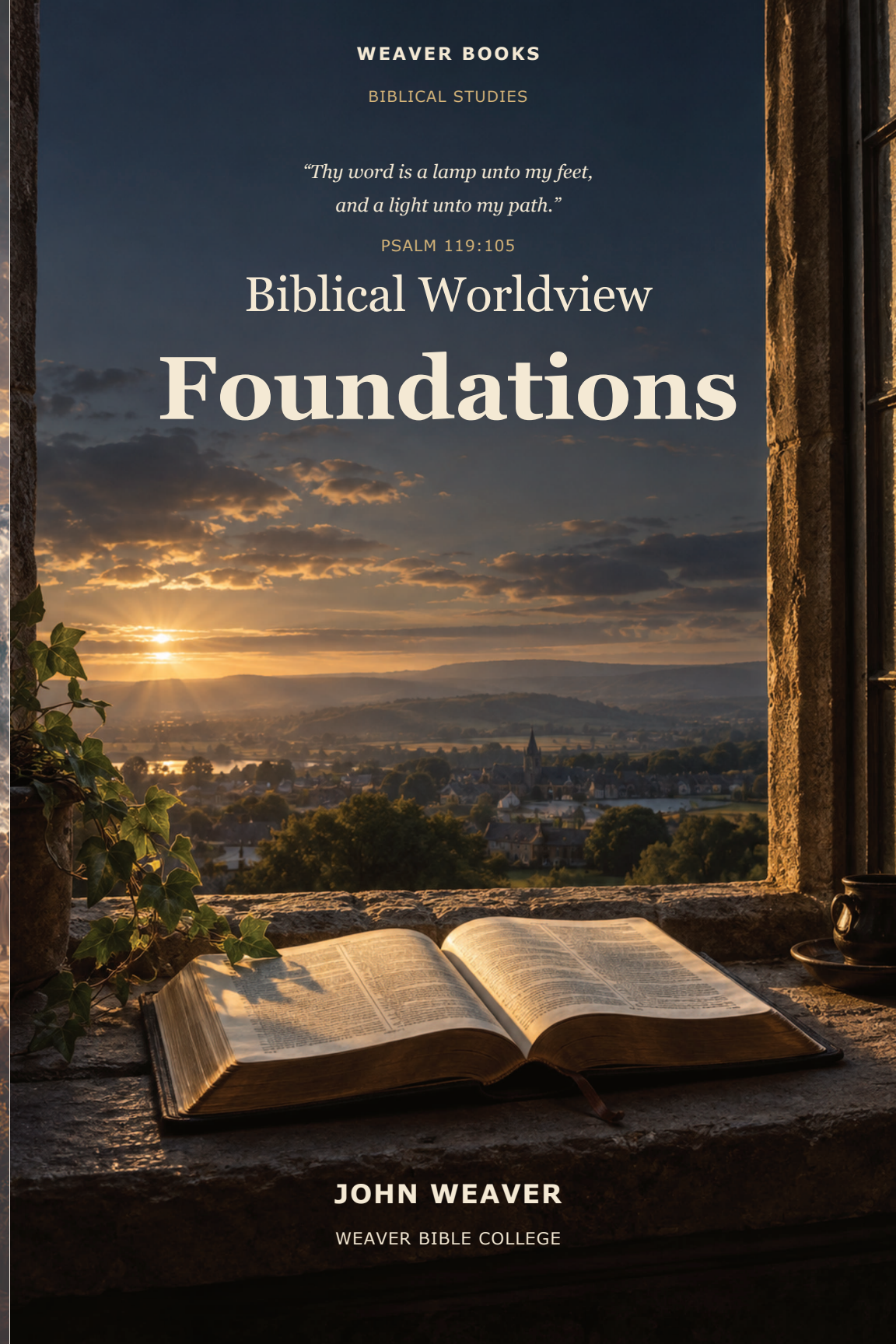
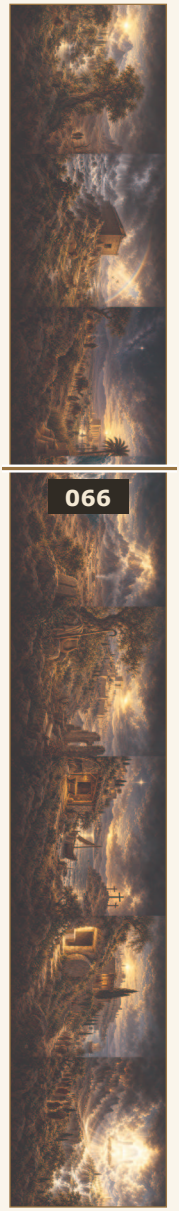

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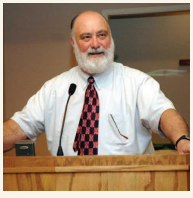
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JAMES 1:22, EXCERPT

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CHAPTER 1

The Duty of Forgiveness

October 23, 2011

The Duty and Obligation of Forgiveness

Introduction: Forgiveness as Duty

Look in Luke 17, beginning with verse 3. Our Lord says this: “Take heed to yourselves. If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him. And if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.” And the apostles said unto the Lord, “Increase our faith.”

Have you ever considered that forgiveness is not only an act of love and mercy, but it is also a duty and an obligation? We tend to think that we are merciful and loving toward others when we forgive them. Yes, that is true in one sense of the word, because we are told in 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 8, “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.” Notice what he said: love covereth a multitude of sins. Many times we overlook the sins, faults, and failures of our spouses, our

children, and our friends simply because we love them. We are not willing to take offense at their shortcomings.

There are no perfect spouses, no perfect children, and no perfect friends. All of us are sinners, and consequently there is a need for love for the continuation of a relationship, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Forgiveness is indeed an act of mercy on our part in one sense of the word, but it is more than that. It is a duty and an obligation, especially to our brethren. Look back at verse 3 again. Our Lord says, “Take heed to yourselves. If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him.” He continues, “And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.”

The interesting thing in verse 3 is that the command is, “Forgive him.” It is an imperative in the Greek, which means it is a command. Our Lord is not asking you to forgive; He is commanding you to forgive. In other words, you have no choice in the matter. God commands it. When you look at verse 4, He says that if he sins against you seven times in a day and seven times in a day turns to you and says, “I repent,” note what God says: “Thou shalt forgive him.” There are to be no qualms, no reservations, no hesitations, and no excuses. God said, “Forgive him,” and thou shalt forgive him.

So forgiveness then is the command that is plain and simple. And we're either obedient or we're disobedient in the matter.

Now, I want to share with you today just two simple points. I want to share with you a caution and a command. I don't particularly care whether you remember these two points, just so you remember the content of the two points. So let's look first of all at the caution. He begins in verse 3 and he says, "Take heed to yourselves." So here's a caution. Here is a warning. Our Lord says, take heed to yourselves. Well, ask yourself this question, why must I take heed to myself? Well, the answer is, or at least should be, obvious concerning the content and the context of the command.

The Caution: Take Heed to Yourselves

The natural tendency of man is to cherish ill feelings, to be angry, to be vindictive, to be bitter, resentful, churlish, hard-hearted, and unforgiving. Really and truly, many times we do not want to forgive. We want to hold the grudge. We want to cherish the anger and wallow in our self-pity and drown in the sense that we have been wronged. We want to take the attitude, "Woe is me, look upon me and see that I'm suffering because I have been wronged." And then we want to convey this simple attitude, "Everybody look upon me because I have been hurt." Did you know the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." What does that mean?

That means whatever trial that Roy falls into, I fall into. Whatever trial I fall into, Doc falls into. Whatever trial he falls into, Henry falls into. All of us have the common temptation. Yes, you are hurt and have been hurt, but then so have millions of other Christians. This is why he is saying take heed to ourselves. We cannot allow such attitudes of anger and bitterness and vindictiveness to fester in us and boil over into self-pity and hard-heartedness. We have to take heed that we act biblically, scripturally, and obediently. We must take heed that we bring our lives in conformity to the Word of God. We have to take heed that we honor our Lord in our times of grief and anger and hurt and disappointment.

Hurt, anger, and disappointment are real and genuine, and they affect us greatly. But they cannot take precedence over the plain command of God. Failure to take heed to ourselves is, in reality, a failure to fear the Lord, which means it is a sin.

Hold Luke 17, but look back in your Bibles to Malachi chapter 3, the last book in the Old Testament, and look at verse 5. God says, "And I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right. Now watch, 'and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.'" God is going to judge. Any of these things that you do in verse 5 means that you are not fearing God.

Notice one of them: turning the stranger away from his right. If it is a sin to turn a stranger away from his right, how much more is it a sin to turn a brother away from his right of forgiveness? We have been commanded in Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." We have an obligation to do good unto all men, but we have a special obligation to do good to the household of faith.

Our failure to forgive is an act of disobedience and rebellion to our Lord, for in failing to forgive, we fail to fear the Lord. Fearing the Lord is equated with obedience, and failure to fear the Lord is equated with disobedience. Therefore, failure to forgive and failure to seek forgiveness is indeed a willful disobedience.

Our Lord says in verse 3, "Take heed." Search those two words in your Strong's Concordance, or in an online concordance on your computer, and you will be absolutely astounded at how many times our Lord tells us that we are to take heed in certain areas. It is absolutely important that we understand the words "take heed" at this particular point. Hold Luke 17, but turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 6.

Our Lord says, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Our Lord tells us to take heed to ourselves in this particular area. Here it is in black and white. If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you. If you do not forgive men, then He will not forgive you.

Our Lord is not teaching salvation by works, nor is He teaching forgiveness by works. He is stating a very simple rule and a very simple principle. Everyone in this room has heard of the Golden Rule. Do you know where that rule comes from? It comes from Luke 6:31: “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.” Lord, however you want men to treat you, that is how you must treat other people as well.

God deals with us as we deal with others. There are two principles involved. The first is the law of sowing and reaping. The second is

the lex talionis, the law of retribution, where God makes the punishment fit the crime. This is how God deals with us. It is not only the law of sowing and reaping; it is also the lex talionis, the law of retribution. Scripture shows us that God deals with us as we deal with others and as we are.

Psalm 18:25–26 says, "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward." Isn't that interesting? You could also say, with a forgiving, thou shalt show thyself forgiving. You could also say, with the wicked or with the violent, you shall also show yourself violence.

In other words, God is going to make us reap that which we sow. God will always make the punishment fit the crime. That is why He said in Matthew 6 that if we want to be forgiven, then we must be forgiving ourselves. We must not only be willing to forgive; listen carefully, we must also be ready to forgive—not only willing, but ready. We have to develop a constant and continual attitude of forgiveness.

In this respect, we have to be like our Heavenly Father. The Bible says in Psalm 86 and verse 5, "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." Notice what the Scripture says: God is good, and He is ready to forgive. We are so unlike our Heavenly Father because we are so quick to cut people off, write them off, and say that they will never change.

Let me ask you a question. Suppose the next time you sin—which will be today—whether sins of omission or sins of commission, God simply cut you off, dropped you, and said, "He'll never change; I'll just write him off." Where would you be? Where would you be if God cut you off when you sinned?

You see, we have to be willing, ready, and able to forgive. I have heard people say, "But you don't understand how the Weaver. I have forgiven him, or I have forgiven her, so many times previously." Well, are you willing to receive forgiveness and unwilling to give forgiveness?

In Luke 17, our Lord says, “And if he, that is your brother, trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.” Some would think that seven times is sufficient. Peter asked our Lord, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother? Seven times?”

Our Lord says, no—seventy times seven. Seventy times seven is 490 times, which indicates not a number that I can count every time I forgive James, deciding that when I reach 491 I will never forgive him again. No. The number indicates that it is just the beginning. You continue to forgive. We should never stop forgiving.

Matthew 18, beginning with verse 21, says, “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” Now watch.

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 18:23-30 (KJV)

> Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

“So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered

him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

There are several principles to be gleaned from this passage. First, we are great debtors, and we have sinned against the Lord grievously. The first servant here represents us. This first servant owed his lord 10,000 talents. Take my word for it, that is a lot of money. I will show you how much money it was. It was an immense sum, because the Greek word myriad is the highest number known in the Greek arithmetical table.

A talent was a weight; it was a sum of money, silver or gold. A talent usually was 3,000 shekels. How much is that? Let me give you two quotes. R. W. Poole, in his commentary, said a talent was 6,000 denarii, or about 240 pounds. John Trapp said a talent is 600 crowns, and 10,000 talents is well nigh to 12 tons of gold.

If you took our tonnage, that is 24,000 pounds. Without going into the Troy ounce or the avoirdupois ounce, which are different, the Troy ounce had 12 ounces to the pound. "I have a watch of why" has 14 and 7 twelfths ounces to the pound. Ours had 16 ounces to the pound. If you were to take 15 ounces to the pound, and stop and think that gold is selling at $1,680—just say $1,700 an ounce—a pound of gold in our money today would be $25,500. Now multiply that by 12 tons, or 24,000 pounds. It is more money than it is. It is an awful lot of money.

The sum then is used to show how great a debt this servant owed his lord. It shows how great a debt we owe our Lord. Sin in the Bible is reckoned as a debt. You remember that passage, "the wages of sin is death." Why? Because sin is a debt, and our sins are numbered. We owe a certain debt. We are sinners not only by nature but by choice.

Each one of us has fallen short; we have failed, sinned, transgressed, disobeyed, and rebelled so often that it is almost impossible for us to reckon our disobediences. I like what one person said: "The calmness and peace of mind that most folks have in their old age comes from their own forgetfulness," and that is about the truth. We may have forgotten our sins, but God has not forgotten

them, and they are a debt. It is impossible for us to know the seriousness and greatness of the penalty owed for our sin, weakness, wickedness, and disobedience. Yet, by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in the Lord Jesus Christ, our debt has been paid, and we have been forgiven.

Have you ever stopped to think of how great our Lord's forgiveness really is? Why is it that we do not value, rejoice in, and glorify our Lord constantly for the forgiveness we have received? The answer is that we do not really realize the value, greatness, and worth of that forgiveness. If you ever saw the magnitude of your sins, the just desserts of your sins, and the worth of the redemption in Jesus Christ, you would begin to understand the value of His forgiveness.

Simon the Pharisee had our Lord in his home. A woman came to Christ, began to weep, and washed His feet with her tears and her hair. The Pharisee said concerning Christ, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." In other words, if Christ were a prophet, He would not let this woman near Him. Jesus answered Simon, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on."

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman?

I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same

loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. Our Lord said, “To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” If you do not have a proper estimation of your sins, and of the greatness, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, you will never praise and glorify Him for what He has done in your life. You have to understand the greatness of your sins in order to glorify and rejoice in God's so great salvation.

The truth is, we have never really seen how despicable, sinful, wicked, disobedient, and rebellious we are. You remember how Isaiah saw the glory of God in Isaiah chapter 6? What did he say? “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

This first servant in Matthew 18 typifies what we owe our Lord and how great a debt we owe Him. Secondly, this wicked servant, after he supposedly had been forgiven, went out and grabbed a fellow servant by the throat, saying, “Pay me that thou owest.” The man owed him a hundred pence, equivalent in our money to fourteen or twenty dollars. Here was a man who had been forgiven billions, yet he brutalized another man and threw him in prison for less than twenty dollars. This is the point our Lord is trying to make.

The man was willing to receive forgiveness for his great debt, but he was not willing to give forgiveness even for a small debt. If we ever understood the greatness of forgiveness, the greatness of God's forgiveness to us, we would never have any problems forgiving the sins of others, because the sins of others are so minute in comparison to our sins to God.

David committed adultery and murder. When he was confessing and acknowledging that sin in Psalm 51:4, David said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Did David sin against Bathsheba? Yes. Did he sin against Uriah? Yes. Did he sin against his family? Yes. Did he sin against the families of Bathsheba and Uriah? Yes. Did he sin against the nation? Yes. But his greatest sin was his sin against God.

All of our sins are primarily against God. Secondarily, they are against others. By comparison, the far greater sin is the sin against

God. If God is willing to forgive us the far greater sin, how could we be unwilling to forgive that which is the lesser sin? This is why our Lord begins with this warning, this caution: take heed to yourselves. You have been forgiven; you shall forgive.

Now let us look at the command. In Luke 17, we have seen the caution; now the command. He says in verses 3 and 4, "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." First of all, here is a command to rebuke. Suppose, for simplicity, that Joe sins against me. What am I to do? First of all, I am to rebuke him.

The Command to Rebuke

This applies if it is indeed a sin. Sin is a violation of the law of God. It does not mean that Joe has simply done something I do not like or agree with. If he violates God's law toward me, then I am to rebuke him. One of our problems is that all too often we are more than willing to rebuke, and we do so in the harshest terms and manner. Moreover, we like to rebuke constantly and continually. We keep heaping scorn and derision upon the one who has upset us and sinned against us.

We turn out to be like that Pharisee in Luke chapter 18 and verse 9, where our Lord spoke the parable: “He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” What we do, unhappily, is take the attitude, “I’m right. I’m righteous. I’ve been sinned against.” In our righteous indignation, we become the scorn and constant, continual ridicule of the one who has sinned against us. In so doing, we end up despising them.

Let me share the implications of the word rebuke. The Greek word is epitimao. It is translated in our Bibles as rebuke, charge, and straightly charge. It is also translated as honor. To honor upon: epi is the preposition meaning upon, and timao means to honor. How did that word come to mean rebuke?

When we rebuke someone biblically, we are honoring them by showing them honor in wanting them to act biblically and scripturally. We do not rebuke someone to hurt or harm him. We

rebuke him in honor and love, in order to help him. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

So here it is: sin. What do I do? I come to him to honor him and love him. I come to him in humility, considering that, if it were not for the grace of God, it would be me who had sinned, and it would be someone coming to me.

If you have to be rebuked, if you have to be confronted, how would you like to be confronted? How would you like to be rebuked? Would you like someone to come to you in a loving, kind, gracious, concerned, humble manner and point things out to you from the Scripture, showing you how you could change things and how things could be worked out? Or would you rather someone just come up to you and cuss you out and drop you?

The truth of the matter is this: in rebuking, we honor the individual. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Leviticus, chapter 19. Note verses 16 and 17. Look at what God says in Leviticus 19:16: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people."

If something is true, there is no need to repeat it unless the person to whom you are repeating it can be part of the solution. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people." Why would you be a gossiper? Why would you bear tales, whether they are true or untrue? God says, Do not do that. "Neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD."

Verse 17 says, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Why would you rebuke? Why would you come to someone to confront him in humility and love? Because you do not want to suffer sin upon him. You do not want to see him continue in sin, and you do not want him to be under the chastisement of God.

In other words, the goal in forgiveness is restoration. It is not bitterness, anger, and vindictiveness. Whenever we confront or rebuke someone, we must listen to what God says in 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 15: "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

If Henry does something wrong, I do not jump down his throat and cuss him out. James can handle that. No, if he does something wrong, I come to him and say, "Look, brother, here is where you are having difficulties; here is where it is not right with the scripture; here is where it needs to change." That is an act of love, honor, and concern, because I do not want to suffer sin upon him.

The Bible says in Matthew 18 and verse 15, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

If Henry does something that is a violation of God's law toward me, I do not go over to Dr. Bowen or Jim and tell them what Henry has done. I go to Henry privately. Have you ever stopped to think that Henry could be totally and completely innocent? It could be my misinterpretation of what he did or said; I could have misconstrued it. That's what Archie Bunker used to say.

He could not have meant anything bad by what he said or did. If I go to him privately and say, "Look, this is what happened," it gives him the opportunity to say, "But wait a minute, brother, I did not mean that at all. That is not the way that I meant that." Then I can say, "Well, I am glad to hear that."

Notice what God says: we are to go to him privately. We seek an explanation. It could be that we have misunderstood. If he has done wrong, our rebuke should be in humility and brotherly love. It should be done privately with the intent to forgive and restore. Our rebukes should never be in anger, frustration, and bitterness, with a desire to punish.

Secondly, the word rebuke is an aorist active imperative in the Greek. An imperative is a command, and the aorist tense means that something happens one time. In other words, if Henry sins, I go to him one time and rebuke him in love. If we speak the truth clearly and distinctly, there should be no need to rehash everything over and over. Once I have rebuked him, I have fulfilled my responsibility biblically.

I would hope, pray, and want there to be immediate repentance. But if there is not, the only thing I can do is pray and wait upon the

Lord to work in his heart. It does absolutely no good to rehash, rework, reword, or rethink everything that has happened. Such worry, mental anguish, heartbreak, and disappointment only serve to wear us down and drown us in sin, disobedience, and despair. Hopefully, repentance will be immediate. Sorrow or an expression of repentance should be expressed. We are to look for and listen for repentance.

How do we know whether someone has repented? Henry has sinned against me, so I come to him privately, rebuke him in love, and show him from Scripture where he sinned against me. He may say, "Pastor, I'm sorry. I would never have done that for anything in the world to hurt you. Please forgive me." That is what I am looking for. Perhaps he says, "I repent. I will not do that anymore." That is what I am looking for. But how do I know he is repentant? How do I know he is truthfully and really sorry?

First of all, all I can do is take his word. I cannot see into his heart or read his mind. If he tells me, "I repent," what does Scripture say? Forgive him. That is it. All he has to say is, "I repent." Forgive him. I have his word. However, after that, I can begin to look for fruits of repentance.

In Matthew 3:8, John the Baptist told the Pharisees to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Literally, "meet" means bringing forth fruit evidencing repentance—fruit that manifests repentance. Simply stated, if one genuinely and truly repents, then sooner or later there will be fruit that evidences that repentance. The Apostle Paul said the same thing in Acts 26:20.

Here is what Paul said: "...but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Do works that evidence and manifest repentance. After Henry says, "I repent," in the coming weeks, months, and year, I can look for fruit. It will be there if he has repented. Obviously, there will be fruit.

Let me give you a caution. Do you realize that it takes time to produce fruit? There is not a person in this room who can go out tomorrow, plant a garden, and harvest it the next day. It is

impossible. Our Lord said it this way in Mark 4:28: “For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” It takes time for that seed to sprout, mature, and produce fruit.

What is true physically is also true spiritually. You are not going to say, “I repent,” and then, within fifteen minutes, begin looking for fruit. It will take time for that fruit to manifest and evidence itself. So here is the command to rebuke. Remember, if you would, that the word rebuke also means to honor. It is also an aorist, which means we do it once. I do not have to keep rehashing it, dragging it out, and turning it over and over in my mind. That kills me.

If Henry did sin against me, and I rebuked him, but he did not repent, what can I do about it? There are other steps, but I cannot make him repent or make him do what is right. We are shut up then to God’s mercy and grace.

Notice one more thing in Luke 17. He said in verse 3, “Take heed to yourselves.” That is the caution. Here is the command: “If thy brother trespass against thee,” first rebuke him, and then, if he repent, forgive him. The word repent basically means a change of mind that results in a change of conduct. If I am walking eastward and repent, I turn and begin walking westward. Thus, when we look for fruit, if Henry has changed his mind, there will eventually be a change in his conduct. Here is the next command: forgive. He said, “If he repent, forgive him.”

The Command to Forgive

The word that is so easily pronounced, so often misunderstood, and usually never applied at all in a biblical manner is forgiveness. What does it mean when you look at someone and say, “I forgive you”? Hopefully, it means the same thing that Scripture means. But in all probability, that is not the case.

The Nature of Biblical Forgiveness

The little Greek word for forgive is aphiemi, and it literally means to send or to go away. It is the main word used for forgiveness in the New Testament. There are a few other words, but this is the main

and most frequently used one. If you look up forgive in Strong's Analytical Concordance, under the Greek word aphiemi, you find these definitions: to send away; to bid going away or depart; of a husband divorcing his wife; to send forth; to yield up; to expire; to let go; to let alone; to let be; to disregard; to leave; not to discuss; to omit; neglect; to give up; to let go; to give up a debt; forgive; to remit; to keep no longer; to give up a thing or a person; and to leave or go away from one place to another.

The idea is that once you have granted forgiveness, the sin, the offense, the stumbling block, and the source of the hurt are gone. You send them away. You divorce them. You omit them. You allow them to die. They are never to be brought up again. We are not to think about them or speak about them, and we cease holding them against the person whom we have forgiven.

Our Lord says in verse 3, "If he repent, forgive him." This is exactly the same forgiveness that we receive from the Father. In Luke 11:4, He taught His disciples to pray, "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Forgive us our sins as we forgive others.

First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is God's forgiveness, and it is exactly the same forgiveness that we are to give to others. I do want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 4, and let us begin reading at verse 30.

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." How do we grieve the Holy Spirit of God? By disobedience, by sin, and by not conforming our lives to His Word. That is why Scripture says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Ephesians 4:31-32 says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, 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."

There are two very important words in verse 32: even as. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as"—that is, equal to the way—"God for Christ's sake hath forgiven

you." So when we forgive, we are to forgive the way that God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us. Our forgiveness must be like unto His forgiveness.

Once we have been forgiven in Christ, God has forgotten our sins. He blots them out. He does not use them against us. He does not endeavor to manipulate us with our sins. He does not browbeat us with our sins. He does not attempt to bribe us with our sins. He removes them, never to remember them against us anymore.

Psalm 103:12 says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." What does God do when He forgives us? He removes our transgressions. In Isaiah 43:25, God says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." God says He blots them out; He does not remember them. Isaiah 44:22 says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Notice: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions."

Jeremiah 31:34 says, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." The same is repeated in the book of Hebrews: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more."

When we forgive, we must do likewise. We must remember the sin no more. God is omniscient; God knows everything. Theologically, God could never forget our sins because He knows everything. He is not only omnipotent; He is omniscient. But God chooses not to hold them against us, not to use them against us, and not to remember them against us. Our forgiveness should be likened to God's.

So Henry has sinned against me. I have gone to him and rebuked him. He has repented, and I say to Henry, “I forgive you.” What does that mean? It means the incident that transpired between us is over and done and gone. It is dead.

I may not have the power to erase what happened from my mind and memory, but I do have the power not to continue thinking about it if it enters my mind. I can purposely and deliberately put it out of my mind. I do not have to think on something just because it enters into my mind. You can only think of one thing at a time. So if that

incident pops into my mind, I say, "Lord, that's been forgiven; that's over; that's done with. I won't even waste my time thinking about that." Then I purposely put my mind somewhere else. As the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." So I purposely put my mind somewhere else.

What if that incident comes back fifteen minutes later? I put it out and put something else on my mind, because it is over and done with. I not only have the power to refuse to think about it and dwell upon it; by the grace of God, I also have the power not to speak about it. How many times does God remind you of the sins He has forgiven? He does not. The devil might, your flesh might, your own memory might, but God does not. We have to have the power not to speak of those sins.

The Bible says in Proverbs 21:23, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles." Haven't we said, "I wish I'd never said that"? When I forgive Henry, it is wiped out of my mind. If it comes back, I refuse to think about it and refuse to speak about it.

If the memories, anguish, heartache, and hurt still haunt you, and you cannot refrain from speaking about those incidents, that is proof positive that you have never really forgiven. If you truly, genuinely, biblically forgive, it is over and done with. You do not allow it to cloud your mind, and you do not allow yourself ever to speak about those things again.

Forgiveness is not only a grace, an act of mercy, and an act of love. It is also a duty and an obligation, because God has commanded us to forgive our brethren.

Applications of Forgiveness

One of the greatest incentives to forgiveness is understanding that God, in His righteousness, will treat us the way we treat others. In Matthew 6:14–15 He says, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses,

your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." If we wish to be forgiven, we must forgive.

We should always be ready, willing, and eager to forgive strangers. If we are willing to forgive strangers, we are to do good unto all men. How much more should we be willing, ready, and eager to forgive our brethren and our own family? The Bible says in 1 Timothy 5:8—now listen carefully.

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." We owe our families spiritual truth and spiritual wealth as equally as we owe them physical sustenance. We're obligated, duty bound to forgive our brethren and our family. Forgiveness is the real ground of restoration and the continuation of fellowship. There cannot be any fellowship apart from forgiveness.

As forgiveness is found in our Heavenly Father, it should also be found in us. Psalm 130, verse 4 says, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." As forgiveness is found in the Lord, it should also be found in us. We must be found with forgiveness in order that we may be found faithful to Christ, faithful to His Word, faithful to his people and faithful to our families.

Love does cover a multitude of sins. But what love does not cover, forgiveness should. God has commanded that if we are sinned against, we rebuke our brother and, if he repent, then we are obligated to forgive him. Have you forgiven anyone lately? Is there anyone that you know that wants your forgiveness? Has anyone forgiven you? Do you need forgiveness? Are you seeking forgiveness? It's only in forgiveness that fellowship, communications can be restored. God said, if your brother repent, thou shalt forgive him.

Our repentance is based upon God's grace. If God gives grace to repent, then we should be willing to forgive. Forgiveness is not only an act of love and mercy. It's a command. It's a duty. It's an obligation. If you and I ever realized the greatness of our sin, the greatness of our debt, and the greatness of the personal work of Christ, we would have no problem forgiving others for such minute acts against us.

As our Lord said, freely as you have received, freely give. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we thank You for Your love. We thank You for Your grace and Your mercy. And Lord, we do ask that You would teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, make us, Lord, forgiving, loving and kind and gracious. And yet, Lord, may we stand by the principles of Thy Word in the totality of our lives and make us what we should be. We ask in the name of Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and Savior, in whose name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 2

Perfecting Holiness Part 2 of 5 - God as Father

November 28, 2012

Review of Holiness and the Promises

2 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 1, and we're on part 2 on this brief series, perfecting holiness. Notice, if you would please, verse 1 of chapter 7 of 2 Corinthians. The apostle writes, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." You remember I told you last week that when the Apostle said, "having therefore these promises," these promises refer back to 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 14 through 18. But the Apostle says, "let us perfect holiness in the fear of God." You remember I told you the word holiness literally means to be set apart. There is a negative and there is a positive concerning holiness. Negative, if you look in 2 Corinthians 6 and verse 17, our Lord says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." So the negative aspect of

holiness is that we are separated from sin and wickedness and ungodliness.

The positive sense of holiness is that we're separated unto God and the gospel. Because in Romans 1 and verse 1, the Apostle Paul called himself a slave of Jesus Christ and the servant of Jesus Christ. And the word servant there literally means slave. So negatively, holiness means we're set apart from sin. And positively, we're set apart to God.

Now, I also mention to you that 2 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 1 has absolutely nothing to do with what we would call positional holiness. Positional holiness is the work of God. It is something that God the Father has done when He set us in Jesus Christ. Positionally, we cannot get any more holy than we already are because we have been clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But when you look at 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 1, He says, "having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves." So here he's referring to a practical holiness. That is something that you and I must apply and work on in our daily lives. And remember if you would, and let me just read it for you, I quoted last week Romans chapter 6 and verse 19 as an example of practical holiness.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh, for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." Here is a practical aspect: as you used to yield your members willingly, knowingly, and premeditatedly to sins and wickedness, now you willingly, knowingly, and premeditatedly yield your mind and the members of your body to righteousness unto holiness.

Likewise, Peter wrote, "as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." On the one hand, if we are obedient children, we will not fashion ourselves according to the former lusts of our ignorance. But here is the positive: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." Scripture also tells us that we are to follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Although practical holiness revolves around our duty, responsibility, and obligation, this does not mean that we can perform it on our own. Our Lord said, "without me you can do nothing." We must have the grace, power, and mercy of God as we apply ourselves to practical holiness.

The First Promise: God Dwelling in His People

When we ended last week, we were considering the promises—the two promises revealed in 2 Corinthians chapter 6: "having therefore these promises, dearly beloved." In verse 16 is the first promise: "and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." That was the first promise, and we dealt with it thoroughly. We ended with the second promise, in verses 17 and 18 together.

The Second Promise: God as Father

He says, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

The second promise relates to God as our Father and to the fact that we are the sons and daughters of God. I went through fifteen or twenty passages, showing that practically every time in the New Testament the Apostle Paul greeted believers, he said something like this: greetings, salutations, or blessings from God our Father and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He emphasized that God was not only the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, but our Father as well. He is our Father by virtue of regeneration, adoption, and redemption.

God as Father Means He Begat Us

The question we must consider is this: What is the significance of having the sovereign, supreme, majestic God of heaven and earth as our Father? How should the realization that God is our Father motivate and encourage us to practical holiness? One of the sub-points under considering the promises, as God is our Father, is the fact that if God is our Father, it means that He begat us.

Scripture says, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.” Again and again, Scripture shows how God is our Father. The whole significance of this is that if God is our Father, and we are His children, we must act like His children.

Since Henry and Janet were not here last week, could anybody look at the Klinger children and not know that they were the children of Henry and Janet? Could anybody look at Tripp and Lacey and not know that they were Dean and Rebecca’s children? Children look like their parents. They act like their parents. They walk and talk like their parents, and their attitudes are like their parents’ attitudes.

If God is our Father, our attitude should be like His attitude. We should walk and talk like Him. The reason many people do not want to address God as Father is that, by doing so, we acknowledge that we are His children. Therefore, there is a moral obligation, duty, and responsibility to act like His children.

God as Our Provider

God as Father Means He Provides for Us

If you will separate yourself from sin and wickedness, and separate yourself unto Me, God says, “I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.”

Secondly, if God is our Father, He is our provider. He makes provision for the nursing, nourishment, and raising of His children. The children do not provide for themselves; the Father provides for them.

I remember as a young man that I could not wait to get out from my father’s house so I could do what I wanted to do. When I got out, I found that I could not do what I wanted to do; I had to do what I had to do. After those first bills started coming in, I thought, What a fool I was. When I lived with Dad, he paid for everything. All I had to do was obey. Now that I am out and away, I have to pay for everything, and it is not so simple anymore.

My father provided for us. The Father is always responsible for the upbringing and health of His children. In 2 Corinthians 12:14,

the Apostle Paul writes, “Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you.” Then he says, “For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.” Thus God, as our Father, does indeed nourish and provide for us.

The problem is that, unhappily, even our Father’s children sometimes rebel against Him and refuse to acknowledge His provision. In Isaiah 1:2, God says, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” He continues, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” Often, we rebel against Him.

But consider Acts 14:17 concerning His gracious provision and providence: “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

So God our Father has providentially provided for us in every way and in multitudinous ways. Have you ever thought about exactly how much our Father provides for us? Consider the fact that if He did not provide air, food, and water, we would cease to exist. God provides the basics of life, but He also provides more than the basics of life. Oftentimes, He allows us to enjoy life to the fullest by supplying not only our needs, but a multitude of our wants as well. He knows exactly what we need.

In Matthew 6, verses 7 and 8, our Lord says, "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them. For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

Isn't that amazing? We do not have to be like the heathen or use vain repetitions. We do not have to beg and beseech and wail and whine and complain and gripe. We simply ask, because our Father knows what we have need of even before we ask. This passage very clearly illustrates and demonstrates that God, our Father, is ready, willing, able, and even desirous to supply our needs. Has it ever entered into your mind that our Heavenly Father wants to provide for you? He is not only able to do so, but He longs to do so. Why? He

is your Father, and you are His child. We simply need to know that we should ask because He already knows our needs and our wants as well.

I particularly love that verse in Psalm 81, verse 10, where God told the children of Israel, "I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." It is just like those little baby birds: they open their mouths wide, and those mothers and dads stuff as many worms as they can down those little birds' beaks.

I have watched them do it innumerable times. God says, “I am your heavenly Father. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.” Look at Matthew 7:11: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, do you not give good gifts to them? And you are a sinner. In one passage our Lord says, if a child asks for an egg, will he give him a stone? If he asks for a piece of bread, will he give him a scorpion? The answer is no. As evil and sinful as you and I are, we still want to give good gifts to our children and grandchildren.

Our Lord said, if you are evil and know how to do that, do you not believe that your Heavenly Father knows how to give good gifts to them that ask Him? I suppose one of the joys of being a father and grandfather is being able to give to your children and grandchildren. I know there are times when it is impossible to give to them. Alice and I have lived through some of those times. But it is indeed a joy to give and supply their needs, even sometimes before they are aware of them. If you and I enjoy providing for our children and grandchildren and giving good things to them, is not our Heavenly Father far greater than we are?

And He is without sin. He is infinitely holy and righteous. And if we sinful creatures enjoy doing those things, how much more shall our Heavenly Father give to us? Greater than any earthly father. One of my favorite passages, and of course I guess I have so many of them, everybody asks me sometimes, well, what is your life verse? Well, I've got one passage that I kind of picked out, but when I get

asked what is my favorite passage of Scripture, I'm dumbfounded, because I like so many of them, but one of my favorites is James 1 and verse 17. Listen to this.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from our Heavenly Father. We need to learn to acknowledge that everything that we are and everything that we have is from Him. Moreover, we need to learn to acknowledge that everything we ever shall have, and everything that we ever shall be, is from Him. If you'll look in your Bibles to Psalm 34, several passages here, just showing you how God the Father provides. Look in Psalm 34, beginning there with verse 8. Psalm 34 and verse 8. The Bible says, "O taste and see that the LORD is good."

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing." In other words, God is going to provide. Then if you'll turn right over to Psalm 37 and look at verse 25. Psalm 37 verse 25. David made this statement. David said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." I've been young and now I'm old. Yet I've never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. You know why? Because in Hebrews 13 and verse 5, he said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And if you will turn right over to Isaiah 40. Isaiah 40. I want you to look at one of the prophecies concerning Christ. Isaiah 40. And look, if you would, please, at verse 11. In fact, we can read verse 10, just to show you this is in reference to the one true and living God.

Isaiah 40, verse 10: "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." We're talking about Christ. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." In other words, He is going literally to take care of us in every way whatsoever.

He has not only provided for us in time and in history; He also provides for us in eternity. In 1 Peter 1, verse 4, the Scripture says, "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." The Father has laid up for His children. In Revelation 7, verse 17, we read, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

So if God is our Father, that means He is the One that provides for us. You know what most children do? Most children take the provision from their father and mother for granted. We get it every day. We likewise take God's provisions for us for granted. We take it for granted that we're going to live through the night, wake up the next day, and have food and money. So often we refuse to thank our Father for His provision—our earthly Father, as well as our heavenly Father. The one true and living God said, if you will separate yourself from evil and wickedness, and you come to Me, I'll be a Father unto you.

God as Father Means He Protects Us

God will provide for you. There is no one who can provide like God the Father. Henry may be rich, but God owns everything. Ed may have plenty of money, but he does not have as much as God does. Who can provide like God? We need Him, and we should want Him as our Father. If we understand that God is our provision and that He is our Father, then we should be very careful to do those things that please Him and not offend Him. A father is always willing to provide for an obedient child. It is only when the child becomes recalcitrant, rebellious, and mean that the father withdraws his giving hand and extends the chastening hand.

If God is our Father, He is not only our provider; He is also our protector. A father will always protect, defend, and shield his children from hurts, injuries, and abuses. He will vindicate their cause against all enemies and make it clear to those enemies that, if they interfere with his children, it will be to their own peril.

I like what Nathan Bedford Forrest told Braxton Bragg: “If you ever interfere with me again, it will be at the peril of your own life.”

That is basically what God tells the enemies. Deuteronomy 32:9 says, “For the LORD’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” Verse 10 continues: “He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.”

The apple of the eye is the pupil of the eye. Since the pupil is the most sensitive area, it has to be constantly and consistently protected. Do you know what David prayed in Psalm 17:8? Here is David, the mighty warrior, and this is what he prayed: “Keep me as the apple of the eye.”

"Hide me under the shadow of thy wings." He wanted to be protected. As you and I would protect our eyes, he wanted God to protect him. In fact, God went ahead and warned the nations in Zechariah 2 and verse 8. Let me just read it rather than you turn there. God said this: "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." Again, God warned them, you touch My people, I'll touch you. Again, God warned in 1 Chronicles chapter 16 and verse 22, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." He repeated that warning in Psalm 105 in verse 15: "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

Have you ever called upon your heavenly Father for protection? Have you ever considered that He's big enough, strong enough, and able and willing to protect you?

I remember my earthly Father. I've only seen Him ready to fight twice in my life, and I've never forgotten either one of those times. One of those times was when my sister and I went to a dentist. My sister was probably six or seven, and I was probably about five. Dad asked the dentist, "Do you want me to stay in here with you because they're children?" The dentist said, "No, I can take care of it." And so Dad went outside and sat in the waiting room. When Barbara got into the dentist chair, being a child, she was scared.

She started crying and wailing, and of course it scared me. And you know what the dentist did? So help me. Instead of trying to calm her down, he took his hand, pinched her nose, and put his hand over her mouth. He was going to smother her into submission. When I

saw that, I really got scared and started screaming. My father, I guess, heard me. I thought he was going to come in because he thought maybe he'd help the dentist. But when he opened that door, he saw that dentist smothering my sister. So help me, my father went over and took that man with one hand and held him up against the wall. He said, "If you ever touch my children again, I'll kill you." Then he dropped him, took us, and left.

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 15:1-10 (KJV)

Now, what was Dad doing? Was he wrong? I don't think so. Consequently, I never went to a dentist for a long time after that, which pleased me well. But I'm just saying, Dad did that. Fathers always protect their children. When my girls went hunting, I'd put them up trees and I may be 500 yards from them, and my instructions were this: if any man comes to this tree and tries to bother you, you shoot him. And I'll question him when I get there. Why? I wanted my children protected.

Have you ever thought that God protects us? Did you know the Bible says in Proverbs 18 and verse 10, that the name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe? Have you ever thought about that? Do you remember how God delivered the children of Israel from Pharaoh, and how He drowned Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea? Look at what the children of Israel did after they were protected by God:

"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song; and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

"And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath,

> which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Here is absolute praise and worship for God's protection. How many times have you thanked God for His protection in your life? Alice and I recently were coming home from Alabama. We were cutting through Alabama, in Henry's old stomping grounds. Right before we reached Henry's home area, we were traveling down the road at 60 miles an hour. All of a sudden, we saw a car shoot across the road in front of us, probably doing 70 miles an hour. He had run the stop sign. We were probably 100 yards back. My mouth fell open, and I looked at Alice.

I said, "Did you see that? That man just ran through the stop sign, probably 70 miles an hour." When we got there, I slowed down and we looked to the right. He was about 100 yards down the road, standing beside it. Maybe it scared him too; I do not know, but it scared me. I told Alice, "We need to be thankful that God protected us." I do not know how—maybe that red light was just 30 seconds longer or something—but we were not there to be hit when that man ran that stop sign. God has protected us so many times, and we do not even acknowledge it. We do not even think about it.

Our Heavenly Father is the protector, the defender, and the preserver of His people. David makes this truth very prominent. In Psalm 7:10 he says, "My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart." My defence is of God. In Psalm 18:2, David ascribes this greatness and power to God: "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."

All of those things are objects of protection. In Psalm 27:1, David says, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." Notice what he is saying: God is my protection.

In Psalm 31:2, David prays, "Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me." In Psalm 59:9 he says, "Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence." God is my defence.

Psalm 89:18 uses the plural: "For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king." Psalm 94:22 says, "But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge."

Psalm 140 is a wonderful Psalm. Verse 6 says, "I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD. O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." What was God doing? Protecting and preserving.

Isaiah 12:2 says, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.” Notice the words, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid.” I remember when Wendy, our oldest, was two or three years old. She was afraid of the dark, so I taught her this verse. You could hear her walking down the dark hall saying, “I will trust and not be afraid. I will trust and not be afraid,” until she got to the light switch.

This is exactly what God says: “I will trust and not be afraid.” Look at Isaiah 33, beginning in verse 14: “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high. His place

of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure."

If I had time to multiply these passages, I could show you practically in every book of the Bible where God is our defence and our protector. If God does not protect us, then we are not protected. If He does not defend us, we are not defended. If we obey Him, He has promised to keep us safe from harm and from our enemies. He has promised us victory over our enemies. In Deuteronomy 28:7 He says, "The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways." If we obey and trust in Him, when our enemies attack, our Lord will give us the victory and make it short and sweet. There is no victory apart from God fighting for us. Leviticus 26:8 is important as well.

He says, "And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword." You stop and think: five chasing a hundred, and a hundred chasing ten thousand. Joshua told his people in Joshua 23 and verse 10, "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you." So when God fights, when God fights for us, one man is able to chase a thousand. Why? Because God is not only our provider; He is our protector. I do not care what weaponry the enemy has. I do not care how advanced their technology is. They cannot overcome the sovereign God of heaven and earth, and they cannot succeed in their rebellion against Him when He fights to protect His children.

God as Father Means He Is Our Portion

Here is the fourth thing today, but the third thing I am giving you: if God is our Father, He not only begat us, He not only provides for us, and He not only protects us; He is our portion. He is all that we need, and He is able to satisfy every heart and every desire. We are to find our solace, satisfaction, and security in Him.

Look in Psalm 16. David said, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot." Notice: the LORD is the portion of mine inheritance. Turn over to Psalm 73,

verse 26. David says, “My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” Notice how many times he refers to God as his portion. In Psalm 119, verse 57, he says, “Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.” Wow! Thou art my portion, O LORD. In Psalm 142, verse 5, David says, “I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.” Wow.

It is not just David who understood that the Lord is our portion. Jeremiah 10:16 says—

He talks about the false gods and says, "The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name." Once again, He is called the portion. Lamentations 3:24 says, "The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." All through Scripture, God is called our portion. What does it imply when the Bible says that God is our portion? We understand that He is our provider, our begetter, and our protector. But what does it mean when He says that God is our portion? David specifically said that He is our portion in this life.

First of all, with God as our portion, it implies intimacy with God. Think for a moment about your earthly father. Do you remember special times, events, or personal moments with your earthly father that were intimate in the sense that they would not have happened with anyone else? I could tell you many things, but I will tell you one that has stuck in my mind forever. When I was a little boy, one of my favorite television shows was The Lone Ranger.

Clayton Moore, Jay Silverheels' Tonto—I do not know if you remember this—came on, I believe, at seven o'clock at night, once a week. The program always began with the William Tell Overture. At that time of night, my father was lying on the couch. When the program came on and the overture started playing, I would run, dive on him, and jump on his chest. The music and the program excited me, and we would wrestle until the program actually started.

Why would something like that stand out in your mind? Because it was an intimate time. He was hugging me, I was hugging him; we were laughing and playing. All I am trying to show you is this: if God

is our portion, it means that there are times of intimacy in our lives—times we have with our Heavenly Father that are special in our lives.

Do you know what eternal life is? Listen carefully. Eternal life is not merely living forever. Does that shock you? If eternal life meant only living forever, the unsaved would have it as well, because they are going to live forever in torment. But you know what eternal life is? It is intimacy with God the Father. Watch it in John 17, verse 3.

In John 17, verses 1 through 3, we read the high priestly prayer of our Lord: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." He tells you what eternal life is. Our Lord defines eternal life as personal, intimate fellowship with our Heavenly Father. Knowing Him is life, for He is life. Would you say that there was intimacy between God the Father and God the Son?

In Mark 14, verse 36, our Lord is in the garden praying: "And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." Notice what He said: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee." The Hebrew word Abba can be translated Papa. Papa is a term of intimacy and endearment. Our Lord called His heavenly Father Papa. That is a familiar term, and it shows familiarity and intimacy.

Romans 8:15 says, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Just as our Lord referred to His heavenly Father as Papa, we have received the Spirit whereby we cry, Papa, Father.

Galatians 4, verses 4 through 7, says: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

The word Abba means Papa; it is a term of intimacy and endearment. John the Apostle wrote, “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.” What is eternal life? It is intimate fellowship with the Father through Jesus Christ. One does not receive eternal life when he dies; he has it now. If you do not have it now, you probably will not have it when you die either, because eternal life is intimate fellowship with the Father through Jesus Christ. If you dislike fellowship with the Father now, you surely would not like it in eternity. If God is our portion, it signifies that we have intimacy with Him. Secondly, if God is our portion, it signifies paternal care.

How many of you have left your little children by themselves? You just leave them alone. Nobody does that, at least not anybody who has an ounce of sense and could care for their children. By the way, if you haven't read it, Greece is so bad—I just read this week—that parents are dumping their children in the streets because they're unable to provide for them and take care of them, and just leaving them.

But a loving father does not leave his child alone. A loving father will rebuke and chasten and discipline his child. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 11, "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children." Do you realize when exhortation fails, there's always the rod? Do you realize if we would listen to our Father, we would not be chastened? One of those passages in 1 Corinthians 11, verses 31 and 32, ought to really be glued into your mind: "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."

God said if we would look to our own sins and rectify them and repent of them, we would not be judged of Him. But when we fail to repent, He chastens us that we might not be condemned with the world. That's why He said in Micah 6 and verse 9, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

Just like a father, when he exhorts, if the child listens, there's nothing else needed. When he does not listen, then the rod comes

out. Hebrews 12, verses 5 through 8, says, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children." Here is the exhortation: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Furthermore, "we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

So what is he saying? Our heavenly Father is going to make sure that we are brought up right. He will discipline us. That is why, in Revelation 3:19, our Lord said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." So if you can sin and get by without being rebuked and without being chastised, something is wrong in your life, because the Father chastens all of His children.

Thirdly, since God is our portion, it implies that we shall most certainly be victorious, and that we will inherit all that He has for us. In light of all the discouragement, despondency, and downheartedness that prevails in Christendom today, I have news for you. The Bible says in Luke 12:32, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And we are going to get it. It does not matter.

According to Galatians 3:29, who is the true seed of Abraham? Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:16 says the same, and verse 29 confirms it. God gave Abraham that little piece of land, but He did not just give him that little piece of land. He gave everything to the true Seed, who is Jesus Christ, just as Abraham gave everything to Isaac and sent the others away. This shows what all we are going to get.

Now consider 1 Corinthians 3:21: "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." How much do we have? Everything. Now, let us look at Romans chapter 8 and watch this.

Romans 8:16–17. Watch carefully. Beginning with verse 14: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” God is our Father. He is also the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

What do we receive as the sons and daughters of God? If children, then heirs—heirs of God. God is our portion; we receive everything about Him. We are also joint heirs with Christ.

How much did God the Father give Jesus Christ? Everything. A joint heir means that both have everything. If we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, everything that Jesus Christ has, we have. What God gave to Christ, He gave to us as well. No wonder the Apostle Paul says that we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us. How can we fail to conquer when we have everything? We have already won; the victory is already in Jesus Christ. Our portion, then, is our God. He is the portion of His people. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Application: Living as Sons and Daughters

How are we to apply this? If God is my Father, if He begat me, provides for me, protects me, and is my portion, everything I have and everything I am is in Him. Therefore, I must please Him and do as He commands, for He is my all in all. What else would I need? Nothing. Consider the promise in 2 Corinthians 6:18: “and I will be a father unto you.”

"And ye shall be my sons and daughters." I desperately want God to be my Father. By that I mean I want Him to be everything to me that He wants to be as my Heavenly Father. If I want Him to be everything to me that He could be and should be as my Heavenly Father, it must also mean that I want to be, should be, and could be everything to Him that I can be as His Son. My life is to be one of practical holiness because God is my Father.

I separate myself from sin and separate myself to Him, and find out what it means to have God as my Father.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We ask Your protection, Your blessing, and Your provision. Lord, that You would be our portion, that You would be everything to us. And Lord, help us to be everything to Thee. May we, Father, be as holy and as godly and as righteous as we can be by Your grace and mercy. May we give Thee the honor and the glory. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Perfecting Holiness Part 3 of 5 - Sins of The Flesh

November 28, 2012

Introduction and Review of the Promises

This is the third part of perfecting holiness. In 2 Corinthians 7:1, the apostle writes, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” When he says, “having therefore these promises,” he is referring to the promises mentioned in 2 Corinthians 6, especially verses 16 through 18. If we separate ourselves from sin and wickedness, God promises that He will not only be our God, but that we will be His people. More specifically, He will be our Father, and we will be sons and daughters unto Him.

We began to look at those promises and saw, first of all, that the promise involves a very intimate relationship. If God is our Father, He is the one who begat us. James 1:18 says, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” If God is our Father, He is also our provider, our protector, and our portion in this life. He is the one who sustains and

nourishes us, protects us, and gives us victory in time and history as well. The promise, then, is not merely that God will be called our Father; it is that He will personally provide for us, protect us, and sustain us as His sons and daughters.

Our Lord told us exactly what eternal life really is. In John 17:3 He said, “And this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true and living God in Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” Eternal life, as defined by our Lord, is a personal, intimate knowledge of and relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, to have God as our God is to belong to Him as His people, and to have Him as our Father is to live in this intimate relationship through Christ.

There is a connection between these promises and the precept, and this connection encourages holiness in our personal lives. If God is going to be our God, and He dwells among us and with us, then, since He is holy, we are to be holy, and we are to have everything around us holy as well. In light of these promises, we are to abstain from anything and everything that is offensive in His sight. The holiness required of us is therefore consistent with the relationship God promises to establish with us.

If we want God to be our Father, we should want to be His sons. If we want God to be everything to us that He can be and wants to be as Father, then we should want to be everything to Him that we can be as sons and daughters.

The Apostle said, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness, in the fear of God.” Do not be alarmed by the word perfecting. I will deal with that word when I get to it in the text. But let me tell you what I am not teaching: I am not teaching sinless perfection.

Clarification: Not Teaching Sinless Perfection

There is a theory—nothing more than a theory—that some man or woman could be sinlessly perfect in this life. It is absolutely contrary to Scripture. Harry A. Ironside used to believe in the doctrine of sinless perfection. He thought everybody else was sinlessly perfect

except himself, and literally it drove him insane. He spent months in a sanatorium. Therefore, he began to study the Scripture and found that sinless perfection was not true. Harry Ironside went on to become a very great preacher, but he had to get over this concept. Being sinlessly perfect in this life is not attainable.

Turn to 1 John 1, while holding 2 Corinthians. Years ago, I went into a cleaning establishment whose owner I knew to be a professing Christian. I was carrying some suits to be cleaned. As I walked in, I said to him, “Isn’t it wonderful to be forgiven of your sins?” His reply was, “I don’t know. I haven’t sinned in years.”

When I picked my jaw up off the floor and regained my composure, I looked at him and said, “Well, you just did.” He said, “What?” Then I quoted these verses. In 1 John 1:8, the Scripture says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Now skip down to verse 10: “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” Anytime you try to deny the sin nature or sinful acts, God says you are lying, the truth is not in you, and you are trying to make God a liar. It is unbiblical, impractical, and a downright lie to deny that we are sinners, that we have sinned, and that we have a sinful nature. We cannot escape the reality that we are sinners. I am not trying to teach sinless perfection.

We’re still in 1 John. If sinless perfection is a heresy—and it is—then the opposite is also a heresy: that we have to sin. We do not have to sin. Hold 1 John chapter 2, because I want you to turn to Romans chapter 6. Romans chapter 6 deals with the fact that we as Christians have been delivered from the dominion and lordship of sin.

Believers Are Freed from Sin's Dominion

The apostle writes, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of

righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

We are not under the law as a means of justification, but under grace. Notice what he said: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." He did not say, "Let not sin therefore be in your mortal body." It is there. But you are not to let sin reign in your mortal body. Sin is not Lord for the Christian. When sin speaks and says, "Do this," you can say, "I don't have to obey you. I'm not going to do that. That's wicked. That's wrong. That's contrary to God."

We owe no obedience to sin. Then he gives an illustration: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Your body is to be an instrument of righteousness unto God. In Jesus Christ, we have been freed from the dominion of sin. It is not to reign in our bodies. We owe it no obedience. We do not have to obey it.

The truth is, we do sin at times, but we do not have to. Look back in 1 John 2:1: "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not." What was the purpose of John's writing this epistle? That we not sin.

He went on to say, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Sin, then, is not to reign in our mortal bodies. It is not to hold sway; it is not our lord. We are no longer obligated to obey sin because we are not under its dominion.

You remember Colossians 1:12–13, where the Bible says, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." We have been taken out of the kingdom of sin and placed into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Therefore, "let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." "These things I write unto you, that ye sin not."

The Role of God's Word in Cleansing

Now, you say, “Wait a minute. We are sinners by nature. We have a sinful inclination, a sinful propensity. What, therefore, is to keep me from sinning?” David answered that for us. In Psalm 119:9–11 he said, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” David said a young man, but this is true of a middle-aged man and an old man. Old men have sins just like middle-aged men and young men.

“With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” David is saying that we are to be so absorbed in the Word of God that it is in our hearts. When sinful temptations occur, the Word comes up and says, No, you are not going to do that. If you please God, you are going to do the opposite. So we cleanse ourselves by taking heed to His Word.

The Purging Described

We have seen all of this in the last two messages—the promises declared. I want to begin my second point today: the purging described. This message will continue next week as well. Look back at 2 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 1. Since we are not under the lordship of sin, and since the Bible was written, especially 1 John, so that we would not sin against God, we know His law, His Word, and what He demands. Paul says, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.”

The Purging Described: Our Agency in Cleansing

Notice the important thing in the way the apostle began this passage: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved.” What are the next two words? Dearly beloved. Paul is writing to Christians. Christians are dearly beloved because Christ gave His life for us. We have a commandment that we should love one another; therefore, our brothers and sisters should be dearly beloved by us. The apostle is saying, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved.”

Then Paul says, “Let us cleanse ourselves.” Here is the agency that the Word of God declares we are to use in cleansing ourselves, and that is us: “Let us cleanse ourselves.” The word cleanse literally means to purge, to purify, or to make clean.

There is a parallel passage in 2 Timothy chapter 2. The apostle Paul, who wrote 2 Corinthians, also wrote First and Second Timothy. Beginning with verse 20, he writes: “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, some to honor and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.”

He is telling us that in every great house there are vessels of gold and silver, and also vessels of wood and earth—some to honor and some to dishonor.

To understand what the Apostle Paul is saying, there are vessels in your home that sit on your mantle or around on some shelf. They may be gold-plated or gold-painted; they are beautiful and expensive, but you do not use them for anything except to sit there and look pretty. You have vessels that you cook with and use every day, as well as other cooking items that you may not use every day. Those vessels may be a little more expensive. Not so much today, but in former years, most every family had a honeypot, which was kept in the house and used as a bathroom when it was cold. You would take it out the next morning.

So the point is this: there are some vessels to honor and some vessels to dishonor. Nobody displays a honeypot on the mantle; they hide it under the bed. Here is what our Lord is saying: if we would purge ourselves from those dishonorable things, we would be a vessel fit for the Master's use. The word purge in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and the word cleanse in 2 Corinthians 7:1 are identically the same Greek word.

So cleansing and purging are synonymous. The Apostle Paul is saying that we are to cleanse, wash away, and purge our sinfulness, iniquity, uncleanness, and compromise. In other words, these things are not to be found with us, in us, around us, or before us. We are to be separate from all of them. That is why he said, “Come out from

among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord. Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you unto Myself, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and My daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty."

Understanding 'Filthiness of the Flesh'

What, then, are we to cleanse ourselves from? What are we to purge out of our lives? First of all, if you look in 2 Corinthians 7:1, this is the only thought I am going to cover today: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh." The very first thing from which we are to cleanse ourselves is the filthiness of the flesh.

The word flesh is used in a number of different ways in the Bible. It can refer to mankind in general. You will find that in Matthew 16:17, Matthew 24:22, and 1 Peter 1:24: "All flesh is as grass." It can also refer to marriage. In Matthew 19, God made the man and the woman one flesh. It can refer to the frailty of human nature, because we do all fade as the flowers of the field. It can refer to the human body, as in John 3:6 and John 6:52. There are a number of other meanings in Scripture.

In fact, flesh can simply refer to our mortal life. In Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." There, flesh refers to mortal life. In Philippians 1:24, Paul said, "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you." He is referring there to mortal life. When you look at the word flesh, you must understand that it has many different meanings, and you must depend upon the context to determine its meaning.

Here, the word flesh in 2 Corinthians 7:1 refers to our sinful nature, our sinful inclinations, and our sinful propensities. For instance, if I came up and opened my hand and slapped you upside the head, what would be your first response? You would either knock me out or cuss me out—or you would want to, if you did. That is just a normal, natural response.

Most of us would never consider turning the other cheek, quote unquote, because we have been insulted, though we have not really been hurt and our life is not in danger. He is talking about this propensity. When you look at the word filthiness—"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh"—the word is used to demonstrate anything defiling, filthy, and unclean, and it is to be purged out of our lives. The verb form literally means to stain, defile, and pollute, and it is used of polluting a garment. When you spill hot chocolate on your nice shirt or dress, that garment is stained and polluted. It will have to be purged and cleaned. This is what he is saying: Let us cleanse ourselves, or purge ourselves, from all filthiness of the flesh. When we speak of the filthiness of the flesh, there is more than what we would call the gross and corrupt appetites of the body.

The Works of the Flesh and the Danger of Allurement

I have been in places—New Orleans for one and New York for another—where I literally had to step over drunks lying on the sidewalks, one in a parking lot, sleeping in his own vomit. They were not dead; they were just passed dead out drunk.

You and I would say that is gross, filthy, wicked, and wrong. Sure it is. But when God talks about the filthiness of the flesh, He is not just talking about the passed out drunk. He is not just talking about the adulterer and the whoremonger, nor merely the murderer and the thief. There are other bodily appetites that are just as wicked and just as wrong.

Let me show you how the Apostle Paul used this. Look in your Bibles to Romans, chapter 7. First, look at verse 5, and then we will go down to verse 18. Paul says, "For when we were in the flesh…" Wow! Are we not in the flesh now? Yes. By the way, when he says, "when we were in the flesh" here, he is using the word flesh to refer to our unconverted, unsaved state.

Our interpretation has to depend upon the context. Paul says, "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." When you were unsaved, the motions of sin—that is, your

inclinations and propensities—worked in your members to bring forth death.

For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. He does not find it in himself. In other words, in our flesh, in our mortal life, there is no good thing, period.

Sometimes there may be the will to do better, but you do not have the power or ability. That is just like dieting. You say, "I am going to go on a diet," and you will for a day or two, until you get hungry or your body starts craving that ice cream; then you go right back. That is what he said: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

Admittedly, we are sinners, and we must confess with the Apostle Paul that by nature no good thing dwells within us. We may be saved, but our flesh is still flesh. What did our Lord say? Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. That is why you are going to get a resurrected body; that is why you will have a new body.

In Galatians 5:17, the Bible says, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The flesh lusteth against the spirit. The word lusteth means to fight against.

The flesh fights against the Spirit, and the Spirit fights against the flesh. These are contrary one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would. When you were unsaved, if you were short of money, stealing was an option. Defrauding was an option. Corruption was an option. Now that you are saved, stealing is not an option because God says, "Thou shalt not steal." Fraud is not an option. Corruption is not an option. You cannot do those things. Your flesh will say, "Here is the easy way; go take it," and the Spirit says, "No, you cannot do that. That's a violation of God's law."

Here you have the flesh and the Spirit fighting one against the other. The inclinations and desires of our flesh are contrary to the inclinations and desires of the Holy Spirit. They draw us in opposite directions. While the Spirit of God would lead us into obedience to the Word of God, our flesh draws us away into disobedience, to fulfill the nature of our flesh. In our regenerate state, we want to please our

Heavenly Father, yet we are in the flesh, and we have to understand that there are things in our flesh that are contrary to God. We should know what the fulfilling of the flesh is.

Look in your Bibles at Ephesians 2:2-3, where he is talking about the time when we were unconverted: "Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation, that is, our conduct, in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

What in the world did he just say? When we were unsaved, what did we do? What we wanted to do—what our flesh wanted to do. We thought nothing of it. It was natural. That's what we did, what we wanted to do, what pleased us, and what satisfied us.

Now God is saying, look, you cannot fulfill the lust of the flesh. They are contrary to Me. You remember that passage in 1 John 2:16, where God said, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are not of the Father.

The truth of the matter is this: when we were unsaved, we probably knew that the lust of the flesh was sinful. We probably knew that the lust of the eyes was sinful. We probably knew that the pride of life was sinful. It did not matter. That was what we wanted, and that was what we did.

Look in 2 Peter chapter 2. Let me show you a danger. Peter is writing to Christians as well. In 1 Peter 2, verse 1, he 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 ye may grow thereby, if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." He is warning Christians. Now skip down to verse 18, in 2 Peter. He is still writing to Christians. He says, "For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lust of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error."

Look at what he said: they allure through the lust of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. He is talking here about alluring through the lust of the flesh. Alluring. You know what? When Alice starts looking at me and staring in that quizzical manner, I know I have given the wrong verse. She has caught me. I am not perfect.

That means to draw someone to something. You can put out lures when you are hunting or fishing, and that lure is supposed to draw the animal or fish to where you are. A lot of people may not do certain acts themselves, but they enjoy watching others do those acts. You say, what are you talking about? Soap operas, for one. When people watch television and all these soap operas, it is a vicarious experience for them. They are not going to do it, but they are going to watch somebody else commit adultery or fornication. They will watch somebody else do this or somebody else do that, and it is allurement.

Just stop and think of the state fairs. What do you think all those bright, blinking lights and beautiful things are for? They are to allure you. They are to draw you there so they can get your money. It is just that simple. So he is talking very clearly about being allured through our flesh. Unhappily, even as Christians, some have indulged their desires, wants, and lust, even though sometimes they knew they were violating the Word of God.

And we got chastised; we got whipped from it. You remember how Abraham took Isaac? God had told Abraham to slay his only son. As they were walking to the place of sacrifice, Isaac said, “Father, here is the wood for the burnt offering.” Abraham himself had the fire. Isaac asked, “Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?” Then Abraham took his son and bound him to that altar.

Let me tell you something: our flesh will not lie as silently and as obediently on the altar as Isaac did. Our flesh will cry and scream for fulfillment. It wants what it wants, and oftentimes we are lured. The Bible says in Galatians 5 and verse 24, “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” They that are Christ’s—that is what He meant when He said to reckon, or count, yourself dead indeed unto sin.

When you are tempted—and, by the way, it is not a sin to be tempted, for our Lord was tempted—the sin comes when we yield to that temptation. We are to reckon, or count, ourselves dead indeed unto sin, and we are not to be lured through our flesh.

Now, let me tell you up front: if you are going to live a holy, godly life, it is going to be a fight. It is going to be a struggle, because your flesh is going to want this and the Spirit is going to want this, and they are opposite. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." What was Paul talking about? He was talking about reckoning himself dead indeed unto sin. He said, "I die daily."

In 1 Corinthians 9, beginning in verse 24, the Apostle Paul gives an illustration: "Know you not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth a prize. So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

If you are going to run in a race, you ought to run to win. To run to win, you have to learn to be temperate in all things. If there were a foot race between Joe and myself, considering Joe's lean, mean body and my pleasingly, pleasantly plump body, who do you think would win? Joe. He is probably more temperate in some things than I am. I like a second helping every now and then. But if you are going to win this incorruptible crown, you have to learn to be temperate in all things.

Paul says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." Do you know what a shadow boxer is? He boxes against himself, with his shadow on the wall. He cannot win anything. He is merely beating the air. He may be getting practice and training, but there is no contest. Paul is saying, "I am not running as somebody fighting the air."

He says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should

be cast away." What is he saying? I have to die daily. I have to reckon myself dead indeed unto sin. I have to purge myself and cleanse myself from all filthiness of the flesh.

Whatever pleases our flesh is usually contrary to God—ninety-nine point nine percent of the time, probably one hundred percent. Have you noticed that many foods that are good for you do not taste good, while those that are bad for you are wonderful and delicious? It is the same principle with the flesh: "This is good; this is great."

But it ends in death. When you are being led by the Spirit, you say, "I've got to deny this. I can't do that. I'm not going to do that." But it leads to life.

In Galatians 5:13, the Word of God says, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." I may have liberty to do certain things, but I never have liberty to violate the law of God. There are many people who sin against God, violate His law, and then claim they are exercising their Christian liberty. Christian liberty is not licentiousness. It means we are free to obey God and do that which is right. It does not mean that we are free to fulfill the lust of our flesh. If God tells us not to fulfill the lust of our flesh, how do we avoid doing that?

Walking in the Spirit to Overcome the Flesh

Galatians 5:16 says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." If you are fulfilling the lust of the flesh, you are not walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. If you are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, you will not be fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 13:14, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Make no provision. If you know something is going to tempt or entice you, stay away from it; do not even go near it. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lust. It is impossible to walk in the flesh if you are walking in the Spirit. It is impossible to walk in the Spirit and walk in the flesh at

the same time. It is impossible to walk in the flesh if you have put on the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

We have to fight against our flesh hourly sometimes, not just daily—sometimes minute by minute and moment by moment. You remember that passage I quoted earlier? Psalm 119, verses 9 through 11.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way, by taking heed thereto according to thy word? With my whole heart have I sought thee, O let me not wander from my commandments, thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Since we are in Galatians 5, look at verses 19 through 21. We have been told that we are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, but many of us do not even know what the filthiness of the flesh really is. God gives us the answer and tells us what our flesh enjoys. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest." What are the works of the flesh? Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like, of the which I tell you before, and as I've also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

One of our problems is that we tend to blame many of our sins and lusts upon the devil. You remember Flip Wilson, a black comedian, who made that very common: "The devil made me do it," or, "The devil tempted me."

Let me give you two observations. First, most Christians are not powerful enough, not godly enough, or important enough for the devil to concentrate upon them. If you study the Scriptures, he only attacked three individuals directly: Job, Peter, and Christ. It is true that he is our adversary and that he walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But most of us are not important enough, powerful enough, or godly enough for him to deal with us. His minions are sufficient to take care of most Christians.

Secondly, the devil does not have to tempt us when it comes to the lust of the flesh. Our flesh is sufficient to do the tempting in and of itself. What does the flesh enjoy? Adultery, fornication, uncleanness,

nakedness, lasciviousness, wantonness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, and strife. I know people who live to fuss and fight, who are not happy unless they are fighting with someone and mad at someone. That is flesh.

Seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: all these things are the works of the flesh. If we are going to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh, we have to understand the implication of each work of the lusts of the flesh. He mentions idolatry.

You may say, "Brother Weaver, I am not an idolater. I have not bowed down to any image or idol." But we have a very limited view of idolatry. We tend to think it is bowing down to an idol somewhere. Look in Colossians chapter 3, and notice verse 5. The Apostle Paul says this: "Mortify," that is, make dead—that is where we get the word mortician from—"mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." What? Covetousness is idolatry. Covetousness is idolatry.

That means if I say, "Man, I sure would like to have Lacey's car. I want that car," I am coveting it. That is idolatry. Look in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 3. He says it like this: "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness"—remember, that is idolatry—"let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints."

Let me explain idolatry like this. Do you realize that anytime we set our will, our wants, or our desires above God, that is idolatry? Covetousness is idolatry. When you know what God's Word says and you disobey it, that is idolatry. You are denying God as the chief good, denying God as the sovereign, and setting yourself up above God, saying, "I know what I want, and I know what is best for me." Idolatry is a work of the flesh.

The Heart Attitude Behind Sinful Acts

Now, I want you to understand—and I will get into this a little more next week—the work of the flesh can be a work of the flesh without the flesh actually doing anything. You say, "What are you talking about?" Remember what our Lord said in Matthew 5 and verse 28:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already.” Where? Somebody tell me. In his heart. This does not mean that you have committed the actual physical act. But if you have lusted after a woman, then God says you have committed it in your heart. So the point I am trying to make is this.

When we're cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, it is not just those outward, grosser sins. I don't know anybody here who is a drunkard, adulterer, or murderer. I don't know anybody like that in here. If you are such, you've hidden it from me very well, but you understand what I'm saying. I'm sure that you don't do that. But that doesn't mean that you don't have sins of the flesh. You may have evil thoughts, wicked desires, wrong motives, pride, and arrogance. It is not just the physical act that God condemns, but it is the attitude and the disposition that leads to those acts. When God forbids any act, He also forbids any and every thought and attitude that would lead up to that act. So if God is forbidding adultery, it forbids me lusting in my heart.

It would also forbid me from looking intently, which would create lust in my heart. When God forbids any act, He forbids at the same time anything—every attitude—that would lead to it. Thus He says, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” If we want God as our Father, protector, provider, and portion, then we should also want to be the sons and daughters He would have us to be. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lust of your ignorance, be holy in all manner of conversation, as I am holy. Because it is written, “Be ye holy; for I am holy, saith the Lord.”

Application: Our Responsibility and God's Ability

The first application is this: the Apostle Paul said, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves.” We have a responsibility to cleanse ourselves. Albert Barnes writes that Paul was not afraid to bring into view the agency of Christians themselves in the work of salvation or sanctification. He says, “Let us purify ourselves,” as if Christians had much to do, their own agency was to be employed, and their purifying depended upon their own efforts.

Although all purifying influences and holiness proceed from God, the effect of the Holy Spirit's influences is to excite us to diligence, purify our own hearts, and urge strenuous efforts to overcome our sins.

He who expects to be made pure without effort of his own will never become pure. He who becomes holy does so through strenuous efforts to resist the evil of his heart and become like God. We have God's promises to aid us, but the responsibility is ours.

Let us cleanse ourselves, but the ability is God's. We have responsibility, but not ability; therefore, we must seek Him for grace, mercy, and power. Our Lord told the disciples, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." We need divine help, for He said, "Without me ye can do nothing." Ours is the responsibility, but the ability is God's.

As the Apostle Paul said, we have to die daily and fight hourly to bring our body into subjection: "No, I will not do that. No, I will not think that. No, that will not be in my mind." It is a daily fight. It would be advantageous for each of us to look in Galatians 5, take each of the works of the flesh, and run them down through Scripture, seeing the implications of all these things in our lives, so that we may turn from them and purge ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh.

I prefer to cleanse myself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit and have God as my Father than not to do so and have God as my adversary. "Wherefore, come ye up from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord. Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you unto myself. And I will be a father unto you. And you shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." Ours is the responsibility. His is the ability.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We ask You to enable us, to empower us, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh—not just the gross or vile acts, but even the attitudes, the dispositions, the thoughts, the pride, the arrogance, and anything contrary to Thy Word. Make us holy, and enable us to live as Thy sons and Thy daughters. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Perfecting Holiness Part 4 of 5 - Sins of The Spirit

November 28, 2012

Introduction and Review of the Promises

In 2 Corinthians 7:1, we are continuing the fourth part of this short series on perfecting holiness. Notice the verse: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” When the Apostle says, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved,” he is referring to the promises revealed in 2 Corinthians 6:16–18. The first promise is that God would be our God and we would be His people. The second promise is that God would be our Father and we would be His sons and His daughters. In the first two messages, we pointed out the implications of God as our Father. If He is indeed our Father, then He is the One who has begotten us.

For James 1:18 says, “…of His own will begotten us with the word of truth.” Further, if God is our Father, it also implies that He is our provider, our protector, and our portion. He is the One who sustains

us, who defends us, who protects us, and who gives us victory in time and in history as well as in eternity. These are all implications of having God as our Father, and they are connected with the promises that the Apostle has just mentioned.

It is important for you and me to remember what eternal life is, because our Lord Himself said in John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true and living God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Eternal life is not simply living forever. Eternal life is that personal, intimate relationship that we are enabled to have with God our Father through the merits and through the work of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This relationship with God is the very nature of eternal life, not merely its endless duration.

The Command to Cleanse from Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit

I hope you see the connection between these promises and an encouragement to holiness. Our God said, "Be ye holy as I am holy." We first looked at the declaration of the promises, and then began looking at the description of the purging. In verse 1, he said, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh." Remember that the flesh here refers to our sinful inclinations and our sinful propensities. The word filthiness demonstrates and denotes anything that is defiling, anything that is unclean, anything that needs to be purged from our lives.

We talked about the filthiness of the flesh in Galatians chapter 5, which tells us the works of the flesh and how we are to consistently avoid the works of the flesh. In Galatians 5:16, the apostle Paul said, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Then in Romans 13:14, we were commanded to "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." He is telling us that this is to be purged from our lives.

But there is something else that must be purged. He says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Under the purging described, we are not dealing only

with the filthiness of the flesh, which we have dealt with. There is a connection which you shall see, but now there is also the filthiness of the spirit. God commands us to cleanse ourselves not only from the filthiness of the flesh, but from the filthiness of the spirit as well.

We must understand that the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit were never designed as a substitute for our discharge of duty. It is true that we have the responsibility to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, but we must rely totally and completely upon the Holy Spirit. Our relying upon the Holy Spirit does not diminish our obligations or our duty at all. It is our responsibility, but it is His ability. We are told, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

External vs. Internal Purity: The Example of the Pharisees

I have preached for 46 years. I began saying this after the first year or two of preaching from personal observations, and I am still saying it: There is nothing meaner or nastier in this entire world than a Christian that is not right with God.

Now stop and think about that. We may boast that we are not guilty of murder, drunkenness, thievery, adultery, fornication, and a thousand other filthy fleshly acts. However, as long as we possess a mean, vindictive, bitter, resentful, and hateful spirit, we are nowhere close to biblical holiness. There are so many people in this world today who make every effort to ensure that the outside is just right and clean.

But on the inside, they are a seething mass of sin and rebellion. It is like the story I heard years ago about a mother who had her little girl in the car. This was before seat belts. The little girl kept standing up, and the mother kept telling her to sit down. The girl would sit down and spring right back up. Finally, the mother reached over, grabbed her, and sat her in the seat. The little girl folded her arms, looked at her mother, and said, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside."

That is exactly the way a lot of people are. They have the outside clean, but on the inside they are still in rebellion. Our Lord tells us

about people like this, and He especially nails the Pharisees. In Matthew 23:27, He says, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.” Our Lord likened the Pharisees to a beautiful, whited tombstone: clean and beautiful, but on the inside absolutely full of corruption and filth.

He uses the same illustration in Luke 11:39, but a little differently: “And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.” Very obviously, these Pharisees were outwardly moral but inwardly totally corrupt. They believed that simply refraining from certain physical acts would fulfill the law and make them pure.

It is true that we must be externally clean, outwardly clean and pure. But it is equally true that we must be internally clean and pure. It does you no good to be externally clean and pure unless you are internally clean and pure. For instance, look at what our Lord said concerning the Pharisees in Matthew 5:20.

Do you realize the average church would be absolutely happy, absolutely delighted to have a church full of Pharisees? Why? They were always on time and never late. They would always pray and tithe, and make a show of all these things. In other words, they would be the perfect church member. You would never have to get on to them for anything.

And yet our Lord said very plainly to His disciples, “Verily I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Our Lord said, “You’ve got to have something more than external purity. You’ve got to have something more than externals.”

The Pharisees did have a righteousness, but it was a righteousness of their own making. It was not the righteousness of God. Our Lord said very plainly that we have to have something more than that. We must be clean without and within, but our external purity must proceed from an internal purity. We have to cleanse ourselves not

only from the filthiness of the flesh, but of the spirit. If we deny this simple truth, we are no better than the Pharisees. In fact, that is what we will become: Pharisees.

We will have the attitude, “I don’t drink, I don’t smoke, I don’t chew, I don’t go with the girls that do.” Well, fine. But why is it you do not do those things? Is it because of an internal holiness that makes you pure externally, or are you just claiming an external holiness?

Look in your Bibles to Psalm 32:2. David is talking about the blessed man. In verse 1 he says, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Then he tells another aspect of the blessed man: “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

The word guile refers to deceitfulness, hypocrisy, treachery, slothfulness, or anything that is untrue and false. But notice where he says it is: “Blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile.” It is not in his body; it is in his spirit. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul wrote to Timothy, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Everything is referring to the internal.

Now consider another passage. Turn to 1 Peter chapter 3 and look at verse 4, because here is that which God declares is holiness in women. 1 Timothy chapter 2 is an excellent passage as well, but notice 1 Peter 3:1: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.” Then observe: “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

Many people take verse 3 out of context and say that women should not plait their hair or wear gold. If that interpretation is applied consistently, the verse also says, “let it not be the putting on of apparel.” Does that mean women should go around naked? Of

course not. The Lord is saying that a woman is not dependent upon her hair, gold, or apparel for beauty. Her beauty comes from an inward meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

The Spirit Dictates Actions

Why are there so many verses in the Bible that refer to the spirit? Why is there so much emphasis upon the spirit? Let me answer that. It is because ultimately it is our spirit that dictates our actions.

For instance, do not answer this out loud, but have you ever physically struck out at someone? Have you ever physically hit someone or tried to hit someone? If you did, it was because you were angry first. Your spirit dictated your actions. Have you ever said something you wish you had never said? It was because your spirit dictated. First, you were angry, you were upset, and you said it. Your spirit—are you listening?—was out of control. You were not controlling your spirit; your spirit was controlling you.

There is a spirit in man, and the Word of God tells us that we should be controlling our spirits rather than allowing our spirits or our passions to control us.

Consider two verses in Proverbs. Proverbs 16:32 says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Interesting, God said that he who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. Then He says, "he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." The man who has control over his own spirit, according to God, is greater than the greatest warrior. He is greater than the greatest fighter, because he can indeed control himself.

Proverbs 25:28 says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls." If we are not in control of our spirit, we are not in control. A city broken down and without walls is easily assaulted, entered, and looted.

If you are able to control your spirit, I cannot make you angry, upset, jealous, envious, or bitter. If you control your spirit, I cannot

manipulate or intimidate you. We often say, “That person just makes me so angry.” No, that person is not making you angry. Your losing control of your own spirit is what is making you angry.

I saw a movie many years ago called Cool Hand Luke, starring Paul Newman. He was in prison, though I do not remember why. He always tried to escape and to do things that would upset the warden and the people in charge. They would beat him, torture him, and do all kinds of inhumane things to him. Yet, even while they were doing it, he always had that sly smile, which infuriated them. When they finished tormenting and torturing him, he still had that smile. Nothing upset him, and that infuriated the people who were torturing him.

It has often been said that if you really want to infuriate your enemies, just smile, be sweet, and be kind, because they cannot literally stand it. Very obviously, it does not matter how obnoxious or contentious someone is. If you can control your spirit, they cannot upset you, manipulate you, or make you angry. God said, “He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city.”

Our Lord illustrates what I am trying to show you in Matthew 15. He tells us that we are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Why should we pay attention to our spirits? Matthew 15:16 says, “And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”

Sins of the Spirit Originate in the Heart

Note what our Lord is saying. The very first thing that proceeds from the heart, or from the mind or spirit, is evil thoughts. You can describe everything else that follows as evil thoughts—whether murders, adultery, fornication, thefts, false witness, or blasphemies. If I am thinking about stealing from Ed, that is an evil thought. If I am thinking about committing adultery or fornication, that is an evil

thought. If I am thinking about lying about Clay, that is an evil thought.

Every one of these things that we ascribe to the flesh, which Galatians 5 says are of the flesh, proceeds from our hearts. Sins of the spirit are sins that come from our hearts and minds. Oftentimes, they are our secret sins.

They are secret in the sense that no one knows or suspects them. No one knows what we are entertaining in our minds or what we are really longing after in our hearts. Usually, the only way outsiders come to know what is really in our minds is when it comes forth in actions—when it manifests itself. Eventually, it will demonstrate and manifest itself.

For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Eventually, you are going to do that. But secret sins are secret in another way as well. Sometimes we may have secret sins and not even know we have them. They can be secret to us. Who can ascertain the first rising of pride? None of us.

How can I have a secret sin and not know it? How can there be sin in my mind, my heart, or my life, and I do not realize it is there? Look at Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" You do not know your heart. You do not know everything in your heart.

There have been times in my life when I genuinely thought I was doing something for God's honor and glory. God opened my eyes, and I found out that God was not in it at all; I was doing it for myself. That was a secret sin until God showed it to me. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Look at Psalm 19:12. Here is what David prayed, and certainly we should pray this prayer as well: "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." Notice, "cleanse thou me from secret faults," or from secret sins.

Many individuals, many Christians, have honestly believed that they had dealt with the sin of the spirit and had it taken care of, under wraps; then, in a moment of tension, pressure, or stress, it came out. Our hearts are deceitful and, above all things, desperately

wicked. Therefore, we need to learn to pray with David, "Cleanse us from secret faults," or from secret sins.

Do you think the sin of adultery would grieve the heart of God? What about murder, theft, or idolatry? Of course, all of these would grieve Him. But all of these are works of the flesh. I want to show you that the sins of the spirit grieve God just as much.

Specific Sins of the Spirit: Bitterness, Wrath, Anger, Clamour, Evil Speaking

In Ephesians 4:30, the Bible says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Then it continues: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, 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."

Notice that after saying, "grieve not the holy Spirit of God," Paul lists things that would grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Since they grieve the Holy Spirit, he tells us to put them out of our lives: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice.

Do you know what clamour is? When I was a boy, my cousins would come over, and since we lived on the farm, we would have corn cob wars. We would fling corn cobs at each other. You do not throw them; you fling them.

We would always cheat because we had a two-story barn. My cousin and I would be up in the upper story, while Ned, the big, strong cousin, was down below. We would soak corn cobs overnight in water. Have you ever been hit with a wet corn cob? It is like getting hit with a brick bat. Ned was so big and so strong that the two of us would stand him.

My cousin and I were in the loft of the barn, and for a minute no corn cobs had been thrown. My cousin looked at me and said, "Where is he?" I said, "I don't know. I don't hear him."

There was a knothole no bigger than that. I said, "Look through that knothole and see if you can see him." My cousin got on his knees and looked down through it. The Lord is my witness: Ned was right

under that knothole with a wet corncob. When he saw my cousin kneel down and look, he threw that corncob, and it came up right through the middle of that knothole, hit my cousin in the middle of the eye, and knocked him out cold as a cucumber.

He went flat on the floor. I jumped out of the second-story window and went to saying, "You've killed him, you've killed him, you've killed him." I went hollering to my dad that my cousin was dead. That was clamour—useless noise—because he was not dead; he was just knocked out. We got him revived momentarily. That is what clamour is: useless noise. It is like Henry saying, "Well, I don't have the answer to the problem, but I'm going to put my two cents' worth in anyhow." I have been in so many meetings where people say things totally, absolutely unrelated to what is going on. I could conduct the average business meeting that lasts eight hours and conclude it in an hour if you just cut out the clamour.

Look what God says: bitterness, wrath, anger, useless noise, and evil speaking are to be put away from you. Suppose Clay came up and said, "You know, I really like Robert." I look at Clay and say, "You wouldn't say that if you knew what I knew." Have I said anything bad about Robert? No. I did not say anything bad about him, but I implied that I knew something bad about him. That is evil speaking—cutting someone down or implying that there is something wrong with someone when it is not true. God says all that evil speaking is to be put away, along with all malice.

There is to be no malice in your heart. Then He says you need to be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Bitterness and Unforgiveness as Root Sins

God says bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking are all sins of the spirit. How many people are bitter? I have known bitter people, and I have known Christians who are so absolutely bitter that it is unbelievable. One of the failings of husbands is to be bitter against their wives. We would not strike our wives or curse them, but we will get bitter against them. God says in Colossians 3:19, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Not only can husbands be bitter against wives; wives can be bitter

against husbands. In fact, we can be bitter against anyone. Let me show you something about bitterness. Look in Hebrews, chapter 12 and verse 15.

You've heard the old expression that a rotten apple will spoil the bushel, the batch, or whatever you have your apples in. One rotten apple stays there, and soon all the other apples are spoiled as well. Watch what God says about bitterness: 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." One root of bitterness that troubles you, according to the Scripture, will defile many. If one becomes bitter, that bitterness will spread and defile a multitude of people. Bitterness is therefore a sin of the spirit.

What about an unforgiving spirit? I've heard many people say, "Well, I'll never forgive him," or, "I'll never forgive her." Why do we have such an unforgiving spirit? The answer is that we have a bitter, vindictive heart, which is a sin of the spirit. Someone says, "But you don't understand. The sin that person committed against me is so great, I could never forgive that person."

Was the sin against you any greater than your sin against Christ? Yet He forgave you. Turn to Matthew 18 and see this in light of what has just been said. Beginning at verse 21 and reading through verse 35, this is a lesson on bitterness and unforgiveness. Matthew 18:21 says, "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." That is four hundred and ninety times, which basically means unlimited.

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 18:23-35 (KJV)

> Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant

> was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.
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> So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.
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> Here is the simple point. If we have been the recipients of mercy, we should show mercy. If we have been the recipients of forgiveness, we should learn to forgive. If we have been forgiven, we should have a thankful, tender spirit. And so that we can forgive others as well. Let me point out that not only bitterness and unforgiveness are sins of the spirit, but also pride and haughtiness are sins of the spirit. Most of you can quote Proverbs 16:18, where the Bible said, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Pride, Unfaithfulness, and the Tongue as Sins of the Spirit

One of the sad things is this: if we were truthful, we would have to wrestle with pride every day, for there is pride in everything that we do. There is a difference between taking pride in your work and doing everything for God's honor and God's glory, and being proud of your work. Most of us want to think that we are self-sufficient, that we can take care of ourselves, and that everyone should agree with us. Pride causes us to stumble and fall, especially when we

become arrogant, puffed up, and haughty. If that is true, do you understand that it is probably one of the reasons we are always in trouble? The Bible says that God resisteth the proud, but He giveth grace unto the humble. The word resisteth literally means that God fights against the proud.

Pride is at the bottom of a hardened spirit and a stiff neck. In Daniel 5:20, speaking of Nebuchadnezzar, we read: "But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him." When his heart was lifted up, that is pride and arrogancy. Notice also: "...and his mind hardened in pride."

Have you ever noticed that some people are so hard and stiff-necked when it comes to the Word of God? They will not listen. They do not want to listen. They will not repent. They refuse to entertain the fact that Jesus Christ is God, that He is Lord, and that He demands their repentance and faith. Why are they so hardened and adamant? The answer is because of pride. Strip away all their excuses and reasonings, and at the root of everything you will find pride.

Pride is a root sin. Bitterness is a root sin. It is the root from which the tree grows and produces all kinds of sinful fruits. Another sin of the spirit is unfaithfulness. We certainly see how unfaithfulness can be the sin of a spirit when we are speaking of an unfaithful husband or an unfaithful wife. But have you ever stopped to think that we do not see that same unfaithfulness in relationship to our Lord and His work? In most churches, pastors have to plead, beg, exhort, beseech, and coerce professing Christians to be faithful to the Lord and the Lord's work. Why?

What is the matter with us? How is it that we cannot be faithful and steadfast with the Lord? I know that when Sunday morning comes around, even my dog knows it is time to ride in the car. I know where I am supposed to be and what I am supposed to do on Sunday, and you should know the same thing.

But let me show you how unfaithfulness is a sin of the spirit. Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 78, and look at verse 8. God is telling these people not to be as their fathers: “And might not be as their fathers, a

stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God." Now watch the next verse: "The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle."

One reason they turned back was that their spirit was not steadfast with God. Israel did not maintain a firm trust in God. They yielded to every impulse and every passion, even when those impulses tended to draw them wholly, totally, and completely away from God. They were so easily led into idolatry. I know that in Galatians 5:20 idolatry is listed as a work of the flesh. We saw it last week. But idolatry first starts in the mind; it starts in the spirit. When the spirit is not steadfast with God, you are going to wander. You are going to entertain thoughts that you should never entertain. The Bible says they were not steadfast with God in their spirit.

The one area in which Old Testament Israel was consistent was their inconsistency with God. They were consistently inconsistent. Unhappily, that is where many Christians are today: consistently inconsistent.

So the question comes back: if we have to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, how do we avoid sins of the spirit? Look in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 5. Let us begin reading in verse 22: Galatians 5:22.

The Remedy: Walk in the Spirit and Pray for a Clean Heart

We're told that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." Now God says that if we do not want to have the sins of the spirit in our spirit, we should learn to walk in the Holy Spirit. Lord willing, I'm going to bring a short series in the not too distant future on what it means to walk in the Spirit. But right here, God says this is the answer.

Romans 8:10 says, “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

If we are walking in the Spirit, if we are being led by the Spirit, it is the Holy Spirit of God who will lead us to mortify—that is, to make dead—the deeds of the flesh and of the spirit. He will lead us into obedience to the Word of God. So, here's how this works: Ed makes me angry. Ed makes me angry.

I am just about ready to cuss him out and tell him off. Then I think, God said to cleanse myself from filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Lord, I have anger, and that anger is wrong and wicked. I am not going to cuss out Ed. I am not going to fuss at Ed. I refuse to do that. I will talk to him, and we can resolve the problem together.

If you think for a minute, here is what God says; here is what I want. You have to cancel out what you want and go with what God says. Here is what I would like to do; here is what God says. I have to cancel out what I would like to do and be obedient to what God says.

Walking in the Spirit means that He is leading us and guiding us into obedience. If you are living an unholy, ungodly life, I have no doubt in my mind that there is not a spirit leading you—but it is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will always lead us into obedience.

Let me point out one other sin of the spirit. We never think of this as being a sin of the spirit, and yet it truly is. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Verse 4 says, "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit." What? Perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit. A sharp, sarcastic, biting, hateful tongue is a sin of the spirit. Isn't that amazing?

James 1:26 says, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's

religion is vain." If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Isn't that amazing? You have to control your spirit in order to control your tongue.

James 3:5 says, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

Wow. I heard one preacher say one time, the tongue is like an automatic sewing machine set on fire out of hell. You ever notice how fast those sewing machines can go? One preacher, who is now dead, did this. There was a lady in the church who was known for her gossiping. He preached that night very powerfully, and he included gossip. After the service was over, while a song was being sung, the woman came up to him and said, "Pastor, I want to lay my tongue on the altar." He said, "Bless God. There's 40 feet of it here. Put what you can on it and throw the rest in the corner."

Well, that's exactly what the Scripture is saying. The tongue is an unruly evil.

We are talking about the tongue and the fact that it is indeed a sin of the spirit. Consider 1 Peter 3:10: "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." God said that if you want to love life and see good days, refrain your tongue from evil, and make sure that your lips speak no guile. Two other passages follow, the next being Proverbs 13:3.

I have quoted these verses many times, not only to myself but to others. Look in Proverbs 13:3. Here is a verse you should memorize, or at least write in the flyleaf of your Bible: "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life.

Look in your Bibles to Proverbs 21:23. This is one of my favorite verses: "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles." You want to avoid trouble? God says, keep your mouth and keep your tongue.

Now think about this with me. God said that we're to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. If we cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh, we must know what the filthiness of the flesh is. If we cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the spirit, we must know what a filthy spirit is.

This leads me to the first application: We must learn to pray with David in Psalm 51:10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Why should we pray that? Because we have secret sins and secret faults, some we don't even know about.

Remember 1 Corinthians 6:20: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." It's not just your body that belongs to Him; it's your spirit. You're to glorify Him in the body and the spirit. One way we must do that is by cleansing ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit.

Conclusion and Prayer for Total Sanctification

Look at one last passage, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Now you will understand why I'm dealing with the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." That's W-H-O-L-L-Y: totally, completely. "And the very God of peace sanctify you totally, completely. I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." So Paul prayed that God would sanctify us totally and completely. That should be our prayer as well: that God would sanctify us and enable us to cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Father, we ask You, in the name of Jesus Christ, for Your grace and mercy. Enable us to cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Enable us to be holy on the inside as well as the outside.

Give us grace, Lord, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear, recognizing that our body and our spirits are Yours. Help us, we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

It Takes More Than a Profession of Faith, Talk is Cheap

December 24, 2012

It Takes More Than a Profession of Faith

Isaiah 48, verses 1 and 2, says:

“Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, that are come forth of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel: The Lord of hosts is his name.”

Introduction: The Problem of Empty Profession

The subtitle is “Talk is Cheap,” which the Scripture states very clearly. Everyone has heard the age-old expression, “Everyone that's talking about heaven ain't going there.” That is certainly true,

because it takes more than talk. It even takes more than a profession of faith.

When I say, “It Takes More Than a Profession of Faith,” I want you to understand from the outset that I am not teaching, talking about, or referring to salvation by works. No man is saved by his works. In fact, Scripture is exceedingly clear, and everyone in this room can quote Ephesians 2:8–9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” So it is not of works, lest any man should boast. It is only, totally, and completely by God's grace.

Salvation is by Grace Alone Through Christ Alone

Salvation is not only by Christ; it is in Christ alone. He is our substitute, He is our sacrifice, and He is our salvation. Apart from Jesus Christ, no one would be saved. No one is saved or can be saved apart from Jesus Christ. Neither can anything be added to His perfect work. It is not Christ plus our works, no. It is Christ and Christ alone. The Bible teaches in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 28, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Notice that He was offered once. He totally and completely perfected salvation. Our Lord made it exceedingly clear that salvation is impossible with men.

We cannot save ourselves, and we cannot help save ourselves. Our Lord made it clear that salvation is totally, absolutely impossible with man. He had just sent away the rich young ruler, who was sorrowful because he had great riches and did not want to give them up. "And the disciples were astonished at his words." What words? "And Jesus looked round about and said unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Now watch verse 26: "And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?"

The question is, "Who then can be saved?" The subject deals with salvation. Watch what our Lord answers: "And Jesus looking upon them, saith, With men it, salvation, is impossible, but not with God,

for with God, all things are possible." The Bible teaches very clearly that with man, salvation is impossible. That is why it is impossible to be saved without Christ, because Christ alone is salvation.

It was Horatius Bonar who said, "Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity." And that is true. We stake our whole eternity on the life and death of Jesus Christ.

The subtitle of this message, "Talk is Cheap," exposes not only the problem with professors in the Old Testament, but also the same problem in the New Testament and the exact same problem that we have today. A profession of faith that is not evidenced or backed up by a life of obedience is worthless. Look back in your Bibles to Isaiah 48 again, at verses 1 and 2, and watch very closely at what our Lord says.

The Old Testament Hypocrites: Isaiah 48:1-2

"Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel and are come forth out of the waters of Judah. Watch which swear by the name of the Lord and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city and stay themselves upon the God of Israel. The Lord of hosts is his name."

In our text, we see a people called by the name of Israel, which implies that they were God's covenant people. They swore by the name of the Lord, made mention of his name freely and openly, and seemingly were unashamed. They professed that they were God's people and purportedly stayed themselves upon him. Yet God states that their profession was not in truth nor in righteousness.

They were a people in name only, with a worthless, useless, lip profession. How many profess Jesus Christ and yet live absolutely opposite to His Word and to His will? In Isaiah 29:13, our Lord says, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but remove their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of man."

Lip Service vs. Heart Devotion: Isaiah 29:13

They honor him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. Their fear toward him is taught by the precept of man. There are many today in the same exact boat as these Old Testament professors. Many have been raised in church, taught in church, and educated in church, yet they have never been regenerated or converted by the power of God. They may be able to quote scripture, sing hymns, and converse in theological language, yet they know absolutely nothing of the power of God in their lives. All they have is what they have been taught by the precept of man, and they are absolutely, totally ignorant of the truths of covenantal faithfulness.

The Extent of False Profession: Jeremiah 5:1-2

The extent of the false profession is absolutely amazing. God was talking about an entire people that professed to be His people, and yet they were totally unregenerate. God told Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, look, just one man, if you can find a man, if there be any that executes judgment and seeketh the truth, I will pardon it. And though they say the Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely."

What did God tell Jeremiah? Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem. Find just one man who executes judgment and seeks the truth, and He would pardon the entire city. God said, "Yes, you are going to find some that will say, 'Surely the Lord liveth.'" But they swear absolutely falsely. Their hearts are far from the Lord.

Over and over in Scripture, Israel was judged and chastened by the Lord for their overt acts of treason, rebellion, and all their provocations against Him. Yet, in all of this, they continued in their rebellion and in their outward profession of being the people of God.

Confession Must Flow from Heart Faith: Romans 10:9-14

This is exactly where we are today. Romans chapter 10 contains a passage that has been greatly misused, taken out of context, and not understood at all. The Scripture says, "That if thou shalt confess with

thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The verbal confession of the mouth is useless without the converting faith in the heart. It is with the heart that man believes unto righteousness. With the mouth confession is made, but it is with the heart. If there is nothing in the heart, the profession of the mouth is absolutely useless.

It is true that we must confess Christ publicly and privately. However, real confession is the result of salvation and not salvation itself. We confess because we have been saved. It is not our confession that saves us; it is Jesus Christ who saves us.

Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is true. But we must define and understand what calling upon the name of the Lord is. I do not think calling upon the name of the Lord is mouthing some little, simple prayer that somebody tells you that you need to pray. I think calling upon the name of the Lord is like Peter when he was going under and cried out and screamed, "Help, Lord!" Peter understood that if the Lord did not save him, he was a goner. I think that is what really calling on the Lord is.

But who is going to call upon the Lord savingly? Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Verse 14 asks, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" What must transpire before you can call? You must believe. Is it calling that saves you, or is it believing in Jesus Christ that saves you? Is calling an evidence that you have believed in Christ?

Paul continues, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" In order to call, you must believe. "And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" In order to believe, you must hear Jesus Christ. "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Then, "And how shall they preach, except they

be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things."

The calling is the result of believing. Believing is the result of hearing Christ. Christ normally speaks to His sheep during the preaching of His Word, and a preacher cannot really preach His Word accurately and truthfully unless he has been sent by God. The real voice you need to listen for is not the preacher's voice, but the voice of Jesus Christ speaking through him as the Word of God is really and truly preached.

You remember what our Lord said in John 10, verse 27? "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me." It is the voice of Christ. How can you call unless you believe? How can you believe unless you hear Christ? It is Christ's calling that saves us. He speaks to our hearts; we believe, we call upon Him, and we confess Him. But confession is not that which saves us; it is Christ. Calling is not that which saves us; it is Christ. We can only believe in Him, savingly, as He speaks to our heart.

No Man Can Say 'Jesus is Lord' Except by the Holy Spirit: 1 Corinthians 12:3

It is true that real, genuine, regenerated, and converted Christians confess Christ, but they confess Him because they have been saved by Him. It is not our confession that saves us. It is Christ who has made our confession real and genuine that saves us. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:3, "Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, and that no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

First of all, no man speaking by the Spirit of God is going to curse Jesus Christ. If you hear anyone cursing Jesus Christ, you can mark it down: he does not have the Spirit of God. But look at the latter part of this verse. "No man"—there is the negative—"speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed"; here is the positive: "and that no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Ghost."

It is only by the power of God, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and conversion, that we are enabled to savingly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Look again at the latter

part of verse 3: "and that no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

I can go out on the street right now and find multitudes of men and women who have the ability to speak. I can ask them, "Can you mouth these words? Can you say, 'Jesus Christ is Lord'?" If they have the ability to speak, they can mouth those words. Mouthing those words does not save. Man may imitate, but only the Holy Spirit of God can authenticate. That is why he said, "No man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." In other words, it takes the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to savingly acknowledge and confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Remember, "can" is a term of ability. He says, "No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

The truth is that many have been deluded in joining a church and openly professing that Christ is their Savior, yet their lives have never been changed. There is no understanding of the Word of God, much less obedience to the commands of Christ or the principles of His Word in their lives. They never read the Word of God, and they certainly never study the Word of God. Their lives are basically empty, hollow, and meaningless. Many rest in and trust in their confession for salvation more than they trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. Mouthing words and repeating empty phrases does not save.

You may even use Scripture in your profession of faith. But Scripture in itself does not save. In 2 Corinthians 3:6, the apostle Paul says, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Do you realize that even Scripture, without the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, is worthless? It is a dead letter without the power of God upon it. As important as Scripture is, it requires the ministry of the Holy Spirit to make it effectual in our lives.

I am talking about people who are in church, who have made a profession of faith, and yet whose lives are totally unchanged. We are also told in Scripture that when the Lord saves individuals, He adds them to the church. Acts 2:47 says, "...and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

I have always been suspicious of those who claim to be saved and yet never darken the doorway of a Bible-believing or Bible-preaching church. If the old adage is true, "birds of a feather flock together," then those who are genuinely Christian will desire to be with others who are genuinely Christian. It is an amazing thing that when God saves us, He puts us together.

On the other hand, there are those who are members of churches and frequently and habitually attend, who claim to be Christians, and all they have to show for it is a profession of faith—an empty one, I might add. They live as they please, even when their lives are completely contrary to the Word of God. They have no regard for God, His commands, or His truth. When they hear truth, they reject it. They refuse it. That cannot be so.

The Insult of Disobedience: Jeremiah 32:30-33

Let me show you the absolute insult this is to God. Turn in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 32, and we will begin reading in verse 30:

"For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth. For the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the Lord. For this city have been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day, that I should remove it from before my face. Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 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 my instruction."

Now let me ask you a question. Is it not, and would it not be, an insult to you if, while you were talking with me and speaking to me, I simply turned my back to you and walked off? What would the implication be if I turned my back to you and walked off while you were speaking to me? The implication would be very clear: I have no regard for your thoughts. I have no regard for your wishes. I have no regard for your desires. I have no regard for your fellowship or your company. In fact, I have no regard for you. You are not worth

listening to, nor do I have any pleasure in your presence. Therefore, I am leaving.

Would you regard that as an insult? Well, of course you would. How much more of a blasphemous insult is it for individuals to turn their back on the holy, righteous, sovereign God of heaven and earth? And what did God say? God said, "I taught you."

I sent my word, and you refused to hear it. You would not pay any attention to my word, to my preachers. You would not pay any attention to me. It is indeed an insult, a blasphemous insult. I want to show you something. Let us turn to Jeremiah chapter 35. I want you to see the difference between the children of Jonadab and the professing children of the Lord.

Contrast with the Rechabites: Jeremiah 35

Jeremiah chapter 35, verse 1: "The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, Go into 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 Habazziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons in 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 sat before the sons of the house of the Rechabites, pots full of wine and cups. And I said to them, Drink ye wine. And they said, We will drink no wine. For Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, You shall drink no wine, neither shall ye nor your sons, forever."

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

> Neither shall you build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any, but all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you be strangers. Thus have we observed the voice of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us to drink no wine all of 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 Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came unto 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 dwelt in Jerusalem. Then came the word of the Lord to 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 you 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 command. But notwithstanding, I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking, but you hearken not unto me. I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return you now, O man, from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them.

And you shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers. But you have not inclined your ear, nor have 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 have 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 to them, but they have not heard, and I've 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 you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab, your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he had commanded you, Therefore, thus saith the Lord of the hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me forever.

Before I give you the principle, let me ask you some questions. How would you like to live without a garden, without a home,

without property, and without a vineyard? Would you like to dwell in a tent continually?

If you think living in a tent is kind of cool, wait until December, January, and February, and make sure that you stay in that tent for about thirty days during the rain and the cold. Then let us see how cool it really is.

Here is the contrast in Jeremiah chapter 35: the contrast is between Jonadab, who is nothing but a man, and the one true and living God. Here are Jonadab's words versus God's words, and Jonadab's instructions versus God's instruction. Jonadab was a man. He had no real authority and no real power, with the exception that he was a husband and a father. Everything that he said and commanded his children to do was, in one sense of the word, not only illogical but very inconvenient. Yet everything he asked his children to do, they did. They obeyed.

When Jeremiah set those pots of wine in front of them and said, "Drink, have at it," they said, "No. Our father, Jonadab, commanded us never to drink any, and we are not going to do it. He commanded us not to have gardens, houses, or property, but just to live in tents and be nomads. That is exactly what we are going to do."

Jonadab was a human being, a man with no authority beyond that which he had as a husband and father. Yet here is a holy, sovereign God of heaven and earth, issuing commands and giving instructions for their good and benefit, with all authority and power, and no one listens to Him. They turn their backs and not their faces. They insult God and blaspheme God. God said, "You claim to be My people, but you will not listen. You will not obey."

It does no good to swear by the name of the Lord if all we have is an empty profession. It does no good to say that we are the people of God if all we have is a lip profession and our hearts and lives are far from Him.

In Isaiah 48:1-2, God says, “Hear you this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, which are come forth of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city and stay themselves upon

the God of Israel, Lord of hosts is his name." Note that they swear by the name of the Lord. John Calvin says, "Now as swearing is a kind of worship of God, he here puts one department for the whole class by a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole. As idolaters offer an insult to God when they swear by their idols, in like manner do sincere worshipers of God render honor to God by employing his name in oaths, for they acknowledge that they have but one God in whose name they glory. But here he attacks hypocrites with open mouth loudly boasting"

They were frequently mentioning the name of God, and yet in their hearts were greatly opposed to Him. On this account He says, "not in truth nor in righteousness." He employs the word "righteousness" to denote integrity and sincerity of heart, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. Rather, righteousness and truth are synonymous terms, as if He had said, "It was a mere pretense and hypocrisy to profess that they were the very people of God, because their treachery openly proclaimed their falsehood." Notice that He used the word treachery. It is treason, but it is more than treason.

Swearing Falsely Profanes God's Name: Leviticus and Deuteronomy

Look in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 13. The Bible says they swore by the name of the Lord. Calvin pointed out that swearing is a type of worship, and it is. God says, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God and serve Him. Thou shalt swear by His name." Swearing by His name indicates that He is the one true and living God. Again, in Deuteronomy chapter 10 and verse 20, He says, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, Him shalt thou serve and him shalt thou cleave and swear by his name."

These people swore by His name, but not in truth and not in righteousness. Consider how swearing falsely is connected with profaning the name of the Lord. Leviticus 19:12 says, "And you shall not swear by my name falsely. Neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God, I am the Lord." What were these people doing when they were professing to be God's people while living in total, absolute rebellion against Him and His law? They were profaning the name of

the Lord. They were swearing by His name falsely, and they were profaning the name of the Lord.

He said, “You shall not do that.” Leviticus 21:6 says, “They shall be holy unto their God and not profane the name of their God. For the offerings of the Lord made by fire and the bread of their God to do all they do offer. Therefore they shall be holy,” but note, “they shall be holy and not profane the name of their God.” Leviticus 22:32 says, “Neither shall you profane my holy name.”

“But I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am the Lord which hallow you.” I want you to understand that swearing falsely is a type of profanation of the name of God. It must be understood that those who profess Christ but do not possess Christ are swearing falsely by His name. In so doing, they are profaning the name of Christ. It takes more than a profession of Christ to save; it takes a possession of Christ. Those who profess Him but do not possess Him are swearing falsely by His name.

Jesus' Warning: Why Call Me Lord and Not Obey? Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-23

Our Lord Himself makes it clear that talk is cheap. In Luke 6:46, He asks, “And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Talk is cheap. That is what He is saying: Do not dare call Me Lord if you are not going to obey Me. The word “Lord” in the Greek is the word “Kyrios,” which literally means boss, owner, master, sovereign. Our Lord is saying, Why are you calling Me boss? Why are you calling Me master? Why are you calling Me sovereign if you are not going to obey Me? If you are Mine and acknowledge My lordship, you will obey Me. If you simply call Me Lord and disobey Me, you are profaning My name. You have an empty profession. A profession of Christ is useless unless it is backed up by a life of obedience to Christ and His Word.

Our Lord gave this warning in Matthew 7:21: “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? Thy name hath cast out devils, thy name done many wonderful works.”

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Here are individuals who had works and a profession, but their profession was not real. They had never been regenerated or converted by the power of God. There are people like that in our churches today. Some of the hardest workers are, in reality, trying to earn their salvation and work their way into heaven, which is impossible. You can have an empty profession and an empty, hollow, meaningless life, or you can have a profession with many works and still never be savingly regenerated.

The Bible says in Titus chapter 3, verses 5 and 6: "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he has shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior." It is the power of the Holy Spirit that regenerates and converts.

Conclusion: A Life of Obedience Evidences True Faith

Our Lord said plainly in John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments." If we confess Christ and claim to be His people, our lives must evidence that claim by obeying His Word. He also said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?" If I am your Lord, you will obey Me. What is the real test? Obedience. Is your life being brought into conformity to the Word of God? Is it continually being brought into conformity to the Word of God?

None of us are perfect. But when we see areas in our lives that are unbiblical and unscriptural, we change them. We repent of our sins and obey. Let us not be like those in Isaiah 48 and like multitudes of others who have a profession, but it is empty and meaningless. Our profession of faith must be backed up by a holy, obedient life, which evidences and demonstrates that God has worked in us.

If God had not already done something in you, you would never have a desire to be holy, godly, or obedient to begin with. It is only His grace that enables us to persevere because of His divine preservation. It takes more than a mere profession of faith. Talk is cheap. We must live an obedient life.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your love and Your truth. Lord, we do want to be Thy people. We want to be holy and godly. We do, Father, love Thee with all of our hearts. Make us what we should be for Your honor and Your glory. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

In Defense of Violence

December 27, 2015

Introduction and Text: Jeremiah 22:1-5

Open your Bible to Jeremiah, chapter 22. I will be quoting a lot of Scripture, including passages I want you to turn to. The message is titled “In Defense of Violence,” or “Defensive Violence,” and I think you will understand as we get into the Scripture. Notice Jeremiah, chapter 22, beginning with verse one.

“Thus saith the Lord, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates. Thus saith the Lord, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.”

Notice particularly verse three. This verse is addressed primarily to the king, to those who rule and have power: “and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow. Neither shed innocent blood in this place.” We are strangers to violence. We have not been brought up in violence, nor have we lived in or around violence.

Defining Biblical Violence

Most of us have absolutely no intent or desire to harm anyone. We have also been taught that all violence is inherently wrong, and therefore we shun it like the plague. In all probability, most Christians could not give a good definition of violence, or at least not a good definition of biblical violence. One of God's requirements in Jeremiah chapter 22 is to do no violence.

Again, look at verse three: “Thus saith the Lord; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.” Obviously, in this context, violence can be done not only to the stranger, but also to the fatherless and the widow. If it is wrong to do violence to a stranger, how much more wicked and worse would it be to do violence to a brother? Jeremiah, in this passage, further links violence to the failure to do judgment and justice.

Because the hearts of these individuals happen to be filled with greed and covetousness, look down to verse 13. Here is a good illustration: “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; that saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.”

Isn't that interesting? God asked, “Shalt thou reign simply because you're rich and well off and you have power and you have authority?” He said, “Was not, did not your father do judgment and justice? And then it was well with him.” Then he asked, “Was not this to know me?” Actually, verses 15 and 16 would be the opposite of doing violence. Therefore, to do judgment and justice, to do that which is righteous and holy, would be the opposite of doing violence.

The very first mention of the word violence is found in Genesis chapter six and verse 11. That verse says this: “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” In hermeneutics, which is the art or the science of Bible interpretation, there is a principle known as the law of first mention. The very first time a word is mentioned in the Bible, and the very first time it is known to mention, but how it is used in that mention is usually the way the word is going to be used throughout scripture, unless the context dictates otherwise. When you look at Genesis six and verse 11, the Hebrew word found there and most often throughout the Old Testament is chamas, which literally means to be cruel, to be unjust, to be unrighteous, to be false, to oppress, and to be violent.

Interestingly, most Christians have never considered oppression, injustice, and fraudulence as violence. I want you to stop and think about what I have just said. Injustice and a lack of judgment are a specific form of violence; they are vile and wicked. This violence is directed primarily against God and His law, and then secondarily against His people. Violence, then, is something that should cause us to cry out to God.

The Bible says in Psalm 89:14, “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.” Listen to this: justice and judgment are the habitation of God’s throne. Then, in Proverbs 21:3, the Bible says, “To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.” If justice and judgment are the habitation of God’s throne, and if they are more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice, would that not therefore mean that injustice, unrighteousness, and fraud are not only violence, but particularly a form of violence against God and His law?

This is something about which we should cry out. Habakkuk 1:2 says, “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence.” Habakkuk was crying out against violence. I want you to stop and think about violence. Proverbs 17:15 says, “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.” Now, here is my question: Would you have a judge who condemns the just, or a judge who justifies the wicked? Is that not violence? Of course it is. It is violence against God, His law, and His people.

Violence Condemned: The Violent Man in Scripture

I have only two points this morning. I want you to see, first of all, violence condemned, and then secondly, violence commended. Violence is most often condemned in Scripture. It is usually that which is wicked, violent, and hurtful toward those who are innocent and instead deserve kindness and respect, such as the widow, the orphan, and the stranger mentioned in our text.

Usually, violent individuals are in positions of power and authority. They are the violent men. In fact, David was a very great warrior, but even violent men terrified David. Let me show you. In Psalm 18:48, and then in Psalm 140, we see this. Hold Jeremiah 22, but turn to Psalm 18, beginning with verse 48. Then we will go to Psalm 140. In Psalm 18, beginning with verse 48, we read this.

“He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.” Who would be the violent man in David’s life? David was a man of war, and yet he says that God delivered him from the violent man. In Psalm 140, David prays, “Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders’ poison is under their lips. Selah. Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings.” David was praying to be preserved from the violent man, who had purposed to overthrow his goings.

Who was continually chasing David and trying to kill him? King Saul. Doeg the Edomite was another violent man in David’s life, but

it was Saul, in his position of authority and power, who was seeking David's overthrow. Violent men not only imagine mischiefs or iniquities in their hearts; they are always ready to commit violence in order to secure their ends. They lie, deceive, and seek to overthrow the righteous.

Proverbs 16:29 says, "A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good." A violent man is not necessarily someone who comes out swinging all the time. He may be very seductive. A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good.

Violence is promulgated in the assemblies of the violent, and they have no respect for God or man. David says in Psalm 86:14, "O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them." Violent men assemble together. I did not look up the word assemblies. I wonder if there is a parallel and we could read it, the courts of violent men. They have sought after my soul and have not set thee before them. Obviously, an assembly means they are getting together somehow, some way.

Examples of Unjust Authority and Violence

So far we have seen from Scripture that violence usually comes from those in positions of authority. There is a good illustration of this in Luke 18:2–5, where our Lord talks about the unjust judge: "There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

Notice that this was an unjust judge. He had a duty and a responsibility to execute judgment and justice, yet he refused to do so. Finally, what prompted him to avenge this woman was simply that she kept on until she wore him out. She would not give up. Unfortunately, we have many authorities like this unjust judge. They do not know to do right; they will not do right; and they store violence for themselves and for others.

There is an interesting verse in Amos 3:10: “For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.” Their palaces are those of kings, judges, or men of importance who possess power and authority. God says they do not know to do what is right. Likewise, today we have judges, rulers, and bureaucrats who have no idea what is right, just, lawful, or even merciful. They vainly and foolishly believe that they are the law themselves and that they are the distributors of justice. Regardless of how they function, such are violent men.

Look in your Bibles at 1 Samuel 12. Israel had sinned by asking for a man to rule over them instead of God. They wanted a man to be king when God was their King. Samuel says: “And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am:

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 12:3-4 (KJV)

> Witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.

Now, the interesting thing is when Samuel is asking them to testify against him, he says, "Whom have I defrauded?" And interestingly, the word there, defrauded, simply means to press upon, to oppress, to violate, to defraud, to do violence, to get deceitfully, to do wrong, and to extort. So Samuel said, which of you can point at anything that I've ever done to abuse my office or to abuse my authority?

It's kind of like our Lord said in John 8, verse 46, I think it is. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" In other words, who can point to anything that I've ever really done that is wrong? Now, I know Samuel was a sinner, but Samuel said, I've never, ever really defrauded anyone. I've not done violence. So Samuel was one who

did not abuse his office or his authority. He was not violent. Nehemiah was another individual that took his office and authority with great regard to God. Notice what he said in Nehemiah chapter 5 verse 15. Let me just read. By the way, when you read through the book of Nehemiah and you read about the Tirshatha, most people say, what in the world is the Tirshatha? It's just the word for governor is all it means. And so here's what Nehemiah said. Nehemiah 5 verse 15. "But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people,

and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God." So he said, these former governors, they demanded food and they demanded wine and they demanded forty shekels of silver, but so did not I for the fear of God. Yea, he said, even their servants bore rule over the people.

Let me tell you something, folks, please understand this. It is only the fear of God that will keep a man honest and keep him in line and keep him humble. If there is no fear of God, then you have something like this, and I'm quoting, I want you to listen carefully. Harnett County, North Carolina. Sheriff's deputies kicked a man's door down at 3:30 a.m. this past Sunday and killed him after he told them that they could not search his home without a search warrant. After John Livingston, 33, shut his door in the deputy's faces with his demand for a warrant, his roommate says police kicked in the door, got on top of him, started slinging him around and beat him.

Then they sprayed mace in his face and began to tase the unarmed father of three, who was described as a hardworking, very loving family man and talented carpenter. He had actually built the deck on the small home the deputies were invading. When Livingston attempted to remove the taser from the hands of the officer who was shocking him, the deputies executed him, claiming he got a hold of their weapon. Tasers were said to be non-lethal, yet the cops evidently feared for their lives at the mere prospect that one of their victims could maybe possibly turn one on them. As it turned out, the deputies were looking for a man who no longer lived in that house.

The Harnett County Sheriff's Department is stonewalling on the case, and it failed to release the names of the deputies involved in the

killing. No doubt, after routine investigation, the state goons will exonerate themselves. Obviously, some believe that disrespecting imagined authority deserves a death penalty. You talk about an abuse of office, an abuse of authority. Let me emphasize this: violent men and violence normally stem from those in positions of power and authority.

John the Baptist's Instruction to Soldiers

John the Baptist had been preaching, and certain groups came to him after he demanded that they repent. They asked what they must do to demonstrate that repentance was genuine in their lives. John gave different answers to different groups because their sins were different.

For instance, verse 10: "And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?" That is, what should we do, in light of what you have been preaching, to demonstrate that we are really repentant? "He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." The prevailing sin of the people in John's day was greediness and covetousness. Verse 12: "Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you." The prevailing sin of the publicans was theft. They were thieves. Watch verse 14: "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?"

Violence Commended

John the Baptist said to the soldiers, “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” Isn’t that amazing? He did not tell the publicans or the people to do violence to no man. He told those who had power and authority to do violence to no man, neither falsely accuse anyone, and to be content with their wages. The Greek word for violence here literally means to agitate, to terrify, to cause alarm, to cause to tremble, to extort from, and to be violent. These soldiers could most readily abuse their office, power, and authority by doing violence; therefore, he said, “Do no violence.”

Interestingly, when you look through Scripture and read about violent men, you have to understand that oftentimes they are men in positions of power and authority. But secondly today, I want to deal with violence commended.

We normally use the word violence simply to mean doing physical harm. If Marshall were standing here and I walked up to him, drew back my fist, hit him upside the head, and knocked him down—perhaps even knocked him out—we would call that violence, and it would be violence.

Violence Commended: God's Righteous Acts

I saw something on the internet that I liked. A middle-aged woman, rather broad, was bent over kissing a child on a motorcycle. This was in Afghanistan, Iraq, or Iran—one of those countries. A man walked by, grabbed her rear end, and started to walk off. She spun around, hit him upside the head, and knocked him into a table. He fell and hit the floor. He was out for two hours. I thought, “I bet he won’t do that anymore.” I thought, “Now that’s justice; that’s good; that’s great.”

When we think about violence, that is what we tend to think about. In today’s language and understanding, all violence is wrong. We have been taught that as children, even that fighting is wrong. According to humanism, fighting is wrong simply because it is a form of violence.

What you and I must do is distinguish between biblical violence—which I am going to show you a little later is not really violence at all, although we would call it that—and unbiblical violence. There is fighting that is condemned in Scripture, and there is fighting that is commended in Scripture. That which is commended is holy, just, righteous, and good. That which is condemned is wicked and vile and contrary to God's law.

I can show you the difference between the two by asking a number of questions. My first question would be this: Is God holy, just, and true? Of course. Let me give you Scripture. Deuteronomy 32:4 says, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." So we know

that God is just, holy, and righteous. All of His ways are judgment, the Bible says.

Now, let us take the humanist position for a moment. Let us assume that all violence, of any stripe, shade, form, or fashion, is wicked, wrong, and vile. Since we know that God is just, holy, and righteous, and we are assuming that all violence is wicked, vile, and evil, I have some questions to ask you. If all violence is wicked, vile, and evil, how could God righteously and justly destroy the antediluvians—that is, the old world—with a flood? If all violence is wicked and vile, how could God righteously and justly send fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain? A flood that wipes out a huge number of people and animals, and fire and brimstone burning people to death and destroying property—

That is pretty violent in my eyes. You must remember that Scripture declares God to be just, holy, and righteous. If God is holy, just, and righteous, and all violence is wrong, how could God send the flood? How could He destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? If all violence is wicked and evil, how could God raise up judges to defend His people?

In Judges, chapter 2, verse 16, Scripture says, "Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." When God raised up a judge, what did the judge do? He fought. Look at verse 18: "And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them."

God not only raised up judges to fight for His people, but the Bible says the Lord was with those judges. He was helping them to fight. The Lord delivered them from their enemies all the days of the judge because He heard the groanings of those whom their enemies oppressed and vexed. If all violence is wicked and wrong, how could God have raised up those judges, and how could God have helped them?

Here is another question: If all violence is wicked, wrong, and vile, how could God leave certain pagan people in the land just to teach

His people war? Judges 3, verse 1, says, “Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan;

The Lord said that the generations of Israel might know how to teach their children war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof—namely, the five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baalhermon unto the entering in of Hamath. God said, “I've left all these pagans here in the land to teach my people how to fight.” They did not know how to fight, so He left some so they could practice.

If all violence is wrong, how in the world could God do that? You have to remember that God is holy, just, and right. If all violence is wrong and wicked, how could God have righteously and justly taught David to fight? David was a mighty warrior. You remember how they sang, “Saul has killed his thousands and David his tens of thousands?”

What did David say in Psalm 144, verse 1? “Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.” David was a shepherd, not raised as a soldier. As he was about to face Goliath, Saul said to him, “You can't fight this man. He's been a man of war from his youth.” David was just a kid, probably somewhere between fifteen and seventeen years of age when he killed Goliath. How did he learn to fight so well? He answered it: God taught his hands to fight and his fingers to war.

God is holy, just, and good. If all violence is wrong, how could God righteously and justly defend Jerusalem and His people? In Isaiah 38:6, God said to King Hezekiah, “And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.” In fact, He said that five times. Do you know how God defended Jerusalem and His people?

By slaying 185,000 Assyrians. If all violence is wicked, vile, and wrong, how could God justly and righteously slay 185,000 Assyrians? You can read about it in Isaiah 37, verses 35 and 36.

If all violence is wicked and evil, how could God righteously and justly demand the deaths of all the Canaanites? When God brought

Israel out of Egypt, He put a sword in their hands and commanded them to kill all of them. Joshua 10:40 says, "So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded." Thus, God sentenced these people to death; He put the sword in Joshua's and the people's hands and commanded them to slay them all. Not all violence is condemned in Scripture.

If all violence is wicked, wrong, and vile, have you ever asked yourself: How will God judge and punish the wicked? I do not know, but I would tend to think that it would be pretty violent. Revelation 18:21 says, “And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.” With violence. God is doing something with violence.

Revelation 19:1 says, “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.” It seems to me that there is some violence used somewhere by God, and we must remember that God is holy, just, and true.

It is wicked and wrong to teach your children not to fight. You cannot teach your children to be cruel, unjust, and unrighteous bullies; that is wrong and condemned. But we have sired a generation of spineless, gutless, lily-livered sissies. Our children and spouses must understand that it is biblical to defend one's life, one's family, and one's property.

Biblical Defense of Life, Family, and Property

This is why God raised up judges in Israel. This is why God gave us the sixth commandment: “Thou shalt not kill.” The positive is, “Thou shalt preserve life.” We have the duty, obligation, and responsibility to preserve our lives and the lives of others. I ran across a book this

week and ordered it. Perhaps you might want to order it as well. I have not read the book.

SCRIPTURE READING - Nehemiah 4:11-17 (KJV)

I did read the reviews and look at the index. The title of the book is "Team Honey Badger: Raising Fearless Kids in a Cowardly World" by Paul Markle, and I'm anxiously looking forward to reading it.

We have been commanded to fight in the preservation of life, liberty, and property. We have to learn to fight, if necessary, to preserve even the Kingdom of God. Look in your Bibles to Nehemiah chapter 4. When I read this passage, beginning with verse 11, remember that Nehemiah was defending. He was not attacking. We're not conquistadors. We don't go out like the Islamics with swords and say, convert or die. No. Watch.

"And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease."

So they were planning a surprise attack.

"And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you."

Lord, you can't stop them. You can't win. Watch verse 13.

"Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the

> rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

What was Nehemiah doing? He was defending. He said, “They want to defend. They want to attack the work of God and stop it. They want to slay all of us. We will defend ourselves. We will defend our lives. We will defend our work.” If weapons are used in attacking us, we defend with weapons. If words are used in attacking us, we defend with words. If we are attacked legally, then we defend ourselves lawfully by whatever means are necessary. But we fight.

The point I am trying to make is this: The violence that is commended in Scripture is not really violence in the sense of that which is condemned, because that which is condemned is unjust, ungodly, and unrighteous. Rather, the violence that is commended in Scripture is that which is done in submission to and obedience to God. It is not rebellion against God; it is obedience, that which God demands.

Obedience to God's Command for Violence

Now, let me show you. Turn to First Kings, chapter 20. There is a war between Israel and Syria. King Ahab is on the throne; he is a wicked pervert. In fact, he is the wickedest man in the northern kingdom. Yet God had told him, “Look, I am going to let you defeat the Syrians,” and had appointed the Syrians for destruction. Ben-Hadad was king of Syria. God had appointed Ben-Hadad and his armies to destruction, and God wanted Ben-Hadad slain. Ahab not only refused to slay Ben-Hadad; he even called him his brother.

Listen to this statement; you are going to hear me say it two or three times: Violence is not always the answer. But when it is the answer, it is the only answer.

In First Kings 20, let us begin reading with verse 31. This is Ben-Hadad’s servants: “And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save

thy life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live." And he said, "Is he yet alive? he is my brother." Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, "Thy brother Benhadad."

And he said, "Go ye, bring him." Then Benhadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot. And Benhadad said unto him, "The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria." Then said Ahab, "I will send thee away with this covenant." So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the Lord, "Smite me, I pray thee." And the man refused to smite him. Then said he unto him, "Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee." And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him. Then he found another man, and said, "Smite me, I pray thee." And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him.

So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face. As the king passed by, he cried unto the king: "Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, 'Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver.' And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." And the king of Israel said unto him, "So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it." He hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets. And he said unto him, "Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people."

One man died simply because he refused to be physically violent when God demanded he be physically violent. When Ahab allowed Benhadad and his service to escape, God said, "Thy life for his life,

and thy people for his people." Violence is not always the answer. But when it is the answer, it is the only answer.

In Jeremiah chapter 48, God is demanding the destruction of Moab: "Against Moab thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Woe unto Nebo! for it is spoiled:

Kiriathaim is confounded and taken: Misgab is confounded and dismayed. There shall be no more praise of Moab: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from being a nation. Also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen; the sword shall pursue thee. A voice of crying shall be from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction. Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard. So Moab is to be destroyed now.

Listen carefully when God sends his army against his enemies: He demands obedience. I am talking about physical violence. Violence is not always the answer, but when it is, the answer is the only answer. God has demanded violence against Moab.

Look what he says in verse 10: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully." That is fighting. "And cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood." When violence is demanded, it is the only answer, and you bring yourself under the curse of God when you refuse to obey God.

Consider Sisera, who was fleeing from Barak. He went to Jael's tent and asked for water, but she brought him milk, the Bible saying, "in a lordly manner." He was tired, so he lay down, and she covered him. He said, "If any man ask if a man is here, say no." He went to sleep. What did she do? She took a tent peg and a hammer, drove it through his temple while he was asleep, and then cut off his head.

Illustrations and Application

Would you consider that violent? And yet she did it in obedience to God. When Barak arrived, she said, "Come, see the man that thou seekest." There he was; he had fallen at the hands of a woman because Barak refused to fight without Deborah. Consider also 1 Samuel chapter 15, when God sent King Saul to destroy all the Amalekites, and he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites.

Samuel reproaches Saul for disobeying God: “Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.”

“And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.” He hewed him and cut him up. He did not merely kill him; he cut him in pieces. The Bible says this was done before the Lord in Gilgal. If you check the phrase, it actually means “as unto the Lord” and “in the presence of the Lord.” What Samuel did to Agag was exactly what God wanted done to Agag. He did it as unto the Lord.

So there is a time to be biblically violent. When you have to fight physical violence, you must fight it with violence. Let me give you an illustration. I do not know whether the Paris attack was real, a false flag, or a real false flag, but I am going to read you an article. Think about this. The title of the article is “Pure Evil.”

ISIS gutted wounded victims at the French Concert Hall as they lay dying on the floor. They slit their stomachs and watched them die. An eyewitness hid in a cellar for three hours as the armed murderers rampaged through the packed theater in Paris. Marisha Payne from Berkshire told the Daily Mail, “We knew people were being tortured in the theater because we heard people screaming, but they were not being shot. And these were singular screams. When we escaped, the man trapped on the level where it happened said to us that the terrorists were stabbing people in the stomach. We were told they were throwing explosives at the people.”

It was a horrendous ordeal. So here is my question: If you were there watching that scenario, would you just fold your hands and say, “Well, I’ll pray for those poor people”? Or would you have defended their lives? What if it had been your wife, your husband, or your child on the floor? Would it have made any difference to you? Think about that. Violence is not always the answer. But when it is the answer, it is the only answer. We must defend life.

We are never ever to be unbiblically violent. But there is a biblical violence. And when it is demanded, we do not shrink from the task

because it is done in obedience to the sixth commandment: thou shalt preserve life.

Alice and I have some friends who now live in various places. At one time, they were raised in Washington State. I have so enjoyed this family. It was a family of eleven boys and one girl—twelve children. If I ever want a good laugh, I just listen to their escapades, the things they have done, and the trouble they have gotten into throughout their lives. But I was talking to them one day.

Two of the brothers said, "Look, here's what Daddy told us," and they feared their father, I can assure you. Their father said, "Boys, let me tell you something. If you ever start a fight, I'll whip you. But if you ever get in a fight and lose it, I'll whip you."

What was he saying? If you start a fight, you are being a bully. You are being unjust, unkind, and disrespectful. You deserve punishment. If you ever get in a fight and lose it, that means you did not start it, and you lost it because you did not fight hard enough and long enough. "I'll whip you." In other words, he was saying, "If you have to fight, you fight to win." I'm sure that Daddy understood their exceptions. It would be hard for me to fight and win if I were fighting five or six different men at one time with their hands. I understand that, and so he understood that.

But the point I'm trying to make is this: If you have to fight, you fight to win. You do not give up or give out. Make up your mind that you will have a combat mentality. There is a biblical principle: You must preserve life, and you must preserve your life as well as the lives of others. So, in defense of violence, yes, there is a time to be righteously, justly, wholly, biblically violent.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to you this day. We thank you for your Word and your truth. We thank you, Heavenly Father, that you are the one true and holy God, and that thou art the sovereign God on the throne. Besides thee, there is absolutely none other. There is one God and one law; therefore, one obedience is demanded. Help us, Lord, to love thee and deliver thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

Knowing God

December 13, 2018

Introduction: The Question of Knowing God

Jeremiah 22 and verse 16. We will come back a little bit later and get the context. The Bible says, “He judged the cause of the poor and needy. Then it was well with him. Was not this to know me? saith God.” So I began by asking this question: Do you know God?

There are numerous individuals who profess to know Him, but a number of questions need to be asked in order to ascertain whether they really and truly know Him. How do you know Him? Who introduced you to Him? How has the knowledge of Him affected and influenced your life? What do you know about Him? Lastly, does your knowledge of Him bring you into a personal and practical relationship with Him?

None of these questions are trivial or facetious. The truth of the matter is that this question is not only important but actually an issue of life and death. Let me go over these questions by way of introduction.

Types of Knowledge and the Role of Revelation

How do you know Him? You must understand that there are different kinds of knowledge. There is a mental or intellectual assent, or knowledge, which is simply knowledge held in the mind. There is theological knowledge, where people are able to discuss doctrine and things about God. But one may know the doctrine and not know God Himself. Then there is personal and practical knowledge of God. You need to discern which type of knowledge you hold concerning God.

The second question is this: Who introduced you to Him? I ask that because of the truth of Scripture. Matthew 11:27 says, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father. And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." No one is able to know the Son unless the Father reveals Him, and no one is able to know the Father unless the Son reveals Him. John 1:18 says, "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

In the strictest sense of the word, salvation is a revelation. The Lord says very clearly that no man knows the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Jesus Christ is the Revelator, the One who declares the Father.

The interesting thing about the word "reveal" in Matthew 11:27 is that it is the Greek word apokalupto. It is the same word we have in the book of Revelation in a different form. The word means to disclose, manifest, reveal, unveil, lay open, and uncover. Jesus Christ discloses and uncovers the Father to each one of us. That is why I ask, Who introduced you to the Father? The only One who can savingly introduce us to the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The Effects of Knowing God

The next question is this: How has this knowledge affected your life? It is impossible to know someone, especially the one true and living God, without being affected. In Jeremiah 24:7, God says concerning the remnant He would bring back into the land, "And I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, and they shall turn to me with their

whole heart." When He says, "I will give them a heart to know me," it means that they will turn to Him; they will turn to Him with their whole, or entire, heart.

If you know Him, you will turn to Him. If you know Him, your life will be changed. If you know Him, you will be so deeply affected that you will never be the same. What do you know about Him? It is impossible to know someone personally and intimately without knowing details about that person.

Intimate Knowledge and Personal Relationship

Consider our relationships. Alice and I will soon have been married fifty-six years. I can say that I know her. I can usually tell you what she is thinking, finish her sentences, and name her likes and dislikes. Unhappily, she would probably say the same thing about me. The point is that it is impossible to know someone without knowing intimate details about that individual. If we truly know God, then we will know intimate details about Him.

There will be things that we have learned through fellowship with Him, through the study of His Word, and through prayer. We will learn His likes and dislikes as well. We will know what is an abomination to Him and what is not an abomination to Him.

The last question that I ask is simply this: Does your knowledge of God bring you into a personal relationship with Him? If it does not, then the answer is that you really do not know God. Let me show you why. Hold Jeremiah 22, but look at John 17 and verse 3. This is the high priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God says, "And this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Eternal life is not simply living forever. If that is your definition of eternal life, then you would have to say that the unsaved who live forever in the lake of fire, being tormented, have eternal life. Eternal life is not simply being heavenly. According to our Lord in John 17:3, eternal life is a personal, intimate knowledge of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

One does not get eternal life when he dies; he has it now. If you do not have it now, you will not have it when you die. It is just that

simple. Many people tend to think that after they die, all of a sudden they are going to love the things which they formerly hated and hate the things which they formerly loved. That is an impossibility.

If you do not love the Lord God now—if you are not interested in worshiping Him, praising Him, honoring Him, glorifying Him, and living for Him now—what makes you think that when you die, all of a sudden you are going to want to do those things? Obviously, eternal life is a personal, intimate knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. We have that life now, and we experience it in degree, not to the degree that we will experience it in eternity, when we have a glorified body, renewed minds, and perfect knowledge and understanding.

In glory we will be forever learning about our great and glorious God, yet never fully able to comprehend Him, because we will not be God, even though we will be glorified. Eternity will be fellowship with this God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, forever and ever. Many professing Christians never stop and think of the Father.

Spurgeon's Introduction on the Study of God

On January 7, 1855, Charles Haddon Spurgeon opened his morning sermon with these words: “It has been said by someone that the proper study of mankind is man. I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God. The proper study of a Christian is the Godhead.

“The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the divinity. It is a subject so vast that all of our thoughts are lost in its immensity, so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity.

“Other subjects we can compass and grapple with. In them we feel self-content and go our way with the thought, ‘Behold, I am wise.’ But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumb line cannot sound its depth and our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass’s colt: ‘I am but of yesterday and know nothing.’

"No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind than thoughts of God. But while this subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. The most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect or magnify the soul as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of deity. While humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory."

"Oh, there is in contemplating Christ a balm for every wound, and musing on the Father there is a quietus for every grief, and in the influence of the Holy Ghost there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea. Be lost in his immensity, and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief, so speak peace to the winds of trial as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead."

When we consider how excellent, great, and vast the study of God is, we must confess that we are unable in ourselves to comprehend even the least part of it. It is indeed a very humbling study. Yet most Christians do not have detailed knowledge concerning God their Father. Our knowledge is often so skimpy, sparse, and small that we are satisfied with what might be called basic information.

Basic Truths vs. Personal Knowledge

In his book Knowing God, J. I. Packer shares five basic truths that serve as a foundation for knowing God.

First, God has spoken to man, and the Bible is His Word, given to make us wise unto salvation. This encompasses two presuppositions of Scripture: God is, and God has spoken.

Second, God is Lord and King over His world. He rules all things for His own glory, displaying His perfections in all that He does, in order that men and angels may worship and adore Him. God is absolutely King of kings and Lord of lords.

Third, God is Savior, active in sovereign love through the Lord Jesus Christ, rescuing believers from the guilt and power of sin, adopting them as His sons, and blessing them accordingly.

Fourth, God is triune: three persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The work of salvation is one in which all three act together: the Father proposing redemption, the Son securing it, and the Spirit applying it.

Fifth, godliness means responding to God's revelation in trust and obedience, faith and worship, prayer and praise, submission and service. Life must be seen and lived in light of God's Word.

This and nothing else is true religion. Let me say again: this is what I would call basic information and fundamental information. There is no way that anyone can be a Christian without knowing this information. J. I. Packer's book is an excellent book. I have it, read it many years ago, and recommended it. But these truths are what you and I would call exceedingly basic and fundamental.

Do you understand that there is a vast difference between knowing God and knowing about God? We could sit here all day and discuss His communicable and incommunicable attributes: His infinity, immensity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, eternality, and sovereignty. We could talk about His creation, providence, and salvation, as well as His love, mercy, goodness, power, justice, kindness, and grace. These attributes do indeed reveal God, or aspects concerning God, but simply knowing those attributes does not necessarily mean that you know Him personally and practically.

For instance, I can tell you all about a friend of mine and give you such detailed information that you would sit there and think, “Wow.” Yet with all that information, you still would not know him unless you had met him, personally communed with him, and discovered things about him for yourself. It is the same way with God. We have to know Him in such a way that our knowledge affects us personally and practically.

The Contrast Between Josiah and Jehoiakim

With that background in mind, go back to Jeremiah 22 and look at verse 16. Consider the context and the question God asked: "Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar?" "Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and the needy, then it was well with him. Was not this to know me? saith the Lord."

In this context, God is condemning King Jehoiakim, and rightly so. Jehoiakim had many advantages and ruined them all. He was the son of godly King Josiah. It is absolutely astounding, as you read Scripture, to find how many godly kings and godly men produced children who were entire reprobates. Alice and I have often talked about this, and one of the leading illustrations is King Hezekiah. One of the greatest revivals in the Old Testament took place under King Hezekiah, yet his son who succeeded him was wicked, vile, and reprobate Manasseh, the most ungodly king in the entire southern kingdom.

You look around and think, How in the world could this be? To understand this context, consider the godliness and obedience of King Josiah. Turn to 2 Kings 23. Josiah began reigning when he was eight years of age. The priest found a copy of the law in the temple and read it. Josiah repented, and God spoke to him and blessed him greatly.

Notice the things Josiah did to restore the true worship of God. "And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great, and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant, which was found in the house of the Lord."

Here was the king reading the word of God to the princes and the people when the book was found in the Temple. "And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their heart, and all their soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And all the people

stood to the covenant." The people followed the king. The king and the people entered into a covenant to obey God. "And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, the Asherah, and for all the host of heaven, and he

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 23:6-12 (KJV)

> burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them to Bethel. And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. And he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it to small powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. And he broke down the houses of the Sodomites that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba, and broke down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on
>
> a man's left hand at the gate of the city. Nevertheless, the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren. And he defiled Tophet, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. He took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, and at the entering into the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire. And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made

in the two courts of the house of the Lord, did the king beat down and break them down from thence, and cast the dust of

They brought them into the brook Kidron. The high places that were before Jerusalem, on the right hand of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtaroth, the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom, the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. He broke in pieces the images, cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men. Moreover, the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down, burned the high place, stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

As Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchers that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchers, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. All you can say is that King Josiah was very, very thorough. Anything and everything that was unbiblical, contrary to the covenant, and contrary to God's Word, he destroyed. He took it out of the way.

He made absolutely sure that there was absolutely nothing left. Josiah was the man who fulfilled all his duties, obligations, and responsibilities before the Lord. He followed God's law, and he wrought righteousness and justice.

This was the father of Jehoiakim. Stop and think: Jehoiakim knew all of this firsthand. So Jehoiakim wasted his education, his inheritance, and his heritage.

Jehoiakim was not made king by Josiah. Josiah was killed in battle with Pharaoh Necho, Pharaoh of Egypt. The people then took one of his sons and made him king, Jehoahaz. But Pharaoh Necho took Jehoahaz into Egypt, and he died there. How did Jehoiakim become king? The king of Egypt simply made him king.

If you look in 2 Kings chapter 23 and verse 34, the Bible says: "Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took

Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there." So now we have a king that God did not put on the throne. God did not designate him as king. Josiah did not make him king. The people did not make him king. A foreign ruler made him king.

To understand Jeremiah 22, consider some things about Jehoiakim. It was Jehoiakim who betrayed Nebuchadnezzar, violated his oath to him, and turned to Pharaoh king of Egypt. God held him liable for this betrayal. It was Jehoiakim who murdered Uriah the prophet, as recorded in Jeremiah chapter 26. Uriah was preaching exactly the same thing that Jeremiah was preaching, but the problem was that King Jehoiakim did not like what Uriah was preaching.

Jehoiakim said, “I’m going to kill you.” Uriah fled and got out of the authority and jurisdiction of Jehoiakim. In fact, he fled to Egypt. But Jehoiakim sent men down to Egypt, brought him back, and personally killed Uriah with a sword. Thus, he murdered a prophet of God. It was Jehoiakim whose life was filled with a multitude of abominations. You will find that in 2 Chronicles 36 and verse 8.

Here is a man who was just absolutely, totally corrupt. Moreover, see this one: it was Jehoiakim who took a penknife and cut up the scroll Baruch had written at the mouth of Jeremiah and cast it into the fire. Jeremiah had been cast into prison. He could not preach, and so he called Baruch. God spoke to Jeremiah, and as Jeremiah spoke to Baruch, Baruch wrote the words down. Jeremiah told Baruch, “Now you go and read these words to the people in the temple.” And he did.

The princes heard it, took the scroll, hid it, and went and told the king. The king did not like what was being said. Jeremiah 36, beginning with verse 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 the princes which stood about the king.”

The king sat in the winter house in the ninth month, and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. When Jehudi had read

three or four leaves, he cut them with the penknife and cast them into the fire on the hearth, until the entire roll was consumed. Jehoiakim never even read all of it. Yet they were not afraid or rent their garments, neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words.

Jehoiakim was a wicked man. He did not fear the Lord. He was unrighteous, a crook, covetous, proud, arrogant, and materialistic. Jeremiah 22 gives the context in a condemnation of King Jehoiakim. God says, “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; that saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.”

Then God asks Jehoiakim, “Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thine heart are”

“Not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.” I do not know about you, but reading that, I would think that God did not have too much respect for Jehoiakim, because Jehoiakim was indeed wicked and vile.

The Meaning of Knowing God in Jeremiah 22:16

Now, here is what I want you to see. Jehoiakim was a king. He lived in a palace. His pride was this great house that he had built for himself. He had wealth. Yet at the same time, he defrauded, oppressed, and treated people unjustly. He did whatever he wanted to do in fulfilling his heart’s desire. But like the wicked, he thought somehow, some way, that the judgment of God would be stayed against him. Certainly, it was not.

Go back to verse 15 and verse 16. Look at these questions and what God says to Jehoiakim: “Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar?” In other words, do you think all there is to life is materialism—that you have a beautiful home and a great house? “Did not thy father eat and drink?” He enjoyed his life. “But he did judgment and justice.” “And then it was well with him.” What else did he do? “He judged the cause of the poor and the needy. Then it was well with him.” And then God asked this question: “Was not this to know me? saith the Lord.”

Here is the point of the entire message: Knowing God is not mental assent, an intellectual acknowledgement, a theological persuasion, or being able to discuss the finer points of theology. No. Knowing God is something very personal, practical, and real. It is simply applying the Word of God to your everyday life. Josiah was doing justice and judgment, visiting the sick, and taking care of the poor and needy. What is it to know God? It is to have the knowledge of Him. Yes, it may be in your mind, but it filters down so that it involves and embraces the entirety of your life. Knowing God is not church attendance. It is not being at church on Sunday and then forgetting Him and living like

Knowing God is not living according to the flesh six days a week, then putting on a pious face and coming to church on Sunday. Knowing God is something that you live seven days a week. It is the application of His truth and His Word to your life. James, in James 1:27, said, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is a practical application of truth. As you apply that truth daily, you keep yourself unspotted from the world.

Commentary Insights and Applications

John Gill, commenting on the statement, “Was not this to know me, saith the Lord?” wrote: “It is not by words only, but by deeds that men show that they know the Lord. For some in words profess to know Him, who in works deny Him. When princes do the duty of their office, they thereby declare that they know and own the Lord by, and under whom they reign, that they have the fear of Him

before their eyes. This is a practical knowledge of Him, and is well pleasing to Him." Knowing God is therefore practical as well as personal. It is doing what you are supposed to do and living the way you are supposed to live.

Calvin wrote: "But this passage deserves to be noticed as it shows the piety that leads men to all duties of love. Where God then is known, kindness to man also appears. So also, on the other hand, we may conclude that all regard for God is extinguished and all fear of Him is abolished when men willfully do wrong one to another and when they seek to oppress and defraud one another."

"There is therefore no doubt but that gross impiety will be found where the offices of love are neglected. For when Jeremiah commended the piety of Josiah on this account, because he executed judgment and justice, he doubtless condemned Jehoiakim as though he had said that he was an abandoned and irreclaimable apostate. For had he retained a spark of religion, he would have acted more justly and humanely toward his people."

Calvin pointed out carefully that where God is known, kindness to man also appears; he also pointed out the opposite. In Luke 18, the Lord teaches that we ought always to pray and not faint: "There was a certain judge in a city who feared not God, nor regarded man." When you do not fear God, you have no regard for man. When you fear God, you do have regard for man.

Why did Jehoiakim not do judgment and justice? Why did he not take care of the poor? Because he had no fear of God. Why do we lack practical application in our lives? The answer is that we really have no fear of God. Matthew Henry said, "The right knowledge of God consists in doing our duty, particularly that which is the duty of our place and station in the world."

He continued, "It was Jehoiakim's pride that he had built a fine house. But Josiah's true praise was that he kept a good house." There is a vast difference between a fine house and a good house. Yet God asked Jehoiakim, "Was not this to know me, saith the Lord?"

Here is my first application: If we know God really and truly, it will manifest itself in our everyday life. We will do our duty in all

things, fulfill our responsibilities and obligations, and do so faithfully and practically.

John Gill quoted part of Titus 1:16, which we need to consider in full: “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” We are talking about professing Christians. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him. In other words, you say one thing with your mouth, while your life says something entirely different. That is the second application.

Blessings, wealth, prosperity, and success are worthless unless we serve the Lord Jesus Christ and apply His Word to our lives daily. I have often quoted the old Puritan saying: God often curses His enemies with riches. Riches can be a curse because people end up trusting in them instead of God. That is exactly what Jehoiakim did. He trusted in his wealth, and God condemned him, saying, “You do not know me.”

The third application is this: It does not matter how much theology you know, how many doctrines you can expound, or how finely you can split hairs theologically, if there is no practical application of the Word of God in your life on a daily basis. What God is saying in Jeremiah 22, verses 15 and 16, is that if we know Him, it will evidence itself in our lives. It will affect us and change us.

David said in Psalm 116, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." We speak what we believe, but we not only speak what we believe; we live out what we really and truly believe. So God asked, "Was not this to know me?" Our Lord said it very plainly in Luke 6 and verse 46: "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, owner, master, sovereign. Why are you calling me master, sovereign, or boss if you are not obeying me? The evidence that Jesus Christ is our Lord is that we will obey Him daily. Our lives will not only have a personal knowledge of God; they will have a very practical knowledge expressed in how we live, what we do, what we think, what we say, and how we act.

Conclusion and Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word and for your truth. We ask, Father, that you would indeed make your word very practical to each one of us. May we live it, understand it, and apply it, and may we praise and glorify thee in it. We will give thee the praise and honor in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

Is It Possible to Know Jesus Christ and Not Be Saved?

June 9, 2024

Introduction: The Question and Three Groups

The title of the sermon is, “Is it possible to know Jesus Christ and not be saved?” Think about that. Is it possible to know Jesus Christ and not be saved? In James 2, verse 19, the Word of God says, “Thou believest that there is one God. Thou doest well.” The devils also believe and tremble.

The question that I am asking is really an exceedingly important question, because your eternal destiny depends upon the answer. Is it possible to know Jesus Christ and not be saved? If you were to look upon the mass of professing Christians who attend church faithfully and regularly, and then, on the second hand, look upon the mass of those who profess to be saved, yet never, ever darken the doorway of a church, there is a third mass that we need to look upon: the mass of the unsaved.

So you have to ask, why are there no discernible differences between these three masses? I know that there are exceptions, especially among those who are lost. But I am not referring to the murderers and the rapists. I am simply talking about those lost folks whom the world would call moral, upright, and honest—those who work and try to do what they can to the best of their limited knowledge.

Consider a couple of things. Why not go into a restaurant and watch people? How many actually pray before they eat? How many are in control of their children and expect them to be obedient? If you go into a mall and watch people, how many are careful with the items they inspect? How many are concerned about the property rights of others? How many try to deceive and defraud the owners? How many will return money when it has been miscounted?

We could also ask any church member who professes to know Jesus Christ and carefully listen to the answer. When you ask, "Do you really know the Lord Jesus Christ?" ask how his life differs from that of the unsaved. Ask how the law of God has made a difference in his life and how he applies the law of God to every area of life. Ask him to explain any biblical doctrine. If he stutters and stammers and cannot think of any, perhaps suggest the doctrine of justification by faith alone or the doctrine of imputation.

The point is rather obvious: the unsaved usually cannot answer doctrinal questions. The truth is that most professing Christians—both regular church attenders and those who merely profess faith—usually cannot answer them either. This leads to the question: Is it possible to know Jesus Christ and not be saved?

You must understand that there are definitions of the word know and different ways that word is used. There is also a difference in the way the word believe is used. Unhappily, most people cannot discern these differences, even in Scripture. James 2:19 says, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."

The word believe, both times, is the same Greek word, pisteuo. It means to think to be true, to be persuaded to be true, or to place confidence in, and it is used in both a moral and a religious sense.

Here is the crux of the matter: the word may convey a saving belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, or it may mean merely acknowledging some fact, facts, or event—nothing more than intellectual faith. There are even degrees or intensities in intellectual knowledge.

Everyone in this room knows for an absolute fact that you are going to die. You do not know when, but you know for a fact that you are going to die. The truth is, most people hardly ever think about dying, and most of us do not want to think about dying, that is for sure. But although we know that we are going to die, if you knew absolutely for sure that you were going to die within the next ten minutes, I think your knowledge of death would be intensified. The degree of that knowledge would be increased, and you would realize that you simply do not have much time left.

The word believe in this passage in James 2:19 can be used of true saving faith, but it can also be used of mere intellectual knowledge. In verse 19, God says, "Thou believest that there is one God. Thou doest well. The devils, or the demons, also believe and tremble."

A Demon's Faith: Intellectual Knowledge Without Salvation

The Greek word for tremble is tremō, and it literally means to shudder. It means to be struck with fear; it literally means to be horrified. The Bible is telling us that they believe, and they are absolutely horrified. Surely and clearly, there is such a thing as a demon's faith: "Thou believest that there is one God. Thou doest well. The devils or the demons also believe and tremble."

They are absolutely assured of the fact that Jesus Christ is God. They know it, they confess it, and they tremble at that knowledge. We have to discern the difference in the meaning of the word know. We also have to discern the difference in the meaning of the word believe. Certainly the demons know and believe that Jesus Christ is God, and yet at the same time they are unsaved.

Demons' Confession in the Gospels

Matthew 8:28 says, "And when he was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with

devils, or demons, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way."

"And, behold, they cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?'" Here the demons recognize that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. They recognize that they are condemned, and they realize that their time is absolutely short.

Mark 1:23–24 says, "And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, a demon. And he cried out, saying, Let us alone. What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Look at that confession and at what he knows absolutely: he knows that Jesus Christ is indeed the Holy One of God. Verse 34 says, "And he, that is Jesus Christ, healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils, and suffered not the devils or the demons to speak, because they knew him." They knew that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh.

Mark 5 begins, "And they came over to the other side of the sea into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, a demon, who had his dwelling among the tombs, and no man could bind him, no, not with chains, because he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces, neither could any man tame him. And always night and day he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones."

"But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, My name is Legion, for we are many." The point is this: the demon is saying, "We know who thou art. We know that thou art the Son of the Most High God."

In Luke 4:34, and beginning in verse 33, an unclean spirit cried out in the synagogue, “Let us alone. What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?” Then it made this statement: “I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.”

Again, in Luke 8:28, when the demon saw Jesus, “he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.” Here is another statement of knowing and believing.

In each of these passages where the word know is used, it is the Greek word oida, which simply means to know, to perceive, to look at, or to behold. It is merely an intellectual knowledge that is confessing facts and reality. Demons know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. They know that Jesus Christ is the Holy One of God. They know that Jesus Christ has power over them. They know that they are defeated. They know that they will be tormented. They know they have a limited amount of time. They do not merely know; they tremble. They are very, very horrified.

Most Professing Christians Lack Even a Demon's Faith

Now, think about this point: most professing Christians do not even have the faith of a demon. Even though they may know facts, they do not tremble before such a holy, righteous, sovereign God. Our Lord said, “Thou believest in one God, thou doest well. The devils also believe and tremble.” Most people are not afraid of a holy, sovereign, righteous God who holds their soul in life. They do not tremble over His sovereignty, His authority, or His power. He is indeed the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Sovereign, Majestic, Eternal, Immutable God, and we know these things as facts. But no one trembles like the demons do. There is a demon’s faith.

Is it possible to believe on Jesus Christ and not be saved? The answer is certainly true, because demons believe, the Bible says, and yet they tremble and are not saved. If you go back in your Bibles to the book of James, chapter 2, there is not only a demon’s faith, but also a dead faith.

A Dead Faith: Profession Without Works

In James chapter 2 and verse 17, James writes, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone.” Now, I am going to come back to this passage, but I want you to see that statement in its context, so let us begin reading with verse 14. He asks, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone.”

Now, first of all, James is not teaching salvation by works. What he is teaching is that real saving faith works. It is never alone. I want you to look back at verse 14 because I want to clarify something for you, and you can see this in the context. James asks, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?” If you add just about three little words, you can understand exactly what he is saying. Look at it again, verse 14: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works, can”—here is my addition—“that kind of faith save him?”

He is talking about a specific kind of faith, and that specific kind of faith is a dead faith. He is talking about a faith without works, a faith that is nothing more than an empty profession. Now, listen to me. This dead faith may be a faith based upon facts. It may be a faith based upon scriptural reality and scriptural truth, and yet, at the same time, it is a dead faith because there are no works. Here is the passage that really ties this together for you, or at least it should: Titus 1 and verse 16.

Titus 1:16 says, "They profess that they know God. But in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient to every good work reprobate." On the one hand, they profess that they know Him; on the other hand, in works they deny Him. Their life, how they live, is a total contradiction to what they profess. God says they are abominable—that means it is a stench in His nostril—and they are disobedient and to every good work reprobate.

We know that Scripture teaches that works do not save a man. A man cannot be saved by works, and works do not even help save a man. Galatians 2:16 says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Jesus Christ and not by the works of the law. For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." It is impossible to be saved by your works. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote in Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

There is no contradiction between the teachings of the Apostle Paul and the teachings of the Apostle James. James is showing that a real, genuine, saving faith works. He has already pointed out a demon's faith; now he is pointing out a dead faith. In James 2:17–18 he says, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works. Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

God knows our faith and sees our faith. But man cannot see faith itself. The only way you can show me your faith is by the evidence of that faith, by producing good, godly, and biblical works. James, in this passage, gives us two examples of how works demonstrate faith.

Biblical Illustrations of Living Faith: Abraham and Rahab

First of all, he mentions Abraham. In James 2:20, he says, “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” Here is the first illustration: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled, which said, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called a friend of God.”

We know that Abraham had faith because the Bible clearly teaches that he is the father of the faith. Read Romans chapter four. God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and he left in obedience to God. When God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, his

only son Isaac, the Bible says that he immediately obeyed. Of course, you know how the story goes: the Lord stopped him and had a ram tangled in the thicket. He said, “I know that thou fearest me, Abraham. Do not by any stretch of the imagination harm that child.”

How do we know that Abraham believed God, trusted in God, and followed God? The answer is in obedience. His works demonstrated and manifested that he had faith in the one true and living God. That is why James says, “and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.” Very clearly, faith and works verify each other.

The second illustration is in James chapter 2, verses 24 through 26: “You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” We will come back to that. “Likewise, also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she had received the messengers and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” James gives us a clear illustration of exactly what he means. Every dead body has this in common: there is no spirit in it. When the spirit leaves, the body is dead. That is exactly what he said. Without the spirit, the body is dead. Now he is talking about Rahab. Hold James chapter 2, and turn to Joshua chapter 2.

Rahab's confession of faith is tremendous. She had already hidden the spies on the roof, and this is what she told them: "And she said unto the men, I know," there is that word, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed."

Then she says, "And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." She continues, "Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token."

Here is her confession: "I know, I know the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above." She knew this because of what He had done. He had delivered Israel out of Egypt, dried up the Red Sea, taken care of Og and Sihon, and given them Zion. She knew that. How did she manifest her faith? By hiding the spies and sending them out by another way. That is exactly what James is talking about.

Now look in James, verse 21: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?"

This same word is used in reference to Rahab, verse 25: “Likewise, also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?” The Greek word is dikaioō, and it means to show, exhibit, or evidence that one is righteous, that one is truly what he declares himself to be. It is not saying that the works saved them. It is saying that the faith they had was evidenced by that work. It was real and genuine, not hypocritical or merely dead intellectual faith. Therefore, we must remember that works cannot save us.

“Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” The word wrought is the Greek word synergeō, meaning to work together, to help in the work, to be a partner in it, and to put forth power together and assist. His works assisted and provided evidence that his faith was real and genuine.

James gives a good illustration. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can that kind of faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?”

Suppose Steve comes along saying, “I’m in bad, bad straits.” I ask, “What’s wrong with you, Steve?” He says, “I haven’t had any food in two weeks, and I haven’t had any water to drink in two days.” You can go three days without water and be in danger of dying. You can go forty days without food, but he is hungry and has had nothing for two weeks. I look at him and say, “Steve, I want to pray for you. The Lord bless you and the Lord keep you, and be ye warmed and filled

as you walk down that road going to look for some other help." What does that profit? I have given him nothing to eat or drink.

What if he came to me cold and shivering, needing a coat or a blanket, and I said, "Brother, may the Lord warm you, and a good way to get warm is for you to jog the next two miles down the road"? That is exactly the kind of faith James is describing: words without works provide no help.

The Role of Works in Demonstrating Faith

Your profession, without the evidence of works, is a dead faith. It is not real; it is hypocritical. It is indeed a false faith.

Now, I want to show you what the Word of God says about works. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Titus. Works do not save us, and they do not help save us, but they do manifest and demonstrate our faith. In Titus chapter 2, beginning with verse 7, God says, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is on the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

A pattern is not something up and down, off and on. What did God tell David and Solomon when they were talking about building the temple? God said, "See that thou make it according to the pattern which I gave thee in the mount." That is what he said to Moses as well, when he was talking about the tabernacle, I thought. A pattern is something that you can go by, something you can depend upon. A lot of you ladies have made dresses. You buy a pattern, lay your material on it, and cut it out. The pattern is something true, accurate, and dependable.

God says that we are to have a pattern of good works. In other words, I ought to be able to look at Gary and say, "Yes, he has been doing this for twenty-five years now, or thirty years, or whatever." It is not only a pattern of good works. Look at Titus chapter 2, verse 14; in fact, let us read verse 13: "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

We are not merely to have a pattern of good works; we are to be zealous of good works. It should be our zeal. A good work is that which is holy, godly, right, and biblical.

It is not merely what someone says or makes up in his mind. In Titus 3:8, Paul says, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." These things are good and profitable unto men. We are not only to have a pattern of good works and be zealous of good works; we are to be careful to maintain good works, because these things are good and profitable unto men. They are not profitable unto God. God sees our faith and knows our faith, but men do not. Titus 3:14 says, "And let ours also learn to maintain good works, for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful." God says that we are to learn to maintain good works. Remember 2 Timothy 3:16–17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

When you get to verse 17, we read that the man of God may be “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work,” or “unto all good works.” Our Lord said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” The same thing is saying: have a pattern of good works, be zealous of good works, and maintain good works.

Everybody can quote Ephesians 2:8–9, and probably verse 10 as well: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” Verse 10 says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” God has ordained good works for our lives if we are His people. If we have been saved by grace through faith, we are created unto good works in Jesus Christ, and He has ordained that we walk in them.

Yet any good thing in us, and any good work done by us, is only because of the grace of God in us, God using us and working through us. Isaiah 26:12 says, “Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.” Our flesh hates God; it is wicked and sinful. When we do something righteous, holy, and

godly, it is because God is working in us. Therefore, a dead faith is a faith that has no works—a faith that cannot manifest itself and does not manifest or demonstrate itself.

So is it possible to believe on Jesus Christ and not be saved? Yes. If all you have is a demon's faith, or a dead faith, it is possible. You may have all the facts accurately, but your faith is dead.

A Divine Faith: Salvation as God's Sovereign Work

There is indeed a divine faith, which is wrought by God. Salvation is the act of God alone. It is when God regenerates and converts us; only God can accomplish it. Man does not help God, work with God, or take the first step. Anything and everything in biblical salvation is of God. The only thing man can do is furnish the sinner.

Turn back in your Bibles to Mark chapter 10. This is where the rich young ruler came running to Jesus Christ, knelt before Him, and said, "What must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" You know the story. Finally, when our Lord told him, "One thing you lack, go and sell everything you have," He continued, "And give to the poor, take up your cross and follow Me." The Bible tells us that the young man went away exceedingly sorrowful, for he had great riches.

Now, here is the point I want to make. Look in Mark chapter 10, beginning with verse 22: "And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, which is impossible, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."

Look specifically at the question in verse 26: "And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?" Our Lord responded, "With men it salvation"—that was

the subject—“with men it salvation is impossible, but not with God. For with God all things are possible.” With man, it is impossible.

Years ago, while I was preaching, I was dealing with the doctrine of repentance. After I finished preaching, a man came up to me and said, “Brother Weaver, you make it so hard for a man to be saved.” I looked at him and said, “Please forgive me, because I have made a very grievous error.” He looked at me with a halfway grin. I said, “Sir, I did not intend to make it hard for a man to be saved. I meant to make it impossible.” That is what He said: “With men, it is impossible.” You cannot save yourself. You cannot help save yourself. Now look in your Bibles at Matthew chapter 11.

There is a divine faith, and it differs greatly from a demon's faith and from a dead faith. In Matthew chapter 11, verse 27, the Word of God teaches us that salvation is indeed a revelation. Our Lord says, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father. And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he whomsoever the Son will reveal him." No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son will reveal Him, and no one can know the Son except the Father reveal Him. Salvation is impossible without a revelation.

The word revealed is apokaluptō, the verb from apokalupsis, which we talk about in the book of Revelation. It means the unveiling, the revealing of Jesus Christ. This is what our Lord taught when He asked His disciples, "Whom say that I, the Son of Man, am?" They answered, "Some say you're Elijah, some say you're John the Baptist, one of the prophets." He asked, "But whom say you that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." The only way Peter knew who Jesus Christ was, was because God revealed it to him.

There are only three illustrations of salvation in the New Testament, and each demonstrates conclusively that salvation is the work of God and the work of God alone. The first is found in John chapter three, when Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, a man must be born again, or he cannot see the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God." Then in

verse seven He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, of the Spirit and of water, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Each time the word again is used, it is the Greek word anōthen, which means from above. Literally, our Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In other words, he has to be begotten by God.

Here, the spiritual birth is compared to physical birth. You did not get your father and mother to come together; you had nothing to do with it. You were born at the pleasure and will of someone else. You were born that way physically, and you were born that way spiritually.

The Bible says in James 1:18, "Of his own will begat he us, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creature." The word begat is apokueō, and it literally means to cease being pregnant, to bring forth from the womb. Of His own will, He brought us forth from the womb. You had nothing to do with your physical birth, and you really had nothing to do with your spiritual birth. The first illustration is birth. The second illustration given in the Bible is creation.

You will find that in 2 Corinthians 4:6: "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." When God created, He sovereignly and omnipotently said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God spoke it into existence. The Apostle Paul says that the same God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts. In other words, He spoke in our hearts, shining and giving us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

No man births himself, and no man creates himself. If we have a divine faith, it must be that God birthed us; He brought us to pass. If we have a divine faith, it is because God created in us the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and He gave us the grace and mercy to receive Christ. The third illustration used in the Bible is one with which you are all familiar: Ephesians 2:1, a resurrection.

"And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sin." May I remind you of what he said in James chapter 2 and verse 26? "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead." A dead man is dead because he has no strength, power, or spirit. You have never seen a dead man raise himself from the dead, with the exception of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is ascribed to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. No one else has ever raised himself from the dead because he has no strength or power.

You do not go by a cemetery and hear something below saying, "Move foot, wiggle toe. Dig with your arms, body." No, he is dead; he is not saying or doing anything. If a man is raised from the dead, it must be a power from the outside exerted upon him, for he has no power. That is why Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth." God gave him life in that tomb, enabling him to walk out. Had Lazarus not been given life, he would never have walked out.

Clearly then, Jonah 2:9 says it like this: "Salvation is of the Lord." That is true. We cannot birth ourselves, create ourselves, or resurrect ourselves.

Now, turn in your Bibles to John chapter 17. You realize this is the high priestly prayer of our Lord. I want to show you the difference in the word know. This is not merely head knowledge; I want to explain it. John 17, verse 1: "These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, The hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."

Eternal Life as Intimate Knowledge of God

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Jesus then defines it: "And this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The Greek word ginōskō signifies an intimate, personal relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Septuagint, the same word is used when Adam knew his wife and she conceived, describing a personal, intimate act. It is also used when God says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." God certainly knew the other families, but Israel alone had been the object of His intimacy:

He had given them His law, ordinances, and ceremonies. That is what He meant. Eternal life, therefore, is not simply living somewhere forever.

The unsaved are going to do that. But eternal life is a personal, intimate knowledge of God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not have it here on earth now, you are certainly not going to have it in eternity. He says, "This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." So here is my question: Is it possible to know Jesus Christ and not be saved?

Application and Conclusion

The answer is yes, if all you have is a demon's faith, or all you have is a dead faith. Unless you have a divine faith, you can know all the facts and still be lost. A mere head knowledge, an intellectual knowledge, a knowledge of facts, is not salvation; it is not a saving faith. Although our intellect is involved in salvation, salvation is more than simply a mere intellectual act. Demons have a very accurate intellectual knowledge, but they are unsaved.

There are people who can recite Scripture left and right, and people who have been taught all their lives and know exactly what they have been taught. You may know the facts and have a dead faith if there are no works that demonstrate that you have a living faith. Unless Jesus Christ has shown you the Father, and unless you have a personal, intimate relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ, then you are not saved. Someone may profess faith all day long, but unless his works demonstrate it, he is merely a hypocrite.

In Acts, chapter 26, the apostle Paul is defending himself before King Agrippa.

Salvation is more than a knowledge of facts. It is more than a knowledge of accurate facts. It is more than a knowledge of accurate scriptural facts. You can be accurate and you can be scriptural and still not be saved, because all you have is a dead faith.

Paul was defending himself before King Agrippa. Agrippa said unto Paul, "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." Then Paul stretched forth his hand and answered for himself: "I think myself

happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews, especially because I know thee to be an expert in all the customs and questions which are among the Jews, wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently." Paul knew Agrippa to be an expert in all the customs and questions among the Jews.

King Agrippa knew all about Judaism. King Agrippa knew all about the customs. He knew all about the ceremonies. He had what you and I would call a perfect intellectual knowledge because he was an expert in that area. When Paul got through, Agrippa said unto Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Agrippa had all the facts, and he knew all the truth, but he was lost. He was lost. You may be an expert in the truths of the Bible, you may know all the words and phrases, and you may speak the language of a Christian, but unless you have been begotten of God, you are not saved.

You remember that passage in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 9 and Revelation 3 and verse 8, where our Lord talked about those who claim to be Jews or Judahites, but they were nothing more than the synagogue of Satan. He said in verse 9 of chapter 3 of Revelation, "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet."

There is a verse that sums up this entire message. It is 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 19: "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The foundation of God stands sure, having been sealed. Number one, the Lord knows who are his. Then he went on to say, if you are his, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. In other words, your works will demonstrate that you are indeed one of his. Your life will manifest that you are indeed one of his. There is a demon's faith and there is a dead faith, but thankfully, by the grace of God, there is a divine faith, and that divine faith always works. It always wants to be obedient and pleasing unto the Lord.

Is it possible to believe on Jesus Christ and not be saved? The answer is yes. If all you have is a demon's faith or dead faith, it is

quite possible. But it is impossible to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with a divine faith and be lost. For our Lord said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” In his high priestly prayer he prayed, “Father, all those that thou hast given me, I pray that they will be with me forever.” Thankfully, there is a divine faith, and it is a faith that produces obedient, godly, holy, and biblical works.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word, we thank you for your truth, and we ask, Lord, that you would speak to our hearts and help us and teach us. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

Losing the Fear of God

January 5, 2026

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Samuel 6:1-10 (KJV)

Introduction and Scripture Reading

2 Samuel chapter 6, beginning there with verse 1:

"Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

> “And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.”
>
> The fear of God is indeed a saving work of God in our lives. Godly fear is a saving grace, and there is simply no way that anyone can work up a godly, saving fear on their own.

The Fear of God as a Saving Grace

God must give it, and God must implant it in our lives. Think about the title of this message, "Losing the Fear of God." You might think the title is deceptive, but let me explain. There is an implication that could be drawn, which is fallacious: you should never equate losing your salvation with losing the fear of God. They are two totally different things in one sense of the word, which I shall explain.

Of course, it is impossible for a real child of God to lose his salvation. Our Lord made this exceedingly clear in John chapter 10, verses 27 through 30, when He said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." Then He said, "I and My Father are one." Clearly our Lord has given us eternal life, and He said we shall never, ever perish.

At the same time, there is a sense in which we can lose the fear of God in a way that is often seen in believers. You may be surprised at how simple, how easy it is to lose the fear of God. It is a sin committed many times by the children of God.

In order to understand this message, you must understand the background. There was a battle between Israel and the Philistines, recorded in 1 Samuel chapters 4 and 5. During this battle, the Israelites were defeated; ultimately, the Philistines prevailed and took the ark of God.

Background: The Ark Captured and Returned

Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests, and they were unsaved men. They should never have been priests to begin with, but they were. They are called sons of Belial in the Bible. That means sons of the devil. They were so wicked that the Bible says they made the people of God despise the offerings of God. Moreover, they were adulterers and whoremongers. These were very, very wicked men.

In 1 Samuel chapter 4, we see where many people are today who profess to be children of God. One of the greatest sins of Israel was that they trusted, so many times, in anything and everything other than God. Likewise, we do the same today; we commit the same exact sin.

The Bible says, in verse 3, “And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines?” Verse 2 tells us that they had slain about four thousand Israelites. They had suffered a real defeat before the Philistines, and the elders were trying to understand why the LORD had smitten them. Yet notice their proposed answer. They did not turn to God Himself; they decided to bring the ark into the camp, believing that its presence would save them from their enemies. That particular battle was over, and the elders of Israel asked, “Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines?” Then they said, “Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant.”

Notice at this point that Israel was so degraded and so backslidden. The truth of the matter is, they viewed salvation and

deliverance in the ark of God, and not in the God of the ark. Likewise, many people today actually think they are saved because of artifacts, ceremonies, rituals, or whatever else they are trusting in. Some people believe they are saved because they are baptized.

Others trust in the Lord's Supper. Others trust in membership in a particular church, and others simply trust in their good works. In other words, they are like the Israelites here: they are trusting in the ark of God instead of the God of the ark. They are basically very superstitious individuals.

You have to remember that the Philistines ultimately defeated all the Israelites. Hophni and Phinehas were killed, and Eli died when he found out that the ark of God had been taken by the Philistines. He fell over backwards, broke his neck, and died.

But notice what God did to the false god of the Philistines. Look in 1 Samuel chapter 5. The Philistines had taken the ark and put it in the temple of their god, Dagon. "And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon."

"And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again." He could not set himself up, obviously. "And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day."

The truth of the matter is that this false god was destroyed, and he fell before the one true and living God's ark. The interesting thing is that God smote the Philistines because they had taken the ark of God. He smote them with a grievous destruction. First Samuel 5:6 says, "But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof." The hand of the LORD was heavy upon

them. He destroyed them and smote them with emerods. Verse 9 says, “And it was so, that after they had carried it about,” so one city was smitten.

They said, "Let's send it somewhere else." And then God smote the other cities wherever it was carried. "And it was so, that after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts."

Now look down, if you would, at verses 11 and 12. "So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven." Evidently, the destruction is exceedingly great, and all the Philistines are willing and ready to get rid of the ark of God. They want to send it back.

What in the world were emerods? The Hebrew word for emerods happens to be techor, and it refers literally to tumors, to hemorrhoids, and to piles. God has smitten these people with a very humiliating disease and slew many of them. Moreover, when you read the rest of this, he also sent a plague of mice into the cities, and they were devouring the food supplies. Moreover, probably many diseases were spread because of the abundance of the mice as well.

They get together and say, "We've got to send this ark back in order for this plague to be stayed." They took counsel together, and the elders of the Philistines said, "Well, you've trespassed against this God, so you must send back a trespass offering." They made golden emerods and golden mice, and put these things in a coffer beside the ark. Of course, they wanted to send it back. How did they send it back?

Look in 1 Samuel chapter 6, beginning with verse 7. Here is how they sent the ark back: "Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them: and take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold,

which ye return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go. And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil."

"But if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us. And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: and they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods. And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh."

They had taken a new cart, two cows that had just had calves, and separated the calves from their mothers. They tied the cows to the cart, although the cows had never been trained to pull one and were not broken to the yoke. The Philistines said, "Now if these cows take this ark straight to Beth-shemesh, we know that the hand of God was upon us. If they wander left and right and go wherever they want to go, we will know that it was just chance that happened to us."

The Sin at Beth-shemesh

There is no such thing as chance, luck, or fate in a world ruled by God. It was not chance. These cows went straight to Beth-shemesh, and the Philistines observed it. It is almost impossible to separate cows from their calves, yet these cows went straight to Beth-shemesh, lowing as they went. They were calling for their calves, but they still kept going. Notice what happened when they arrived at Beth-shemesh.

In verses 13 and 14, the Scripture says, "And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it. And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD."

They took the cart and made an altar out of it. Then they killed the cows and offered them as a sacrifice upon that altar. Evidently, the Levites had done this, because verse 15 says, “And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD.” The Levites had now taken the ark down, and they were probably the ones who made the sacrifice as well.

But let me tell you this: when it came to the ark of God, the Levites themselves could not look upon it. It was sacred.

Here was a sin that was committed, and the sin is very plain. Verse 13 says that the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. They lifted up their eyes, saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it. In verse 14, the cart came into the field, and they made the sacrifice. Now skip down to verse 18: “And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: which stone remaineth unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Beth-shemite. And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.”

"And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?" Then they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you." God had sovereignly smitten the people of Beth-shemesh, killing fifty thousand and seventy of them because they evidently looked into the ark or looked at the ark. The ark was infinitely holy, and no one outside of the high priest was to see it.

Even the Levites, who were ordained by God to help the priests, could not do whatever they wanted to do. They were to handle everything in the tabernacle, but their duties, obligations, and

responsibilities were assigned to them by God, under the authority and direction of the priests. In Numbers 4:18, God says, "Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites." He continues: "But thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden."

They could not simply do what they wanted to do; Aaron appointed them. "But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die." Aaron and his sons had to cover the ark and anything that was specifically holy. No one could see this ark except the high priest, and he went in only once a year.

What happened in 1 Samuel 6:19? These people looked into the ark of God. The Bible says, "And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men." There are some scholars who say that they did not actually look into the ark, but that they stared at it. They gazed at the ark.

It was a sinful curiosity. The Hebrew word is ra'ah, meaning to see, look at, gaze, observe, or watch. They were watching the ark. Colin Dalish explains that they did not necessarily look into it; they simply gazed at it with a simple gaze. He writes: “The stroke which fell upon the people of Beth-shemesh is sufficiently accounted for in these words, ‘because they had looked.’ There is no necessity to understand these words, however, as many rabbins do, as signifying that they looked into the ark, that is, opened it and looked in. For if this had been the meaning, the opening would certainly not have been passed over without notice. Ra'ah with beth means to look upon or look at a thing with lust or malicious pleasure. And here it is no doubt signifies a foolish staring which was incompatible with the holiness of the ark and was punished with death.”

Dalish's point is that the judgment is sufficiently explained by the words “because they had looked”; the text does not require us to understand that they opened the ark. Whether they looked into the ark or merely gazed and stared at it, no one was to observe it except the high priest. Even the Levites had to have it covered before

carrying it. Clearly, God judged these people, whether for maliciously staring or for opening the ark.

The Ark in Kirjath-jearim and David's Attempt

The men of Kirjath-jearim were then told to come and get the ark because the men of Beth-shemesh could no longer handle it. Their message was essentially, “We can't handle it anymore. We don't want it now.” First Samuel 6:21 says, “And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.” The men of Kirjath-jearim came, fetched up the ark of the LORD, brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep it. “And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.”

For twenty years the ark remained in Kirjath-jearim. It is true that the Philistines had taken it, but we must note what happened next as we look at 2 Samuel 6:2. The narrative now directs our attention back to the ark and to what followed its long stay in Kirjath-jearim.

the ark was in Kirjath-jearim for twenty years. We just read that. Note if you would 2 Samuel chapter 6 verse 2: "And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims." So now David goes to Baale of Judah. Well, I thought the ark was in Kirjath-jearim. Well, let me just explain this. There is no contradiction. Baale of Judah was called Kirjath-jearim in 1 Samuel chapter 7 verse 1. You'll also find it in 1 Chronicles 12 and verse 5. It was formerly called Kirjath-baal in Joshua 15 and verse 60. It was also called Baalah in Joshua 15 in verse 9, and it's also called Baale of Judah because it was of the tribe of Judah, and you'll find that also in Joshua chapter 15 in verse 1. So when they went to Baale of Judah, they went to Kirjath-jearim, because it's one and the same place.

Now, it's been in Kirjath-jearim for twenty years. May I ask you, who was the king before David? You remember was King Saul. Now the Bible says the men longed for the ark. How long was King Saul king? And the answer is, he was king for forty years. Now I want you

to see something. Look in your Bibles to 1 Chronicles chapter 13. 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles. So notice if you would 1 Chronicles chapter 13, and I want you to look at verse 3. Here it is. 1 Chronicles chapter 13, and look there at verse 3. Look what the Bible says. Here it is: "And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul." So the forty years that Saul was king, the ark was neglected. No one inquired of it. Okay, wherever the ark was, it may have been at Shiloh at that particular time, but it was neglected. Then of course it was captured, and then of course now it is at Kirjath-jearim or Baale of Judah, and David wants to bring it back to Jerusalem. So

The Bible tells you in Acts chapter 13, verse 21, that Saul was king for forty years. So David makes an attempt to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem, the city of David, known as the earthly Zion. Now look in 2 Samuel chapter 6, and let us read verses 3 through 8. This is important because it ties right in with what I am going to share with you.

“And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

“And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.”

David's Fear and the Lesson Learned

The Bible says in verse 8, “And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day.” Now, here is an amazing truth. Look at verse 9: “And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?” And David was afraid of the LORD that day.

Was David not fearful of the LORD before that day? What does it mean when it says, “And David was afraid of the LORD that day”? Was it that God gave him more fear, or was it a better fear? The word “fear” here is the Hebrew word yare', and it means to fear, to be afraid, to make afraid, to terrify, as well as to revere and to stand in all awe.

David was a believer. In fact, the Bible tells us plainly that David was a man after God's own heart. And yet, here in verse 9, the Bible says that David was afraid of the LORD that day. Is this a new awakening of the fear of God in his life? Is this a new realization of the fear of God? What happened to Uzzah made David stop and think. It caught his attention and made him consider his actions. He realized that God was displeased with Uzzah.

That's why He smote him. And God may have been displeased with other things as well. David was saying, "God may be displeased with me as well." So, not only does it say that David was afraid of the LORD that day, but he also asked this question: "How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?" In other words, if God has been so displeased with us and what is going on, I don't think I'm ever going to get this ark to me, because I'm not interested in displeasing God.

David probably thought about God's displeasure with the Philistines. I have no idea how many of those Philistines were killed by God, and the Bible does not tell us. But the Bible says His hand was heavy upon them. It was a great destruction, and they were eager to get rid of the ark of God. Then we read about the fifty thousand and seventy who were killed at Beth-shemesh.

Now Uzzah is smitten, and he falls down dead. David asks, “How in the world am I going to get this ark back to me?” David was afraid of the LORD that day. Had David lost his fear of the LORD? Why are we told particularly in verse 9 that David was afraid of the LORD that day? He was certainly considering the displeasure of God, because God had evidenced His displeasure at the Philistines, at the Beth-shemites, and at Uzzah. How could this ark get to David in the city of Jerusalem without God's displeasure?

David was so concerned that he relinquished the idea of bringing the ark to him in the city of Jerusalem. Verse 10 says, “So David

would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household. And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness."

When the ark was turned aside to the house of Obed-edom, God blessed that house for three months. Obed-edom was a Levite of the family of the Kohathites, as recorded in Exodus 6:21, Exodus 18:16, and 1 Chronicles 26:4. He was called the Gittite, or Gathite, because of his birthplace in the Levitical city of Gath-rimmon, which was in the tribe of Dan. God blessed his house, and David was encouraged to go back and get the ark.

But what was David thinking? He had tried to bring up the ark on a new cart with oxen or cattle. When the oxen stumbled, or the cart hit a rock or root, the ark began losing its balance; Uzzah reached up and touched it, and God killed him. Was David going to get a newer cart or different cows?

How is David going to get this ark? We know that he got it, but I want to show you. In 1 Chronicles 15:1, we read: "And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it."

None ought to carry the ark but the Levites. That is what God had ordained. Skip down to verse 11: "David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab, and said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it

not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order."

Now here is my question: Did David lose his fear of God? Let me ask it another way: Had he forgotten the fear of God?

Learning and Forgetting the Fear of God

The fear of God is given to us initially and originally by God Himself. His fear is implanted into His people. It is impossible to work up a saving fear of God; man cannot do that. But when God works it in us, He expects us to work it out. In Philippians 2:11-12, the Apostle Paul says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." They are not earning their salvation. Then he says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." If God works it in us, it is our responsibility to work it out. God tells us that we must learn the fear of God.

I am not going to show you all five of those texts, but I am going to remind you of one. Turn back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy, chapter 4, verses 9 and 10. Look at this, plain and simple. Look what God says to His people.

Deuteronomy 4:9–10 says, "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children."

Notice verse 9: "Keep thy soul diligently." Why? Lest you forget, lest these things depart from your heart—but teach them to your children. Then, in verse 10, He says, "I will make them hear my words" so "that they may learn to fear me." If you can learn to fear the Lord, you can also forget the fear of the Lord. In that sense, you can lose the fear of the Lord by failing to hear and heed His words.

Deuteronomy 8:11 gives this 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." Do not

forget to obey Him; do not forget to keep His Word. Verse 14 says, "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." You can forget God, His covenant, and His law.

Verse 19 continues: "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish." When you begin to forget God's Word, God's covenant, and God's law, you end up in idolatry. It is just that simple.

Mark 4:24–25 presents two very important principles: "And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."

Here is the first principle: God measures truth to us in proportion to our hearing, our reading, our studies, our meditation, and our consideration. If you study the Word of God for fifteen minutes, you are not going to get six hours' worth of truth. You are going to get fifteen minutes' worth of truth, and that is it. With what measure you mete, it shall be measured back to you. That is all there is to it. If you only spend twenty minutes a week reading your Bible, you are not going to get more than twenty minutes' worth of truth. That is all there is to it.

You have got to remember this principle: God measures truth in proportion to the degree that we give in learning that truth. Here is the second principle: "From him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath." Let me put this in a paraphrase for you: If you do not use the truth, you lose the truth. If you do not use the truth, you lose the truth. Now, think about this.

David's Loss of Fear and Application

Some of you may have had algebra in high school, perhaps calculus in college. That was a long time ago. Can you still do algebra? Can you still do calculus? For most of us, the answer would be no, because we have forgotten everything. We never used it.

Dinah could explain many things to me about nursing, and I could sit here and listen intently—or pretend to listen while letting my mind wander. After teaching me for ten hours, she might ask, “Now what have you learned?” I might answer, “Beats me. I don't know.” But if I really listened, was truly interested, and genuinely wanted to learn, I ought to be able, after she taught me, not only to tell her what she had taught me, but also to explain how I would use it and how it would be applied.

So let me put it to you very bluntly: If you cannot explain truth, or if you do not know how to apply truth, you do not possess truth. Someone may explain things to me, and, as the old saying goes, it is Greek to me. I cannot see it or imagine it. He can explain it in words, but I do not know exactly what he is talking about. I might repeat back to him what he said if I listened carefully. But if I cannot do it, if I cannot make application of it, all the teaching is useless.

This is exactly what God is telling us right now: If you do not use the truth, you lose the truth.

Now, here is my question: Did David lose his fear of God? The answer is yes. Did David forget the fear of God? Again, the answer is yes. How do I know that David lost the fear of God? The Bible said he was afraid of the LORD that day. Something reminded him of the fear of the LORD. What had David just done? Let us see.

He went to the house of Abinadab, got the ark of God, and put it on the cart being pulled by cows or oxen. When one of them stumbled or the cart hit a rock, the ark lost its balance, Uzzah touched it, and God killed him.

When the Philistines sent the ark back, what did they do? They put it on a cart with two cows. What did David do? He put it on a cart with two cows. David was using a method of the unsaved, uncircumcised, ungodly Philistines. David said, "God put a breach upon us. Why? Because we sought him not after the due order." In other words, none but the Levites ought to carry this thing. David had forgotten that knowledge when he attempted to put the ark on a cart. If the Philistines did it, David said, "It worked for them, it'll work for me."

No. God says, "No, the Levites are to carry that ark." What is happening today is the same thing. Most of us as Christians are not worshiping God after due order. Even our churches are turning into social clubs and entertainment centers, filled with worldly activities and worldly worship.

Fearing God and obedience are synonymous. You cannot fear God without obeying God. If you disobey God, then you do not fear God; you have forgotten the fear of the Lord and lost it, at least temporarily, for the time that you have sinned against Him. It is impossible to fear God and disobey Him. If you fear God, you are going to obey Him.

Every one of us has problems, faces issues, and encounters opportunities for ministry. Whenever we face a problem or issue, or consider a possible ministry, we should ask ourselves: How should we resolve this, or how should we do this, in a biblical manner that is pleasing to the Lord?

If Dinah and I get into an argument and become irritated, angry, and mad at each other, how am I to resolve that in a biblical manner? How is she to resolve it in a biblical manner? We need money. How do we resolve that in a biblical manner?

When you take the attitude, "I have this problem, I have this issue, but I will work it out my own way. I want to do what I think best. I've got an idea exactly what I'm going to do," you are headed for failure if you are a Christian. In every area of our life, we ought to be willing to do that which is biblical and bring everything into conformity with the Word of God. If we do not, then we are going to be losing the fear of God.

Awakening to Fear through Judgment

David was awakened by the death of Uzzah. No doubt he was considering what happened to the Philistines and to the people of Beth-shemesh, but Uzzah died right in front of him. The others did not die in front of him. So Uzzah's death awakened David: "Wait a minute, we might be doing something wrong. We're displeasing God. God has made a breach upon us. What are we doing wrong?"

Later, he finally remembered: "None but the Levites are to carry the ark."

If it took the death of Uzzah to awaken the fear of God in David, what will it take to awaken the fear of God in us so that we want to do everything biblical and pleasing unto Him?

Isaiah says, “Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.” That is what we want. But notice: “in the way of thy judgments we waited for thee.” Isaiah continues, “With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.”

“For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” Isaiah also says, “Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.”

Again, “With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” It is not the wicked who will learn righteousness. Who will? It is the righteous, those who are saved. They will learn His righteousness. In other words, God will use His judgments to awaken us to obedience.

Consider this application: good intentions do not and cannot negate God's chastisement and judgment when we do something wrong. Uzzah undoubtedly had good intentions. He probably thought, “Oh no, there's the ark. Let me save the ark.” He touched the ark. He was not allowed to touch the ark. Many times we do things wrong, but we do it with good intentions. But we're still doing wrong. Our good intentions do not cancel out our unbiblical deeds, our unbiblical thoughts, or our unbiblical actions.

Final Applications and Conclusion

This is why we have to know what God demands and commands. Another valuable lesson that we must learn is that God does not need our help. We need Him, but He really does not need us. God

could have saved the ark from falling without Uzzah touching it. In Isaiah 42:8, He says, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." God is quite capable of protecting His own glory, protecting His own people, defeating His own enemies, and subduing everything to His sovereign authority. God does not need us. Yes, we are His servants, and we minister to Him by ministering to others, but God does not need us to work out that which He has ordained from eternity.

The Bible says, "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." God will do it. It is His. He is quite capable of taking care of the wicked. We get bent out of shape and concerned over what is going on. Yes, we should make it a matter of prayer. Yes, we should search the Scripture and quote the Scriptures. We should plead to our heavenly Father. That is true. But we have to understand that He is quite capable of taking care of everything Himself.

The strongest emphasis is this: We lose the obedience, we lose the fear of God, through our disobedience. Stop and think about this. The more you sin, the easier it is to sin. The more you disobey, the easier it is to disobey. "Well, God didn't strike me down that time. Maybe He's not God, or just maybe He's not paying attention, or maybe He's not going to do it."

Psalm 36:1 says, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." That is the transgression of the wicked. There is no fear of God before his eyes: "I don't fear God. I'm going to do what I want to do."

"I'll do it my way." It is impossible to fear God and disobey Him. If you fear God, you're going to obey Him. If you disobey Him, you don't fear God. Did David lose his fear of God? Yes, he did. How do I know he did? Because he used the way of the Philistines. He used the way of the world to try to get God closer to him. You can't get God closer to you by using the world and worldly methods. It's impossible.

God has ordained everything, and God has said, "This is the way I'm to be worshipped. This is the way that I come to you, and this is the way you come to Me." Anytime we get in the habit of certain sins,

we're losing the fear of God, because if we genuinely feared God, we would not do what He commanded us not to do. We would be obedient. We must learn we cannot use the way of the world to worship God. We can't use those things which God condemns to bring us closer to Him.

It is possible to lose the fear of God, but not lose your salvation. It is possible to lose the fear of God through disobedience. The more you disobey, the easier it becomes to disobey. The more you sin, the easier it becomes to sin. In doing so, you're losing the fear of God, until all of a sudden God will send something in your life that will open your eyes and awaken you, and you'll be in the place of David. David was afraid of the LORD that day, because he realized what he was doing was wrong, and God was displeased with him. Do not lose the fear of the Lord.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. We ask, Father, for Your grace and mercy. Teach us, Lord, to be obedient and to honor Thee. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Source Notes

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Chapter 8: Is It Possible to Know Jesus Christ and Not Be Saved?
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Chapter 9: Losing the Fear of God
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