conspiracy."

That is why the Church of Jesus Christ was considered illegal in the Roman Empire: it was in competition with the state and with Caesar. Therefore, it had to be brought under subjection to Caesar.

Keep in mind that Caesar claimed to be God and that the Roman Empire claimed total authority. In Acts 4, Peter is preaching and is being questioned because of the healing of a man by the high priest and his kindred. He responds:

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

You cannot understand verse 12 without understanding this truth. Peter is declaring war upon the Roman Empire and upon the Caesars. In 14 B.C., a bright star shone, and Caesar proclaimed himself Lord and sent throughout his empire this statement: “There is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved than the name of Augustus Caesar.” Peter took that and put it here in Acts 4 and verse 12. The name under which we must be saved is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord. Caesar is not Lord. Jesus Christ is Lord.

He was denying the emperor cult. He was denying that the state is God. He was saying, Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the boss, the owner, the master, and the sovereign. Anything less than that is leading Jesus Christ into captivity. Jesus Christ is God.

Applications: Confessing Christ as Lord Alone

The first application is this: we cannot and must not lead or deliver our Lord Jesus Christ and His Word over to the state, the civil government, or religious institutions in order to denounce, deny, or denigrate His authority and jurisdiction. He is Lord, and He is Lord alone. Our Lord is sovereign, and He does not have a co-chair. There is no one with Him. To submit the church of Jesus Christ to the state or civil government is to submit Jesus Christ to the state and civil government, since He is the head. Incorporation is another idea, but that is also submitting Jesus Christ to the state, because the state then becomes the head of the church instead of Jesus Christ.

The second application is this: the war of the first century has become the war of this century. The war in the first century revolved around this question: Who is Lord? Christ or Caesar? That is the question and the heart of the issue today. Look at what is happening in America and Canada. Ask yourself: Who is Lord? Christ or Caesar? In the first century, when you confessed that Jesus Christ was Lord, you needed to prepare yourself because you would either

be incarcerated, executed, or lose everything you had for saying, standing, and believing that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Because the state would brook no rivals. Our Lord asked a question in Luke 6:46: “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Our lives, lips, and actions will reveal whom we genuinely confess to be Lord. Jesus Christ alone is Sovereign. He is the head of the church, and we must bow to Him, worship Him, and obey Him regardless of the dictates of the state, what man says, or what any government says. Jesus Christ rules and reigns supremely. He is God.

That is why He said, “All authority in heaven and in earth is given unto Me.” We cannot allow the sovereign God of heaven and earth to be subjected to some finite, limited, delegated authority that wishes to play God. Jesus Christ alone is God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, and so great salvation in Jesus Christ. Help us, Father, to honor Him, for Thou didst say, “He that honoureth the Son honoureth the Father; and he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father.” Help us to bow before Thee and always remember, and prepare our hearts, minds, and lives, to confess and acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ alone. In whose name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 10

The Mark of a Tyrant

The Marks of a Tyrant

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 28:6-19 (KJV)

Introduction: Everyone Bears Marks

1 Samuel chapter 28.

The Bible says, "And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said unto him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. And Saul disguised himself, and put on another raiment. And he went in two men with him, and they came to the woman by night. And he said, I pray thee, divine unto me, by thy familiar spirit, and bring me up him whom I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off from those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

> "Wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die. And Saul sware to her by the Lord, saying, Is the Lord liveth? There shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice, and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why dost thou deceive me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid, for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.
>
> "And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up, he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed himself. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams. Therefore, if I call thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the Lord hath done to him as he spake by me, for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David, because thou obeyest not the voice of the Lord, nor executest his fierce wrath upon Amalek. Therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day."

"Moreover, the Lord will deliver thee Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me. The Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines." So the message is dealing with the marks of a tyrant. Do you understand that marks are identifiers? We all have marks in one way or another. Many times we talk about physical marks, particularly birthmarks. Years ago I saw a cartoon, I think it was from the Far Side, showing two big buck deer with nice antlers. One was standing beside the other, and he had zero targets on his chest. The other looked at him and said, "Bummer, a birthmark, Al."

I suppose it was. When we think of marks, there are birthmarks. Those are physical, but there are also mental, emotional, political,

and economic marks—not necessarily birthmarks. There are marks by which individuals can be identified, grouped, or singled out. You can have marks of which you make glory, and there are marks of which you need to be ashamed.

The Apostle Paul had his marks, and they were marks of a Christian and of a true servant of Jesus Christ. He said in Galatians 6:17, "From henceforth, let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Usually, when you and I think about marks, we also need to connect the Greek word for mark: stigma. It refers to a mark usually pricked into the skin or branded. Originally, slaves were branded or had their owner's name etched in their skin. Oftentimes, soldiers had their commander's name either burned or etched into their skin.

At times, those devoted to false gods would actually etch or burn the name of the false god into their body as well. I suppose that is one reason why the Word of God says, "Thou shalt not make any cuttings in your skin," because it would have reference to a false god. But when Paul spoke of his marks, undoubtedly he had reference to everything that he had suffered.

For instance, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, let me just read verses 23–28. Paul asks this question: “Are they the ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool. I more. In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often, of the Jews five times received by forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I've been in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, and in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care for all the churches.”

So undoubtedly, Paul did indeed have a lot of marks on his body, not just from being beaten, but from being stoned as well. And the truth of the matter is, the Lord Jesus Christ also had marks. If you look in your Bibles at John chapter 20, you know the story about how our Lord appeared to His disciples. Thomas, called Didymus,

was not there originally, so our Lord appeared again. Notice what is said in John 20, beginning in verse 24: “But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.”

“But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to him, My Lord and my God.” So our Lord Jesus Christ had His marks as well. Now, the marks that were on the Lord Jesus Christ are usually referred to as the stigmata. Of course, the word stigmata is from the Greek word stigma as well. If you were to look up the word stigmata in a dictionary, you would find it would be something like this.

The word would refer, first of all, to a mark of disgrace, a mark of infamy, or a stain upon someone's character or reputation. It may also refer medically to a physical or mental mark that is characteristic of a certain defect or disease. When we think of Alzheimer's, we can think of the mark of forgetfulness. Thus, there are medical applications as well.

Originally, even that referred to the marks that were in Jesus Christ. In the Roman Catholic realm, they would say that someone who ended up with marks supernaturally, as Christ did, had the stigmata. In other words, it would be supernaturally imposed upon someone, which, of course, would be in that particular area.

But let me say this concerning the stigma: There is a stigma to biblical Christianity. Those who faithfully obey the Lord Jesus Christ, believe His Word, and follow Him are stigmatized; that is for sure. Our Lord recognized that and said so in John 15:18-20: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they

will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

Clearly, then, our Lord said there is a stigma to being a true follower of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 13:12-13 says, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." There is a stigma to being a real, true biblical Christian. I had much rather be a believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, hated, mocked, ridiculed, and despised by the world, than be praised by a wicked, ungodly world and then be hated by the sovereign God of heaven and earth. There will be a stigma either way, and I would much rather have a stigma concerning Jesus Christ.

Everyone bears marks. You may be marked as a Christian, a sinner, an adulterer, a murderer, or a thief. Even politicians have marks. The leftists, the liberals, and the Democrats have their distinctive marks, most of them evidenced by mental instability. This is especially apparent when they try to say that a man is a woman and that a man who claims to be a woman can have babies. That is sheer lunacy, insanity, and ignorance. Wokeness would be a mark as well, I suppose. Everyone has marks, and even tyrants have marks. Many tyrants do not want to appear to be tyrants, although they are in reality.

Defining Tyranny

Our Lord gave us good counsel in Matthew 7:20: “Wherefore, by their works you shall know them.” When someone thinks of a tyrant, he usually thinks of someone who is cruel and oppressive, with unrestrained power. If you look up tyrant and tyranny in a dictionary, you find these definitions. A tyrant is “a sovereign or other ruler who uses power oppressively or unjustly.” Another definition is “any person in a position of authority who exercises power oppressively or despotically.” Tyranny is “arbitrary or unrestrained exercise of power” and “despotic abuse of authority.”

Listen to this definition: government by a ruler or a small group of people who have unlimited power over the people in their country or state and use it unfairly and cruelly. Let me correct one thing about

that definition. No individual and no group has unlimited power. Only God is sovereign. Only God is infinite. They may think they have unlimited power, but that is not true.

Tyrants are not always cruel and oppressive in the sense that they do not always appear to be so. Stop and think about this. A tyrant may view himself as a benefactor. He may view himself as a benevolent dictator, ruling and determining what he believes is in the best interest of his people. Yet he is still a tyrant. A tyrant is also someone who uses lawful power unlawfully. Think about lawful authority and the abuse of lawful authority.

You could spend all day long on illustrations. Husbands do indeed have fatherly authority over their children and husbandly authority over their wives. Yet there are men who abuse that authority and power. Pastors have authority over the churches they pastor, but some exceed that authority and demand that everyone do everything exactly the way they do. Thus, lawful power or lawful authority is turned around and used unlawfully.

The same thing is true of politicians. A politician may be elected lawfully, yet when he gets into office, he uses the power of his authority unlawfully. Consider our Congress: each member has taken an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States. Although many may have been elected lawfully, they are now using their power unlawfully because they are totally ignoring the Constitution they swore to uphold. A tyrant can be someone who simply uses lawful authority unlawfully. King Saul was a tyrant. He had a very humble beginning, yet the truth is that he became a horrendous tyrant.

The First Mark of a Tyrant

Saul's tyranny actually begins in 1 Samuel 15. We read 1 Samuel 28, but 1 Samuel 28 is actually the end result of his tyranny, the culmination of it. When we come to certain verses in 1 Samuel 28, the things Saul actually said should be absolutely astounding. It shocked me when I realized what Saul actually said. To understand this, we must go back in our Bibles to 1 Samuel 15. I want to give you six marks of a tyrant. At least five of them appear before we get to 1 Samuel 28, and the sixth comes out of 1 Samuel 28.

Mark 1: No Regard for God or His Commands

The very first mark of a tyrant is that he has no regard for God or God's commands. Remember this, because you will see it in several places. Look in 1 Samuel 15, beginning in verse 1: “Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel.” Here is a lawful authority. God anointed him; God appointed him.

Now look what the Bible says: “Now therefore, hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord.” In other words, you are God's ordained authority; therefore, you must listen to what God says. Verse 2 says, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” Note that he was actually to slay everything.

What did Saul do? He disobeyed God. He spared Agag, the king, and also spared the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen. Then he blamed this disobedience upon the people. In 1 Samuel 15, verse 15, Saul said, “They, that is, the people, have brought them from the Amalekites; for 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.” So now he was blaming it on the people.

Then, in verse 20, Saul said unto Samuel, “Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.”

"But the people took of the spoil, sheep, and oxen, and sheep of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, the sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal." The truth is this: God did not give His orders to the people. He gave His orders to the king whom He had anointed and appointed. Saul knew that everything was to be destroyed. The people may or may not have known, but Saul certainly had a responsibility to tell them. Why, then, were the best of the sheep and oxen spared?

Go back to verse 17. Once Saul had claimed that he was obeying God, look what Samuel said: "When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast not thou made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed." Now notice verse 19: "Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?" He flew upon the spoil. He wanted it for himself.

Saul did not care about obeying God, about God, or about the people. Saul was for Saul. He wanted what he saw and desired, and he forsook God and the Word of God.

Go back to verses 10 and 11: "Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying," God is speaking, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king. For he has turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night."

Our Lord said in Matthew 7, "by their fruits you shall know them." How do we know that Saul forsook God? What was the evidence? God gives it to us: "for he is turned back from following me and have not performed my commandments." When Saul disobeyed, violated the Word of God, and forsook God's commandments, that was evidence that he had turned back. I do not care how piously, graciously, or benevolently a ruler talks; if he will not obey God and His Word, he is a tyrant. Why?

Because he views himself as independent of God, he views himself as a law unto himself and as a source of his own authority. That is why, in 2 Samuel 23, David, claiming direct inspiration from God, said this: "A man must be just ruling over men in the fear of God." So if men are not ruling in the fear of God, then basically they are tyrants because they are saying, "I am my own authority. I make my own law." Disobedience is evidence of rejection of God and His authority.

Now look in verse 26. "And Samuel said unto Saul," Saul wants him to return to worship with him. "And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee, for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord,

and the Lord has rejected thee from being king over Israel. And Samuel turned about to go away, and he saw laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine that is better than thou. And also the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent, for he is not a man that he should repent."

Understand this biblical principle: in this exact and biblical sense, a tyrant is an individual who arrogates to himself authority without having the right to that authority. Thus, a tyrant is one who rules without God, apart from God, and views himself as an absolute source of authority. And, by the way, 1 Samuel chapter 15 is just the beginning of Saul as a tyrant. It all begins when someone rejects God and His word.

Mark 2: Concerned Only with His Own Rule and Power

The second mark of a tyrant is that he is concerned only with his rule, power, and kingdom. Please put two plus two together while I preach this. Our modern-day politicians, once they get in office, have as their main goal staying in office. It does not matter what it takes. A tyrant has no concern for innocence and truly has no concern for the will of God. His main concern is that his rule, his power, and his dynasty continue, and he is willing to do anything to make that right.

David was mercilessly driven from his home into the wilderness by Saul. Twice David was almost killed by Saul; Saul threw a javelin at him twice, and twice he escaped. David had to fight off attempts of assassination by Saul, the king. Saul employed spies to find him, discover his haunts, track him down, and destroy him. Why was Saul so absolutely intent on destroying David?

In 1 Samuel chapter 20, Saul and David had been together before him, and David and Jonathan had entered into a covenant. David already knew that Saul would try to kill him again, so he asked Jonathan's permission to go down and visit his parents. He did not visit them, however; he was hiding out. Saul asked where David was. "And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem."

"And he said, Let me go, I pray thee, for our family hath a sacrifice in the city, and my brother hath commanded me to be there. And now if I have found favor in thy eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not to the king's table."

Now watch what Saul does. "Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse, rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and to the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now sin, and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die." And Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, "Wherefore shall he be slain? What have you done?" Saul cast a javelin at him and his own son to smite him, whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

Why was Saul so anxious to put David to death? He said, "Jonathan, you'll never be king as long as he's alive. He must be killed."

The same attitude was exhibited by Jeroboam, who happened to be the first king of Israel, in 1 Kings chapter 12. Once he was established, Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now shall the kingdom return unto Rehoboam, if this people go down to Jerusalem and worship, and they shall slay me. What am I going to do?” He took counsel and made two calves of gold, put one in Dan and one in Bethel, and said, “These be thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of Egypt.” Jeroboam did not care anything about God. He did not care anything about truth. He did not care anything about his people. All he wanted was to maintain his power, his kingdom, and his rule.

I want you to see how prevalent this is. In John chapter 11, after our Lord had healed many people and raised Lazarus from the dead, the Bible says, “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees of counsel and said, What do we? For this man doeth many miracles.” What are we going to do?

Look what they say: “If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him. And the Romans shall come and take away both our place

and our nation." One of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, "You know nothing at all, nor consider it that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and the whole nation perish not."

Caiaphas spoke this prophetically, yet he did not necessarily mean it prophetically. What Caiaphas was saying is this: We need to get rid of him. Why do we need to get rid of Jesus Christ? "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place," that is, our station in life, our power, "and our nation."

In other words, we'll lose everything. Here is an innocent man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He just needs to be sacrificed; he needs to be killed in order that we can maintain our power base. You have to understand that a tyrant is only interested in his power, his position, and his control. All tyrants place themselves above everyone else, and they believe that everyone else is at their disposal because they are the only ones that count. A tyrant not only has no care for God and His Word; he is concerned, above all, about his power and his rule.

Mark 3: Willingness to Distort Facts and Reality

Here is the third mark: the third mark of a tyrant is a willingness to distort facts and reality for his own benefit.

Now look in 1 Samuel chapter 22. This shows you again what a tyrant is. Notice verse 7: "And Saul said to his servants that stood about him, Hear now, you Benjamites, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards and make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds."

"That all of you have conspired against me. And there is none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse. And there is none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait, as it is this day."

In verse 7, Saul, who was a Benjamite himself, talks to these other Benjamites: "Do you think David's going to make you all captains of thousands, captains of hundreds? You think he's going to give you

40 acres and a mule? You think he's going to do all this for you? He's not going to do any more for you than I'm doing. I'm your own flesh and blood."

If Saul had a race card, he would have played it. But he didn't have a race card; he did have a pity card. He lays it on thick: "Nobody loves me. Nobody appreciates me. No one is sorry for me. No one is going to give me information. Why is everybody against me?" I don't think that's so strange. We hear that all the time today—everybody playing a pity card: "I want what I want and I want it right now." Wow. Isn't this interesting?

He said, "Why hasn't anybody told me that my own son has entered into a league with David?" Yet it seems like we just read in 1 Samuel chapter 20, where Saul threw a javelin at his own son because of the covenant he had made with David. And if you look back in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 18—in 1 Samuel 17, David kills Goliath. He cuts his head off and brings it to Saul. Watch in verse 1: "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul," that is, David had made an end of speaking to King Saul, "that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

Now watch: "And Saul took him that day, and would let him no more go home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David and his garments, even to his sword and his bow and his girdle." All in front of Saul. Saul already knew about this covenant.

In 1 Samuel chapter 22, Saul says, “Nobody told me. I’m the last one to find things out. Why didn’t somebody tell me?” Really? Then he says, “My own son has stirred up my own servant against me.” Jonathan did not stir David up, and David was not even against Saul. Why was David running to begin with? Because he did not want to fight Saul. When God twice, sovereignly and providentially, delivered Saul into David’s hand, David refused to kill him.

Everything is a total, absolute lie. What is Saul doing? He is distorting the facts and distorting reality. Here is a principle that you need to learn: there is a vast difference between facts and the

interpretation of facts. Everyone interprets facts, and everyone interprets them from his own perspective.

I have counseled married couples for years. I have had a husband and wife sitting in front of me. I say, "Sir, would you please tell me what the problem is?" He tells me. Then I look at the lady and say, "Ma'am, would you please tell me what the problem is?" She tells me exactly the opposite of what her husband said.

Now, which one is lying? The answer is neither. They are interpreting the facts from their own perspective. When someone says, "Well, this is a fact," you had better check whether it is a fact or an interpretation of a fact. Saul was interpreting facts and distorting them for his own benefit. Distorting facts—January 6, COVID, vaccines.

Mark 4: Willingness to Receive False Witness and Shift Blame

The fourth mark of a tyrant is his willingness to receive false witness and to shift blame to others for his own failures. In 1 Samuel chapter 22, verse 9, Doeg the Edomite, set over the servants of Saul, says, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob to Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub. And he inquired of the Lord for him," which was a bald-faced lie, "and gave him vittles," which was true, "and gave him the sword of Goliath of Philistine," which was also true. It was David's anyhow. Then the king sent for Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests in Nob. They all came to the king, and Saul said, "Hear now thou son of Ahitub."

Saul accused Ahimelech: "Why have you conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me to lie in wait at this day?" Ahimelech answered that David was faithful among Saul's servants, the king's son-in-law, obedient to Saul's command, and honorable in his house. He asked, "Did I then begin to inquire of God for him?" and said, "Be it far from me. Let not the king impute anything to his servant, nor to all the house of thy father, for thy servant knew nothing of all of this, less nor more."

That was the absolute truth. When David came to Ahimelech, Ahimelech had asked why he was alone. David answered that the king had sent him on an urgent mission and that he had not had time to get his sword, food, or anything else. Ahimelech could know nothing except that David was the king's son-in-law. He gave David bread from the show table of showbread and Goliath's sword, but he did not inquire of God.

Here is what was happening: Saul was accusing Ahimelech of conspiring with David, which he absolutely had not done. Ahimelech, his family, his priesthood, and the whole priesthood were entirely and completely innocent in the affair. Even if Ahimelech had been complicit—which he was not—none of the other priests or people were involved.

Truth does not matter to a tyrant. Innocence does not matter to a tyrant. Any false narrative, any bald-faced lie, or simple innuendo is enough if it allows the tyrant to escape responsibility and put the blame on someone else. Think about the last two years in this country and all the lies told to us, the people; the false narratives given, where everything is someone else's fault or our fault, never the fault of those elected as leaders. Have you noticed that? But that is a tyrant. Here is the fifth mark of a tyrant.

A Willingness to Murder

Mark 5: Willingness to Murder with Ease of Conscience

The fifth mark of a tyrant is a willingness to murder, and to do so with ease of conscience. Since we are in 1 Samuel 22, consider verse 16: "And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, and I will let down all thy father's house." Ahimelech was innocent. Moreover, what had his father's house to do with it if he had inquired of God for David, which he had not? Saul said, "You're going to die and all your father's house."

"And the king said unto the footman that stood about him, Turn and slay the priest of the Lord, because their hand also is with David," which was not true, "and because they knew when he fled and did not show it to me," which was not true. "But the service of

the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priest of the Lord. Then the king said to Doeg, Turn thou and fall upon the priest of the priest. And Doeg the Edomite turned."

Doeg fell upon the priest and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear the linen ephod. He murdered eighty-five priests. Then Nob, the city of the priests, was smitten with the edge of the sword: men and women, children and sucklings, oxen and asses, and sheep. Saul murdered everyone and everything.

At least the Israelite soldiers had some conscience. When Saul commanded them to fall upon the priests, they refused. But there is always a Doeg when a tyrant rages and conscientious people refuse to obey wicked and vain commands. Doeg will do what the tyrant wishes in order to ingratiate himself with the kingdom, the tyrant, and the empire.

This is the progression of tyranny. See how Saul started in 1 Samuel 15, then proceeded to 1 Samuel 20, and finally to 1 Samuel 22.

The Sixth Mark of a Tyrant

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 28:7-13 (KJV)

Mark 6: Willingness to Usurp God's Position and Nullify His Word

The sixth mark of a tyrant is that he is willing to usurp the position of God and declare His Word null and void. He started out by denying the Word of God, the commandments of God, ignoring God, and refusing to obey Him. But now he ends up usurping the position of God and declaring God's Word null and void.

"Then Saul said unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and inquire of her. But his servants said unto him, Behold, there's a woman that hath a familiar spirit that endure. And Saul disguised himself and put on another raiment, and he went in two men with him. And they came to the woman by night, and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up,

> whom I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits and wizards out of the land.
>
> "Wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul swore to her by the Lord, saying, Is the Lord liveth? There shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up for thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice and spake unto Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? For thou art Saul.
>
> "And the king said unto her, Be not afraid. For what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth."
>
> Now, because of all of Saul's rebellion, wickedness, and disobedience, God has cast him off. The Philistines have gathered together for battle, and Saul is anxious—yea, desperate. He does not know what to do. God does not answer him by dreams, by prophets or seers; nobody is talking to him. God does not answer him by the Urim and the Thummim, which the high priest wore in his vest. When a question was asked, he would pull out one, and there would be an answer. But God was not speaking to Saul. So Saul, in desperation, says, "Seek me out a woman that has a familiar spirit." They say there is one at Endor. Does anybody remember?

That television show that came on many years ago called Bewitched—do you remember it? Elizabeth Montgomery, I think, was the woman. Does anybody remember what her mother, who was a witch, was called? Endora—from the Witch of Endor. The woman said, “You’re laying a snare for me. Saul has banned us from the land.”

Let me hasten to say this: banning these people from the land was unscriptural and unbiblical. How can I say that? Exodus 22, verse 18, says, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” They were to be executed, put to death. Had they been put to death, there would have been no witch for this man to go to. But he simply banned them; he did not execute them. Everybody wants to argue over whether this

woman actually brought up Samuel. The truth is, she did not. She could not have.

She did not have that power. To show you how absolutely shocked this woman was when Samuel did come, look at 1 Samuel 28:12: "And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice, and the woman spake to Saul and said, Why dost thou deceive me? For thou art Saul." She was not expecting Samuel. She knew she had no power to bring Samuel up, and yet Samuel came up.

It was when he appeared that truth broke in on her. She knew that she had been set up. Let me show you the point that most people overlook. Everybody wants to argue over whether or not this woman brought up Samuel. Obviously, she did not. But here is the culmination of tyranny. Look at verses 9 and 10.

This is appalling: "And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land. Wherefore, then, layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?" And look at what Saul said: "And Saul sware to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing."

God had said, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Saul may not have been going to execute her, but God certainly would execute her. Yet Saul said, "There shall be no punishment." Here is the tyrant with a tyrannical attitude, believing that he has the power and authority to subvert and overthrow the judgment and punishment of God. He even does so in the name of the Lord: "As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment be unto thee." He swears by God!

Modern-day tyrants do exactly the same thing. They seek to promote that which God condemns, while believing that their political and legal acts make void the judgment of God. Look at all the immorality, wickedness, and rebellion that have been legalized and made acceptable—against God, against His law, and against society.

Psalm 94:20-21 asks this question: "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee which frameth mischief by a law?" A throne of iniquity is a wicked civil government. It is a throne, a power, an authority, but it is a throne of iniquity. Shall it have

fellowship with God? No. When that wicked civil government frames mischief by a law, mischief is another word for sin in the Bible. So it says, “Shall the throne of iniquity, shall a wicked civil government have fellowship with thee which makes sin legal?” Now watch verse 21: “They,” that wicked civil government, “gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous and condemn the innocent blood.”

Modern man, or rather fallen man, believes that sins are somehow not sins if they are declared legal. Since sins have been made legal, “There is therefore now no punishment and no judgment for those sins.” Look at abortion, sodomy, and all that is going on in our land. It is just like Saul when he said to the woman, “As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.” Just do what I say. I can declare that God will not punish you.

Modern man, or fallen man, thinks that his pronouncements and legal acts make void the judgment of God. He wickedly and foolishly believes that his legal and political acts are the epitome of freedom. What he means by freedom is freedom to sin and freedom to escape the punishment that God has demanded for that sin. Rushdoony gave a wonderful quote: “Statism assumes that its law, rather than God's regenerating power, is the principle of freedom. As a result, it legislates against biblical law. The end result is the enslavement of all men.” And that is true.

Application: God is the Enemy of Tyrants

Look back in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 28, verse 16. Here is another important truth, especially for tyrants. Saul is telling Samuel, “God won't speak to me.” That is a good principle to understand: God is not going to direct tyrants. God does not establish tyranny. Tyranny is not a biblical form of government.

Samuel said, “Wherefore, then, dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee and is become thine enemy?” God is the enemy of tyrants. He fights against them, overthrows them, and destroys them. Stop and think of all the judgment that modern-day politicians are going to face when God makes bare His arm. Somehow they think they are going to escape, but they are not going to escape.

Deuteronomy 32:35 says, “To me belong vengeance and recompence. Their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that come upon them make haste.” God said their foot is going to slide. He is going to take care of it. Mark it down: the tyrant is not going to escape. All those who have caused the murder of countless numbers of people, not just in America but in the world, will be held accountable by God.

I just read where, among young people from eighteen to thirty-nine who took the Moderna and Pfizer vaccination, the death rate is up eighty-four percent—eighty-four percent among that one group. I am simply saying they are not going to escape. They are not going to get away with it.

Conclusion: The Danger of Statism

Samuel said that God had become the enemy of Saul, and He is thus the enemy of all tyrants. Ludwig von Mises, the Austrian economist, said, “The worship of the state or the worship of government is the worship of force. There is no more dangerous menace to civilization than a government of incompetent, corrupt or vile men. The worst evils which mankind ever had to endure were inflicted by bad governments. The state can be, and has often been in the course of history, the main source of mischief and disaster.” I would add: also rebellion against God and evil toward man.

The Marks of a Tyrant

You do not have to be a single individual reigning and ruling cruelly, oppressively, and despotically to be a tyrant. Whenever you begin without God, you are not only going to end up being a tyrant, but you are going to end up with tyranny and the enslavement of mankind. We need to know the marks, and we need to watch.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth; ask Your blessing. May we be awakened by Thy Word, understand our situation, and prepare lives and hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 11

Christians Who Despise God

Introduction: The Shocking Claim of Proverbs 14:2

Proverbs 14:2 is in the Old Testament: “He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord, but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.” Look how simple that verse is. If you were to ask the average professing Christian, “Do you despise God?” undoubtedly you would get a resounding negative. In fact, you might even get more than a negative. You may even get looked at in a bold and hard and incredulous manner. You may even get hollered at or cussed out—in a Christian manner, of course, you understand. But obviously most of them say, “Well, no, I certainly do not despise God.” However, there’s a vast difference between professions and action.

Actions Reveal the Heart

Each of us has used the old adage, “I can’t hear what you’re saying because of the way that you’re acting,” or we’ve heard it like this: “Actions speak louder than words.” Our Lord made that truth abundantly clear in Matthew 7:16 when He said, “You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of

thistles?" And then He said it again in Matthew 7:20: "Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them."

So in the strictest sense of the word, it really doesn't matter what someone says or what someone professes; what really counts is how he lives. Even Solomon, in Proverbs 4:23, said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Our actions and our conduct really and truly reveal our heart.

Our text is emphasizing truth: "He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord." I just finished twelve messages on walking with the Lord, and I reminded you in every one of those messages that walking indicates a way of life. It is your conduct. It is how you live. The latter part of that verse says, "He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord, but he that is perverse in his ways." Again, your ways happen to be your life. It is how you conduct yourself and how you live. The text is very simple: "He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord, but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him."

Defining Uprightness and Perverseness

When one walks in his uprightness—and by "uprightness" is meant that which is right, righteous, moral, and ethical according to God's law—it is indeed a demonstration that he fears and honors God. His life demonstrates that he is holding God in awe and reverence. His life demonstrates again that he regards God and is bringing his life into submission to what He teaches.

On the other hand, when one is perverse—and "perverse" literally means one that is crooked, devious, forward, and disobedient—when a man is perverse in his ways, the Bible says, "he despiseth him." In other words, perverseness is evidence and a manifestation that a man has absolutely no regard for God. In fact, he dishonors Him and despises Him. The word "despise," as used in Proverbs 14:2, means to hold in contempt, to scorn, to make contemptible, and to count as vile and worthless. Thus Proverbs 14:2 presents this contrast: "He that walketh in his uprightness or in righteousness fears the Lord, but he that is perverse in his ways counts God as vile, worthless, and contemptible."

The World Despises Christ, but Can a Christian?

The world as a whole disdains the Lord Jesus Christ and despises Him. The Bible says in Isaiah 49:7, “Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and His Holy One, to him whom man despiseth.” In reference to Jesus Christ, He is called the one whom man despiseth. Isaiah 53:3 says, “He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” The very fact that Scripture says, “we esteemed him not,” means that we did not even count Him worthy of being thought about. He was so despised that we would not even allow Him into our minds. Basically, an unsaved man has no time for Jesus Christ and no time for the Bible.

He does not think about biblical things; he has no time for that. He counts God as vile and worthless. Everyone understands that the unsaved, the heathen, and the pagans would count Jesus Christ as vile, worthless, and contemptible. But these are the questions we must ask: Is it possible for a Christian, for a real, genuine child of God, to hold his heavenly Father in such contempt, derision, scorn, and disdain? Is it possible that we might actually treat our heavenly Father as vile and worthless? Is it possible for a genuine child of God to treat our Father with such contempt that God regards it as despising Him? The answer to each question is absolutely yes.

No Middle Ground: Love or Hate, Serve or Despise

Our Lord makes it clear that we are either going to love Him or hate Him. We are going to serve Him or reject Him. He said in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." There is no middle ground, no in-between, and no neutrality. You either love Him or hate Him; you either hold to Him or despise Him.

Before proceeding further, it will be helpful to consider an illustration in the Bible where a real, genuine believer actually despised God. When we speak of Christians despising God, the concept is so far from our minds that it is almost inconceivable that a genuine child of God could end up despising Him. Yet it is true.

David: A Man After God's Own Heart Who Despised God

I am sure that each of you remembers King David. The Bible tells us that David was a man after God's own heart. Let me emphasize that when you read this, it was God Himself who gave that testimony concerning David. Acts 13:22 says, "And when he had removed him, that is when God had removed King Saul, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to him also he gave testimony and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will." Everyone knows David's love for the Lord and that, by and large, for most of his life, he was obedient to God.

If it was possible for David, who is known for his love and obedience to God, to despise Him, the question has to be asked: how much easier and more readily is it for you and I, who do not love Him as much as David did, to despise Him and hold Him in contempt?

Everyone understands that David committed adultery with Bathsheba. He also had her husband, Uriah the Hittite, slain with the sword of the children of Ammon. In 2 Samuel 11:26, the Bible says, "And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. And when the mourning was passed, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son." Notice this statement: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord."

I am not even going to explain the word "displeased" here, with the exception that everyone understands David's actions were certainly not in agreement and in conformity with the Word of God. They were contrary to God's Word; therefore, God was very sorely displeased.

Nathan had come to David and told him the story about the poor man with the one little lamb and the rich man who had plenty. The rich man spared to take of his own flock, but took that poor man's lamb. David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

And Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah."

Nathan continued: “And if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.”

Then came the judgment: “Now therefore the sword shall never depart out of thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.”

Go back to verse 9. What did David first do? He despised the commandment of God. What did that commandment say? “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife.” “Thou shalt not kill.” David therefore despised God’s law.

Understand this: God and His law are one and cannot be separated. Nathan says, “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord?” Then, in verse 10, “Now therefore the sword shall never depart out of thine house; because thou hast despised me.” Did David despise God’s law, or did he despise God? He despised both. When you have no regard for the law of God, you have no regard for the God who gave that law. Therefore, it is called a despising of God. God and His law cannot be separated.

A king rules by his law. The king's law is an expression of his will. This is true not only in the Old Testament. In Psalm 138:2, David said, "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." God has placed His word on a very high

pedestal, even above His name, in the sense that if God's word ever failed, then God would cease to be God. God has said, "Here's my word, and my word is holy because I am holy." So David despised God's law, and therefore David despised God. It is impossible to maintain one attitude toward God's law and a different attitude toward God.

The Inseparability of God and His Word

It is likewise impossible to maintain one attitude toward the Bible and a different attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Some people say, "Well, I love the Lord Jesus, but I don't care for the Bible. I don't ever read it. It's hard for me to understand, and I just don't care for it. But now I love the Lord, really." That's impossible. You could say, "Well, I love the Bible, but I don't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." That's impossible. Our Lord Himself said in John 12:48, "He that rejecteth me"—that's the living Word—"and receiveth not my words"—that's the written Word—"hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Jesus said it is impossible for you to receive His words and reject Him, or to reject Him and receive His words. If you reject Him and do not receive His words, you are still going to be judged by His words. Why? When He says that you are going to be judged by His words, who will be doing the judging? Remember what our Lord said in John chapter 5: “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.” The Lord Jesus Christ will be the Judge.

It is impossible to say, “I love Christ, but I do not love the Bible,” or, “I love the Bible, but I do not love Christ.” No, it is impossible. When, as Christians, we refuse to obey God, we are guilty of despising His law and despising His Word, and therefore equally guilty of despising God who gave that Word.

Esau: A Fornicator and Profane Person

Let me make a statement and show it to you from Scripture. You might get upset when you hear it, but that is beside the point. It is still true: when we despise God, we are nothing more than an Esau. Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 12, and at

the same time to 1 Corinthians chapter 6. We will go to Hebrews chapter 12 first, then turn back to 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Hebrews 12:15: “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.”

"For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Now God says, "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau." When you hear the term "fornicator," you normally think of the abuse of the body in a sexual relationship—a whoremonger, a fornicator. But the term "fornication" is exceedingly broad. In this context, he says, "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." Thus, the fornication of Esau has to do with his birthright.

The birthright meant that, as the oldest son, he would be the heir, so to speak. He would be the one to follow in his father's footsteps as the patriarch of the family. Moreover, he would receive a double portion of the inheritance, because it would be his responsibility to take care of elderly mother who has left or elderly father who has left, or anyone who needed help. That would be his responsibility. Moreover, the birthright included the lineage and genealogy of Jesus Christ.

What did he do? He despised his duty. He despised his obligations. He despised the spiritual gift and the spiritual birthright that he had. He unlawfully traded that for something that would satisfy his body—a mess of pottage, which is an unlawful use of the body. That is what fornication is.

In 1 Corinthians 6:13, 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 did not make us to use our bodies unlawfully for anything. The Lord made us for Himself. Our bodies are for Himself.

There is an implication of illicit sexuality here, but notice 1 Corinthians 6:15: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of

Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid." Perish the thought; do not even think it. "What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."

"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." How much of you does God own? Everything about you—body, soul, and spirit. We cannot use our bodies unlawfully in any way.

What Esau did as a fornicator was to say, "I'll trade you my birthright. I don't care about the blessing of God. I don't care about my duties, my responsibilities, or my obligations. All I care about is that bowl of peas right there." He traded all that for an unlawful use, simply to satisfy his immediate hunger at that particular time. When he said, "I am at the point of death," he was not about to starve to death. He simply, as Scripture says, despised his birthright.

The warning is, "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person." A profane person treats that which is holy as if it were common, unclean, or unholy. Thus there are fornication and profanity. You can be absolutely profane and never utter a curse word.

Esau was probably not necessarily what we would call a cusser; he may have been, but I have no idea. Scripture does not label him as that. How, then, is he called profane? He treated that which was holy as if it were unholy, and that which was godly and right as something common and unclean, something that could be easily disposed of.

Old Testament Examples of Despising God

The point I am trying to make is very simple. When we despise God's Word and refuse to obey God's Word, we become Esaus. We count God and His truth as something that is common, unclean, and unholy, and then we unlawfully use our bodies. We are treating God

as if He is worthless and vile. We are holding Him in contempt. We are despising Him.

Israel, in the Old Testament, often despised God or despised His law. In Leviticus 26, the Lord says, “I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen;” because they were going to be the bondslaves of God; through His redemption, He bought them. “I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright.”

Then verse 14 says, “But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments”—and the word “abhor” is a very strong word for hatred—“and if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you.”

“I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.” But note what He said: “If ye shall despise my statutes.” He is talking to the people He had just redeemed, the people He had just brought out of Egypt.

In verse 43, He says, “The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes.”

In Numbers 11:20, the people had been complaining that they did not have any meat to eat.

God had been giving them manna, and the manna was perfectly suited to sustain them. It was nutritionally perfect. It was everything they needed. They wanted meat, and so they whined, bellyached, and complained. In Numbers 11:19, God says, "Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?"

You know what we often do? Each one of us is as guilty as we can be. We whine, complain, and bellyache against God's divine providence. We do not like how God leads and directs us or how he supplies us. Here it is called a despising of God.

In Numbers 14:31, after the people said that God had brought them and their children into the wilderness to die, God says, "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." When they refused to obey God and refused to go in and conquer the land, God said, "What you're doing is despising my gifts. I gave you the land. You didn't want it. You despised it. Your children are gonna go in and get it, but you will never get it."

Numbers 15:29 begins: "Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them."

Each one of us sins through ignorance. We do things that are wrong sometimes without even knowing they are wrong. That is why I normally tell people—I hear Christians say, “Well, I remember I repented when I got converted.” Really? I know I repented when I got converted; my life has been a continual repentance, because as God opens my eyes, I see more and more sin and wickedness and rebellion in my own life. Repentance does not change.

The truth is, we often sin through ignorance, and sometimes we sin not only without knowing it, but without thinking about it. The next thing we know, “Oh, I realize what I have just done.” There is a difference between a sin through ignorance and a sin of presumption. Numbers 15:30 says, “But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” Why? “Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off.”

What is the sin of presumption? Do you remember how David prayed in Psalm 19? He said, “Keep me from the sin of presumption; let them not have dominion over me.” Here is the sin of presumption: Steve has a rifle. I like it. I want it. I ask him to sell it,

but he refuses. I ask him to give it to me, but he refuses. Yet I want that rifle, and I know when he is going to visit his relatives. I plan and premeditate, and while he is gone, I go in and steal it. Was that a sin of ignorance? No, that was presumption. I knowingly, willingly, premeditatedly violated God's law. God says that when you do that, you are despising His commandment. It is a sin of presumption.

Isaiah 5:24 speaks of Judah and Jerusalem. Isaiah 5:7 says, "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant." He is talking about Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem.

"Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." So when you pay no attention to the law of God, taking the law of God and putting it to one side, God says that is despising Him. You are not paying any attention to Him.

New Testament Warnings and the Principle of Honor

Someone may say, "But everything that you have just shown me is in the Old Testament." So far, yes. "Everything that you have just shown me usually referred to Israel or Esau or somebody like that." So far, yes. But may I remind you, the Old Testament is just as much the Word of God as the New Testament. We have one Bible, not two, and there is one God, not two. The same God who is the God of the Old Testament is also the God of the New Testament.

In Romans 15:4, the Apostle Paul writes: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime"—that is, the Old Testament, because the New Testament was then being written—"were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Now God says everything that happened to Israel, everything that happened in the Old Testament, all of that was written for our learning and our admonition. We had better make application and benefit from it.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, Paul 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." What is he talking about in verses 1 and 2? He is talking about the crossing of the Red Sea and the deliverance from Egypt.

Then verses 3 and 4 say, "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." So now we are talking about Israel during its Old Testament wanderings in the desert. Yet verse 5 says, "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

You remember all those people who died because they bellyached and complained and disobeyed God? Now look in verse 6: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." These things were our examples. There are many examples in the Bible, in the Old and New Testament, that we are to emulate. There are also examples that we are to stay as far away from as we possibly can.

He says, "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples—or examples—and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Everything that happened to them is for our benefit. We have to consider what God did in their lives.

There are warnings scattered throughout Scripture concerning despising God and His Word. Proverbs 1:29–31 says, "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel"—that is, they would have 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 they do? They despised all of God's counsel and all of God's reproof, all of His warnings. God says, "OK, you can eat the fruit of your own ways. You can be filled with your own devices. That's what you want. You can have it."

Proverbs 13:13 says, “Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.” I do not know about you, but I would rather be rewarded than destroyed. Whoever despises the word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth the commandment—and if you fear it, you will obey it—shall be rewarded. It is just that simple.

When my youngest grandson was about five or six years old, I asked him to do something, and he looked at me and said, “Papa, I don’t want to do it.” I said, “Son, I appreciate that. So I’ll give you a choice. You may either do it, or you may get a whipping and do it.” He looked at me and said, “Papa, I think I’ll just do it.” I said, “I think you’re a wise son.” That is what the Bible says. I would much rather be rewarded than punished.

Proverbs 19:16 says, “He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways”—that is, God’s way—“shall die.” God said, “If you keep my commandments, you’re keeping your own soul. If you’re despising my way, then you’re going to die.”

Now consider a general principle in 1 Samuel 2:30. God was speaking to Eli, who honored his sons above God. Hophni and Phinehas were so wicked that God killed them both in one day. The Lord said, “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.”

Verse 29 explains Eli’s offense: “Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?” God had said He would bless Eli and allow him to be His priest, but now He said, “Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and those that

despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Here is the principle: if we honor God, God is going to honor us.

If you keep the commandments, you will be rewarded; if you do not keep them, you will die, you will be punished—chastened, however God wants you. You say, "But I'm a Christian." May I remind you that the Bible says in 1 John chapter 5 that even for the child of God there is a sin unto death. Sure there is.

Is it any wonder that, for the most part, Christians' prayers are unanswered and their lives unblessed? Who wants to honor a dishonorable child? Who wants to bless a disobedient, hateful, impudent, arrogant, rebellious child? What father would look at his son and say, "Son, you've insulted me and your mother. You've stolen from me. You violated my confidence. You've done everything that I hate and despise. But, son, I'm going to buy you a new car"? Would you do that? Neither would I. Do you think God is going to do that? No.

"Those that honor me will I honor. Those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Listen to what God asked the priest in Malachi 1:6: "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?" God says, "You are despising me." We despise the name of God by holding Him in contempt, refusing to honor Him and obey Him, and counting His service and worship as absolutely vile and worthless.

Look at the average Christian. He will stay out of church for any reason in the world. I understand that many churches need to be stayed out of. But the average Christian, if he has a toeache, will stay out of church; or if he desires to go fishing, to the beach, or somewhere else, he will do it.

This is exactly what God is saying in Malachi chapter 1: We despise God by holding Him and counting Him as worthless and vile.

Hebrews 10:25 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Consider also 1

Thessalonians chapter 4, beginning with verse 1. This is a New Testament passage, and Paul is speaking to Christians: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."

Paul said that he had instructed them how to walk and please God, and his prayer was that they would do this more and more. Then he says, "For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus." These are commandments: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified." Verse 7 continues, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."

Despising God's Messengers Is Despising God

Then verse 8 makes the matter plain: "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit." Paul had told them what was biblical and right. If they despised it, they were not despising man; they were despising God, who had given them His Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is impossible to despise the Word of God without simultaneously despising the God who gave the Word. This text also makes clear that when we despise God, we despise the Holy Spirit He has given us.

Before making some applications, there is one more thought to connect with this. Look in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 36. We have already talked about despising God's Word and despising God. When we despise those who declare and teach His Word, we not only despise the messengers of God, but we despise God who sent the Word as well.

In 2 Chronicles 36:15, listen carefully and see this from Scripture: “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them”—that is, to His people—“by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place.”

When God has compassion upon a people, He sends them His preachers. He sends men who will teach His law and declare His Word. Verse 15 says, “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: but they”—that is, the people—“but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand.”

Look at verse 15: “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers”—that is plural. He sent more than one preacher. Then verse 16 says, “But they mocked the messengers”—plural—“but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his”—singular—“and despised his words.” Those are God's words.

They despised his words and misused his prophets—that is plural. All of the messengers and all the prophets were preaching and teaching God's word. When they rejected those messengers, they were despising his words. Unhappily today, so many people, like the Israelites of old, will stick their fingers in their ears and, like a little child, say, "I'm not listening. I'm not listening. I'm not listening." You are despising the Word of God.

Our Lord said this with his own mouth: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."

When we refuse to hear men who are declaring the truth of God, we are refusing to hear God who gave that truth. When you despise the man who preaches the word of God, you are despising Jesus Christ. When you despise Jesus Christ, you despise the Father who sent Christ.

Now, here is my question: Is it possible for a Christian to despise God? Yes. Is it possible for a believer to hold God in absolute contempt and count Him as vile and worthless? Yes—even while we profess to love Him, because of our disobedience.

This leads to the application: It is not just what we say that counts; it is how we live our lives. It is our attitude and our actions. "When a man walketh in his uprightness, he feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him." It is all a matter of how we live, whether we are obedient or disobedient.

The Severe Consequence: Sorer Punishment Under the New Covenant

Hebrews 10:28–29 says, “He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.” That is the law God gave through Moses. In the Old Testament, when a man sinned, there had to be a minimum of two witnesses for the death penalty. When a man was testified against by two or more witnesses, he died. The Bible says “without mercy,” because the law of God said, “If you do this, you're going to die.” It is just that simple.

“But,” the passage continues, “of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” Under the Old Testament, when there was limited knowledge and it was given in writing, a person died without mercy under two or three witnesses. How much sorer, or worse, punishment should we be thought worthy of now, since God has given the full and final revelation in Jesus Christ, and now we are trotting Him under our feet? We are counting Him as vile, worthless, and as a filthy rug, filing in covenant and doing despite to the Spirit of grace.

I tend to think that when we do things like that, it is like what God said to David when he committed adultery and murder. God was not well pleased; He was displeased. How can we expect the blessings of God in our lives if we are living dishonorably, treating Him with contempt, treating Him as though He is unholy and common, someone we can throw away and throw around at our leisure?

“He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.” Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, we confess our need of grace and mercy, and we

confess and acknowledge our sin. We have despised Thee so many times in so many ways, though Thou hast blessed us immeasurably. We do love Thee, Lord, but we are sinners, frail, and weak. Help us to be obedient, holy, and godly, and to bring our lives into greater conformity to Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 1: Richard Cameron
JW01084 | SermonAudio

Chapter 2: What it Means to Hate God
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Chapter 3: Why God Does Not Answer Most Prayers
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Chapter 4: The Marks of a True Christian
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Chapter 5: When God's People Become His Enemies
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Chapter 6: Christians Who Despise God
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Chapter 7: Grieving God
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Chapter 8: The Sin Every Christian Admits Daily
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Chapter 9: Leading Christ into Captivity
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Chapter 10: The Mark of a Tyrant
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Chapter 11: Christians Who Despise God
JW01432 | YouTube

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