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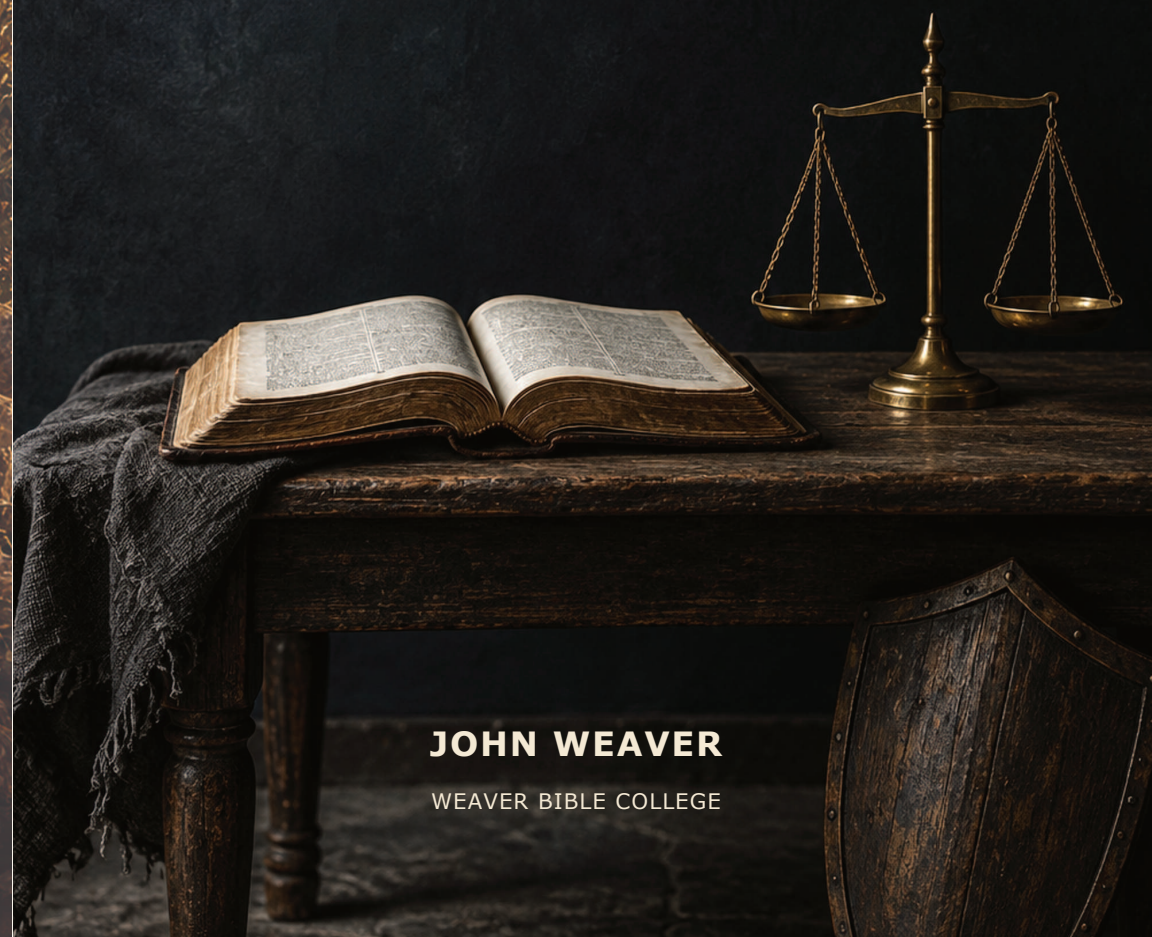
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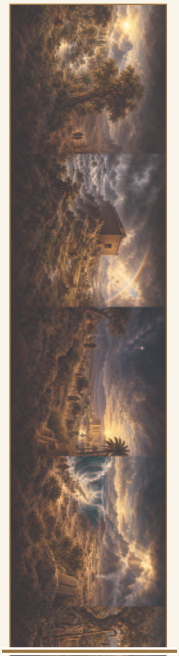
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105

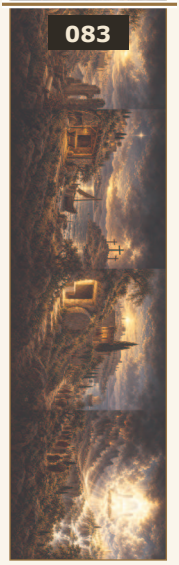


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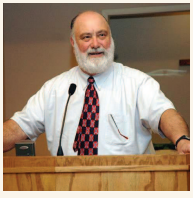
A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.

PROVERBS 11:1

Wisdom must shape the practical decisions of ordinary life. This collection considers wealth, prudence, responsibility, defense, and justice through biblical teaching and historical illustrations. John Weaver asks readers to examine conduct as well as belief, weighing human assumptions against Scripture and considering what faithful responsibility requires in the household and community.

“The only source where you will ever find wisdom and understanding is God, because God alone is the source and the substance of wisdom and understanding.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

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

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CHAPTER 1

Do You Really Need a Great Faith

March 30, 2014

Luke 17, verses 1–10. The title of the message is, "Do You Really Need a Great Faith?"

Look at Luke chapter 17, beginning there with verse 1: "Then said he unto his disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 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." And the Lord said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you."

"But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

Introduction: The Misconception of Great Faith

I've heard many sermons and preachers speak of the need of a great faith. We tend to think that if we had great faith, we would be able to do more in the service of our Lord. Man always thinks that abundance is greater. More is better. Alice accuses me of that because one vitamin C is good, then three has got to be better than one. We especially think that in Christianity. We tend to think that a greater congregation, a better building, a larger program, and an ever-expanding outreach are evidence of success and displays of greater devotion and service to our Lord. But such is not always the case.

1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 2, says, “Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” God does not say that a man must be found successful. He says that he must be found faithful. So it really does not matter whether one has little or much. It is not success that counts, but faithfulness that counts. Faithfulness, even in little things, is counted success in the eyes of God.

Faithfulness Over Success: Biblical Examples

In Luke chapter 16, verse 10, our Lord says, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?”

What is God saying? If you can be faithful in just the very minutest amount, you are going to be faithful when you have a lot.

He said if you are unjust in the minutest amount, you are going to be unjust when you have a lot. If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon—that is, money—"Who will commit unto you the true riches?" If you are not faithful in your own money, who will commit unto you the true riches? If you cannot be faithful in that which is physical, what makes you think you are going to be faithful in that which is spiritual?

And if you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? If I borrow something from Dr. Holmes, or he lends me something, or he gives me something, or asks me to take care of something for him, and I will not faithfully take care of that which he has entrusted to me, why would I think that I would be faithful to take care of my own? No. The whole principle is this: if you are faithful in just a little, then you are going to be faithful in that which is much.

The Bible teaches that it is faithfulness that counts. It is faithfulness to the Word of God, and it is faithfulness to our Lord, which He measures as success.

I have heard for years—and some of you have heard as well—churches and preachers say that if a pastor is not baptizing 300 per year, then he is not right with God. I have heard a multitude of preachers say that. My response is, really? May I ask you, how many did Noah baptize in 120 years of faithful preaching and teaching? None. How many converts did Jeremiah and Isaiah produce?

What kind of outreach ministry did Abel have? How about Rahab and Enoch? How about Moses? Did you know that Moses led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt and lost them all but two? Only two of the original men who got out got in. Yet, in Numbers chapter 12 and verse 7, God says, "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house." In Hebrews 3 and verse 5, our Lord says concerning Moses, "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." Moses was faithful even though he lost every one of the men except two.

Do you realize that every individual listed in Hebrews chapter 11, and others who are not named but are mentioned there, together with a host of others who are not even listed or termed the “others,” were faithful to God? Some had what you and I would call great ministry; some did not. But it was not success in man's eyes that God viewed as success. It was faithfulness.

As you read through Luke chapter 19, the individual to whom the Lord gave ten pounds doubled it, and our Lord said, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: have thou authority over ten cities.” The man to whom the Lord gave five pounds doubled it, and the Lord said, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: have thou authority over five cities.” The reward for each was basically the same. They simply doubled, and the Lord doubled them. By ratio, it was exactly the same. Our Lord is saying this: we do not need to be great; we simply need to be faithful. According to the Scripture, it is the faithful in the land upon whose eyes the Lord rests.

Psalm 101:6 says, “Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.” This should be a great encouragement to you. Notice what God says: “Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land.” Upon whom are the eyes of the Lord? The answer is, they are upon the faithful of the land. God counts faithfulness.

Since God is referred to and designated over and over in Scripture as the faithful God, it is obvious, therefore, that He is indeed concerned with faithfulness. In fact, Deuteronomy 7:9 says, “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.” When you get to 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 9, the Bible says, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In Luke 17:5, the disciples said unto the Lord, “Increase our faith.” I was reading this passage recently, and this request just really struck me. When you read the context, it appears on the surface that our Lord either ignored their request or shot it down based upon what follows. It is true that He shows and demonstrates how effective even a small faith could be. One who exercises that small

faith could command a sycamine or sycamore tree to be uprooted and to be planted in the ocean, and He said it shall be done.

The Context of the Apostles' Request

Yet it just appears from the context that our Lord does not really answer their request. They say, “Increase our faith,” and yet He just says, “No. If you had the faith as a grain of mustard seed…” Let us first of all consider today that which brought on this request. How would you know? They said, “Lord, increase our faith.”

Let me ask you a couple of questions. How many of you have ever asked for your faith to be increased? Don't answer out loud. How often have you asked for your faith to be increased? How often have you been concerned with the quantity and the quality of your faith? The truth is, like the apostles, we hardly ever think on the subject. It was only when our Lord told a truth the apostles deemed difficult to obey that they asked, "Lord, increase our faith." That subject concerned interpersonal relationships, especially the duty and obligation of forgiveness.

Go back to verses 1 and 2. In Luke 17:1-2, our Lord speaks of the inevitability of offenses: "Then said he unto his disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." Our Lord is speaking of individuals who purposefully, deliberately, and willingly scandalize and upset one of His true disciples. The "little one" is not necessarily a child, but a believer. Notice that He speaks both of the difficulty and the inevitability of these offenses. They are going to come whether we like it or not.

Handling Offenses Biblically

The word "offense" is actually where we derive our English word "scandal." Skandalon is the Greek word. When one is scandalized, he is trapped and hurt; he has been caused to fall, or has fallen into error or sin. Has that ever happened to you? The answer is yes, and probably many times. Most of those times were not nearly as severe

as a few others, yet there have been times when you were offended, hurt, and scandalized.

One of the most difficult things for us to do is to easily, readily, willingly, and heartily forgive one who has caused us so much hurt, pain, and injury. Isn't that difficult when you have been hurt? Yet notice what our Lord says. Even in light of these offenses and scandals, He says in verse 3, "Take heed to yourselves." Then He continues: "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."

Now our Lord, in verse 3, gives us a heads-up in His admonition: “Take heed to yourselves.”

Why should we take heed to ourselves if someone else is hurting us? Why should we take heed to ourselves if someone is offending us? Our Lord is saying we better take heed that we act obediently and scripturally. We need to take heed that we do not stumble and that we do not become an occasion of stumbling in the lives of others.

When our Lord says, “Take heed to yourselves,” it is a command that you are to be aware of imminent danger. Wow. So when He says that someone has offended you, upset you, hurt you, injured you, the first thing you better do is to take heed to yourself. And you need to make sure that you especially act obediently, even in the realm and the duty of forgiveness.

Now, once you and I have been hurt and offended and scandalized, what He says is we need to take heed to ourselves that we follow the Word of God in resolving the conflict.

Now, look back at verse 3: “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him.” Let me deal with this phrase, “rebuke him.” Our Lord is telling us that if our brother sins against us, we are to rebuke him. Obviously, when our Lord commands us to rebuke our brother, that does not mean jumping down his throat, cussing him out, telling him off, or embarrassing and humiliating him in front of others.

That is a tendency of the flesh. When we have been hurt, the tendency is to hurt back and strike back. It is far more natural to try to hurt someone who has hurt us than to quietly and firmly discuss what has happened and seek to resolve it in a biblical manner. Rebukes in the flesh will only raise the hackles of the flesh and will always make the problems more complex and compounded. However, rebukes done in gentleness and in the power of the Holy Spirit humble and subdue us.

May I remind you of Proverbs 15:1? “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” Years ago, when I was in a Christian school, I had an office next to a woman whose whole duty and ministry was dealing with irate parents. The school had about 3,000 students, so she had many irate parents. I heard her numerous times when someone would come into her office screaming, hollering, mad, telling her off, and saying what they were going to do.

Barbara would always say, “I’m sorry you’re upset. If you would please sit down, I’ll try to work it out for you.” They would holler, and the louder they hollered, the softer she would become, until they had to say, “Pardon? What? What did you say?” Then they saw the discrepancy between their voice and hers. Embarrassed, they were no longer willing to sit down, and she always worked it out.

But she was following this principle: a soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger. Now I want you to think about something. Often when we are hurt, when we are upset, the one who did the hurting did it innocently or in jest. Or what you and I would just say, in plain ignorance. And sometimes, sometimes it may be intentional, but obviously not most of the time. And are you listening? If someone has hurt us innocently, not knowing, or if someone has hurt us in jest, or if someone has hurt us in ignorance, they have absolutely no idea that we've been hurt or upset or offended.

Therefore, our Lord tells us exactly how we're to deal with it. He tells us first we're to rebuke him.

Now, let me show you something. I want you to hold Luke 17, but turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5, and then we're going to

Matthew 18. Look at Matthew chapter 5 in verses 23 and 24. Matthew 5, verses 23 and 24. Watch carefully now, because our Lord is telling us exactly how to handle these problems. Matthew 5, verse 23, our Lord says: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Now wait a minute. Go back to verse 23 again: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee." I want you to note this: your brother has something against you.

You have nothing against him. You're not upset with him. But he's got something against you, and you know about it. What does God say in verse 24? "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Now, here's my question: If you know that your brother has ought against you—you don't have anything against him, you're not upset with him—but you know that he has something against you.

Whose responsibility is it to go to him? It's yours. It's yours.

Matthew 18:15–17 says, "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. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Go back to verse 15: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Now, wait a minute. Your brother does not have anything against you, but you have something against him. Whose responsibility is it to go and get it resolved? It is yours.

Notice what God says: you are to go to him privately. In other words, when we begin to rebuke, reprove, or admonish, if it is over a private sin, it must be dealt with privately. Do you understand that? If I say something to Ron and he takes it the wrong way, he is to come to me privately. I did not mean anything by it; he simply took it

the wrong way. I had no idea he took it the wrong way until he comes to me and tells me. If he does not tell me, I will never know. So God says, if it is a private sin, then you simply deal with it privately. It is just that simple.

What He is saying is, take heed to yourselves. We had better take heed that we handle all of these problems biblically and scripturally.

Luke 17:3–4 says, "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."

We would hope that no one would repeat offenses against us seven times in one day.

Probably not one of us has ever had anything like this happen in our lives. Have you ever had a brother sin against you seven different times in one day? No. But our Lord said that if it happened, we must take heed to ourselves and act biblically each time in rebuking, reproving, and solving and settling the problem with biblical forgiveness. We cannot allow bitterness, resentment, ill will, and hard feelings to build up in our lives. After our Lord had taught all of this, He said, “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him.”

“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.” The apostles were beginning to grasp their own weakness and obvious inability to perform this in light of our Lord’s teaching. They sensed their inadequacy, so in verse 5 they said, “Lord, increase our faith.”

Jesus' Response: Faith as a Mustard Seed

They viewed themselves as inadequate to obey. To obey such a plain and obvious teaching, they believed they needed a greater faith. What they were saying was, “Lord, wow, we need an extraordinary faith. We need a superhuman faith to accomplish what You are commanding us right now.” Our Lord very quickly quells and shoots down that attitude in verse 6: “And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou

plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you."

If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed. In Mark 4:31, our Lord said that the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds. When Alice and I were teenagers—which was a long time ago for me, but not for her—the girls used to wear these mustard seed necklaces.

Our Lord said, "You're asking me to increase your faith to obey what I've just commanded you? Why?" He said, "If you have the faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this tree, 'Be thou plucked up and be thou cast into the sea,' and it would obey you."

You don't need a great faith to obey Me. A small faith is sufficient as long as it is a living, thriving, and energetic faith. That tiny mustard seed becomes a great herb; it becomes a tree. Faith realizes a power beyond the person who has it. Faith is limitless because God is limitless. He is infinite.

Faith trusts God. Faith believes God. Faith relies upon God. Faith leans upon God. It's not the amount of our faith. It's simply faith. We do not need a great faith. We simply need to exercise the faith that God has already given to us. It is not the amount of faith that is significant; it is the exercise of faith.

In Mark 9, verse 23, our Lord said, "All things are possible to him that believeth." He didn't say all things are possible to him that has a great faith. He said all things are possible to him that believeth. So it's not the amount of faith; it's the exercise of faith. If you can believe, all things are possible. If you can believe, you can say to this sycamine tree, "Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou cast into the sea," and it'll obey you.

Now, how does what our Lord is teaching in verses 7 through 10 fit in with what He just explained in verses 5 and 6?

The Parable of the Unprofitable Servant

Let us go back to verse 5: "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle,

will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

How do verses 7 through 10 fit with verses 5 and 6, and especially with what our Lord has taught in verses 3 and 4? How can our Lord be telling them that they do not need great faith, but only need to exercise what they have, and then give the illustration of a man whose servant works all day? When the servant comes in at night, the master does not say, "We'll sit down and eat and I'll serve you." No. The master says, "You serve me. And when you get through serving me, then you can serve yourself."

What is our Lord teaching us? Faith acts upon duty. Faith is evidenced by faithful and obedient regard to duty. Consider the master and the servant. The servant labors in the field all day, yet when he comes in at night, he is not dismissed. He must serve his master again. His tiredness does not matter. His repeated performance is done daily. He waits upon his master and serves his master. He is constant, consistent, and thankful. It is never supposed that the master waits upon the servant. No. The servant is bound to obey the master, wait upon him, and do everything in his power to please him. It is his duty. It is his obligation.

He expects no thanks for it and no reward. He has simply done that which it was his duty and obligation to do. Our Lord says, "Does he thank him? Ah, truly not."

Why should we obey our Lord, even in the most difficult things, with our puny little faith? The answer is because it is our duty and obligation to do so. We are not our own. We have been bought with a price. Everything we are, everything we have, everything we ever will be, and everything we ever will have is only by His grace and mercy.

First Corinthians 6:19–20 says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have

of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

What is our Lord telling us? We are His slaves, bought with a price. The apostle Paul delighted in calling himself the bondslave of Jesus Christ: "Paul, an apostle, a servant"—that is, a bondslave—"of Jesus Christ." Have you ever considered yourself a slave to Jesus Christ? If you have not, you need to. He is indeed our Lord and Master, and everything we are and everything we have belongs to Him.

When our Lord speaks of the master-and-servant relationship, it is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If a human master were given uninterrupted service by his slave day and night, how much more do we owe our heavenly Father uninterrupted service, since He has bought us, soul and body? If the slave was duty-bound and obligated to serve his master twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days out of the year, how much more are we obligated to serve our Lord like that?

There are three characteristics that make an excellent servant, or an excellent slave. As I speak of these characteristics, are they present in your life?

Availability

Characteristics of an Excellent Servant

The first characteristic is availability. The master is not required to use each servant. If I had ten servants—Alice could tell you they would probably all be busy, but I do not. If I had ten, am I obligated to use all ten? No. I could use only one, two, or half of them. I could do what I want because I am the master and they are the slaves. Do you understand that God is not obligated to use you in His service? He may do so, but He is not obligated to do so. The only thing we can do is say, "Lord, here am I. I am available."

Look in your Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 18, while holding Luke 17. Ahimaaz wanted to run, but Joab did not think he should run, and so he sent Cushi. Absalom had just been killed. Notice verse 19:

"Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies. And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead. Then said Joab to Cushi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran."

I said, "Here am I. Send me." Joab said, "No. I'm not going to send you today. I'm going to send Cushi." We could say that to the Lord: "Lord, here am I. Send me." But God is not obligated to send us or to use us. He may do so, but He is not obligated to. Therefore, we must make sure that we are available. When God does choose to use us, we should be here, ready, willing, and available.

The Faithfulness of a Servant

The second characteristic of a slave or servant is dependability. Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. used to say this: "The greatest ability is dependability." Have you ever thought about that? If you cannot be counted upon, if you are not dependable, if you will not work and do that which you say you are going to do, why should the Lord use you? Or why should anyone use you? If you cannot be depended upon, you are useless.

Many are like the son whom the father sent to the vineyard and said, "Son, go today and work in my vineyard." And what did the son say? "I go, sir." And he went not. What good is that? It is absolutely no good. You must be available. You must be dependable. And thirdly, you must be faithful. That is the third characteristic of an excellent servant or slave: faithfulness.

Luke 16, verse 10: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

Notice that God is emphasizing faithfulness even in the smallest, most minute things. The Word of God says this in Proverbs 25, verse

19: “Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint.” If you have a foot out of joint and a rabid wolf is chasing you, you are in a heap of trouble. If you have a broken tooth and are trying to chew something that really needs chewing, you are in trouble. God says you simply cannot put confidence in an unfaithful man. It is almost impossible.

Listen to what I am about to tell you. God is not obligated to use you, and He is not obligated to use me. I told a pastor friend this week that I would dearly love to see a mighty revival and a mighty work of God among God's people. But I do not care whether it starts here, in Kentucky, or in Montana, just so God uses whom He will use and starts it where He will start it. He does not have to use me, and I will not be upset if He does not. If you cannot sit on the bench carefully and faithfully, waiting upon orders, what makes you think you will be faithful in the field? If you cannot be faithfully available on the bench, what makes you think you would be faithful in the field?

Do you realize that our Lord took Peter, James, and John with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane and asked them two simple things: watch and pray? When He came back, what were they doing? Sleeping. In Luke 12:42, our Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” What God requires is faithfulness.

Now look back at Luke 17. I want to call your attention again to verse 4; in fact, let us read verse 3 as well. Our Lord says: “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.”

You do not have to forgive the one who has hurt and wronged you seven times all at once. You only have to forgive him one sin and one slight at a time. If you are faithful and obedient in that which is least, you are going to be faithful in that which is colossal. Do not worry or concern yourself over the great and colossal exercises. You must do as the slave does, one thing at a time. It does not require great faith to be obedient in small things. When you and I learn to be obedient

in small things, we are going to learn an amazing truth: every great and colossal thing is made up of a series of small things.

Do you remember the old adage? The way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time. All God requires is that we be faithful one moment at a time, one minute at a time, one hour at a time, and one day at a time. If we are faithful in the small things, the Lord's things are going to take care of themselves. If you are faithful on a daily basis, the years will take care of themselves.

Applications: Faithfulness in Small Things

Our Lord is saying, you do not need great faith. You just need to exercise what you have.

Now, let me make some applications. Which of us have obeyed the Lord perfectly in every area? None of us have. But if we were perfect and did obey the Lord in every area, He still would not owe us anything, because all we would have done is that which is our duty to do. Do not think that you deserve special attention and special favor from God simply because you obey Him every now and then, or even if you are consistent in your obedience. You have a duty to obey God. You have an obligation to obey God. Until you obey Him perfectly in every area of your life, you have not given God anything. Why should you be praised for doing what you are supposed to do? That is what our Lord is saying. None of us have gone over and above and beyond our duty. We have not even performed our duty.

The second application is this: reward is always of grace and never of debt. The thing that still astounds me daily is the graciousness, kindness, and generosity of our loving Heavenly Father. We are so unfaithful to Him, and yet He supplies our needs. He keeps us alive. He gives us health, family, and friends. We do not deserve the least of His mercies or favors. It is all of grace.

The third application is this: the way to increase our faith is through obedience—exercise—and recognizing that the Lord deserves all of our worship and service. If we endeavor to be faithful in the small things and the seemingly insignificant things, we will discover that we will be faithful in those areas that are huge and colossal.

Matthew 25, verse 21: "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." What did he say? "Thou hast been faithful over a few things." Look to God that we can be faithful over a lot of things. Our Lord says this one has just been faithful over a few things, and He is going to make him ruler over many things: "enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

The principle is simple. Instead of wishing for a million dollars, use the money that you have to provoke the kingdom of God. Instead of wishing for greater talents, use the talent that God has given you, however insignificant it is, for God's honor and glory. Instead of demanding a greater faith, use the faith that God has given you. As you use it and exercise it, it will grow just like muscles grow through exercise. God is going to make sure that He gives us everything we need to honor Him, obey Him, worship Him, and serve Him.

We must begin with that which we have, and not that which we do not have. If you begin with what you have, God will use it. Samson began with the jawbone of an ass. If he could have begun with an AR-15, what would he have done? But he did not have an AR-15; he had the jawbone of an ass. Use what God has given you.

However small or insignificant your faith is, it is still faith. Our Lord says, “All things are possible to him that believeth.” It is not the amount you have but the exercise of it. If God gives you great faith, wonderful; but if He does not, use what you have. Eventually it will probably become great faith, because faith exercised becomes stronger and stronger.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for what You have given us and for Your truth. Lord, help us understand the principle of being faithful in small, insignificant things, because he who is faithful in the least is faithful in much. If we cannot be faithful in our money, how can we be faithful when You give us true riches? If we cannot be faithful in the things of others, why think we would be faithful with things of our own? Apply it to our hearts, and use what You give us for Your honor, glory, and service. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Knowledge of Wisdom

January 12, 2020

The Knowledge of Wisdom

Introduction: The Knowledge of Wisdom

Proverbs 24:13–14 says, “My son, eat thou honey, because it is good, and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste. So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul. When thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.” Verse 14 speaks about the knowledge of wisdom. Do you have the knowledge of wisdom? Do you know the difference between knowledge, understanding, and wisdom? Many possess knowledge. Few possess understanding, and even fewer possess wisdom.

Illustrations of Knowledge vs. Understanding

Consider electricity. I know electricity works and how to use it, but I do not understand how it flows through the lines. I know that electricity can be beneficial, but it can also be deadly. Likewise, I know how to drive a car, but I do not understand all the component parts that make it run. I understand that a car can be beneficial, but

it can also be deadly. Knowledge and understanding often flow together. I know enough about electricity to use it, although I do not thoroughly understand it. I know enough and understand enough: don't touch a raw wire.

The same thing is true with a car. Someone has humorously stated that knowledge is knowing that tomatoes are a fruit; wisdom is knowing not to put a tomato in a fruit salad. That may be true, but there are many truths in the Bible concerning knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. We need to grasp those if we are going to be walking and pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

Old Testament Definitions

Let us begin with some basic definitions found in the Old Testament, including some of the main root words. The most common Hebrew word for knowledge is Yada, which literally means to know, to have knowledge, to perceive, to know by experience, and also to be able to discriminate and distinguish, to find out, and to discern.

Knowledge is foundational. Without knowledge, you cannot function. That is why we train our children when they are little: they have no knowledge of certain things, and they need that knowledge simply to operate. It is impossible to function without knowledge.

The second word is understanding. One of the most basic words used for understanding in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word tabun. It is translated as understanding, discretion, and reason. It is also intelligence, but it is even more than that, because it refers to insight, comprehension, and the ability to explain. A good illustration is this: I have known men who earned doctorates but could not teach their way out of a wet paper bag.

Do they have knowledge? The answer is yes. They have knowledge, but they lack understanding in the sense that they cannot explain, transfer, or communicate the knowledge they possess. Just because someone has knowledge does not necessarily mean that he has the understanding to explain that knowledge as well.

Thirdly, we have to understand the definition of wisdom. The main Hebrew word is chokmah, and it is used repeatedly in the

Bible. In fact, it is translated as wisdom 145 times. It refers to skill, prudence, and shrewdness in areas such as war, business, administration, and religion. I am using religion broadly to mean that which is moral, right, and ethical.

Wisdom as Skill in Scripture

Originally and initially, this word speaks of skill and ability. In the Old Testament, wisdom is used especially in regard to the garments made for Aaron, the tabernacle, its vessels, and everything related to it. Exodus 28:2–3 says, "And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wisehearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." Here, God has given wisdom to certain individuals to make these garments.

In Exodus 31, look carefully at Bezalel. The Bible says, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works to work in gold and in silver and in brass, and in cutting of stones to set them, and in carving of timber to work in all manner of workmanship.”

God gave Bezalel all this wisdom, understanding, and knowledge to work with silver, gold, precious stones, and wood. It is absolutely mind-boggling. Many of you remember Melvin Stringer, a dear friend of mine for many years. I used to lovingly tell Melvin, “I hate you.” He would just smile. I said that because Melvin could take a car apart and put it back together. He could build a house, plumb, and wire. There was nothing he could not do.

It is just like Roy, who does our videos. He has been a photographer, owned his own camera shop, and is an excellent Finnish carpenter. Some of his jobs, with just the molding, would be $50,000 to $60,000. He did churches and Hilton hotels. I asked him one day, “Roy, where did you go to school to learn how to do all this precision carpentry?” He said, “I didn’t.” I asked, “What do you mean you didn’t?” He replied, “Well, I just knew I could do it and I

just started doing it." I said, "I hate you." When I cannot even cut a straight board, he can simply start doing it.

That is exactly what God did for Bezalel. God gave him all the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. But that is not all. He said, "And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee." God gave all these people the ability and skill. Exodus 35:26 says, "And all the women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom spun goat's hair." Then verse 31 says of Bezalel, "...and he hath filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship."

When we think of the word wisdom, we think in very broad terms. However, initially and originally, in the Scripture it dealt with skill, precision, and knowing how to apply knowledge in every area. Sometimes we say that wisdom is far more than these things, but in the New Testament God still refers to skill in teaching the Word of God.

In Hebrews 5, the apostle is talking about two different groups of people. He says, "Of whom we have many things to say and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing. For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." He is talking about people who should have been teachers, but needed someone to teach them again. They needed milk and not meat.

Then he says, "...for everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." The man who uses milk is unskillful, but the man who uses meat is skillful because, by reason of use, he has had his senses exercised to discern both good and evil. There is a skill that God gives in wisdom in teaching the Word of God as well.

There are several books in the Bible, five in fact, known as the poetical books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

Wisdom Literature and Christ as Wisdom

Now, the reason they're referred to as the poetical books, obviously, is because you have a great deal of Hebrew poetry in these books. But that is not all these books have in common. These five books are also referred to as wisdom literature. And the reason they're called wisdom literature is because in each of these books, you are being taught knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, and how to live, and how to apply those things to your life in every area. So it teaches us then, not only wisdom with God, but also wisdom with one another as well. If you would understand wisdom literature, you have to understand in one sense of the word, that all of the Bible is wisdom literature, because everything that God says is wise, because God is the only wise God. And if you would really like to understand wisdom, then you need to really master Proverbs chapter 8, because in that passage, Jesus Christ is wisdom personified. And when you get to the New Testament, in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 30, the Bible says this, "...but of him that is God the Father, but of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

So Jesus Christ is wisdom incarnate. Now, before we proceed any further, I want you to look in your Bibles to Job 28:28. You might as well mark that passage because we're going to come back to it just a little bit later. But I do want you to see it in Job 28 and verse 28. Please remember that we're talking about knowledge, wisdom, and also understanding. Job 28 and verse 28. You want to know what wisdom is? You want to know what understanding is? Here it is. Watch. "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." Note, if you would, you have wisdom and you have understanding. What is not mentioned is knowledge, but obviously it is implied. Why? Because you have to know what the fear of the Lord is, and you have to know what is evil in order to depart from it. So, he says very clearly then, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."

The Fear of the Lord and Departing from Evil

Now, I want you to understand something about knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. When you study through the scripture, you will find that these three things usually flow together. If you have true biblical knowledge, to some extent, you're going to have true biblical understanding. And to some extent, you're going to have true biblical wisdom. They just simply come together. However, when you try to divide these and separate them, then you're going to run into problems.

For instance, turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 8 and look, please, at verses 1 and 2. There Paul addresses knowledge pursued merely for knowledge's sake. This is what he says about it. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8:1, "Now touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge." Then he makes this statement: "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." Verse 2 says, "And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." When you think that you know everything, you do not know anything.

Knowledge Puffs Up, but Wisdom Comes from God

I was talking to someone today, and the lady said, "I thought I knew some things a long time ago, but the older I get, the more I realize I don't know anything." Usually, that is the way it goes. The man who learns realizes that he does not know everything that he needs to know as well.

I want to call your attention to verse 1 again, because here the Apostle Paul says, "Knowledge puffeth up." The word "puffeth up" in the Greek is physioō, and it literally means to puff up, to make proud, to bear oneself loftily. When someone wants knowledge just for knowledge's sake, he turns out to be an arrogant upstart, someone who is haughty and high-minded and thinks that he knows everything. I know men like that, and I am sure you know people like that.

In fact, Job also knew men like that. He knew his three friends were like that because in Job 12:2 he said, "No doubt you are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." In other words, when you

are dead, it is all over because nobody else knows what you know. Our knowledge must be tempered with understanding, and that will lead to wisdom.

Put two things together in your mind. First, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are the gifts of God. God must actually give those gifts. Proverbs 2:6 says, "For the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Where does wisdom come from? It comes from God. Where do knowledge and understanding come from? They come from God as well.

Daniel 2:21 says that God "changeth the times and the seasons, he removeth kings, and he setteth up kings, he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who know understanding. Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding do not originate in man. They are gifts that God gives, and the Lord is the source of each one.

When I was reading in Proverbs 24 about the knowledge of wisdom, I asked myself, Who can know wisdom? Who has the knowledge of wisdom? Then I began to find that wisdom not only has knowledge as its foundation basis, but it can also be learned. It is not merely something spoken of as a gift; Scripture commands us to seek it and learn it. Without it, man is nothing more than a brute.

Without Wisdom, Man is a Brute

Proverbs 30:1–3 gives us the words of Agur, the son of Jakeh: "The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy, the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal, Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have I the knowledge of the holy."

Notice two things. First, in verse 2 he says, "Surely I am more brutish than any man." Why? He has not the understanding of a man; he has neither learned wisdom nor the knowledge of the holy. Thus, when I do not have wisdom, understanding, or the knowledge of the holy, I am nothing more than a brute, nothing more than a dumb beast. The absence of wisdom is not a small deficiency.

Without understanding and the knowledge of the holy, a man is reduced to the condition of a beast.

Psalm 49:20 says concerning someone who is in honor and does not understand, "Man that is in honor and understandeth not is like the beasts that perish." A person may be in honor, yet if he does not understand, he is like the beasts that perish. Without wisdom, without understanding, and without knowledge, we are nothing more than beasts that perish. Here is the thing: we are commanded to get wisdom, and we are commanded to get understanding.

Commanded to Get Wisdom

Proverbs 4:5 commands, "Get wisdom. Get understanding. Forget it not. Neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee. Love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom. With all thy getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee. She shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her." God says, Get wisdom. Get understanding. Wisdom is the principal thing, but in all thy getting, get understanding as well.

How do we explain what we have just read? Scripture shows that wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are the gifts of God. Yet Scripture also shows that we can learn wisdom, seek after wisdom and understanding, and have been commanded to get them. How in the world do we work this out if all of these things are God's gifts? The answer, I believe, is much like that found in 2 Timothy 2:7: "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." Notice the words, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." Understanding is the gift of God; God has to give it. But God does not give understanding willy-nilly.

You do not go to bed dumb and wake up smart. You do not go to bed ignorant and wake up brilliant. You do not go to bed stupid and wake up understanding everything. No, no, no. He said, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding." You have to be considering—that is, studying, thinking, and meditating. As you study, think, and meditate, then God gives you the gift of understanding. Obviously, we have a responsibility to seek God for

these gifts and to use the means that God has ordained to acquire them.

If we are going to have wisdom and understanding, then we have to be increasing in the knowledge of Him, His Word, and His ways.

The Starting Point: Fear of the Lord

Job 28 tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." The fear of the Lord is not only the beginning of wisdom; the fear of the Lord is also the beginning of knowledge.

There has to be a starting point. You cannot go anywhere or do anything without a starting point. If you start out wrong, you are going to end up wrong. So, if Brother Bill wants to go to North Carolina and starts going south on 75, he is not going to make it. You start out wrong, and you end up wrong. Everybody has to have a starting point.

The point I am trying to emphasize is this: we have to have a theological starting point and not a humanistic starting point. If you start with man, you are going to end up wrong. If you start with God, you are going to end up right, because it has to be done from a theological perspective.

True wisdom is knowing God and fearing Him, but more than that, it is also abhorring everything that is contrary to Him. I am going to increase on that just momentarily. Listen again to Job 28:28: "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." In other words, if we want wisdom, we have to understand the fear of the Lord. If we want understanding, we have to learn to depart from evil.

Now look in Proverbs chapter 8. Let us add to it, beginning with verses 13 and 14. Remember, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding. Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." It does not say anything about wisdom, does it? It does not say anything about knowledge, does it? It says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil."

Verse 14 says, “Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.” True wisdom is not just fearing God, though it is that. It is not just understanding, though it is that. It is not just having knowledge, though it is that. It is also departing from anything and everything that is contrary to God.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever. If you have biblical wisdom, it is going to lead and guide you in biblical attitudes and biblical actions as well. It will lead and guide you to depart from that which is evil, wicked, and contrary to God.

There are plenty of individuals today who claim to be wise but are as wicked as they can be. They are not wise. There are plenty of men who claim to have an understanding but are vile and reprobate. They do not have biblical understanding at all.

Exposition of Proverbs 24:13–14

In Proverbs chapter 24, Solomon says, “My son, eat thou honey, because it is good, and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste. So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul. When thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.” When Solomon says, “My son, eat thou honey because it is good,” it is almost as if he is recommending a diet: here is something you can enjoy, and here is something you can enjoy eating.

But verse 13 is foundational to verse 14, and you really cannot understand verse 13 unless you understand verse 14. Look carefully at verse 13: “My son, eat thou honey, because it is good, and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste.” Then you see a colon. A colon means pause, wait for it—the best is yet to come. The most important thing is that which follows.

He finishes what he actually means by saying, “So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul, and when thou hast found it, there shall be a reward.” Honey entered largely into the diet of the Hebrews, and honey would be a natural emblem for the purest and simplest wisdom. Just as the apostles said in the New Testament

that we are to desire the sincere milk of the word, in the New Testament we are talking about the milk of the word; in the Old Testament, we are talking about honey.

Canaan land was a land flowing with milk and honey. You remember John the Baptist? Matthew 3:4 says that he had a raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Plenty of individuals in the Bible ate honey. Honey was an emblem of purity. It was also used in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ: butter and honey.

Isaiah 7:14–15 says, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," which, of course, being interpreted, is God with us. "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good."

Solomon is telling us that honey is good for food. That is true. It was used over and over in the Old Testament. But it is also medicinal. It not only strengthens you, nourishes you, and refreshes you. Look at Jonathan, who stuck the end of his staff into the honey and tasted it, and his eyes were enlightened. Look at Samson and John the Baptist. Honey is not only good food; it is also good medicine. The Roman soldiers used honey on their sword cuts and also for infection. If you want to see how medicinal honey really is, order yourself some Manuka honey. You will find that it is very, very expensive, especially as the grade of its medicinal usage increases.

It is obvious that Solomon is saying, you eat honey; it is good for you. You eat the honeycomb; it is sweet to your taste. Everything about honey, then, is a fit symbol for wisdom. As honey is to the mouth and to the body, so likewise wisdom is to the soul. If you find wisdom, you will find a great reward, just as if you find a beehive, you find a reward for your mouth and your stomach as well.

Matthew Henry, in light of Proverbs 24:13, said: “Those that have tasted the honey need no further proof that it is sweet, nor can they by any argument be convinced of the contrary. So those that have experienced the power of truth and godliness are abundantly satisfied with the pleasure of both. They have tasted the sweetness of

them, and all the atheists in the world with all their sophistry and profane with their banter cannot alter their sentiments."

Just as you have tasted honey, nobody can convince you that honey is bitter. You know better because you have tasted it. As Peter said, "If so be that you've tasted that the Lord is gracious." You have known the power of truth, grace, the Lord Jesus Christ, and salvation. No atheist or wicked person is going to change your opinion. So here is my question.

Where to Find Wisdom and Its Rewards

Where do we look to find the knowledge of wisdom? Proverbs 24:14 speaks of the knowledge of wisdom. Let me ask another question: Where do we look to find honey? We find it in the beehive. Obviously, it is not anywhere else. Where do we find the knowledge of wisdom? We find it in the Word of God, the Bible.

Solomon wrote Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. Look at Proverbs chapter 1 to see why Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs. "The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel. To know wisdom and instruction. To perceive the words of understanding. To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice and judgment and equity, to give subtlety to the simple and to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear and will increase learning, and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels. To understand the proverb and the interpretation, the words of the wise and their dark sayings, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Solomon says, I wrote this book for you, that you might receive the instruction of wisdom, that you might know knowledge and discretion. If you have any understanding, you are going to listen and hear, and you are going to increase. But notice the latter part of verse 7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." God describes those who despise wisdom and instruction as fools.

What is a fool? He is someone who is scripturally ignorant. He is not necessarily mentally off balance; he is scripturally off balance. A fool is going to look for honey in a wasp's nest. It is not there. Look at

the fools today who are looking for wisdom in Eastern religions, Eastern philosophies, Greek philosophies, and Marxist dialectics. It is not there. It never has been there and never will be there. The only source where you will ever find wisdom and understanding is God, because God alone is the source and the substance of wisdom and understanding.

Turn to Job 28. This is one of the most wonderful chapters in the book of Job, particularly because it speaks about wisdom and understanding. God is saying that there is a place for everything, but if you really want wisdom and understanding, you must seek it from Him.

“Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone. He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men. As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold. There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen.”

So, in the air, it has not been discovered. “The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.” It is not on earth. “He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing. He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.”

But look at verse 12: “But where shall wisdom be found?” You know where to look for gold, silver, and precious stones, but where shall wisdom be found?

"And where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living." It is not in man by nature. "The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the

crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding, seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air?"

"Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof." It is God alone. "For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; to make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: then did he see it, and declare it." God is the one that declared it.

"He prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." God is the source and the substance of wisdom and understanding. Proverbs 15:33 says, "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility." If one truly desires to learn wisdom and possess its knowledge, he needs to know, understand, and comprehend the fear of the Lord. Oftentimes, when we talk about the fear of the Lord, most people think only of God's anger, justice, and wrath, and how powerful God is: "Oh, I don't want God

Anyone with one eye and half sense would be fearful of someone who is omnipotent or much stronger. Obviously, there is a truth to that, but usually when you read about the fear of the Lord, it is not referring just to God's righteous justice. It deals more with reverence, awe, and respect for the Holy One of Israel, which will lead us to submission and obedience. It will also lead us to a filial, loving relationship, not only with Him as our Heavenly Father, but with one another as well. It extends to all of God's children.

Wisdom, according to the Bible, may be sought, learned, listened to, and applied, as well as despised, rejected, refused, and ridiculed. We're admonished in Scripture to get wisdom and to get understanding. We will be the gainers, whatever the cost, if we do that.

Now, if you'll look again at Proverbs 24 and verse 14, look at what he says. After he tells you about honey again, he says, "So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul," just like honey is to your mouth and body. "When thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thine expectation shall not be cut off." God is saying that when we get real biblical wisdom and understanding, there are so many rewards, and our expectation will never ever be cut off. Seeking the Lord and His Word is wisdom, and he that hath the Lord Jesus Christ shall certainly abide satisfied. Solomon said in Proverbs 5 and verse 1, "My son, attend unto wisdom and bow down thine ear to my understanding." Then in Proverbs 19 and verse 8 he said, "He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul, and he that keepeth understanding shall find good." So knowledge, understanding, and wisdom all flow together.

They all come from God, who is the source and substance of each one. Let me make a couple of applications. First, I believe the very first aspect of real wisdom is comprehending that it is absolutely useless to resist, rebel, and fight against the Lord God. Pitting the finite against the infinite is absolute foolishness. God cannot be overcome, outwitted, outsmarted, overruled, overthrown, or defeated. Resistance is futile. You cannot fight against God and win. That is why the Bible says in Proverbs 21:30, "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord." The man who has wisdom knows it is useless to fight against God. That is why we submit, bow down, and worship, because we know that we cannot possibly win.

Secondly, there is a price to pay for wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. It requires study, meditation, listening, receiving counsel, and renouncing our own understanding. One of the saddest things to me is the average professing Christian, the average church member. You ask a Baptist, "Why are you a Baptist?" "My mother and father were Baptists. My grandparents were Baptists." Why are you Presbyterian? "That is the way I was raised." Why do you believe such and such? "I was told that is what I am supposed to believe." Really? Where have you searched from the Word to find out what the truth is, and come to convictions based upon the study of the Word of God?

There has to be a price to pay. Scripture tells us that wisdom is far better than rubies, and all the things that can be desired are not to be compared to wisdom. Proverbs 16:16 says, "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold, and to get understanding than choice silver?" One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 23:23, where God exhorts us to get truth and sell it not: "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." Buy the truth and sell it not, whatever it costs you. Get the truth, and once you get it, do not ever sell it or depart from it. There is a price to pay.

Thirdly, a lack of wisdom brings judgment and destruction. The Bible says in Proverbs 10:13, “In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.” If you do not have understanding and wisdom, inevitably you are going to suffer. Proverbs 23:9 says, “Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy word.”

Another aspect of wisdom is knowing how to conduct our lives, number our days, and make the most of our lives. Moses, the man of God, prayed in Psalm 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.”

I have seen it not only in my life but in the lives of many others: young people think somehow they are going to live forever and never die. You do not really begin to think about death until you start getting older and realize, all of a sudden, that you may not have many years or months left. Whatever time I have left, I want to use it wisely for God's honor and glory. I want wisdom to know how to number my days.

I remember hearing an illustration, or actually reading it many years ago. Dwight L. Moody was preaching, and his wife was sick and unable to attend the service. When he came home, she asked him, “Were there any converted?” He replied, “Yes.” She asked, “How many?” He said, “Two and a half.” “Oh,” she said, “you mean two adults and one child?” “No,” he said. “I mean two children and one adult. The adult's life is already half gone.” Is that not the truth?

Ecclesiastes 12:1 says, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, when the evil days come not.” God commands us to use

wisdom in numbering our days. Knowledge, understanding, and wisdom should flow together. There is a knowledge of wisdom and an instruction of wisdom according to the Bible. If we are going to live accurately, biblically, and scripturally, we must have knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. They must flow together, and they come from the same source: the one true and living God, who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Therefore, as we read the Scriptures, we should pray, "Lord, give me knowledge, give me understanding, give me wisdom, that I may know how to number my days and live for Thee." Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day.

We thank You for Your Word and truth. We thank You, Father, that You have given us knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, and we confess and acknowledge that we need all three. We ask You, Father, to be pleased to open our eyes, teach us, instruct us, and build us up in the most holy faith. Help us to love Thee and honor Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

The Prudent and the Pathetic

March 14, 2012

Introduction and Definitions

Open your Bibles to Proverbs, chapter 22. There are a number of things here that I believe might be helpful for you. In Proverbs 22 and verse 3, we have one verse for today, and you will also find this verse in Proverbs 27 and verse 12.

The title of the message is “The Prudent and the Pathetic.” The Word of God says, “A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.” So the question is, are you prudent? Listen carefully, because I did not ask, Are you prudish or prunish? I asked, Are you prudent? I could probably ask this question: Are you prudent or pathetic? We could really discover the answer to that question simply by looking at the Scripture.

I am using the word pathetic today in the way that it should be used, in the sense of eliciting or drawing forth scornful pity. According to our text, if one is not prudent, then very obviously he is pathetic. The word pathetic simply denotes one that is foolish, one that is simple, one that lacks understanding. As we look through

Scripture, you are going to find that oftentimes the word simple, the word scornful, and the word fool are used interchangeably, because they refer to the one and the same individual.

Look in your Bibles, very quickly to begin with, at Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 22. We are giving some definitions of the pathetic and of the prudent. Notice what the Word of God asks: “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?”

"And the scorners delight in their scorn, and fools hate knowledge." Notice that the simple, the scorner, and the fool are all in the same boat. They are identical, one and the same. In Proverbs 7:7, a young man is about to go into a harlot, and the Bible says, "And I beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youth a young man void of understanding." Notice the word simple; then God explains what He means by describing someone void of understanding. In Proverbs 8:5, He says, "O ye simple, understand wisdom, and ye fools, be of an understanding heart." The words simple and fool are therefore used interchangeably. A simple man is a fool, and a fool is a simple man as well. I am using the term pathetic to describe the simple, the scorner, and the fool.

A pathetic, or simple, person does not wish to be bothered with facts or reality. I have talked to people and tried to explain things, only to hear them say, "I don't want to hear that." I have actually seen people put their hands over their ears: "Don't tell me that. I don't want to know that. I'm not interested in learning anything about that." The simple, or pathetic, individual lives in his own fantasy world and shuns everything that would cause him consternation.

He does not seek wisdom or understanding. He does not prepare for evil because he does not see it and does not believe it. Or at least he believes that, if it is real, it will not affect him at all; somehow, he will escape it.

The word prudent, on the other hand, refers to one who is sagacious, wise, astute, and particularly one who looks ahead, plans, and prepares—one who is purposeful and deliberate. The Hebrew word for prudent is binah, indicating discernment, understanding, observation, intelligence, discretion, insight, and consideration. An

individual who is prudent in his affairs handles them with understanding, insight, and deliberation.

Now I want you to understand that David was such an individual even as a young man. So if you will turn back in your Bibles very quickly, hold if you would Proverbs, but turn back to 1 Samuel chapter 16, and look if you would please at verse 18, at what is said concerning David. And he's being recommended now to stand before King Saul. In 1 Samuel 16 and verse 18, after Saul had said, "Get me a young man that can play well and bring him to me," in verse 18, then answered one of his servants and said, "Behold, I've seen a son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man,

and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and is a comely person, and the Lord is with him." But notice if you would, the Bible says he is prudent in matters. So David knew how to act, he knew how to speak, and he also knew when not to speak. It should be understood, and I'm going to show you before we close today, that sometimes a prudent man just keeps his mouth shut. Sometimes he does not say anything. If you'll go back in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs chapter 10, I'm just showing you some things about prudence. And the prudent man sometimes keeps his mouth closed. So if you'll look in Proverbs 10 and verse 19, the Scripture tells us this.

"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, but he that refraineth his lips is wise." So there's a time to speak and there's a time not to speak. It was David who prayed in Psalm 141 in verse 3, when he said, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips." So he's asking for wisdom as to when to keep his mouth shut. So David then, as a young man, was prudent, not only knowing when to speak but when not to speak, he was also brave and valiant as well.

So prudence then, according to the scripture, will dictate many things. And biblical prudence is to always be acted upon and obeyed. Now let me very quickly distinguish for you between a biblical prudence and a humanistic or a worldly prudence. You have to remember that the world always has its imitation. And you can always tell basically which is which just simply by looking at the fruits. But just like human wisdom is condemned, human prudence

is condemned as well. So God teaches us that there is a wisdom or prudence that is from above, and there is a wisdom and a prudence that is from beneath.

Biblical Prudence vs. Worldly Prudence

Look in your Bibles to James chapter 3, beginning with verse 13: "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom."

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth." If you have bitter envying, strife, and lying against the truth, this wisdom "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

Here is the contrast: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

There is a wisdom, or prudence, that is from above, and there is a wisdom and prudence from beneath. Twice—in Proverbs 22:3 and Proverbs 27:12—we are told, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished." Prudence, according to the Bible, allows us to see and prepare for that which is inevitable, that which we know is to come.

The Prudent Man: Seeing and Preparing

God has not allowed us to look into the future and see everything in detail. But if we understand the principles of the Word of God, including the curses and blessings taught in it, then we can foresee the evil that is going to come.

When I was a boy, if I did something wrong and got caught, I knew what was coming, and it came with power and fury, I can assure you. The same principle applies when we see how a society and a nation transgress the law of God and disobey and dishonor Him. Inevitably, invariably, we know that a curse is going to come. We cannot see exactly what will happen in detail, but based on the

principle of Scripture, we can tell generally what is sooner or later coming down the pike. Therefore, prudence allows us to see the evil that is coming and either prepare for it, step out of the way, or get out of its way.

For instance, in Isaiah 26:20, God says, “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.” What did God say? Get in your chamber; get safe until my anger is passed, until the calamities are passed.

You and I cannot avert disasters, judgments, or collapses. We cannot divert them or stop them. But if we see them and understand them, we can prepare for them to the best of our ability.

If we know that conditions for a hurricane are ripe, and if the Hurricane Center has issued warnings and said that one is probably on the way and will hit our coast in a day or two, would it be prudent for us to stock up on supplies and food in preparation for what we know is coming, or should we just wait and see if it really happens or affects us? Should we prepare or not prepare? Should we be prudent or pathetic? Should we put up what we know we would need in an emergency, or should we walk on saying, “Well, it won't happen to me. I'll never be in need”?

Alice and I were visiting our daughter and her family in Tampa, Florida, one time. It was the first day we got there, and the first day hurricane warnings were issued. We arrived early in the day, and our daughter decided that we would wait until her husband came home before going to the store for what we needed. By the time we got there at three or four o'clock in the afternoon, the shelves were bare. And that was just the first day.

There is in Proverbs 22:3 a strong contrast between the prudent and the pathetic. The contrast is clearly evident: the prudent look ahead and see the calamity coming, and in seeing it, they prepare for it. The simple, oblivious to what is going on, walk on their way as if their head is in the clouds, living in their own fantasy world; they go on their merry way and are simply punished.

The Bible teaches in the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 2, verse 14: “A wise man's eyes are in his head.” A wise man's eyes are in his

head. Then Ecclesiastes 10:2 says, “A wise man's heart is at his right hand.” The right hand is the hand of action. So the man sees, and then the righteous man's heart is at his right hand. He then acts upon that which he does see.

Did you know that in the New Testament our Lord derided and berated the Pharisees for not discerning the signs of the times? For instance, Matthew 16:1 records: “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.”

He answered and said unto them, “When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering.” Now look at His application: “O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?” You cannot discern the signs of the times. You know what the signs of the times really are?

The signs are what is happening around you right now. They are what is going on in your life and in society. There are so many signs of our times today. It is like a huge billboard and a neon light. Unhappily, most people simply ignore the signs. Would you ignore a sign as you were traveling down the highway at seventy miles an hour that said, "Bridge out"? That is exactly what is happening today. Everybody is ignoring what is happening in our society with the riots, the economic situation, and the pending collapse.

I want you to consider two points today: the prudent and the pathetic. Let us look at the prudent first. I want to take you through the book of Proverbs very quickly and show you how prudence is connected with knowledge, understanding, and action. A prudent man is not simply someone who sees and knows; he is one who acts. He knows how to act.

Proverbs 13:16 says, "Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge, but a fool layeth open his folly." Prudence, then, is connected to knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 14:8 says, "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way. But the folly of fools is deceit." The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way.

Proverbs 14:15 says, "The simple believeth every word, but the prudent man looketh well to his going." The prudent man looketh

well to his going. Verse 18 says, "The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge." Notice how knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and action are all working together.

Proverbs 15:5 says, "A fool despiseth his father's instruction, but he that regardeth reproof is prudent." If you get reproved or chastised, pay attention to it, learn from it, and learn how to act. God says that is prudence.

Proverbs 16:21 says, "The wise in heart shall be called prudent and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning." The wise in heart shall be called prudent. Then Proverbs 18:15 says, "The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge." The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge, and as he gets understanding, he gets wisdom.

Now, let me tell you something about the prudent man. The prudent man does not need to know every detail about the future. What does he do?

He examines what is happening in the present with understanding, discernment, knowledge, and wisdom that comes from above, and he prepares himself and his family for what is coming sooner or later. The prudent man foresees the evil. He sees it coming and knows that it is coming. The word evil in Proverbs 22:3 and Proverbs 27:12 refers to that which is hurtful, disagreeable, unpleasant, distressful, malignant, bad, injurious, and that which leads to adversity. The prudent man foresees all of those things.

The prudent man sees the termite damage in the house and foresees that, if something is not done, the house will collapse. He sees the approaching storm and foresees that he needs a place of safety. He sees threatening danger around himself and foresees that he needs to protect himself and his family. He sees temptation coming and flees from it. He sees the battle brewing, foresees its coming, and therefore prepares his armor because he knows and understands.

Do you see any signs of our economy collapsing? Do you see any sign of joblessness and the rise of people without a means to support themselves? Have you noticed how many businesses have shut down due to the economy? The General Motors dealership in our town

shut down. Shoney's restaurant shut down. A number of other little restaurants have shut down.

Practical Applications: Economic and Societal Collapse

I do not care where you look. I was preaching in Florida, and I am not going to tell you where. I preached there twice, one year right after the other. One man, a huge contractor, told me, "We're barely hanging on by the skin of our teeth." They had been doing $50 million a year in business, but it dropped to $15 million. He said, "We can barely keep our doors open." The next year I was there, they were totally gone. They went from $50 million to absolutely nothing.

Men like Gerald Celente, Peter Schiff, Jim Rogers, and Porter Stansberry—Christian and non-Christian economists alike—are saying basically that our society, our economy, and the way we know it are either going to collapse this winter or no later than next year. Even the liberal news media are saying the same thing. Not only have you noticed a bad economy, but have you noticed an increase in food costs? Have you considered laying up or stocking up on the essential items that you know you use and will need daily, weekly, or monthly?

Would you not think it would be prudent to buy some things now before they rise in price? The reason prices are rising is simply that the value of the Federal Reserve note is decreasing. The more paper the Fed prints, the more worthless what you have becomes. They have already announced that they are going to do a third quantitative easing with billions of dollars into the economy.

I love what H.L. Mencken said. He said the government is the only entity that he knew that could take a valuable commodity like paper, slap some ink on it, and make it totally worthless. A few years back, I started shooting a handgun. When I first started shooting, a box of 9mm, 100 rounds to a box, was $12.00. It went from $12.00 to $15.00 to $18.00 to $21.97. Now it is $23.97 at Walmart. Thus, it went from $12.00 to basically $24.00. If I had taken $5,000 and invested it back when it was $12.00, you would say, “Boy, you would have doubled your money.” Yes, due to inflation, I would have doubled my money.

But in reality, the price of ammo has not increased. The value of the paper money has gone down. If we were on a silver standard, or I was paying in silver, it would be essentially the same. All I am trying to show you is this: the price of ammunition, no matter what caliber, is going to continue to rise because the value of the money is going down. My suggestion would be, if you do not have enough, you need to get it now before it goes higher and higher and higher.

I will tell you what I told one lady. One young lady came up to me one day and said, "Pastor, how much ammunition do you really need?" I looked at her and said, "One more box." I do not care how much you have—just one more box. You can always use it, sell it, or barter it.

Apply this same illustration to canned goods. I know that some canned goods cannot be stored; however, much can be stored. You could save yourself a few shekels simply by putting up what you know you are going to use. Food prices are going to continue to rise, just like ammunition prices and everything else. What we do not understand is that it is not only the federal government that is broke; many states and cities are absolutely bankrupt as well.

A recent report described "the new reality for United States cities: no money for street lights, roving packs of wild dogs, and open air drug markets." Its opening paragraph said, "If you want to know what the early stages of an economic collapse look like, just walk around some of the downtown areas of our major cities."

"Today, nearly all large U.S. cities are either flat broke or are on their way to being flat broke. Yes, New York City, Washington, D.C., and a few others are still doing fairly well, but for most U.S. cities, economic reality is catching up with them very quickly. Right now, there are a number of major cities that are so broke they cannot keep the street lights operating."

"Down in St. Louis, parents in some areas are carrying golf clubs with them as they walk their children to school in order to fend off roving packs of wild dogs. In other major U.S. cities, open-air drug markets conduct business without fear. All over the United States, cities that used to be clean and prosperous and full of hope are now being transformed into post-industrial wastelands. We are certainly

not in Mad Max territory yet, but it does not take too much imagination to see where all of this is headed."

The article states that the war to keep the lights on in Detroit is serious. Thieves, antiquated equipment, and a lack of funding have made it impossible for city officials to catch up. Officials estimate that 15 to 20 percent of the 88,000 lights in the Motor City are not working, and they acknowledge that the figure could be as high as 50 percent in some neighborhoods. Detroit is not alone. In Highland Park, Michigan, the majority of the streetlights have been repossessed because the city was not keeping up with its electrical bill. In Fresno, California, the theft of copper wire from streetlights has become a total nightmare. The loss of copper wire and the cost of repairing the lights cost Fresno about $50,000 a month; approximately 25,000 streetlights have been stripped of their wiring.

In Las Vegas, the days as a boomtown are gone. With 14 percent unemployment, it has the highest rate in America, compared with a national average supposedly at 9.1 percent, though the real figure is higher. Housing prices have fallen 58.1 percent from their 2006 high, the biggest losses anywhere in America. According to RealtyTrac, which specializes in foreclosed properties, Las Vegas is the nation's foreclosure capital. About 70 percent of its homes are thought to be underwater or in negative equity, meaning their value is less than the amount owed on the mortgage. Foreclosure notices have been served on one in sixteen properties. A survey by the Las Vegas Review-Journal and Channel 8 News found that 34 percent of locals would leave if they could find work elsewhere or were not underwater on their home loan. Hundreds now live in tunnels under the streets, as shown in a CNN video.

In Los Angeles, homelessness is absolutely exploding, with thousands living in the street. In Skid Row, a grimy pocket of downtown, the prostrate forms of homeless people lie strewn across the pavements. The lucky ones have tents; others make do with a sliver of cardboard for a bed and a supermarket trolley for their rags. At last count, 1,662 people lived on the streets, twice as many as a year earlier.

Now, amid the drug addicts and the drunks are families who not so long ago had homes and ordinary suburban lives. But there are cities in California that are even in worse shape than Los Angeles. If you go east of Los Angeles about a hundred miles, you will come to the city of San Bernardino. 34.6% of the residents of San Bernardino are currently living below the poverty line. Among major US cities, only Detroit has a worse poverty rate.

In an extraordinary article entitled “City of Ruins,” Chris Hedges did an amazing job of documenting how bad things have gotten in Camden, that is Camden, New Jersey. Today it is estimated that the actual unemployment rate in Camden is between 30 and 40 percent. For most young people in Camden, there are very few legitimate opportunities for a better life. Selling drugs is what they are doing. There are perhaps a hundred open-air drug markets, most run by gangs like the Bloods, the Latin Kings, the Los Nitos, the MS-13. Lots of young men in black leather jackets and baggy sweatshirts sell weed and crack to clients, many of whom drive in from the suburbs. The drug trade is one of the city's few thriving businesses.

“A weapon, police say, is never more than a few feet away, usually stashed behind a trash can in the grass or on a porch.” “Seventy-two percent of all US cities are laying off workers this year.” “Take advantage of the relative prosperity that we're enjoying now to prepare for the lean years which are ahead.”

You need to read all of this document. It's absolutely astounding. We've talked about food and society, but let me ask you: What about the federal government? Do you think, for one instant, that the federal government is going to grant or give us more and more liberty? Or are they going to grant and give us more and more tyranny? If you are aware that we are losing our liberties and freedoms, are you making any preparations?

Practical Applications: Government Tyranny and Healthcare

Are you thinking through things? Are you planning for what you know is going to be coming down the pike? Are you prudent in this area or pathetic? Gary D. Barnett wrote an article entitled “Police State Fascism is Now Rampant, Martial Law is Next”: “Our situation

is worsening by the day, and the state apparatus is preparing to fight against its own citizens here at home. This is a precarious situation that could spiral out of control. And we're terribly close, in my opinion, to being in an uncontrollable police state environment. When this happens, the obvious next step will be martial law. Once that stage is reached, it may be too late to stop the coming onslaught of the totalitarian state."

"This is a serious threat and one that could result in violence and chaos in the streets of America. It's already happening. Okay? All need to be aware of this progression and all need to prepare to stop it. Anything less will result in the complete loss of what little freedom we have left and our lives may be forever harmed." Listen to what he says. "The state is always and forever the enemy of the people. It has nothing. It creates nothing. It produces nothing. And it lives and survives by looting, stealing, beating, and murdering. It's time to remove the power that the state holds over us and to try liberty instead of slavery. I say it's time to abolish the state." That's what he wrote.

Did you know that Albert J. Nock, many years ago, wrote a book entitled "Our Enemy, the State"? There are indeed Nockean societies all over this country. Ayn Rand in her book "Atlas Shrugged," and I don't recommend Ayn because of her infidelity, but what she says here is dead on. Listen to what she said. "When you see that in order to produce, you need to obtain permission from men who produce nothing, when you see that money is flowing to those who deal not in goods but in favors, when you see that men get rich more easily by graft than by work, and your laws no longer protect you against them but protect them against you, you may know that your society is doomed." Wow.

Do you really believe that Obama and the Feds are genuinely interested in health care? Undoubtedly, you have read about the effects of socialized medicine in England and other countries, including the limitations planned for the elderly, cancer patients, and those considered terminally ill. Do you really want a bureaucrat from the federal government determining when it is your time to die?

Stop and think about that. Do you want some bureaucrat to determine whether you receive certain medicines or medical treatment? If you have done any reading or listening to the news, or visited any internet sites, you should know that all health care is going to be drastically reduced. Moreover, you have to ask yourself: What are those people on the state and federal health care programs going to do when there are no more subsidies? There is no money to provide such care for everyone.

You probably never read this; it may have skipped your reading, but it was all over the internet. One article said October 31st, Halloween, should have been really scary for most people because, on that date, the national debt surpassed our gross national product. There is nothing like that. You could take all the goods and all the money in this country, and it would never reach what we owe.

So, if you do not think that Obama and the Feds are genuinely interested in your health, do you not think it is your responsibility to take care of your health, provide for yourself, and prepare for what you and I would know would be inevitable?

Now, I understand that each of us has to die sooner or later. But I got news for you: I do not want to die because of my own pathetic stubbornness and failure to prepare. There are medicines you can stock up on. Moreover, you can take CPR courses, combat medical courses, and EMT courses at technical schools and colleges.

You can do CERT training, Community Emergency Response Training. Most cities have that. Ours does not, where I live, but Douglas has it, Tifton has it, and Waycross has it. Probably St. Simons has it. Do you realize that you can sign up for this training, and they even provide you with a lot of equipment? It requires nine weeks of training, one night a week for nine weeks.

I am simply pointing out that there are classes we can have here. There is so much to learn and so many people who can teach. You can learn alternative medicine. You do not need drugs. I do not think anybody ever really suffers from a drug deficiency. Naturally, you may suffer from one if you have been on one for a long time. But you can learn about herbs and homeopathic medicine.

And you can buy books, especially those like “Where There Is No Doctor” and “Where There Is No Dentist.” Go on the Internet and read about wound care, how to cleanse and suture wounds. There are so many things you can learn just to take care of yourself. You can learn how to set a broken bone and fix a dislocated shoulder. Have you ever wondered how our forefathers took care of themselves when there were no doctors and no hospitals on every corner?

My goodness, they did it, and they did it well. The problem is that we need to learn discipline. We need to shut off the television and begin to study, learn, apply, and teach. We can become self-sufficient. We may never be able to do brain surgery, but there is a lot we can do to take care of ourselves. We need to cease being dependent upon others, especially the state and the feds, and learn to take care of ourselves. We need to cease being serfs and slaves.

Gerry Spence, in his book, "From Freedom to Slavery," said, "In America, we have achieved the Orwellian prediction. We are enslaved. The people have been programmed to love their bondage and are left to clutch only mirage-like images of freedom, its fables and fictions. The new slaves are linked together by vast electronic chains of television that imprison not their bodies only, but their minds as well. Their desires are programmed, their tastes manipulated, their values are set for them."

And that's true. You talk to the average individual, and they believe whatever they see and hear on television. The prudent man flees slavery just as quickly and readily as Joseph fled Potiphar's wife. The prudent man avoids soup lines, welfare agencies, and the government dole.

He prepares because he believes the Word of God and understands that he is responsible for himself and his family. He does not look to others; he looks only to the Lord and to himself. He believes Proverbs 6, when the wise man said, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest."

The prudent man is the man who prepares to take care of himself. Proverbs 18 and verse 10 tells us, "The name of the Lord is a strong

tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." What does that mean? It means, yes, we trust in the Lord, but we obey Him and do that which He has commanded. His tower is His Word, and we need to learn to be obedient to that Word. The prudent, then, are those that hear, understand, take action, and prepare for what they know is really coming down the pike.

The Pathetic Man: Ignoring Warnings

Our text says, “A prudent man foresees the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.” I hope you're beginning to see the clear distinction and contrast between the prudent and the pathetic. The simple pass on and are punished. They pay no heed to the warning signs or to what is happening around them. They refuse to listen. They refuse to be educated. They refuse to be enlightened. They refuse instruction.

The word simple, as I've already pointed out, simply means fool, foolish, one who is naive, one who is simple, one who lacks understanding and discernment. This is the contrast: the prudent recognizes danger and takes refuge, but the pathetic ignores danger and proceeds toward punishment. He does not heed warning signs or receive education, enlightenment, or instruction. The result is destruction, as Proverbs warns. Look at what God says in Proverbs 1:32: “For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.” The turning away of the simple shall slay them. They will not listen.

They pass on like a hog to the slaughter. They do not listen, and they will not learn. Proverbs 9:13 says, “A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing.” Simple and knoweth nothing—what does that mean? She does not understand, has no knowledge, and has no wisdom. The simple are simple because of their ignorance and unbelief. Consequently, they pass on and are punished. They pass on without fear, without reason, and without thinking. They are resolved only to have their way, to do their own thing, and to enjoy the present. God says they are going to be punished. They do not want their little boat rocked. They do not want to be moved out of their fantasy world or upset; they do not

want to have to learn. “I’ve got my little routine, and that’s what I’m going to stick in.”

When God was sending all His judgments upon Egypt, Moses told the Egyptians exactly what was going to happen. In Exodus 9:18, Moses says, “Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.”

Then the Scripture says, “He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: and he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field.” What was that? God says, if you believe Me and listen to Me, you will obey Me and avoid the evil. If you do not believe Me, listen to Me, or obey Me, you will die. He that feared the Word of the Lord obeyed; he that did not fear the Word of the Lord suffered.

The Bible says in Proverbs 16:21, “The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.” The wise in heart shall be called prudent.

Applications: True Prudence and Silence

The first application is this: prudence is preferred over simplicity. I have shown you the prudent and the pathetic from the Word of God. It is the wisdom of God that truly makes a man prudent. Worldly wisdom or worldly prudence will come to absolutely nothing. First Corinthians 1:19 says, “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent,” that is, the worldly prudent. If you read the context of First Corinthians, chapter 1, you will see that Paul is speaking of destroying the wisdom and prudence of the world. You may have all types of worldly prudence and worldly wisdom and still suffer loss. It is biblical prudence that God is talking about. Now turn to Hosea, chapter 14 and verse 9. Notice how Hosea ends his message.

Hosea 14:9 asks, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein." That is Proverbs 22:3 and Proverbs 27:12. Who is wise? Who is the one who has understanding? Who is really prudent? The one who knows the ways of the Lord and walks in them.

But the simple pass on and are punished. Read Pilgrim's Progress, and you will find out what happens to Mr. Worldly Wiseman. He never makes it.

The second application is this: prudence not only teaches us to prepare; it also teaches us when to speak and when not to speak. Amos 5:13 says, "Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time." There is a time to speak, and there is a time not to speak. If I were to ask how many in this room have said things they wish they had never said, every hand would be raised. I can assure you.

One of my favorite verses is, "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his soul from troubles." There is a time to speak, and a time not to speak. Sometimes we may say the right thing, but say it to the wrong person. Proverbs 25:11 says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." That is true. But the opposite is also true. A word that need not be spoken and should not be spoken is equally like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

We have to see the difference between the prudent and the pathetic. So I begin this message by asking you: are you prudent or pathetic? You can answer that yourself based upon what I have shown you from the Word of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your grace, mercy, and help. Make each of us prudent. Help us, Lord, by Thy grace and mercy, to prepare according to Your wisdom and Your Word. We give Thee praise and understanding. Receive all the glory and praise for everything. Please give us understanding and discernment. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Community Peace and Personal Responsibility

December 3, 2012

Introduction: The Need for Biblical Community

Psalm 127, verse 1: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Community, peace, and personal responsibility is a multifaceted subject, with many areas to cover and many implications and applications. I've been told all my life that there is no house large enough for two families, because I don't care how related you are one to the other, once you begin living together, inevitably, as we used to say, somebody's going to rub the cat's hair the wrong way and there's going to be problems.

The question is, if we cannot get along with each other now while times are relatively good and peaceful, what will we do when we're forced to live together in very difficult times? How can we survive without looking to outside help? The Bible mentions this truth in Jeremiah 12, verse 5. The question is asked, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou

contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustest, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of the Jordan?" So if you can't run with the footmen, God says, what are you going to do when the horsemen come along? And if you can't get along in the time of peace and prosperity, what in the world are you going to do when the Jordan swells and there's difficulty on every hand? How can we exist without resorting to outside help? How can we exist without using an unbiblical judicial system or depending upon a militarized, federalized law enforcement?

It is best to avoid all contact with them whatsoever and whensoever it is possible. The theme is bringing communities back to life. When you hear that phrase, the theme very clearly indicates that our communities have died. The truth of the matter is there has not been a real, genuine community that I know of probably in 50, 60 years.

Some of us are old enough to remember when neighbors would come down and visit. And any problem in the community, the neighbors would come together to help resolve that problem. Someone got sick, the neighbors would bring in food however long was needed and necessary. The same thing when there was a death in the family. I remember even as a boy when we had a rabid fox in our community. All the men came together and were trying to kill that fox.

In other words, everybody participated. Everybody came together. The truth of the matter is, we have not had a real, genuine community for so long, most people have absolutely no idea how a real biblical community is to function. It's not only the fact that our communities have died, our society has died, and our governmental structure has died as well. I don't like to quote Ayn Rand because she was basically an atheist, but she did say something that is worth quoting.

She said, "When you see that in order to produce, you need to obtain permission from men who produce nothing. When you see that money is flowing to those that deal not in goods, but in favors. When you see that men get rich more easily by graft than work, and your laws no longer protect you against them, but protect them

against you, you may know that society is doomed." And that's a fact. Our communities do indeed need to be resurrected.

Rebuilding on God's Law, Not Man's

You must remember that resurrection is always on God's terms. I've often asked this question. If society collapsed tomorrow, and you were able to rebuild the day after tomorrow, what law structure would you use? Would you build upon God's law structure, or would you build upon man's law structure? Those are the only two law structures available. And if you answer, "Well I would try to build on the best of man's law structure," then you might as well not rebuild at all, you might as well let Jericho stay buried, for the curse of God is upon it. When Jericho was destroyed, Joshua chapter 6, verse 26 says, "And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho."

"He shall lay the foundations thereof in his firstborn, and his youngest son shall he set up the gates thereof." In other words, he would end up sacrificing his sons in the rebuilding of the cursed city Jericho. If our communities are to be resurrected and live, we must rebuild according to God's law and learn to live according to God's law by applying it and obeying it in every area of our life. You have to remember that communities are built first and foremost upon individuals and then secondly upon families. It is individuals that constitute families. It is families that constitute communities. It is impossible to have a resurrected community if that community is filled with unresurrected individuals and families.

The Foundation: Individuals and Families

You cannot have a spiritual community with unspiritual people. You cannot have a community that functions the way it should unless you have individuals and families willing to function the way they should. You cannot have the blessings of God upon a community that is filled with rebellious individuals. One of my favorite quotes is from Robert Winthrop. He was a congressman, former Speaker of the House.

He died in 1894 and he said this as he was speaking to the Massachusetts Bible Society. He said, "All societies of men must be

governed in some way or the other. The less they may have of stringent state government, the more they must have of individual self-government. The less they rely upon public law or physical force, the more they must rely on private moral restraint. Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled either by a power within them or by a power without them, either by the word of God or the strong arm of man, either by the Bible or the bayonet."

Robert Winthrop, born in 1809, died in 1894, also spoke against a law or a bill that would allow atheists to testify in court. He says this, "I confess, sir, I'm at a loss to conceive how any man who has ever read our Constitution as originally framed, or as it now exists, can listen a moment to such an argument."

"If anything be clearer than another on its face, it is that it was intended to constitute a Christian state. I deny totally the gentleman's position that the religious expressions it contains were intended only to show forth the pious sentiments of those who framed it. They were intended to incorporate into our system the principles of Christianity. Principles which belong not only to those who framed, but to the whole people who adopted it. Sir, the people of that day were a Christian people. They adopted a Christian constitution."

America's Christian Heritage and Departure

"They no more contemplated the existence of infidelity than the Athenian laws provided against the perpetuation of parasites. They established a Christian commonwealth. They wrote upon its walls, salvation, and upon its gates, praise. And Christianity is as clearly now its cornerstone as if the initial letter of every page of our statute book, like that of some monkish manuscript, were illuminated by the figure of the cross." So here he is saying that no, atheists were not to be allowed to testify because this was indeed a Christian nation.

John Adams, who happened to be the second president of the United States, said this, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." Charles Carroll, who was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, said this, "Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time. They therefore who are decrying

the Christian religion whose morality is so sublime and pure, are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments." What is the best security for free governments? Christianity. That's what Charles Carroll said.

Noah Webster said it like this, "The duties of men are summarily comprised in the Ten Commandments, consisting of two tables. One comprehending the duties which we owe immediately to God, the other the duties we owe to our fellow men." He goes on to say, "In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children under free government ought to be instructed. No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people." This is why in order to seduce and enslave a people, they must be drawn away from the Bible and the Christian religion. And when we turn from that, we cease to be a free government and a free people. John Quincy Adams, who was the sixth president of the United States, said this, "The law given from Sinai, the Ten Commandments, was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code."

It is for our civil institutions as well as for individual morality as well. James Madison, the fourth president of the United States, said it like this, "We've staked our future on the ability to follow the Ten Commandments with all of our hearts. We have staked the whole future of American civilization not upon the power of government, far from it. We've staked the future of all of our political institutions upon our capacity to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God."

With this basic historic overview in mind, What has happened to our country? What has happened to our state? What has happened to our communities? We've forsaken the Law of God and our God as well. We've disobeyed His Law. We've despised His Son. We've trampled His Law under our feet. And as Scripture says, we've done despite unto the Spirit of Grace. Therefore, we've lost His blessing, we've lost His protection, and we must repent and turn to Him.

Personal Responsibility and Avoiding Conflict

If you and I wish to avoid encounters and conflict with our government the way it is today, as well as with our federalized and militarized law enforcement, we must learn to live right, to do right, to control our emotions, and assume personal responsibility for all of our actions. We must not only not need outsiders, we must be able to avoid them as well. What does that mean? How in the world can we avoid the powers of government? The answer is we must learn to look for and to apply biblical alternatives.

If I wish to avoid a fight, the wisest thing for me to do is to stay away from places where fights most likely occur. If I do not want to be involved in a fight, why should I even visit a bar or casino or nightclub? The premise is this: We need to avoid all unnecessary conflicts. We have enough of our own conflicts that we can't avoid, and so we need to stay away from anything that's unnecessary. We have enough trouble as it is. Why in the world do we want to start any trouble?

Any young person ought to understand this: Don't go to stupid places with stupid people and do stupid things. I've told my grandkids this. I've never smoked in my life, and I'm thankful. But if you don't start, you don't have to quit. There are a lot of things that you can avoid if you just don't get involved with them to begin with.

We must be aware of our surroundings and we must be aware of our mouths. I read a long time ago there are three rules dealing with any governmental area. They are: Shut up, shut up, and shut up. Those rules are also pretty simple when it comes to just about anything that you can imagine.

Psalm 39, verse 1 says, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." Watch your tongue, watch your mouth, especially when you're in the presence of the wicked.

If you are around friends and relatives with whom you disagree, you must learn to control not only your temper but your tongue. You do not have to say everything that comes into your mind. One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 21, verse 23: "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles."

How many of us have said things we wish we had never said? Once you say something, you can't recall those words. First Peter 3, verse 10 says, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." If, God says, you want to love life, and if you want to see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile. Psalm 37, verse 8 says, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."

So God says, just don't do it, just stay away from it. It is best to avoid a dispute. It's best to avoid a conflict. If one cannot be avoided, and if we are involved in a dispute or a conflict, then we must resolve it in a biblical manner.

Biblical Dispute Resolution

No matter how hard we try unhappily, we're never going to be able to avoid every conflict. We're never going to be able to foresee every problem and stay out of its way. There will be conflicts. If we are involved, then we have to determine that we're going to resolve it biblically and scripturally. There is indeed a biblical way to solve problems. There are a lot of unbiblical ways as well, but they're never resolved when you use unbiblical ways. First Corinthians 6 shows that the Bible actually forbids a Christian going to law, a court of law, with another Christian. Beginning in verse 1, the Apostle Paul says, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?"

In other words, there can be an ecclesiastical court. There does not have to be just the heathenistic judicial courts. He says, "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know you not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments of things pertaining this life, set them to judge who are the least esteemed in the church."

He's saying, if you have something to settle, you need to take even the saints that are the most least esteemed and go before them before you'd go before a heathenistic judge. He goes on to say, verse 5, "I speak to your shame. Is it so that there's not a wise man among

you?" In other words, surely there's someone who can settle the issues among the saints. Surely there's a wise man who can resolve these things. "Is there not one wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brother. But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before unbelievers. Now therefore, there's utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, you do wrong and defraud, and that's your brethren."

"Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind." He goes on. The problem is this: God says we do not need to go to law before unbelievers. If we have a conflict, let's resolve it biblically. There is only one way to resolve something for sure, and that is to do it biblically.

We ought to be able to settle our differences among ourselves. If we're not able to do so, then there are wise men in the church, there should be wise men in the Christian community, and we should be willing to submit to their counsel and their judgment. In the Old Testament, if you refuse to abide by the decision of a biblical court of law, the penalty was death. God is saying, there's a way to resolve this.

We need to stay away from the system and control of the heathen as much as possible. Once you enter into their realm, once you enter into their jurisdiction, you are under their control. And you will be forced to abide by their judgment, whether it's right or wrong, biblical or unbiblical, and what your concern is and what your conscience says does not matter one bit to them. One court case is Hollis v. Edmonds.

This involved the State Street Baptist Church in Kentucky. The State Street Baptist Church existed as a church for 140 years. And then it chose to incorporate. And it incorporated under the statutes of Kentucky. There was a little spat in the church as to how some money was being spent. And so those who were dissatisfied went to the courts. And the church's position was this. You have no

jurisdiction over us. This is a church matter. It is not a governmental matter.

Here is what the court said. I'm quoting. "Once the church, that is the State Street Baptist Church, determined to enter the realm of Caesar by forming a corporation, it is required to abide by the rules of Caesar, or in this case, the statutes of the Commonwealth of Kentucky." In other words, if you had incorporated, we'd have nothing to say in this. Once you submit to their jurisdiction, you're in their power.

Whether you agree or whether you disagree, whether they're right or wrong, biblical or unbiblical, it doesn't matter. So the wise thing to do is to stay out from their system. William Penn said it like this, "Men must be governed by God or they were ruled by tyrants." And the truth of the matter is this, when we refuse to be governed by God, we will be ruled by tyrants.

Community Defense and the Militia

Read 1 Samuel chapter 8 to confirm all of that. So, what happens then when society collapses? What happens when people, godly people, are forced to come together and live together in a very complex and a very difficult time. In a real, genuine, biblical community, In a grid-down situation, the answer is that real, genuine, biblical community not only helps each other, but they defend each other and that community will come together and defend their lives and their families and the lives and the families of their friends. In a societal collapse, we either learn to stand together or we will indeed fall separately.

That is no time for our little pet peeves and idiosyncrasies and likes and dislikes to get in the way. That's why all of these things have to be worked out. There are no perfect people. And you could say, well, pastor, I love you. I've been listening to you for 30 years. Well, I'm thankful and that's wonderful. But if we live side by side and work day in and day out every day, after about six months you might get ticked off at me. Probably a little before that. And I might really get ticked off at you.

And the next thing we're knowing, he's getting on my nerves. She's bothering me. Why can't he do this? Why can't she do that? There just are no perfect people. You have a lot of things to work out. If we're going to defend ourselves, if we're going to defend anyone else, then obviously we must be trained in defensive techniques, as well as in the defensive use of firearms.

At one time, riflery was taught in every public school. I remember as a boy taking my weapons to school. To go hunting afterwards, have them in the truck, had no problem. Ron did the same thing. The federal government today still promotes civilian marksmanship programs.

I got this title from Ron and then I looked it up: "The Office of the Director of Civilian Marksmanship, DCM, was created by the United States Congress as part of the 1903 War Department Appropriations Act. The original purpose was to provide civilians an opportunity to learn and practice marksmanship skills so they would be skilled marksmen if later called to serve in the United States military."

"Formation was precipitated by the adoption of the M1903 Springfield Rifle as the national service rifle; civilians experienced with popular contemporary lever-action rifles were unable to sustain an equivalent rate of fire from the unfamiliar bolt-action M1903 rifle. Over the years, the emphasis of the program shifted to focus on youth development through marksmanship. From 1916 until 1996, the CMP was administered by the United States Army. Title 16 of the National Defense Authorization Act for the fiscal year of 1996 created the Corporation for the Promotion of Rifle Practice and Firearm Safety to take over administration and promotion of the civilian marksmanship program." There are still numerous civilian marksmanship programs, and you can still acquire what was an M1 Garand from the federal government. There are all these federal programs promoting this.

Self-defense is biblical. Defending others is biblical. Knowing how to fight is biblical. David said in Psalm 144, verse 1, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." Nehemiah chapter 4, beginning at verse 11, tells what Nehemiah did when his community was going to be attacked.

"And our adversary 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 upon this group of people who were working on the walls, trying to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. "And it came to pass that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places which you shall return unto us, they will be upon you."

This is so common. The Jews who dwelt by them were trying to discourage the ones who were doing the work, saying, you can't fight them, you can't win. There are too many of them. They've got too much weaponry. They're too powerful. Nehemiah did this in 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. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me."

Nehemiah got the people together and organized and said, we're going to defend ourselves. We're going to take care of the problem. Clearly, that's exactly what the scripture says.

You may say, I'm not a member of a militia. I don't know how to fight. you may not know how to fight, but if you are between the ages of 17 and 45, you are the member of a militia by law. In fact, my birth certificate has on it that I was born in the third militia district. The

law says every male between 17 and 45 is a member of the unorganized militia.

Here is the United States Code, Title 10, Subtitle A, General Military Law, Chapter 13, The Militia. "The militia of the United States consists of all able-bodied males at least 17 years of age and, except as provided in section 313 of title 32, under 45 years of age who are, or who have made a declaration of intention to become, citizens of the United States and of female citizens of the United States who are members of the National Guard." "The classes of the militia are the organized militia, which consists of the National Guard and the naval militia, and the unorganized militia, which consists of the members of the militia who are not members of the National Guard or the naval militia." So you're in the militia if you're between 17 and 45. You can be in the organized or the unorganized militia, but you are still in the militia.

Tench Coxe said this, one of the founding fathers. He asked, "Who are the militia? Are they not ourselves? Is it feared then that we shall turn our arms each man against his own bosom? Congress shall have no power to disarm the militia. Their swords and every other terrible implement of the soldier are the birthright of every American. The unlimited power of the sword is not in the hands of either the federal or state governments, but where I trust in God, it will remain forever in the hands of the people." Tench Coxe, 1788. George Mason said it like this, "When the resolution of enslaving America was formed in Great Britain, the British Parliament was advised by an artful man, who was the Royal Governor of Pennsylvania, to disarm the people; that it was the best and most effectual way to enslave them; that they should not do it openly but weaken them and let them sink gradually by totally disusing and neglecting the militia." Representative Elbridge Gerry, who was also a signer of the Declaration of Independence, said this, "What, sir, is the use of a militia? It is to prevent the establishment of a standing army, the bane of liberty. Whenever governments mean to invade the rights and liberties of the people, they always attempt to destroy the militia in order to raise an army upon their ruins."

George Washington said this, "Firearms stand next in importance to the Constitution itself. They are the American people's liberty

teeth and keystone under independence. From the hour the Pilgrims landed to the present day, events, occurrences, and tendencies prove that to ensure peace, security, and happiness, the rifle and pistol are equally indispensable. The very atmosphere of firearms everywhere restrains evil interference. They deserve a place of honor with all that is good."

Thomas Jefferson said the strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against the tyranny in government. The right to keep and bear arms according to the Second Amendment is not about duck hunting or deer hunting. It's about preserving our liberties from a tyrannical government. Again, Thomas Jefferson said, "Laws that forbid the carrying of arms disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes. Such laws make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants."

"They serve rather to encourage than to prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man." And that's the truth. The truth of the matter is, an armed society is a polite society. There is a creed that is quoted by, or used to be, by every Marine. It is entitled My Rifle. I had to learn some of this, although I was not a Marine. I did not know all of it until recently. The Marines' creed concerning his rifle says, "This is my rifle."

"There are many like it, but this one is mine. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life. Without me, my rifle is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than the enemy who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will. My rifle and I know what counts in war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, or the smoke we make. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit. My rifle is human, even as I am human, because it is my life."

"Thus I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strengths, its parts, its accessories, its sights, and its barrel. I will keep my rifle clean and ready, even as I am clean and ready. We will become part of each other. Before God, I swear this creed. My rifle and I are the defenders of my country. We are masters of our enemy. We are saviors of my life. So be it, until victory is America's, and

there is no enemy but peace." We must learn to fight, in every area. We must learn to fight mentally, economically, physically, and spiritually. And we must learn to do so together. We must learn to help each other, to encourage each other, to work with each other.

Conclusion: Living for God's Honor

One man alone is easy prey. no matter how much confidence he has, no matter how much firepower he has, no matter how many supplies he possesses, he will not last very long. That's why we need communities. That's why we have to come together, especially in a time of societal collapse, and learn to work with each other, and help each other, and defend each other. If you and I are to have happy and loving and living and safe communities. We have to know God's law. We have to know how to apply that law. We have to learn to live by that law. And we must be ready to defend that law. And we must be ready to defend our lives, our families and our neighbors' lives as well. And we have to do it all with a special regard for God's honor and God's glory. William J. Bennett, a lecture to the United States Naval Academy on November 24, 1997, said this, "Honor never grows old and honor rejoices the heart of age. It does so because honor is finally about defending those noble and worthy things that deserve defending, even if it comes at a high cost. In our time, that may mean social disapproval, public scorn, hardship, persecution, or as always, even death itself. The question remains, what is worth defending? What is worth dying for? What is worth living for?" And I submit to you, the Lord Jesus Christ and His law is worth fighting, dying, and living for.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your mercy and Your grace, and we do pray, Lord, that You would help us to learn to live together as a community, to worship together, to function together, to be what we should be to each other, that You may be glorified in every life and in every activity. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Captain Jonathan Davis and a Combat Mentality

July 6, 2022

Introduction: The Problem of Girly Men

1 Corinthians chapter 16 and verse 13 says, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, and be strong.” So my first question is this: Where are the men? How is it that in our day and time we have sired a generation of pansies, a generation of gutless, spineless wimps who are absolutely afraid to stand for truth, righteousness, and principle? We could ask more questions: Where are the men willing to fight for their families, their churches, and their society? Where are men willing to fight for principles of right?

I certainly do not agree with or endorse Arnold Schwarzenegger, but I do agree with something he said years ago. He made a comment about “girly men,” which I think is very important in today’s arena. Such girly men are everywhere today. Men today would much rather play than work. They would much rather be protected than be the protectors, and they would much rather be

pacifistic than engage in martial training. In fact, most men today would much rather be amused than study, think, and pray.

Not too long ago, Alice and I were at the Denver Airport waiting for a flight. I looked across from me, and there sat a young married couple. I would suspect they were twenty-one, or perhaps a little older or younger—around nineteen to twenty-three. The husband was sitting there playing a computer game, and his wife was coloring in a Charlie Brown coloring book. They were not mentally challenged, at least not from appearance. But I thought, "Here are children. Although they're married, they're still refusing to grow up."

Years ago, I saw a young married couple in a drugstore. The store had a little book section, magazine section, and comic books, and this couple were sitting there reading comic books. I knew both of them, so I inquired of someone I knew in the drugstore. They said it was their habit to come in every day and read comic books for several hours. Here were people who were evidently ashamed to grow up.

There is something wrong with a forty-year-old father who can beat his twelve-year-old son in video games. Everywhere I go, I see men and women playing video games. Often Alice and I take four- or five-hour flights, and I have watched people sit and play games on their phones for the entire flight. No one is reading; everyone is simply playing games. We either have a bunch of girly men, a bunch of grown adult children, or folks who have refused to grow up. There is only one area, according to the Bible, in which you and I should be immature.

Biblical Call to Manly Maturity

You say, "Where in the world is that?" Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:20, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." It is all right to be children when it comes to malice. Malice includes anger, bitterness, resentment, and staying mad. In that respect, he says, "You're going to be children."

What does he mean? You have seen children playing together. One gets hurt and runs to his mother, saying, "Mother, mother,

Tommy hurt me." She asks, "And where did he hurt you?" He answers, "Well, right here," and there is hardly a mark. She says, "Well, you'll be all right, son. Go back out and play with him." The next thing you know, they are playing as though nothing had happened. That is why the Apostle Paul said that in malice we are to be children.

However, 1 Corinthians 16:13 is totally different: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, and be strong." This text is a clear call to what we would know as a combat mentality. It is decidedly a military text, demonstrating awareness, courage, boldness, and strength. Interestingly, the word for "men" is a unique word. In Greek, it is called a hapax legomenon, a word that occurs only one time in the Bible. The word is andrizomai, translated in the phrase "quit you like men." It literally means to make a man, to make brave, to show oneself brave, and to show oneself a man. Thus, we are to consider ourselves manly and brave and show ourselves as a man.

Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 16:13

That is, we are not to be cowards. We are not to be timid or alarmed at our enemies, but bold and brave. We have a common saying among fathers and sons, especially when we say, "Be a man, son." In other words, son, show yourself a man. Do not be scared, do not be timid, and do not just start crying at anything and everything. When we say, "Show yourself a man," what we are saying is, do not be base, timid, or cowardly; do not act like a child. In other words, if you are a man and involved in a fight, you keep fighting and keep on fighting until you win.

What does the phrase "quit ye like men" imply? It implies that when you are attacked, you do not flinch, waver, run, hide, give in, or give up. Rather, you maintain your ground, press forward, fight, strike home, and keep fighting until you conquer. In other words, you are not giving up, giving out, or giving in.

What he is teaching us here is decidedly what is known as a combat mentality. We fight, and we fight to win, and we keep fighting until we either die or win. When God tells us in this passage to be strong, it means that we are to put forth all the vigor and all the energy that God has given us. We are not to give up or give out.

Each of these terms is military language. “Watch ye” means that we are continually to be on our guard, lest we be surprised by our enemies. We put out our scouts, sentries, and sentinels, making sure that we are not slipped up on or surprised, and that we are alert and ready to perform our duty. Then he says, “Stand fast in the faith.”

The Danger of Divided Ranks

What in the world does that mean? Obviously, it means that we keep our ranks and are not disorderly. We are like the Spartans at the Battle of Thermopylae: we keep our ranks unbroken and close together. Our preservation depends upon our unity. If the enemy succeeds in breaking our ranks and dividing us as a sacred army, our rout will be inevitable.

Most of you know the old adage, “divide and conquer.” The police are really good at this. If they take two men in and separate them to question them, they might say, “Tommy, you need to tell us what you did.” Tommy says, “No.” Then they say, “Well, what did that preacher do?” Tommy answers, “No, I’m not talking.” “Well, Tommy, I’ve got news for you. That preacher has already talked, and he told us that you did this. It was all your idea. It’s all your fault. He’s going to bail out, and he’s not going to be held accountable. It’s going to be you.” Then Tommy says, “That dirty, lowdown, stinking rascal, I didn’t do it. He did it.” The next thing you know, they are confessing together.

This happens in the ministry many times. Years ago, I learned this principle. Every one of us is concerned about my ministry. By “my,” I mean individual ministry; we have a number of pastors here. But think about this: there is my ministry, there is our ministry, and there is the ministry. Do you realize that most pastors are not concerned about anyone but themselves, their work, and their church? They very seldom even pray for other pastors and other works.

Certainly, I want God to bless my ministry. But I also want God to bless our ministry, and I would like God to bless the ministry. It does not matter to me whether revival starts in Virginia, Georgia, or Washington State—just so it starts. I do not care who receives the honor or the glory. I want the ministry to prosper and be blessed. I

want our ministry to be prospered and blessed, and I would certainly like mine; but mine is insignificant compared with ours, and ours is insignificant compared to the [source wording incomplete].

That is what the Apostle Paul said so many times about praying for the ministry as well. When he says, “stand fast in the faith,” he is saying that we must stand together. We must not have a broken rank.

In the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, the alliance of Greek city-states fought the invading Persian army. Vastly outnumbered, the Greeks held off the Persians in what we would call a famous last stand.

Historical Example: The Battle of Thermopylae

The small force was led by King Leonidas of Sparta, who was blocking the only road through which Xerxes, king of the Persians, was to pass. After several days of confrontation, the Persians attacked and suffered very heavy losses, while the Greeks suffered very few. On the second day, they attacked again, with the same result. On the third day, however, a man who betrayed the Greeks showed Xerxes a way around to come in behind the Spartans. When Leonidas understood what had happened, he took his 300 Spartan bodyguards and 700 Thespian soldiers and allowed the rest of the army to leave. These thousand men, especially Leonidas with his 300, would stand and hold off the Persians until the rest of the army escaped.

The defenders' performance at the Battle of Thermopylae is often used as an example of the advantages of training, equipment, good use of terrain, and maximizing an army's potential. It is also a symbol of courage against extremely overwhelming odds. When Xerxes reached Thermopylae, he sent emissaries to the Greek force. He first asked Leonidas to come over to his side, offering to make him king over all Greece. Leonidas responded, "If you knew what is good in life, you would abstain from wishing for foreign things. For me, it is better to die for Greece than to be monarch over my compatriots."

When Xerxes was refused, he sent word to Leonidas and his men to throw down their arms. Leonidas answered with the famous words, "Molon labe"—come and take them. You want them? Come and take them.

So "stand fast in the faith" means exactly what it says: we do not give in, give up, or give out. Paul plainly stated this principle in Ephesians 6:13: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Take on the whole armor of God. The command to be strong signifies that we are not to give in to weakness or faint.

I have heard so many pastors say, “Well, I’m just tired of it all.” Why are you fainting? I have two messages on how not to faint, how not to faint in the ministry. No, he says that we are to be strong, maintain our courage, sustain and help one another, and have no fear, for our great Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the victor in every battle.

You must remember what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 3: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” It is the same truth spoken in Joshua 1 and verse 6, where God commanded Joshua: “Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.” Be strong; be of good courage. You will do this, I can assure you.

When Joab saw that the Ammonites were in front and the Syrians were in the rear, he found himself surrounded by his enemies. He said in 2 Samuel 10 and verse 12: “Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good.”

So he says, "Be strong." We are not to behave ourselves like children, but like men. Children are usually very easily terrified and scared by any noise or anything unusual. We are to face our enemies with courage and fortitude.

Circumstances Reveal Character

The truth of the matter is this: we are living in dismal, perilous, extremely dangerous times, and I believe that things are going to get

worse. But here is a principle: circumstances never make or break a man; they just reveal him. Someone takes up a weapon, charges straight into the enemy, saves his men, and defeats the enemy. You say, "The battle made him a hero." No, the battle did not make him a hero; he was already a hero in his heart. The battle just revealed him. Another man in the same battle takes his weapon, throws it away, and runs. You say, "The battle made him a coward." No, he was already a coward in his heart. The battle just revealed him. What I believe is coming down the pike is really going to separate the wheat from the chaff.

We need courage and fortitude. Captain Jonathan R. Davis used two Colt pistols and a Bowie knife to kill eleven outlaws in one fight. He killed more in one fight than any other incident that took place on the western frontier. He was outnumbered, outgunned, and surprised, yet he won the battle.

The Story of Captain Jonathan R. Davis

Jonathan R. Davis was born in Monticello, South Carolina, in 1816. Following his education at the University of South Carolina, he enlisted in the Palmetto Regiment of Volunteers and was quickly promoted to lieutenant. He was also in the Mexican War, where he fought with distinction and honor. He was wounded at Churubusco in 1847, along with 1,100 other American casualties. In those days, surviving wounds amid all the infection, without proper antibiotics, was a miracle indeed, and only the toughest survived. Jonathan R. Davis certainly survived, and he was a tough man indeed. Davis mustered out of the Army in 1848 with the honorary rank of captain, along with hundreds of other veterans. Set adrift after the war, he had nothing to do other than look to the gold fields in California. So he went to California to be a prospector.

It was there that his soldierly demeanor, his skills with arms, and his unblemished character earned the respect of his fellow prospectors. Jonathan R. Davis was not only a superior marksman; he was described by a friend as second to none in the art of fencing in the entire state of California. Here was a man who could shoot and use a knife. As noted earlier, he was never seen without his two Colt pistols and his large Bowie knife.

The gold rush brought many to the gold fields. Unhappily, some went there unwilling to work for gold. They planned to let others do the work and simply steal the gold. Those who had done the work and dug the gold out wanted to keep it and did not want to give it up. Consequently, they would fight.

For the outlaws, work was hard and stealing was easy. To gain an advantage, they always came in gangs. It is difficult for one or two people to overcome a large gang, so individuals whose gold was stolen usually paid the price. The gangs were after the prospectors' gold, and it was safer for them to attack in numbers. But the prospectors, who were always armed, never went alone when they knew danger was ahead; they also had several individuals with them. Seldom would these outlaws fight man on man. They were predators interested only in killing and stealing. One such gang consisted of fourteen members.

Modern-day politicians would be happy with this gang because it was truly an example of multiculturalism: two Americans, five Australians, two Britons, four Mexicans, and a Frenchman. Just two days before December 19, 1854, they had robbed and murdered six Chinese prospectors and four American prospectors.

Life is exceedingly cheap to people like this. They could care less about your life or whether you lived or died, so long as they got what you had. Tyrants are much the same. Do you think that Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson were really concerned about the adverse effects that the gene therapy shots had on Americans or anyone else?

And the answer is no—not when you have millions and billions of dollars rolling in. What about the tyrants? Look at Pol Pot, who murdered his own people, or Stalin, who murdered his own people. I saw a political cartoon years ago. Idi Amin was on the back of his Jeep with a .50-caliber machine gun, while his people lay dead in front of him. He was on the phone and said, “Traffic control, I want to report an accident. One jeep and 50,000 natives.” They do not care anything about life.

Prospectors had friends, too, and they wanted to protect themselves and their gold. When they believed they had an issue,

they did not travel alone. On this occasion, Captain Jonathan Davis was accompanied by his good friend, Dr. Boulevard Sparks, and James McDonald.

Ambushing three men in a lonely canyon must have seemed very simple and easy for fourteen desperados. However, these men had never run into anyone like Jonathan Davis. They did not know him, his skills, or his combat mentality. They were going to learn, and they were going to learn the hard way.

Here is a wonderful truth that I discovered years ago: sooner or later, every bully, every tyrant, every evil person, and every criminal is going to meet his match. He is going to run into someone who will not submit. I read a couple of years ago about a man who was following an elderly man in Florida. The elderly man was eighty-one. He realized he was being tailed, so he purposely drove out of the neighborhood, away from the houses and children playing. He did not drive home but went to the edge of town. The man kept following him.

Finally, when he reached an unpopulated place, he pulled over and parked. He pulled out his pistol and stepped from the car. The man behind him had also pulled over and was rushing toward him with a pistol in his hand. “Give me everything you’ve got,” he said. The eighty-one-year-old man raised his pistol, shot him three times in the chest, and killed him. The man had a rap sheet that long for robbing people.

When I read the article, I told Alice that I was really disappointed. She said, “Why?” I said, “Well, the man asked for everything he had with a .38. He had at least five or six rounds. He only gave him three.” I said he should have given them all of it. Sooner or later, somebody is going to bring the bully down. Sooner or later, someone is going to stand their ground. And the man who is the bully, the tyrant, or the criminal is going to learn the truth of Proverbs 13 and verse 15 very quickly: “the way of the transgressor is hard.”

The gang that intended to prey upon Captain Davis and his party learned that truth very quickly because they not only met their match; most of them met their maker. Historian John Boessenecker calls what happened “the single most extraordinary feat of

self-defense by an American civilian in the annals of frontier history." It was December the 19th, 1854, on a cold day in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Three prospectors carefully traversed a red trail in an aptly named Rocky Canyon in El Dorado County, near the North Fork of the American River. Unknown to them, fourteen heavily armed outlaws were hiding on that trail, waiting to ambush them. Unknown to both parties, three miners were up on a ridge and saw the entire incident. They were eyewitnesses.

All of a sudden, the fourteen outlaws jumped from their ambush and began firing. Davis, Dr. Sparks, and James McDonald were oblivious to what was ahead. When the bandits came within proper range, they opened fire. James McDonald was killed instantly, unable even to present his weapon, much less get a shot off. Dr. Sparks got off two shots before he fell, but both undoubtedly went wild.

With one friend dead and the other gravely injured, Captain Jonathan Davis stood alone in a hail of gunfire. He did not hesitate, run, or cower. He responded quickly, efficiently, with deadly force. Captain Davis later described himself as being in a fever of excitement. With fourteen men firing at him, one friend dead, and the other badly wounded, he drew those Colt pistols and started firing at the charging outlaws. When his two Colts were empty, seven of the bandits were dead.

Probably none of his shots missed. With seven dead bandits, he was now out of ammo. Thankfully, the outlaws also were out of ammo. But the fight was not over. Four of the bandits charged with a short sword and knives. Many people never understood the 21-foot rule or the Tueller drill. I think the 21-foot rule now has been extended to about 31 feet.

What that means is this: a man capable of running can cover 21 feet or 31 feet in a second and a half. If a man is charging at you with a knife, and you have a weapon on your side but cannot get it out and on target in less than a second and a half, you are dead meat. You can look at it on the Internet, on YouTube. There was a man, of course, holding a rubber knife, while English cops had plastic

weapons in their holsters. When the man said, “Go,” the man with the knife ran up. While the cop was trying to get his weapon out, he was slashing him with a knife—not really hurting him, but showing the throat or stabbing or whatever. Not one of the English cops beat him, not one. He got them every time.

So here were four men charging Captain Davis with a short sword and knives. A man with a Bowie knife, or any knife, who knows how to use it is a deadly person. Captain Davis was no exception. When charged by these four men, he whipped out his Bowie knife and quickly warded off the thrust from two bandits. He stabbed one to death and disarmed the other by knocking the knife from his grasp and slicing off his nose and a finger of his right hand. The two last attackers had been hurt previously in a fight, yet foolishly and stupidly still tried to attack the man who had just shot seven of their brothers, quote unquote, and then killed or disarmed two more.

They attacked him, and he quickly and efficiently used his Bowie knife to kill them. The three remaining bandits ran off. In seconds, this man had shot seven outlaws and killed four more with his Bowie knife. One was still alive, but he was going to die. Davis had suffered only two minor flesh wounds. Remember, the men on the hill were watching everything.

Davis took off his shirt and began tearing it into strips. James McDonald was dead, but Dr. Boulevard was still alive, so Davis went over, doctored him, tried to stop the blood, and sought to save him. When he finished with Dr. Boulevard, he went to the bandits who were still living—even the one with his nose cut off—and tried to tend them and help them.

He had won the battle. Mercy, then, was his to dispose of if he chose to do so. The three men who had watched from the hill came running down the trail. Davis was bandaging the surviving men when he heard their footsteps and quickly dove for McDonald's revolver, which was still loaded. He grabbed it, pointed it at them, and said, "Halt right there or I'll shoot."

They identified themselves as John Webster, Isaac Hart, and P.S. Robertson. They explained that they had been hunting game and had seen everything from the hilltop. They acknowledged that Davis

and his party had acted in self-defense, and then helped him doctor the men.

They went back to their camp and brought fifteen other men, not only to review the situation but also to help bury the wounded. As the sun went down, three more of the wounded bandits finally died. The noseless leader confessed to his gang's murder of the ten people during the two previous days, the seventeenth and eighteenth. He died the following day.

Aftermath and Vindication

Remember, ten people had been murdered. What they found on the outlaws was $491 in gold and silver coins, nine watches—two silver and seven gold—and four ounces of gold dust. It would be worth more today compared with today's worthless money, but ten men had been murdered, and that was all they got.

Captain Davis pointed to Dr. Sparks, who was still clinging to life. He told them that the doctor had a home and family in Coloma, and urged that the ill-gotten gain from the outlaws be given to Dr. Boulevard Sparks and his family to help him recover. They all agreed. After the battle was over, the next day, all the dead were buried.

Being law-abiding men, the group formed a coroner's jury, wrote a report of the incident citing all the evidence and the witnesses' statements, and concluded that Davis's party had acted in self-defense. Seventeen men signed the report, and it was sent to Placerville, California, the county seat. Davis then carried his friend Boulevard Sparks to his home in Coloma, but the doctor passed away on December 26.

One witness stated in a letter, "Although we counted 28 bullet holes through Captain Davis's hat and clothes, 17 through his hat and 11 through his coat and shirt, he received only two very slight flesh wounds." Twenty-eight bullets had struck his hat and coat. In the following months, many people expressed doubt concerning Davis's deed, and the city folks proclaimed it a wild exaggeration. Davis did not seek publicity or notoriety.

But he was stung by the dishonor heaped upon him and by the fact that Dr. Sparks, his good friend, and James McDonald were being ridiculed. Finally, Davis and the witnesses appeared before Judge R. M. Anderson in a court of inquiry, where detailed depositions and comparisons of statements set the matter to rest. Yes, he did do that.

Jonathan Davis said, "I did only what hundreds of others might have done under similar circumstances and attach no particular credit to myself for it." Indeed, hundreds of others might have done it, but the question would have been, would they have done it so well? Captain Davis possessed what the average man does not possess. He not only had his weapons; he was trained with them. And it was not just his weapons and training. He also had what most people do not have: a combat mentality. In other words, he refused to be a victim.

I give you an excellent illustration of this. I have a true story in writing about a man who was beating his wife. The neighbors heard her crying and screaming and called the cops. The cops came, blue lights flashing and siren sounding, so the man came outside. He knew he was going to be arrested. His wife came outside, and yes, she had a black eye, a bloody nose, and a bloody mouth.

He told the cops he only had on a pair of pants—no shirt, no shoes. He said, "I know that I'm going to be arrested. At least let me go back in and get a pair of shoes and a shirt." The cop said, "Fine." One cop stayed with his wife, and one walked in with him to the bedroom. It was a standard double bed, not a queen-size bed or a king-size bed. When the man went to one side of the bed to reach down for his shoes, the cop automatically went to the other side so he could watch him. When the man came up, he did not come up with his shoes; he came up with a pistol. The cop drew his pistol. Both men emptied their pistols at each other across the bed, and neither of them cut a feather. No one was hit. Not one.

You say someone is very incompetent. That will show you what pressure and adrenaline will do to you. Do you realize there is a 50 percent rule normally taught in training? Under pressure, you are only half as good as your best day on the range. If Jonathan Davis was only half as good as his best day on the range, what could he

have done without the pressure? Wow. I can only think of biblical illustrations that will parallel and rival the deed of Captain Davis.

Biblical Parallels: David's Mighty Men

In 2 Samuel 23, we have the listing of David's mighty men. Notice what a couple of them did. Verse 8 says, "These be the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time." That does not mean he threw the spear and it went through 800; he took the spear and, in one battle, killed 800.

After him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: "He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the Lord wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil." Here was a man who used that sword and fought so ferociously that his hand clave to it—in other words, it cramped around the sword. When he finished fighting, someone basically had to pry his fingers away from it.

Verse 11 says, "And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines. But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the Lord wrought a great victory."

These men fought. They were outnumbered and outgunned, yet they fought and stood, and the Lord wrought a great victory. How did the Lord win such a great victory? The men were doing the fighting, yes, but it was the Lord enabling and empowering them to fight, giving them the courage and the might.

Applications: Martial Training and Combat Mentality

You must understand and comprehend the value of martial training. Most people have never trained, do not desire to train, and will never

train. I've heard every excuse under the sun as to why men do not train: "I don't have time." "It costs money." "It's too far to travel." I'd much rather have the training and never need it than to need it and never have it.

My wife and I took Shorinji Kempo, and we both became second degree black belts. I've never, ever been in a fight. I don't desire to be in a fight, and I don't want to be in a fight. But the only time I almost got into a fight was when a much younger man threatened me, and I could not control myself. I laughed in his face and said, "Son, if you jumped on me, it'd be the worst mistake you've ever made in your entire life." I had no desire to hurt him. Could I have mashed him into the ground? Of course I could have. I was probably in the best conditioning I'd ever been in at that particular time. Two days later, that young man came back and apologized. He said, "You're right. If I jumped on you, it'd been the worst mistake I'd ever made in my entire life."

I'd rather have the training and never need it. Someone has said that training with weapons is like training with a parachute: if you ever need it and don't have it, you'll never need another one. That's certainly the truth. Martial skills are perishable skills, and many skills require muscle memory. If you are not usually conditioning yourself and continuing with that, your muscle memory is going to fade. If you have a family, you're responsible for their protection. Pastors, if you have a church, you're responsible for their protection. One of the hardest jobs I ever had was getting preachers to train.

When you look at what I preached yesterday, those preachers, those black robe regiments, most of them trained their own men—not only theologically, but practically and militarily. They believed they were responsible for the people God had given them, and they were going to protect those people.

After a number of years, I did get some preachers to come out and train. But let me make another application: you must understand and comprehend the value of martial training. Where are the men who are ready, willing, and able to defend themselves, their families, and their communities? You do not have to be a member of the armed forces in order to possess a combat mentality.

If you do not determine to fight, you will lose. If you do not determine to be the victor, you will be the victim. If you do not determine to go home alive, you will be left dead on the street. A combat mentality is absolutely necessary.

Do you want to be holy? Do you want to be godly? Do you want to be obedient? Do you want to honor the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you realize that you need a combat mentality? Look at the filthy and ungodly thoughts, at everything that floods your mind. You must determine that you will fight, because you are not going to allow that trash in your mind or in your life. You are going to fight to be holy and to be godly.

Look what happens when brothers offend you, when brothers upset you, or when you upset them. You have to hide those emotions and say, "I am not going to get bent out of shape. I am going to do what God says. I will resolve this in a biblical manner." It requires a combat mentality. Paul said, "I die daily." Paul said, "Fight the good fight of faith." You are never going to be holy or godly until you learn to fight against sin and wickedness.

You also need a combat mentality when it comes to sickness, disease, cancer, or anything else. I have no idea how many people I have watched die, but I can tell you what most of them said to me right before they died: "I'm just so tired of fighting." When you get tired of fighting, you die. When you give up, when you give in, you die. Whether we are talking about holiness or disease, you need a combat mentality.

Do you remember Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10 through 18, all the armor God has given us? Why would God give us all that armor if He did not expect us to fight? We sing, "Onward, Christian Soldiers, marching as to war," and we do not fight. No. When it comes to fighting, to a combat mentality, you have to understand this.

We must trust in the Lord, but we must use the means He places at our disposal. I wonder what Samson could have done with an AR-15. Yet he used only the jawbone of an ass to kill a thousand Philistines.

My attitude and philosophy are this: If you try to attack me—and I will explain why—or my wife, I am going to fight you. If I have no

weapon, I am going to punch you with my fist as hard as I can. If you break both my arms, I am going to kick you as hard as I can. If you break both my legs, I am going to bite you. If you knock all my teeth out, I am going to do my best to gum you to death. I am just not going to give in, give up, or give out. I am going to leave the win, or you are going to kill me.

Does anybody here know what the sixth commandment is? "Thou shalt not kill." That is a negative. You could quote it as, "Thou shalt not take life except on God's terms." There are seventeen reasons in the Bible where life can be taken on God's terms, plus one more, which is self-defense. When God says, "Thou shalt not kill," the positive is, "Thou shalt preserve life." I have a duty and responsibility under God to preserve my life, the lives of others, and especially the lives of my family.

God is absolutely sovereign. He has ordained the means for our protection, and those who will not use those means are really denying God, His Word, and His truth. This combat mentality—"quit you like men, and be strong"—is taught in the Word of God. In light of all the tyranny, lawlessness, and danger prevalent in our society, we should be motivated to study and prepare ourselves for the danger that lies ahead. We must remember Proverbs 22:3: "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." We may never be as expert as Captain Jonathan R. Davis.

But we can develop, from Scripture, a combat mentality and use it to live a holy, godly life and to fight for everything true, righteous, holy, and godly. That is why the Apostle Paul told Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." Let no man despise thy youth. Fight against sin and wickedness, and fight for truth and holiness. We need a combat mentality: "Watch ye. Stand fast in the faith. Quit ye like men. Be strong."

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank Thee for Thy Word and Thy truth, and we pray that Thou would indeed make us fighters for truth and righteousness. Give us the combat mentality to live holy and godly lives. Help us in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

For Love of the Truth

August 25, 2024

Introduction: The Rarity and Value of Truth

Proverbs 23:23 says, “Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom and instruction and understanding.” Truth is indeed an absolutely wonderful commodity. It is also extremely rare in our day and time. Many individuals think that they really want truth, but in reality they do not want truth because they never search for it. They never actually look for it or study for it.

The truth of the matter is that when most people stumble upon truth, they simply ignore it and walk on by as if it does not even exist. Someone has said very aptly that most people at one point in their lives stumble over truth. When they do, they get up, dust themselves off, and continue to walk as if they had not stumbled over absolutely anything. And that is true.

Partial Truth Is a Lie

Many of you have been in a courtroom. Some of us have been witnesses in legal trials. When you are called as a witness, you place

your hand on the Bible and swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God. Yet the prosecutor and the defense attorney most often really and truly do not want the whole truth. What they want is a partial truth to show that they will either get their defendant acquitted or the man condemned, one of the two.

I have done this before, and I know other people who have. The prosecutor will ask a specific question, and he wants a specific answer. I say, “I will answer that, sir, with this explanation.” “No, no, no, no. Just answer the question.” “No. I am going to answer the question if I can explain my answer, because I took an oath to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And the way you pose the question, it would not be the whole truth. It would just be a partial truth.”

So, the truth of the matter is, most people really do not want the truth. A partial truth, presented as a whole truth, is a lie. You can ask your child, “Did you eat the last apple?”

And he will respond, "No." Well, is he telling the truth or is he telling a lie? Well, both. He didn't eat the last apple; he only ate half of it. The point I am trying to make is this: a half-truth presented as a whole truth is an untruth. It is a lie.

The truth of the matter is that most people really, truly do not want the truth. They are not interested in studying, reading, or anything other than being totally and completely satisfied with what they know. Even if it is a partial truth or no truth at all, look at how people are raised. I am not just talking about this country; think about the folks in India and all the many gods, the false gods, they have. Think of the Islamists. Think of all these people. Think of the Roman Catholics. Look at how people are raised and how difficult it is to get someone to accept the truth when they have been raised in error all their lives.

The Pharisees' Contempt for Those Without Their 'Truth'

Now, when we are talking about truth, there is another interesting thing: some people believe that they have arrived at all truth. They

are at the apex, the pinnacle, of truth. Since they have the truth and you do not, or since they have the truth and you do not agree with them, see what they see, and understand what they understand, they look down upon you as someone absolutely ignorant—someone so stupid that you cannot even discern your right hand from your left hand.

You say, "Were there people like that?" Of course. If you will look in your Bibles at the book of John, chapter 7, beginning with verse 45, you will find that the Pharisees were exactly like I have described. "Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?" They had sent these officers to bring Jesus Christ to them. And the officers answered, "Never man spake like this man." Then answered them the Pharisees, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed."

The word "knoweth" is the word ginosko, which literally means to know, to perceive, or to understand. The Pharisees said that people who did not know, perceive, or understand this law were cursed. The word "cursed," by the way, means a curse, to be execrable, and to be exposed to divine vengeance. In other words, the Pharisees were treating people who did not see what they saw or understand what they understood with absolute contempt, saying that they were miserable and under the curse and judgment of God.

At the same time, remember that the Pharisees were in error and in heresy and did not have the truth; they believed the lie. That is why they hated Jesus Christ: He was exposing their error and their heresy. Yet they looked down upon those who did not know what they knew—or at least what they thought they knew.

I do know people like that. I even know some preachers like that. The Apostle Paul gave an interesting verse that really exposes this kind of thinking. In 1 Corinthians 8:2, he said, "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing as he ought to know." When you think that you have arrived, or that you have all truth, you do not know anything at all, period.

The Command to Buy Truth, Wisdom, Instruction, and Understanding

Go back to Proverbs 23:23 and consider this absolutely wonderful verse, full of instruction: "Buy the truth and sell it not. Also, wisdom and instruction and understanding." Consider, first of all, the word "buy." It is the Hebrew word kanah, meaning to buy, purchase, or acquire. Buy it. You are to consider truth the most valuable commodity. You are not to quibble over the price. Whatever the price is does not matter. He says you are to buy it.

In verse 23, there are actually four things that you and I are to have and possess, and each of them is extremely valuable. First of all, he says, “Buy the truth and sell it not,” so we must have truth. Then he says also, “wisdom and instruction and understanding.”

The Hebrew word for truth is emeth, and it means truth. Truth is divine instruction: a body of revealed knowledge, referring obviously to the Bible or the Holy Scriptures. When he says “buy the truth,” he is talking about all the truth that God has revealed in His Word.

You have often heard that the Old Testament—or actually, the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses—is known as the Torah. Sometimes the term refers not just to the first five books, but to the totality of the Old Testament. The word Torah means authoritative instruction or authoritative direction. Thus, “Buy the truth and sell it not” means authoritative instruction and direction given to us in the Bible.

Now look at verse 23. The second thing we are to buy and possess is wisdom. The Hebrew word for wisdom is chokmah, and it refers to wisdom, skill, prudence, and discernment. You will hear theologians and Bible scholars talk about the wisdom literature in the Bible. The wisdom literature includes Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. The word for wisdom in “wisdom literature” is the same word. Therefore, when he speaks of getting wisdom, he is again speaking of getting divine wisdom. He says, “Buy the truth and sell it not, also wisdom and instruction.” The third thing we are to buy is instruction.

Here is an item that most people do not want, but God commands us to buy. When he said, "Buy the truth," it was an imperative, which

means it is a command: "Buy the truth and sell it not." Then he says wisdom and instruction. Why do most people not want instruction? The Hebrew word is musar, and it literally means instruction, correction, rebuke, chastening, and discipline. How many of you really want chastening? How many of you really want discipline? Most people do not want discipline. They do not even want rebuke.

When he says that we are to buy instruction, we can be instructed in two ways: by words, that is, teaching like I am doing now; or by rods. That is the way we instruct our children. We use words, and we also use rods. Remember Proverbs 13:24: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that chasteneth him loveth him." He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that chasteneth him betimes, or between times, or whenever is necessary, demonstrates that he loves him. Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself is a shame to his mother." Thus, you have the rod and the words as well. Micah 6:9 says, "Hear ye the rod and him who hath appointed it." God does indeed appoint rods for us.

He tells us that we are to buy the truth, have wisdom, and have instruction. The fourth thing we are to have in verse 23 is understanding. The word for understanding is the Hebrew word binah, and it refers to understanding and discernment. This word is translated as wisdom twice in our Bible.

In one sense of the word, if you really possess truth, you will possess wisdom and instruction and knowledge. In another sense of the word, if you do not possess truth in the strictest sense of the word, you do not possess all of these things, because they could be what you and I would call individualized. The distinction is between possessing truth and possessing things that may be individualized rather than grounded in truth.

Truth Without Application Is Worthless

Let me give you an illustration. Someone has said knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit and not a vegetable. That's true. It is a fruit. It is not a vegetable. Wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad. So you can have knowledge, but if you do not know how to use that knowledge or how to apply it, then you are not necessarily going to have wisdom.

In one sense, you could say, "Well, I have God's word. I've got God's truth. And yes, I do have wisdom. Yes, I do have instruction. Yes, I do have understanding." In another sense, you could say, "Well, I have the truth, but I don't know how to use it. I don't know how to apply it." Let me put it to you very plainly: truth not understood and truth not applied happens to be absolutely worthless. If you do not know how to use truth, that truth is worthless to you.

John Gill said it like this: "Also, wisdom, instruction, understanding, that is, buy these things and sell them not. Wisdom is to be prized above everything. It is the principal thing and should be gotten. All means should be used to obtain it. It may be bought without money, it should be asked of God who gives it liberally, and being had should be held fast. The instruction of the Scriptures, the instruction of the gospel, the instruction of wisdom, should be valued above gold and silver, and diligently sought after, should be laid fast, hold on, and not parted with. Understanding of divine and spiritual things is to be gotten, and happy is the man who gets these things."

Proverbs 4:5 says, "Get wisdom, get understanding, forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth." Then verse 7 says, "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom. And with all thy getting, get understanding." Proverbs 16:16 asks, "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold, and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver?"

Matthew Henry writes, “We must buy it, that is, be willing to part with anything for it. He does not say at what rate we must buy it, because we cannot buy it too dearly. But we must have it at any rate, whatever it costs us.”

“We shall not repent of the bargain. When we are at expense for the means of knowledge and resolve not to starve so good a cause, then we buy the truth.”

He also says, “Riches should be employed for the getting of knowledge rather than knowledge for the getting of riches.” When we are at pains in searching for truth and after truth, then we come

to the knowledge of it and may distinguish between it and error; then we buy it.

So we are commanded to buy the truth and sell it not, and along with that truth, wisdom, instruction, and knowledge. Since God has commanded us to have these things, why is it that we do not have them in our lives? We may have a little taste of some of them, but we do not have wisdom, knowledge, or understanding to the degree that we need them. Why is it that we do not have these things?

Why People Reject the Truth

I could answer that, in one sense, with the words of our Lord in John 8:46. Looking at the Pharisees, Jesus Christ said, “Which of you convicteth me of sin?” Then He said, “And if I say the truth, why do you not believe me?” That is a good question. If you hear the truth, why do you not believe it? Why do we not receive the truth when we hear it?

I want to show you why most people do not receive the truth. First of all, by nature, as depraved individuals, we are blind to the truth. We cannot see it.

The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 18 and 19, listen carefully, "Having the understanding darkened." What? "Having the understanding darkened." How? "And being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them who have given themselves over unto lasciviousness with all uncleanness." What? "Being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." So God tells us by nature, we're absolutely blind to truth. You remember the passage in 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 14, where he said, "But the natural man," that is man by nature, unsaved man, "but the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Listen to this. "For they are foolish unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." So the natural man, the unsaved man, does not have the ability, he does not have the capacity to understand spiritual things.

I want to show you a good illustration. I want you to look in your Bibles to the book of John chapter 18. John chapter 18. And let's begin reading there with verse 37. Just to show you how blind people

really are by nature. In John chapter 18, verse 37, Jesus Christ is standing before Pilate. The Bible says in verse 37, "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king."

In other words, that's equivalent to saying, "You said it, buddy. You nailed it. Yes, I am a king." That's what he said. "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." Isn't that interesting? "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." Pilate says unto him, "What is truth?" Truth was standing right in front of him and he did not see it. Truth was speaking to him and he did not hear it. Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me." So here, Jesus Christ is standing right in front of Pilate, and Pilate still wants to know what truth is.

So first of all, people will not receive the truth because of their depravity, of the blindness of their heart. Secondly, hang on to this one, many people do not want the truth because it proves them wrong, and that they have been in error most of their lives. It even gets worse than that. Because it also proves that their parents were probably in error, their grandparents were in error, their friends are in error. And so they're going to refuse the truth, they're going to reject the truth, because to receive the truth and admit the truth means, "I have to say, I'm wrong. I've been wrong." I want you to look at this.

In 2 Timothy 2:24, the Bible says, “...and the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” Why must we be apt to teach? Why must we be patient? The answer is, “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.”

Someone who will not listen, who argues against the truth, and who refuses and rejects the truth is opposing himself. “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and then they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” When do men recover themselves out of the snare of the devil? The answer in verse 25 is when they acknowledge the truth. When do they acknowledge the truth? The

answer in verse 25 is when God gives them repentance. Why then must the servant of the Lord not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance?

Change comes hard. Change in our thinking comes hard. Change in our belief system comes hard. When you have been taught error for a long period of time, it is even far more difficult.

When God saved me and called me to preach, I had three or four pastor friends who took me under their wing and taught me a lot of things. I loved and respected those men. In fact, I was converted under the ministry of one of them, so he was very special to me. All of these men had graduated from Bob Jones University. Upon their recommendation, I went to Bob Jones University.

I had a teacher there named Dr. Richard Gaynor, whom I had in several classes, including Pauline Epistles. I was married when I went to the university, and I had a child and had worked, so I was not a little young thing. I was young, but not a teenager. When I heard Mr. Gaynor teaching, it struck me that what he was saying was contrary to what I had been taught and what my pastor friends had been teaching me.

I sat at my desk and said to myself, “If he's right, I'm wrong. If he's right, all of my friends are wrong.” I'll be honest: I didn't mind being wrong myself, but I did not want my friends to be wrong. So I raised my hand, and he called on me. This happened right before summer break, on the first of May. He called on me and said, “Yes.”

I stood up and said, “Mr. Gaynor, you know that what you're saying is not true. You're just saying that because you want to be accepted by an intellectual elite.” I was angry and upset because I knew that if he was right, all my friends were wrong. He looked at me and said, “Mr. Weaver, shut up and sit down. I'll see you after class.” I did, but after class I was still upset and angry.

I stormed up to his desk. He looked at me and said, “You realize I could have you expelled from this university.” I said, “Yes, sir, I know that.” He said, “You realize I could report you to the discipline committee, and you would have more problems.” I said, “Yes, sir, I know that.” Then he said, “But I'm not going to do either.” Instead of

being upset that I had basically called him a liar, he said, “I do know that you study.” And I did.

I made A's in his class and in about every subject. He said, “So here's what I want you to do. I want you to go out this summer and go ahead and preach like you're going to preach. And when you come back in the fall”—this was my sophomore year—“we will resume this conversation.” Then he said, “But there's one thing I'm going to ask you to do.”

I said, “What is that?” He said, “You must remember this. You always allow the Bible to interpret your experiences. You never allow your experiences to interpret the Bible.” That summer, God opened my eyes like you would not believe. When I went back to school in the fall, the first person I went to was Dr. Richard Gaynor. I went to his office and knocked on the door.

I said, “Sir, I just came by to apologize and ask your forgiveness. You were right. I was wrong. If you can get all those students back together,” I said, “I will be glad to stand up and apologize in front of all of them.” He looked at me and said, “You don’t need to apologize in front of them.” He said, “I’m just happy that God opened your eyes.” Isn’t that amazing?

By the way, we’re still friends. He’s much, much older than I am, but he’s still alive and we’re still friends. But I’m just saying, change is very difficult. When you’ve been taught something all your life and all of a sudden you realize it’s wrong, that is difficult. Let me show you. They were about to stone Stephen to death, and they were summoning some false witnesses. I want you to look at what they say. Acts 6:13 says, “And they set up false witnesses which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, that is the temple, and the law.” Then they said, “For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us.” Guess what? Jesus Christ did destroy that place, and He did change the customs. But what they were saying was, “We don’t want to change.”

“We’re happy with what we’ve got. We’re not going to change.” Change comes hard. So there are some people who simply do not

want to confess or admit, “My grandpa was wrong. My mama and daddy were wrong. I’m wrong.” It is very, very difficult.

Here’s a third reason most people will not receive the truth: it exposes their wickedness. In John chapter 3, our Lord says in verses 19 and 20, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” Why? Because they don’t want their deeds reproved or exposed.

Let me give you a good illustration. Years ago, I had a family in our church for hours past. The wife was a normally Christian lady who taught in our Christian school. The children of this family were in our church and Christian school as well. This lady's husband was an extremely likable man. You could not help but like him or love him. He was such a kind individual; he would give you the shirt off his back. But he was unsaved, and about once a month he had to pitch a good drunk, if you could call a drunk good. He would get good and drunk.

He was a hard worker, made good money, and supported his family, but once a month he was just going to get drunk. One day I was talking to him and asked him why. He would come to church every now and then, but he would not come often. I asked, “Why is it you do not come to church more often? Your wife wants you to come. Your children want you to come. I want you to come. Our people want you to come. Why is it you do not come to church more often?” He looked at me and said, “Preacher, do you want me to tell you the truth or lie to you?” I said, “I want you to tell me the truth.” He said, “I’ll tell you why I don’t come more often.”

He said, “Because I know that you are right and I am wrong. I know that when I come, I am condemned for my sins. And I’m going to tell you the reason I don’t come. Right now, I just love my sins too much.” At least he was honest. He hated the light. He would not come to the light lest his deeds be reproved. That was it. But I’m thankful to report to you that after a number of years God did save him, and he’s an active member in that church even today.

Now, let me give you the fourth reason why people will not receive truth: truth is suppressed by them. You will have to look at Romans chapter 1 to understand this point, in verses 18 and 19. Many people do not understand this passage. When you read it, it's almost confusing until you understand one word. Romans 1:18 says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them." How do you hold the truth in unrighteousness? When you understand that the Greek word is katecho, it literally means to hold down, to suppress, to hinder, to restrain, to hold back.

In other words, here's someone who may have heard the truth at one point. He may have been taught the truth by his parents or heard some preacher preach the truth, and yet he is not thinking about it or contemplating on it. He knows that he has heard it, but he is holding it down, suppressing it by his constant and continual wicked, unrighteous acts. He holds it back; he suppresses it.

The interesting thing is that "he holds the truth in unrighteousness" uses the Greek word adikia, meaning that which is contrary to God's law, a violation of God's law, that which is not righteous. He is continually sinning and doing that which is wicked to keep the truth from coming up in his mind. He did not want to think about it or meditate upon it. Here is the problem: according to 1 Timothy chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, someone like that can have a seared conscience—a seared conscience.

What in the world is that? If you do something that is wicked and wrong often enough, frequently enough, and long enough, you get to where it never bothers you. Have you ever wondered how someone can be a professional hitman? I read an article about some beautiful Mexican women, and they had pictures of them. I forget the word that they called them, but these women were just killed mercilessly. They were paid to do that, and it did not bother them.

Several years back, I read about a young man who was in a gang. He had a girlfriend, and they had two children. The leader of the gang suspected her of giving information to the police. He had no real knowledge of it; he just suspicioned that. So he ordered his gang

member to murder his live-in wife and two children. Guess what he did? He took them out on a picnic, fed them, and murdered his wife and two children because the gang boss told him to do it.

You stop and ask, how in the world can anyone do something like this? Because when you do something long enough, it does not even bother you. Look at what is happening in some of these Venezuelan gangs and in these Islamic countries. It does not bother these people. Their conscience is seared.

Here is the fifth reason, as far as Christians are concerned, that we do not really have wisdom, truth, instruction, and knowledge. This may take a little explanation. We have not realized our position as kings and priests unto our God. If we are kings and priests unto our God, that means we have kingly and priestly duties, responsibilities, obligations, and privileges.

Let me give you two verses. The first is found in Revelation 1:6, where the Bible is speaking about Jesus Christ: "And he hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Then Revelation 5:10 says, "He hath made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign with him on earth."

Now, without going into great detail, I want to show you one of our kingly duties. Turn in your Bibles to Proverbs 25:2. In fact, we will read verse 1 as well: "These are also the Proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, copied out." Look at verse 2.

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter." It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, and it is the honor of kings to search out a matter. I have had people ask me, "Why doesn't God spell out everything concerning every problem and every situation in the Bible, so that we could turn to a passage, read it, and know exactly what to do?" Well, if God did that, you couldn't carry your Bible around. It would be so big and bulky. But what He has done is give us principles, and we are responsible before Him to search out these principles so that we will know how to live and how to act.

How many of you have simply walked on your property, reached down, and picked up several ounces of gold lying on the surface every day? Maybe you pick up a little silver every day. Does that happen on your property? It does not happen on mine either. Do you know why? Gold and silver are extremely valuable, and they are also extremely rare. If you are going to get gold and silver, you have to mine it. You have to dig for it and search for it. I realize you can pan for it if it is in the river, but usually you are talking about mining, and that is very difficult, hard, laborious work.

The Duty to Search for Truth as for Hidden Treasure

Consider what God says in Proverbs chapter 2: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom and apply thine heart to understanding, yea, if thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

The words are receive, hide, incline, apply, cry, lift, seek, and search. The promise is that then—and only then—you shall understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding. Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then and only then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Wow!

If you knew for sure—absolutely—that there was a treasure chest full of silver and gold hidden on your property, containing gold coins and silver coins from hundreds of years ago, which makes them far more valuable than modern-day gold and silver, you would know it was there even though you did not know where. Would you take your shovel, dig for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then say, “Wow, this is hard work. I don't think I'm going to do this”? Would you turn around, go back in the house, get your glass of tea, and sit down where it was cool? I know you wouldn't. If you knew that treasure

chest was on your property, you wouldn't stop digging until midnight.

If you gave out of steam, you would try to rent a backhoe. Your yard would look like a modern-day highway full of potholes, because you want that silver and gold. This is exactly what God is saying in Proverbs chapter 2. Psalm 111 and verse 2 says, “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all of them that have pleasure therein.” The works are not sought out of people who do not have pleasure in them; they are only sought out of people who do have pleasure in them.

Lying Against the Truth by Attitude and Disobedience

So it is our duty, our responsibility, our obligation, and our privilege to study and to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that needeth not to be ashamed. I want to tie this together because I titled this message “For the Love of the Truth.” In James chapter 3, verses 13 and 14, the question is asked, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness and wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth.”

Let me make something clear that is very obvious in this passage: you can lie in more ways than one. You do not have to use your tongue to lie. Your attitude and your disposition can be a lie, because bitter envying and strife happen to be dispositions; they happen to be attitudes.

“If you have bitter envying and strife in your heart,” he said, “glory not and lie not against the truth.” The word truth here happens to be the word aletheia, meaning actual truth. Truth is revealed in the Bible; it refers to objective truth. So what is truth? That is what Pilate asked Jesus Christ: “What is truth?” The Bible gives us the answer, because the Word of God is referred to over and over as the Word of Truth. John 17:17 says, “Sanctify them by truth, thy word is truth.” James 1:18 says, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.” Over and over, the Bible, the Scripture, is called the Word of Truth. We know, therefore, that the Scriptures are the Word of Truth.

Secondly, the Sovereign God is truth. Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 4 tells us that God is truth. Whatever He does, He does in truth. You will find the same truth in Psalm 31 and verse 5. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is truth, for He said in John chapter 14, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh to the Father but by me." John 1:17 says, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, for the Bible says, "For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fullness of the Godhead dwell bodily." Jesus Christ is truth incarnate. The Spirit of God is called the Spirit of Truth in John 14, John 15, and John 16.

When you look at James 3 and verse 14, he says, "But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth." If we are living ungodly, in error, in sin, or disobediently, what are we doing? We are lying against the truth. That means we are lying against the Scriptures of God, the Sovereign God, the Son of God, and the Spirit of God. You can lie.

In more ways than one. Now, the interesting thing is this. In the Old Testament, they lied against God. In the New Testament, we do the same thing. But I want you to see this. Look in your Bibles to Hosea, chapter 7 and verse 13. Look at this. Look what God says about Israel. In fact, you can read verse 1: "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria. For they commit falsehood," look at that, "and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without."

In the context, he is talking about his own people. Look what he says in verse 13: "Woe to them, for they have fled from me, destruction unto them, because they have transgressed against me, though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me." Here is a good question: Are you lying against God? You can lie against Him with your attitude and your disposition as well.

Now consider why people are perishing—why our children perish, why our grandchildren perish, and why, in the end, everyone perishes. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 10, the Bible speaks of those who perish "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." Why are they perishing? "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved."

The Consequence of Rejecting the Love of the Truth

What happens when you do not receive the love of the truth? “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie.” What happens when you believe a lie? “That they all might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Most people have never really considered this reality. If you do not have the truth, the only thing left is error. If you do not understand truth, the only thing left is for you to believe a lie. Our Lord says people were perishing because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. When they do not receive the love of the truth, God sends them a strong delusion. If you will not believe the truth, you will believe a lie; and if you believe the lie, you are going to be damned, because you received not the love of the truth.

The Bible tells us in Titus chapter 1 and verse 9, “Holding fast the faithful word as we have been taught.” You and I are obligated to what truth we have; we are to hold it fast. Hebrews 2 and verse 1 tells us not to let it slip.

In 1 John chapter 4 and verse 6, the Bible says, “We are of God. He that knoweth God, heareth us. He that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” John says that we are the representatives of Jesus Christ, the representatives of God. He that knows God hears us. He that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Conclusion: Hold Fast the Truth

So what is the spirit of error? The spirit of error is a rejection of the truth. It is the belief of the lie. Then, in 2 John chapter 1 and verse 2, there is this interesting statement: “For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever.” Have you ever stopped to think about this? How could those martyrs sing psalms, praise God, and quote Scripture as they were being burned alive? How could they endure such torture? The answer is, for the truth’s sake.

For the truth's sake, because the truth dwells in us, and those who have the truth in the Word of God cannot deny it.

You remember what the Bible says about overcoming the enemy: "And they overcame him" how? "By the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death." If we love the truth, we will hold to the truth regardless. Our Lord said, "Buy the truth, sell it not. Also wisdom, instruction, and knowledge." When God gives you truth, when you see it from His Word, hold it fast. Never, ever let it slip from your grasp.

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. Lord, we pray that You would give us truth, that we may rejoice in it before Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

Never ever let it slip from your grasp. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word and your truth, and pray that you would give us truth, that we may rejoice in it before thee. In Jesus Christ's name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

Are You Poor and Needy?

February 21, 2024

Introduction: The Question and the Text

Deuteronomy 24:14-15 says, “Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren or thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates. At his day thou shalt give him his hire. Neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and set his heart upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.”

So the pressing question is: Are you poor and needy? When we hear that question, our minds immediately think of money. We either think that we have a sufficient amount for the time being, or we think that we do not have a sufficient amount. If we cannot pay our bills, provide for our families, and secure what you and I would refer to as the necessities of life, we would consider that we were poor and needy.

Misconceptions About Poverty and Wealth

There are many people, I think, that believe they are poor and needy when, in reality, they are not poor and needy. Oftentimes, those who are loaded with money think that they are poor and needy because they do not think that they have enough money. Thus, they would consider themselves poor and needy. It is like one wealthy landowner that I read about. Someone accused him of wanting to own the world.

He said, “That’s a lie. He does not want to own the world. All he wants to do is own the land that’s next to his.” Now think about it. Pretty soon, he would indeed own the world, that is for sure.

Now there are some that are poor and needy due to their own slothfulness, idleness, laziness, and they refuse to work. Those are the ones, I believe, that should not be helped financially in any way whatsoever. In fact, I would say, do not help them in any way, period. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” He continues: “For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now then, them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that they with quietness work and eat their own bread.”

“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” I have no sympathy for a man who will not work. It does not matter whether he is a professing Christian or not. If he will not work, God says, let him starve. I am assured in my own mind that most people would learn to work before they would starve.

The Sluggard Condemned in Proverbs

Many Scriptures in the Bible condemn laziness and what you and I would call being a sluggard. God condemns a man who is lazy, indolent, and will not work whatsoever. In Proverbs 6:6, God says, “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise.” Here is what the ant does: “Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the

harvest." Then he asks, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?"

"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." God sends us to the ant to learn. Those that will not lay up, will not work, and will not provide are nothing more than sluggards.

Proverbs 10:26 says, "As vinegar to the teeth and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him." Vinegar hurts your teeth and smoke hurts your eyes. If you send a sluggard to do a job, you are going to be hurt. It is just that simple.

I have always liked Proverbs 13:4 because it is so easily illustrated: "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat."

In every city, just about, you have people who will sit around a fire drum or on a bench somewhere, and they desire everything they see. They see that good Lincoln Town Car. They see that big, high Silverado truck. "Man, I'd like to have one of those," but they'll never have anything like that, because they won't work. That's exactly what he's saying: "The soul of the sluggard always desires and he hath nothing," but "the soul of the diligent," the one who is going to work and save and provide, "he shall be made fat."

In Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 4, he says, "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing." The sluggard is someone who does not want to be inconvenienced. He doesn't want to work when it's cold or when it's hot; therefore, God says he'll beg in harvest and have nothing.

In Proverbs chapter 26 and verse 16, he says, "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason." You can't argue with a sluggard. You're not going to win, because he is so wise in his own conceit that he is not going to listen whatsoever.

Deception and the Work Ethic

The truth of the matter is that some people find it easier to beg, deceive, and defraud than to work. It is a violation of the Eighth Commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." These people always try to

get something for nothing. Years ago, Alice and I used to go from Pahrump, Nevada, to California because I'd be preaching there. On the way, there was one little dinky town with about two or three service stations, and that was about it. We would pass a Volkswagen van with a woman and three or four little kids, and she would hold up a sign saying that she needed gas money to get home. The interesting thing is that she must never have gotten home, because she was in that same spot every year, three or four years in a row. Clearly, she never could make it home.

The truth is, she lived nearby. That was simply her way of getting money and making money.

Alice and I have both passed folks standing where you have to stop at a red light or stop sign. They are holding signs saying, "Need food," and are smoking cigarettes. Well, I figure if you can buy a pack of cigarettes, you can buy a hamburger. Cigarettes cost more than a hamburger. I am simply saying that I am not interested in helping someone who is standing there smoking and telling me they need money when, in reality, they do not.

Recently, Alice and I passed a decently dressed man in a decent truck, a truck nicer than mine. He was standing beside the road at a stop sign, holding up a sign saying that he needed gas money to get home. So I looked at Alice and said, "I have some questions. Did he need to return home before he ever left? If he needed to return home before he ever left, why did he not take enough money to make sure that he got back home? Secondly, if he did not have enough money to get back home, why did he leave to begin with? Thirdly, if he really needed money and was out of gas, why did he not call a family member or a close friend? Why in the world would he try to place a burden on absolute strangers?"

The Bible says, and it is true in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." But in the same passage, Galatians chapter 6, verses 4 and 5: "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden."

I have a responsibility to do what I can do, and not to expect Steve to do for me what I can do for myself. What I cannot do, I can ask him to help me do. But I have a responsibility not to be a burden on anyone else.

The problem is that most people, even most professing Christians, do not understand what is known as a biblical work ethic. I have often been exasperated, not just with young people but also with adults who cannot work, will not work, or do not care whether they work. If they do work, they have absolutely no concern about what kind of work they produce. In other words, they are just backing up to get a paycheck, and they do not care anything about the work or its quality.

If you don't believe what I'm talking about, compare equipment today with that which was made thirty and forty years ago. Alice and I have a freezer that we got from her parents after her father died in 1997. Before he got it, it belonged to his mother. We were trying to figure out how old it was, and the truth is, it was pretty close to fifty years. It is still running and working. I bought a brand-new freezer last year, and it did not last six months. They replaced it, but I am wary of the replacement. Brand-new, and it did not even last six months.

The point I am trying to make is that the workmanship and parts today are so shoddy. When you stop and consider the fact, listen carefully, it is oftentimes cheaper to replace an item than to repair it. I have had computers fail. I can buy a new computer cheaper than someone can fix one. We do not have television sets, but we used to. When I had one and it went bad, a man told me, “I can fix it. I can assure you I can fix it.” But he said, “It’s going to cost you more than a new one.” I said, “Well, I don’t want either one of them then. Trash it. I don’t care.”

Martin Luther said it like this: “The Christian shoemaker does not demonstrate his Christianity by placing little crosses on his shoes. He demonstrates his Christianity by making good shoes.” And that is a fact. What we have forgotten is Colossians chapter 3 and verse 24: “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

God Forbids Oppressing the Poor

God forbids taking advantage of people, especially those who are truly poor and needy. Look back to Deuteronomy chapter 24, because I ask this question: Are you poor and needy? Look again at verses 14 and 15. God says, “Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren,” so he could be a Hebrew, “or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates,” he could be a stranger. “At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.” It is a sin to take advantage of those who cannot protect themselves or fight back simply because they are poor and needy.

I've known individuals, and I'm thinking of one right now, who lost a house simply because he did not understand how the system worked. He was a poor man. He was a needy man. I didn't even find out about it until after the house was already gone. But that's the way people are. They simply take advantage of the poor. They take advantage of the needy.

Now, it's interesting what God says about individuals like that. In Psalm 37, verse 14, he says: "The wicked have drawn out the sword and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation." So God says it's the wicked, then, who take advantage of the poor and needy and slay such as be of an upright heart. If you would turn right over to Psalm 109, you will find out how David prays against these individuals. Look in Psalm 109 at verses 15 and 16. Look what he says: Psalm 109, verse 15.

“Let them be before the Lord continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.” In other words, let God kill them, get them out of the earth, let everybody forget. Why? “Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.” Wow.

If you will turn over in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel, this is one of the reasons that God judged those people so strenuously during the days of the Babylonian captivity. In Ezekiel chapter 22

and verse 29, God says, “The people of the land have used oppression and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.” So even the people then were involved in this sin. They oppressed the stranger wrongfully; they were involved in this sin.

Now, since you are in the book of Ezekiel, I want to ask you a question. Do you know what the sin of Sodom was? Most people are going to say, “Well, of course I know the sin of Sodom was sodomy.” Well, that is part of the sin of Sodom. That is not all. If you look back in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel, chapter 16, and look at verse 49, Ezekiel 16, verse 49, the Bible says, “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom: pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” Pride, fullness of bread, and an abundance of idleness were in her and her daughters. Neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. So actually, their perversion was a result of all this other pride, fullness of bread, idleness, and an unconcern for the poor and the needy.

Now, I am going to ask that you turn to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 22. I want to make a statement, and I want you to see this from the Bible. This may surprise you, but here it is: We must understand that our treatment of others reflects our regard for God and his truth as well as their persons. So in Jeremiah, chapter 22, look at verse 13.

Treatment of Others Reflects Regard for God

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."

Now look at this question: "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." Our treatment of others reflects our regard for

God and his truth. If we have no regard for God or his truth, we will not have any regard for others.

Remember the passage in Luke chapter 18 concerning the unjust judge: "There was in a certain city an unjust judge who feared not God, neither regarded man." If you do not have any regard for God, you will not have any regard for man. In Proverbs 31 and verse 9, God commands, "Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy."

The question was, are you poor or needy? When most people hear that, they think about money. But remember this truth: your regard for other people reflects how you regard God and his truth.

In Matthew chapter 25, our Lord puts the sheep on the right and the goats on the left. He tells the sheep, "Come, ye inherit the kingdom prepared for you, and you fed me, you gave me water, you visited me when I was sick, you visited me when I was in prison." They ask, "Lord, when did we do that?" Our Lord answers, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you did it unto the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me." The wicked ask when they saw him hungry, thirsty, or in prison and failed to minister to him. He answers, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as you did it not to the least of these my brethren, you did it not unto me." Thus, in Matthew chapter 25, you have both the positive and the negative.

Now, I gave you all of these scriptures to ask you one question: Are you poor and needy? I can look around in this room and just about assure you that no one here has ever gone hungry. If you did, it was simply because you were on a diet and chose to go on a diet. Most people in this room have never gone hungry in their entire lives. No one here has been forced to sleep on the streets. Some have slept in the woods purposely, but nobody has been forced to sleep on the street.

Spiritual Poverty: David and Job as Examples

The truth of the matter is this: you have never had to do without the necessities of life. I have said this before, and I am not going to say I do this every night, but almost every night, anytime I get the opportunity—and we do it every night—to soak in a tub of hot water,

I thank the Lord for hot water. I thank the Lord for a bath. My mind goes to many people in other countries who not only cannot bathe, but do not even have hot water. Now, that is a blessing. So you have never actually been forced to do any of these things or do without necessities.

So let me tell you something. If you are not poor and needy, you are not in a position to be helped or blessed by our Lord. I am going to make another statement. It may shock you, but I am going to show it to you: you can be a multimillionaire and be poor and needy. You can.

Look in your Bibles to Psalm 40:17. This is a psalm of David. David says to the Lord, “But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.” Notice that: “But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.”

In Psalm 70:5, again a psalm of David, he says, “But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying.” Again, David said, “But I am poor and needy. Make haste unto me, O God, thou art my help and my deliverer, O Lord, make no tarrying.” Psalm 86:1 is another prayer of David.

David prays, "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy." Again, "Hear me, for I am poor and needy." In Psalm 109:22, David says, "For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me." Four times, David has said, "I am poor and needy."

Now consider 1 Chronicles 29. David was king of Israel and exceedingly rich. He had more real money than you and I could ever think of, dream about, or imagine. This was before his death, when Solomon had been anointed to take over the throne and build the temple. David was speaking about the temple and how he had prepared for it:

"Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God."

"Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance."

Now watch what he is saying: "Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house." This was out of David's personal money and personal wealth. He said, "I have of mine own proper good of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house."

There was preparation beforehand for the temple. Now David says, in light of all that preparation, here is something out of my own money that I am giving. He gave “even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal: the gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers.” Then he asked, “And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?”

First Chronicles 26:27 says, “Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the Lord.” Think of all those people David conquered, all the wealth he acquired, and all the spoils: most of it went to prepare for the temple. David had money as well and received some of the booty, but most of it went toward preparation to build the temple out of the spoils won in battle.

Because of his great affection and love for the house of God, David gave these things out of his own proper good. He says, “Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house.” That was over and above all the spoils he had taken. He gave “even three thousand talents of gold and seven thousand talents of refined silver.”

A talent was the heaviest unit of weight in the Bible. One article I recently read said that a talent was 75 pounds, or 35 kilos. Thus, if David gave 3,000 talents of gold, he gave 22,500 pounds of gold out of his personal wealth. Since gold is now over $2,000 an ounce—not a pound, but an ounce—that represents an enormous gift of the best gold. The 7,000 talents of silver would be 52,500 pounds of silver. Silver is approximately $25 an ounce. This does not include the precious stones, brass, wood, or marble that he gave.

In light of David's exceptional and vast wealth, in light of his great monetary wealth, how could David truthfully say, "I am poor and needy"? Are you poor and needy? Four times in the Psalms David said, "I am poor and needy." A multi-millionaire could be poor and needy. When someone is poor, he has nothing in himself. When someone is needy, he can do nothing for himself. Our Lord said in John 15 verse 5, "Without me ye can do" how much? Nothing. Without Him, we are nothing. Without Him, we can do nothing.

In Psalm 40:17, David said, “But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.” We read this earlier, but this is the first time David said this.

Do you wish for God to think upon you? Do you wish for God to help you? Do you wish for God to deliver you? Do you wish for God to help you and deliver you speedily and without tarrying? If so, you are poor and needy, and you are totally dependent upon Him. The other passages we read where David said that he was poor and needy all relate the same truth. We need God to hear us when we call. We need God to protect us. We need God to preserve us. We need God to provide for us. We need Him, period.

Do not consider that your wealth, however great it may be, is sufficient. It is not sufficient. It will never redeem. It will never ever deliver. Psalm 49, beginning with verse 6, speaks of the wealth of many men, especially the wicked: “They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)” No amount of money is going to deliver anybody. It does not

matter if you own the world. You cannot deliver your own soul, and you cannot deliver anybody.

Consider this illustration in the book of Job, Job chapter 1, verse 1: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright,” or mature and upright, “and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” I love that word, eschewed. It means he spit it out. He could not swallow it. He could not stomach it. So he spit out evil. “And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen,” that is, 1,000, “and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.”

There is no telling how wealthy Job really was. He had more than anyone in the land. So here's my question. Out of everything that Job had, this vast wealth that he possessed, how long did it take for Job to lose everything? One day. And one day, he lost 10 children. And one day, he lost every animal that he owned. One day. Wow.

Do you realize that everything we are, we are by the grace of God? Everything we have, we have by the grace of God. Everything we ever will be is by the grace of God. Everything that we will ever have is by the grace of God. And if God does not protect us, and if God does not preserve us, then we will be like Job. We can lose everything in one day.

Job understood this. So if you look in your Bibles to Job 1 and verse 21, the Bible says this: “Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Regardless of what Job possessed, like David, he was poor and needy. Regardless of what you possess, you are poor and needy. I want you to consider the opposite of being poor and needy right quickly.

The Opposite: Pride and Self-Sufficiency

If you will turn in your Bibles to Psalm 75, look, if you would, beginning there with verse 4. “I said unto the fools, Deal not

foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck." Arrogant, proud, haughty, heady, high-minded. Why? "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south."

"But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." No, he said, "Speak not with a stiff neck, lift not up your horn on high." Lifting up the horn on high and speaking with a stiff neck is the apex of pride and arrogance.

When you think that you do not need God or anyone else, that you are sufficient in and of yourself, you are simply holding God in contempt and saying, "I don't need you. I can take care of myself." You will find out how soon you cannot take care of yourself. The Bible says in Proverbs 16 and verse 5, "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord."

"Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished." The word abomination means a stench in God's nostrils. Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to God. The Bible says in Proverbs 16 and verse 19, "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." And then God said in Proverbs 21 and verse 4, "An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin."

Anytime we have pride and arrogance in our lives, we are not being poor and needy. We are thinking we can do it, that we have it. That is why the Bible says in the book of Galatians chapter 6 and verse 3, "When a man thinketh himself to be something, he deceiveth himself, for he is nothing." When we reach the place in our Christian life where we understand that we are nothing and can do nothing in and of ourselves, we reach the right perspective in life.

If I were to ask you who was probably the greatest apostle in the New Testament, most people would answer the Apostle Paul because he wrote most of the New Testament. But look in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 11, and see the Apostle Paul's estimate of himself. The Apostle Paul said, "I am become a fool in glorying; ye

have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles." He was not behind any of them. "But," though I am nothing. What was the Apostle Paul's estimation of himself?

Desiring to Be Poor and Needy

He did not brag about his missionary journeys or about those he had converted. He said, “I am nothing.” When we realize that we are nothing without Him and can do nothing without Him, we can say with David, “I am poor and needy. I need the Lord. Without Him, I am nothing. I can do nothing.”

Reasons to Desire Being Poor and Needy

I want to give you two applications. First, turn with me to Scripture, because I want to give you four reasons from Scripture that should make you desire to be poor and needy. Look at Psalm 72:13. Here is the first reason: “He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.” I do not know about you, but I would like to be spared, and I certainly want to be saved. He said, “He shall spare the poor and needy, and he shall save the souls of the needy.”

“He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.” Yes, I want that. Look at Psalm 74:21. Here is the second reason you should desire to be poor and needy: “O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name.” Do you realize that the poor and needy will really praise the name of the Lord? Why? Because they are the most thankful, the most grateful, and the most appreciative.

I do not have a television. I was listening to a man’s sermon, and he gave an illustration that I used. Then one of my men pulled it up on his phone and said, “Here it is right here.” It was from The Simpsons. I do not know anything about them; I only know they are cartoons. Apparently, a young boy was at Thanksgiving dinner and was praying. He said, “Lord, we paid for all of this ourselves, all this food ourselves. Thanks for nothing. Amen.” I think I would like to slap somebody’s cheek if he prayed something like that. Do you realize the arrogance? Do you realize the pride? Do you realize the ungratefulness and unthankfulness?

The point is this very simply: if God did not give you air to breathe, you could not do one thing. If He did not give you the ability to work, you could not make any money. If He took it away from you, you would not have any money. Poor and needy people are really thankful for what they receive from God. If we have a poor and needy attitude and recognize how dependent we are upon Him, He will make us thankful for anything and everything.

Psalm 82:4 gives another reason I would rather be poor and needy in spirit: "Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked." I would rather be delivered out of the hand of the wicked. God says in Isaiah 41:17, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." He continues, "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." When the poor and needy thirst, He will take care of them. I would rather have the sovereign God of heaven and earth take care of me than presume that I can take care of myself. God says, when they cry, I will hear.

Conclusion: Dependence on Christ

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "I have a great need for Christ. I have a great Christ for my need." Do you realize that the more we have need of Jesus Christ, the more we will have of Jesus Christ? Those who think they do not need Him will not have Him. But when we recognize that we are poor and needy, that we have nothing in and of ourselves and can do nothing of ourselves, we understand our great need for our Lord and His blessings, mercy, and grace. So the question I ask is this: Are you poor or needy?

No matter how much money you have, you are poor and needy if you understand Scripture, because you are totally and completely dependent on Him. The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Just as He gives, He can remove. Everything is in His hands, not ours.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your help, Your grace, and Your mercy. Lord, give us a biblical attitude and an understanding of being poor and needy, that we might cry more often to Thee, be more appreciative and thankful for anything and

everything Thou hast given us. May we understand our dependence upon Thee. Thank Thee, Lord, for Thy gracious and merciful care for each of us. We give Thee praise and thank Thee in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

Safety, Preparation, and Situational Awareness

April 27, 2024

Introduction and Context

Proverbs 21:31 says, “The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord.”

This past week, I was preaching in Greenville, South Carolina, at a local Presbyterian church. They had asked me to deal with the biblical doctrine of self-defense. On Monday night, I did that; on Tuesday night, I dealt with the main objection to that doctrine, when the Lord told Peter to put his sword back into its sheath. On Wednesday night, they asked me to speak on what I would call safety, preparation, and situational awareness. It took me about an hour and fifteen minutes to finish that message, but I want to compress it and preach it today because several things impressed my heart.

First, Joe Biden has made a decree that this day is National Transgender Visibility Day. That is a slap in the face of God and of

every child of God, every Christian. Whether you like or dislike Trump is immaterial, but Trump has called on Biden to apologize to the nation. I think he should apologize to God and to every Christian as well. But that is beside the point.

Another thing concerns Candace Owens. She is a black woman, I guess a journalist, whatever; I do not know what she does, though I know she is fairly popular. She was recently fired because she said, “Christ is King.” A Jewish man, whose name I do not remember, said—and I am quoting—that saying “Jesus Christ is King,” or “Christ is King,” is anti-Semitic, and that the Jews are God’s chosen people and far superior to any mere Christian. Of course, that would itself be racist, as well as a denial of many things. That set me off. I was hoping and thinking that perhaps ten million people ought to send him a little note saying, “Christ is King.”

This morning, I was talking to a pastor friend.

He asked me, "Did you hear about the churches that have been bombed last Thursday?" I said, "No, I have not heard one thing about it." He told me that one was a Latter Day Saints building, actually a gymnasium where the young people were gathered. Someone threw an explosive device in there; it did not go off. But three churches in California and Nevada were Baptist churches. Those devices did explode, people were endangered, and people were hurt.

That caused me to think about this. When I had preached this message, one of my men said, "Well, that is an Ezekiel 33 message. That is a warning message for sure." And it is. But look again at what the Bible says: "The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord."

Biblical Foundation: Safety is of the Lord

Everyone should be interested in safety and self-defense. Only those who are foolish and naive will not be concerned with their safety or welfare. It is normal, natural, and biblical to want to be in health and to want to prosper. John the Apostle said in 3 John 2, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." If most of us prospered financially and

physically as our souls prosper, most of us would be very poor and in very poor health. But that is what John said: "I wish above all things that we may prosper and be in health, even as our soul prospereth."

If you consider your safety important, then you must give high priority to safety, preparation, and self-defense. As long as a person remains unconcerned about these things, he will not be able to defend himself.

Now, let me give you two major caveats, or two major warnings, concerning this message. The first is set forth in Proverbs 21:31: "The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord." Primarily and foremost, our safety is in the hands of the sovereign God of heaven and earth. If God does not protect us, all our preparations, planning, and abilities are worthless.

They are null and void and completely useless. The Bible says in Psalm 33:17, "A horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength." We could paraphrase that: an AR-15 is a vain thing for safety. A machine gun is a vain thing for safety. A tank is a vain thing for safety. An airplane is a vain thing for safety. Neither will it deliver anybody by its great firepower. In other words, the Bible is telling us first and foremost that safety is indeed of God. That is why the Bible says in Psalm 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

Scripture tells us that if we want His protection, we need to be obedient unto Him. The Bible says in Leviticus 25:18, "Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety." In other words, safety is connected with obedience. The first caveat, the first warning, is that safety first and foremost is of God.

The second caveat, or second warning, is this: We must understand that God is not going to fulfill our responsibilities for us. He is sovereign. He is omnipotent. He is omniscient. He is omnipresent. He is immutable. But He is not going to do for us that which we can do for ourselves. God is not going to pray for you. God is not going to repent for you. God is not going to think for you. God

is not going to train for you. God is not going to use the means for you that He has ordained that you use.

Human Responsibility in Preparation

We have to keep these truths in proper perspective. First, God is sovereign. Secondly, we are responsible. A good Scripture illustrating this is 2 Timothy 2:7, where the Apostle Paul told Timothy, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." It is true that understanding is the gift of God. But you do not go to bed stupid and wake up smart. Understanding will come from consideration, meditation, and application; it will not simply be thrown into your brain, so that all of a sudden you wake up understanding everything.

It doesn't work like that. God said, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." So we must understand at the same time that God is absolutely sovereign and that our safety is first and foremost in Him, but He is not going to do for us that which He has commanded us to perform. We are responsible.

It is true that God empowered Samson. But when Samson came off that mountain, he had to pick up the jawbone of an ass and slay a thousand Philistines. God did not fight for him. It is true that God saved him and empowered him, but God did not fight for him. It is true that God helped David win over Goliath. But David chose those five smooth stones. David put the stone in the sling, and David slung the sling. God did not sling for him. That was David's responsibility.

Anyone who is over seventy years old understands how things have changed in this nation. We understand how things have changed in this country. When I was a boy, if I wanted to see a policeman, I had to drive uptown. Once I got uptown, I had to look around because they were few and far between.

Accepting the Reality of Evil and Change

Were there bad people back then? I suppose there were. But the truth of the matter is, most people even back then obeyed the Ten Commandments, regardless of whether they were Christian or not. They were moral people. In fact, I don't ever remember in my entire

life one of our banks being robbed in our hometown. Alice didn't remember it either. I asked a deputy just a few weeks ago, "Has there been a bank robbery in our hometown?" He said, "I don't know. I don't think so." He said there was one that happened a long, long time ago.

I know people were evil, and I know people were sinners even back then. But at least things were different. We have to accept the truth that things have changed. If you and I are interested in our safety and preparation, the first thing we must accept is that things are not like they used to be.

Things have changed. You have to believe and receive the truth that there are some really, really bad people in this world—people who are pure evil, who will kill you and smile and laugh while doing so, and who will steal everything you have and brag about getting away with it.

In other words, these folks have absolutely no regard for God. They do not honor Him, and consequently they have no regard for man. You remember Luke 18:2, when our Lord said, "There was a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man." If someone does not fear God, he is not going to regard man. We have to understand that things have changed; culture and society have changed.

Do not live in a fool's paradise. Do not be deceived or deluded. Do not think that nothing evil will ever happen to you. Good men do not always win. Read 2 Samuel chapter 11. Uriah the Hittite had his wife stolen from him, and then he was murdered by David. David was the bad guy, and Uriah was the good guy—the one honoring God. David was dishonoring God. You can read how God judged him and what God said to him in 2 Samuel chapter 12.

The point is that good men do not always win out. There is a reason we are faced today with such wickedness and evil. Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." When there is no execution of God's laws, that only encourages criminals. Criminals are coddled left and right. They thwart God's law, laugh in the face of God, and then the judicial system, instead of punishing them, rewards them.

Look at all of the illegal aliens and what is happening in this country. In New York, a lady with a million-dollar house had squatters take over. She argued with them and called the law, and they arrested her—the owner. Squatters took over another house, and when the woman who owned it came in, they murdered her and cut her into pieces.

We have to understand something: we are not living in Mayberry, and Andy Griffith is not our sheriff. Things have changed.

The next thing you must accept is this: an attack could happen at any time. It could happen to you, your family, or your church. The fact that you do not think, believe, or wish that anything like that would ever happen to you will not change reality. It will not stop an attack simply because you think, "It could never ever happen to me." It will happen to you. And if you understand that there is a change, you have to understand that we are living in an extremely evil time. I told you in time past—and I am only going to mention it, not go into detail.

The Threat to Churches and the Failure of Gun-Free Zones

I have a good friend who is nearly a thirty-year police officer; he lacks two more years of retiring. He is a big man. He took his family to a little Chinese restaurant out in the country, out on a junction, and left his weapon in his car. When he went in, the first thing he did was go into the bathroom to wash his hands. A big, tall black man came screaming, hollering, cursing, and beating on the door, trying to get in. My friend said, "I'll be out in just a moment." Then one of his two big sons said, "Look out, Daddy, he's got a gun."

When my friend came out, sure enough, the man had a gun. He had gone into the bathroom and still had the weapon out when he came back. My friend asked the owner of the little Chinese restaurant, "What's wrong with him?" The owner said, "He just hates white men." My friend replied, "Well, we'll probably just go ahead and leave and get out of his way." Let him have the restaurant. He told his family to go outside and get in the car. As they walked out, the man followed them with the weapon.

My friend said, “Now I had a choice. My weapon was in the car. I could either try to get it while he already has his weapon out in his hand, or I could just get in the car and drive off since my family was already in the car.” He got in the car, drove away, went straight to the police station, and swore out a warrant for the man.

Here is what he said: “You tell everybody that I said, don’t go around unarmed. It will happen when you think it cannot possibly happen.” Just because you think nothing can ever happen to you does not mean that it will not happen.

I am going to give you several quotes today because I want to trust that this is going to impact you. I am going to give you a couple of quotes from a man named Ron Borsch. You probably do not know who he is, and if I simply said his name, you would probably think nothing of the quotes. But Ron Borsch happens to be the staff instructor for the Kent Martial Arts.

That does not mean anything in and of itself, but he was also a Vietnam veteran and a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne. That does not necessarily mean anything in and of itself, but he is also a thirty-year retired law-enforcement officer: twenty years as a range master and seventeen years as a SWAT operator and trainer. He is now retired, but he still retains his commission and acts as a consultant.

“One would imagine that among different locations, places of worship would be a safe haven, and we would not have to be concerned about safety from violence there. Unfortunately, churches are not the sanctuary they once were. Here we are not talking about mere arson, assault, burglary, mugging, rape, or robbery. Even worse, churches can and have been the site of murder, multiple murders, and rapid mass murder.

“About a year ago, churches were the third most commonly targeted location by active killers after schools, kindergarten through 12, and then colleges and universities.” Schools, and third, churches. “The survey of over 1,300 congregations in the United States finds that in 2014”—that is 10 years ago, but it is going to be brought up to date—“the survey of over 1,300 congregations in the U.S. finds that

in 2014, 39% of the congregations experienced some type of property or violent crime, from vandalism to homicide."

He continues: "Checking our stopwatch of death database back to 1975, we find that church murders have been increasing with alarming frequency. Regrettably, ignoring the problem is only trolling for tragedy. It is perfectly normal for us to not want to think about violence, much less murder or mass murder in church. Today, however, safe havens do not occur naturally. They require our personal attention, intention, planning, and effort."

Another headline reads, "Skyrocketing Number of Attacks on Christians' Churches Explodes. American culture appears increasingly hostile to Christianity." It continues: "Experts are warning a skyrocketing number of attacks on Christian churches mirrors the general anti-Christian tenor of the Biden administration's policy at home and abroad." I have a dear friend that lives in Germany.

He and I correspond every day, and this morning he sent me an email. One of the articles concerned Europe, the world, and America. Experts are warning that a skyrocketing number of attacks on Christian churches mirrors the general anti-Christian tenor of the Biden administration's policies at home and abroad. According to a new report from the Washington Stand, such incidents of violence have exploded over 800% in the last six years. During the first 11 months of 2023, there were 436 acts of hostility against churches in America, including 315 vandalisms, 75 arsons, 30 bomb threats, and 12 instances of satanic graffiti.

The Stand reported: "These statistics likely understate the extent of the problem because many acts of hostility against churches are likely not reported to authorities and are not featured in the news or other online sources from which we collect data. There were few areas of America left untouched, with reports coming from 48 states and Washington, D.C." There were 91 such attacks in California.

I've had people tell me, "Well, all we've got to do is put a little sign out there saying 'No Weapons Allowed.'" When you post a sign saying, "No Weapons Allowed," all you're telling everybody is, we

don't have weapons. We're not going to fight. We're not going to defend ourselves. A sign like that is not going to stop a criminal.

I saw a cartoon some time ago showing two masked men with guns approaching a building marked "No Guns Allowed." One looked at the other and said, "Oh, shoot, we'll have to go back. They don't allow weapons in there." Of course, it was a spoof. No criminal is going to think like that. What he is going to say is, "We've got it made. Nobody in there has weapons, and nobody's going to fight us. We'll do what we want to do."

We have talked about gun-free zones in our schools, universities, and sometimes our churches. Listen to this: "Gun-Free School Zones and Shooting Statistics, 2024 Updated." There have been 2,646 school shooting incidents in the United States since 1966. Of those, 2,205—that is 94%—occurred after the 1990 School Zone Safety Act, which was amended in 1995. Think about this: 94% happened in gun-free zones. Gun-free zones are an invitation for criminals to do as they please, because criminals do not obey the law. And that's a fact.

A church in Colorado, the New Life Church, was attacked by a murderer with a rifle, two pistols, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition. He wanted to massacre these people. Seventy miles away, twelve hours earlier, he had gone to the Arvada Missionary Church, where he murdered two people and wounded two more. The New Life Church is a megachurch with 7,000 members. When he pulled up to the New Life Church, he murdered two people in the parking lot and wounded three more. Inside the church, they heard the shooting, and they had the foresight to train some people and have some security.

One individual, who happened to be a woman, Jeanne Assam, was a former police officer. When she heard the shooting, she ran to its source and saw the man coming in with his weapons. She pulled out her pistol and began to shoot him. She hit him several times and knocked him to the floor. There, instead of fighting back, he pulled out his pistol and blew his own brains out.

Here is what she said: “God guided me and protected me. And I did not think for a minute to run away.”

Practical Preparation: Mindset, Skills, and De-escalation

This is preparation. Preparation involves not only owning a weapon, but knowing how to use it. It involves knowing how to shoot accurately and quickly, and knowing how to deal with malfunctions, which are temporary stoppages of the weapon. You would be amazed at how many lives have been saved because, when people come to commit mass murder and their weapon malfunctions, they do not know how to fix it. That gives people an opportunity to tackle them.

Do you have a proper mindset? Do you have a biblical mindset? Do you understand the Sixth Commandment? “Thou shalt not kill”—that is the negative. The positive is, thou shalt preserve life. You have a duty to protect life and preserve life. Do you know how to use less-lethal devices if needed? Do you know how to use tear gas? Do you know how to use a Taser? Do you know how to try to de-escalate?

If Steve and I got into an argument and things were getting out of hand, the Scripture says in Proverbs 15:1, "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." I do not have to holler back at him. I can lower my voice and speak softly. I do not have to be irritated just because he is irritated. Years ago, my office in a huge Christian school was right next door to a lady whose sole job was to take care of irate parents. I sat in my office and heard parents come in screaming. They were so angry. And dear, sweet Sherry, as loud as they got, she got softer, lower, and quieter.

Pretty soon, they saw what they were, and they saw what she was, and they got embarrassed. Then she was able to work it out. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." If Mike wants to jump on me, I can turn and walk away. I do not have to stand there. It takes two to tango.

We need to learn how to de-escalate verbally. We also need to learn how the mind works under stress. Do you realize that when you are under stress, one of the first things that happens is that you freeze? The reason you freeze is that you are shocked. You are saying, "I don't believe this. I don't believe this is happening to me." When you freeze for that moment, you give your adversary a great

advantage. Usually, most of us would freeze until the fight-or-flight concept came roaring through our minds. But we either have to fight or get out of there. We also need to understand the OODA loop.

We deal with this in the advanced class. The OODA loop was actually discovered by Colonel John Boyd, who was an Air Force pilot. The OODA loop simply means that you observe, orient, decide, and then act. There is a way to reboot that loop, which you have to learn. If Mike is hiding behind that door and is going to mug me, he has already seen me coming. He has already observed me, oriented himself, and decided he is going to act. All he has to do is act when I get to the edge of that door.

Situational Awareness

And he throws that gun in my face and says, "Give me all your money." Now I'm behind the loop. I have to do something to distract him, to put him behind that loop. If we are not prepared, we need to understand that when a stressful, dangerous situation comes along, the first thing we will probably do is freeze. We will say, "I don't think it's happening to me. I can't believe this."

The best way to win a fight is to avoid it. If you don't have to fight, fine; that's wonderful. That brings us to what is known as situational awareness. Most people are completely, totally unaware of their surroundings. They are playing with their phones, playing games, talking, texting, or doing something else.

Situational Awareness Principles

You can probably still see on YouTube the woman walking down the sidewalk, texting on her phone. Right in front of her are two doors wide open. A business has a cellar, and things are being moved in and out. She walks into the open doors and falls in. The next thing you know, an ambulance is bringing her out on a stretcher. I don't know what all she broke, but she was totally, completely unaware. That is where most people are. We are daydreaming, off in la-la land somewhere, and not paying attention to anything.

Situational awareness is not something you learn by reading a book or master in one evening or a week. Learning to exercise it is an

exercise in and of itself. Eugene Nelson gave some ideas concerning situational awareness, and I added to the list. First of all, he said, be mindful of your surroundings. Know where you are. Watch what you're doing.

For instance, when driving up and down the interstate, I am checking not only in front of me, but also my rearview mirror and side mirrors. Occasionally, Alice, I see someone weaving and think, "Oh, no, he's either drunk, texting, or something." I either have to slow down or get around him very quickly, because he will be heading into a wreck sooner or later.

We were going up I-75 to the Atlanta airport. It was iced over, and we were driving about thirty miles an hour. The road was practically empty because of the ice, but we had to get to the airport. A fellow passed us in a brand-new Ford pickup, four-wheel drive, doing seventy miles an hour. Alice said, "Wow, he's in a hurry." I said, "Don't worry, sweetheart. We'll pass him shortly." Sure enough, about a mile down the road, that brand-new pickup was in the median against an iron rail, torn to pieces. I am just saying that you have to be aware. Sometimes, while driving home, I look in my side or rearview mirror and tell Alice, "Oh, two are fixing to blow right by us." And they will, at ninety miles an hour.

This is what he means: be mindful of your surroundings. The second thing he says is to establish a baseline. A baseline is what you expect to see in any given situation; anything outside of that should concern you. If you came to this library, you would expect to see people reading, sitting at a computer, or talking quietly. You would not expect people running up and down, hollering and screaming, or shelves of books being pushed over. That is out of character for a library, and it means you need to pay attention. Something is going on.

The next point is to anticipate and predict. You need to anticipate what could happen to you. Is this a good place for someone to mug me? You must watch for anything unusual or anything that might happen. Number four is to avoid distractions and complacency. The phone rings, we hear music, or we see something outside that gets our attention. Distraction happens to everyone.

Years ago, when we lived in Chesapeake, we had to cross a railroad track. We always stopped at that railroad track. One day, I had so much on my mind. I was almost home when it dawned on me that I had stopped at the railroad track. Did I even look? I did not remember looking, and I did not remember stopping. I finally figured out that I had, but I did not remember because I was distracted by my own thoughts. You have to make sure that you are not distracted.

Then there is complacency. That is when you think nothing could happen here. That is what my friend thought at that little out-of-the-way Chinese restaurant far out in the country: nothing had happened. When you think that nothing can happen and become complacent, that is exactly when it is going to happen.

You must trust your own intuition and act decisively. Here is a good definition of intuition: your intuition is your subconscious mind processing information before your conscious mind can process it. Everyone understands the expression, "The hair on the back of my neck stood up." You knew something was not right; you knew something was wrong. When that happens, take yourself and leave. Do not hang around. Just leave.

Learn from feedback and mistakes. If you make a mistake, learn from it. Feedback means that if other people have been in the same situation, you see what they have learned and learn from that. You need to train regularly and realistically—not necessarily train to fight, but train your mind to observe and pay attention to whatever is going on at that particular time.

Do not look like or act like easy prey. The sheep that straggles is the one that gets eaten by the wolf. If you are walking down the road or sidewalk with your head bowed and looking at a phone, you are not paying attention. You are in for trouble; you are easy prey. That is what they do in the knockout game up north: they come up behind you or from the side, hit you upside the head, and knock you down. Individuals have been killed like that. The blow would have knocked them out, but when they hit their head on the concrete, that is a horse of a different color. If you act like easy prey, you will be preyed upon. It is just that simple. Do not act like that. Act like you know where you are going and what you are doing.

I've been in plenty of places where you would need special permission to be there. But I didn't get the special permission, and I went there. How did I do it? I just acted like I knew exactly what I was doing and exactly where I was going. No one said a word to me. But you act like you're confused, like you don't know what's going on, and you're easy prey.

Number nine: if you see someone dressed improperly for the weather, you need to be aware. Last Sunday, Alice and I stopped for a cup of coffee. I stayed in the car, observing and watching, while she went in to get the coffee. Everyone was in T-shirts and shorts. It was eighty degrees. Then a young man came with a heavy coat and a thick collar. I watched him as he went inside and watched him through the windows. When Alice came out, I asked her, "Did you see that young man with that heavy coat on?" She said, "Yeah."

Let me tell you something: you can hide shotguns and rifles under those heavy coats. When you see someone dressed inappropriately for the weather, you better be concerned.

Number ten: pay attention to body language and tonal patterns. If you see somebody clenching their fist or gritting their teeth, you better pay attention. If someone is just staring and not looking away, pay attention. If someone is glancing around, ask what they are doing. Are they seeing if cops are around or if anybody is watching them? You better pay attention to something like that. Look, and make sure that you listen for tonal patterns. I could say to Alice, "I love you, sweetheart." She understands that. But I could also look at her and say, "I love you," and she knows I'm mad as I can be at that particular time. Tonal patterns mean something.

Lastly, look for signs of a concealed weapon. A lot of times, people do not really conceal their weapons. They imprint on their shirts or their little white jackets, or you can see the bulge. Just pay attention. I was in a camp preaching, and there was one man there who was very vocal. I considered him a very good man, a good friend.

I came up to him and put my arm on his shoulder. “Let me ask you a question.” He said, “Go ahead.” I asked, “Do you always carry concealed in the small of your back?” He said, “Yes, I see you noticed.” I said, “Yes, I did. Here’s my comment: If somebody

surprises you, hits you upside the head, and knocks you out, it's going to hurt your spine very greatly when you fall back on that weapon. If they don't knock you out, you have a hard time accessing it, because it's in the small of your back."

"I wouldn't do that. But that's you, you know." I'm simply saying, you need to look for signs. You need to observe. I will also say this, and I've said it before: trust your instincts. If you think something is wrong, just extract yourself from that and leave. That's all there is to it.

Church Security Assessment Questions

Now, I want to go back to Ron Borsch. We think we're prepared. We think we're prepared in church. Ron Borsch, a thirty-year retired cop, asks these questions to see if you are prepared: "Do you carry a gun at church? Why or why not? If you have a gun, can you access it quickly?" I added two: "Can you shoot accurately? And will you shoot?" Then he says, "Take a look at your church building."

"Many have very large rooms where the congregation gathers for worship. Could you make a shot with your carry handgun at the farthest distance a threat can appear from you in such a large room?" Remember when that guy came into the church out in Texas with a shotgun? He murdered two. One man, at fifteen yards, while he was walking, made a headshot and killed the murderer. So he's asking, "Can you make a shot from the distance that you need to make a shot?"

"When is the last time you practiced shooting that far? If you can't make this shot, what is your plan to move closer?" Often during worship, lights are dim, or at night the electricity goes off. "Do you carry a bright enough flashlight to fully identify a threat at any range? Do you know how to use a flashlight and a weapon at the same time?"

We teach this in the advanced class. Consider these questions: What events would cause you to draw your gun and shoot? Would you shoot the man ranting at the pulpit with a gun in his hand, or would you wait until after he shot someone? There is not any right

answer, but you must know where personal boundaries lie and what your go signal will be.

Do you have a church security team? These are gaining popularity, and many churches now have them. If you do not have a team, do you know who else is armed in your church? Do you have a plan to work together to stop the threat? If you plan on stopping the threat, who will take care of your family, and do they have a plan to get to safety? What can be used as cover or as an improvised weapon in your church? Everyone should know the difference between cover and concealment.

I could turn this table upside down and lie behind it. I am concealed; you cannot see me. But it is not cover, because a round would go right through the table. Cover will stop a round; concealment will not. Look at your church building and ask what can be used as cover or as an improvised weapon. If you do not have a weapon on you, what could you use to attack the attacker?

If your church has pew seating, do you sit near an aisle so that you can easily get out of the pew to address the threat? Who is the most likely target of a killer in your church? Do you have a high-profile religious leader, or do you engage in controversial political actions that might anger someone? How do you plan to protect those in your congregation who are at greatest risk? What about less serious threats? Do you have a plan to deal with thieves or aggressive beggars?

In many churches, children have Bible study or separate worship sessions from adults. There may also be a cry room. Who is protecting the children in these locations? If you cannot answer these simple questions, you are not prepared for a violent incident in your place of worship. It is time to start doing your homework.

Encouragement for the Old and the Call to Train as Ministry

Now, I want to close with two truths. I want you to understand this. First of all, you must understand that you are not too old to train. You are not too old to defend yourself, and you are not too old to defend others. I know that I cannot do today what I did at

twenty-one. I cannot even do what I did at fifty. But the truth of the matter is, there are some things I can do. There are some things I can do in old age better than a lot of younger folks.

Someone has said it like this: “You’re not defeated”—or let me rephrase it—“You do not lose if you’re defeated. You only lose when you quit.” And I’m not quitting. I’m not quitting now. This actually happened in Pennsylvania. I was up there preaching, and they asked me to teach a two-day handgun class.

I said, "Sure, I'll be glad to." Here was a lady who would never be fast, but she listened well and was accurate. When we were shooting center chest, she had all her rounds in a place about that big around. You could have taken the bottom of a coffee cup and covered them. When we did the headshots, it was the same thing: everything was in one spot.

We took a break, and I was commending her. Right behind her target was an old tree about four to five inches in diameter. While I was commending her shooting ability, all of a sudden I pushed around the way because the oak tree fell. She had cut it in two. She had hit the same spot so frequently. She was probably in her 60s.

I am simply pointing out: Do not try to excuse yourself and say, "I'm too old." Don't try to excuse yourself by saying, "I can't do what I used to do." None of us can do what we used to do. Don't say, "Well, I don't have the money. I don't have the time." Yes, you do. You have money for whatever you want. You prioritize the way you spend your money. The reason you don't prioritize money for training is that you don't think it is necessary. You don't believe in it; you are opposed to it. The reason you don't prioritize your time for it is that you don't think it is important.

We each have twenty-four hours in the day and a certain amount of money, but you can prioritize everything. You can do whatever you truly want to do. That's a fact.

"Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." The psalmist said, "I'm old and grayheaded," but asked God not to forsake him until he had shown the younger generation God's power, grace, and mercy.

Isaiah 46:4 says, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." God says that just because you are old does not mean anything. He can help you. He has the strength and the power. So, first, do not think that you are too old to train. Do not think that you do not have the money to train. Do not think that you do not have the time to train. Do not think that you do not have the strength to train. You do. You might not be able to do everything, but you can do something. Whatever you can do, you ought to do by the grace of God.

Here is the second truth: self-defense, defense of others, and church security should be viewed as a ministry. Think about this. It cannot be done with improper mindsets, a lack of training, or a lack of dedication. Colossians 3:23–24 says, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." Whatever you do—whether eating, working, or training—do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men.

There is no division between the secular and the sacred for the child of God. For the child of God, everything is sacred. He said, “Ye serve the Lord Christ.” And, of course, in 1 Corinthians 10:31, which everyone should be able to quote, the Apostle Paul said, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

So training should be done to the glory of God. Defending others should be done to the glory of God. Defending yourself should be done to the glory of God. Whatever you do, those who have faith in God, their heart in His service, and their mind to the task at hand are bound to fail. People who naively assume that they will be able to function without training are deceiving and deluding themselves, and they will fail. It is just that simple.

Moral Duty to Defend and Closing Exhortation

If you do not wish for evil to triumph, the wicked to win, and criminals to control, you must train for God’s glory and for the good of the brethren. You must be able to protect your family and protect your congregation. Remember what Clint Smith said: “Owning a

handgun does not make you armed any more than owning a guitar makes you a musician." Owning a guitar does not make you a musician, and owning a gun does not make you armed unless you are trained with that weapon.

I want to give you a quote from a debate titled "The Life and Death Debate: Moral Issues of Our Time," by Dr. Norman Geisler and J. P. Moreland. Norman Geisler was an Old Testament scholar, a preacher, and a theologian who wrote many books. I have a number of his books. Listen to what he said:

"To permit murder when one could have prevented it is morally wrong. To allow rape when one could have hindered it is an evil. To watch an act of cruelty to children without trying to intervene is morally inexcusable. In brief, not resisting evil is an evil of omission, and an evil of omission can be just as evil as an evil of commission. Any man who refuses to protect his wife and children against a violent intruder fails them morally. God has laid the expectations at the feet of the heads of families that they protect, provide for, and defend their families and protect and defend their countries."

Little ones cannot do so and rely solely on those who bore them. God no more loves the willing neglect of their safety than He loves child abuse. He no more appreciates the willingness to ignore the sanctity of our own lives than He approves of the abuse of our own bodies and souls. God has not called us to save society by sacrificing our children or ourselves to robbers, home invaders, rapists, or murderers. Self-defense and defense of the little ones go well beyond a right.

It is a duty based on the idea that man is made in God's image. It is His expectation that we do the utmost to preserve and defend ourselves when in danger. For He who is sovereign and who gives life does not expect us to be dismissive or cavalier about its loss. If you believe that it is your Christian duty to allow your children to be harmed by evildoers, and you actually allow it to happen because you think Christ was a pacifist, you are no better than a child abuser or a pedophile. God demands violence as a response to threats on our person because man is created in God's image and life is to be preserved. It is our solemn duty.

The simplest and most compelling case for self-defense lies in the Decalogue of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not murder” means “thou shalt protect life.” If you are willing to sacrifice the safety and health of your wife or children to the evils of abuse, kidnapping, sexual predation, or death, God is not impressed by your fake morality. Capable of stopping it and choosing not to, you are no better than a child molester, and I would not even allow you around my grandchildren. Those were strong words, and they were true words.

We need to learn what God says, and we need to have our hearts and minds prepared for what is happening and what is going to happen. In 2 Corinthians chapter 10, beginning with verse 3, the Apostle Paul says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.” So he is talking about a war.

Now look in verse 4: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” Paul is not saying that modern-day weapons or physical weapons are useless and worthless. He is saying that physical weapons are useless in the kind of warfare he is talking about. They are not fleshly, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Your stronghold is your place of defense. If someone came through that door shooting and I was able to get into that closet back there, that closet would be my place of defense. It would be my stronghold.

Now watch this. You will see the warfare he is talking about: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” So here is my question: How many thoughts are you and I to have that are unbearable? None. We are to bring every thought into subjection to the captivity of Jesus Christ. That means we must think biblically.

Concerning self-defense, the defense of our families, neighbors, and churches, and preparation, we must think biblically. The Bible says in Proverbs 22:3 and Proverbs 27:12, “A prudent man foreseeth

the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." We need to think biblically about situational awareness and have every thought clarified and established by the Word of God. There is a biblical doctrine of self-defense, preparation, and situational awareness. We must train our minds to think biblically.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for your grace, mercy, and help. Teach us, we pray. Build us up in the most holy faith and make us, Lord, what we should be for your honor and your glory. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

Your Treasure is not Hidden

September 30, 2024

Introduction: The Revealing Nature of Treasure

Matthew chapter 6 and verse 21 says, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” This is a very short and simple verse. Suppose I could tell you exactly where your treasure was located. What would you think? You would probably think I was a spy or a thief, or at least someone who happened to be overly inquisitive.

You might believe that I had been snooping around and watching you without your knowledge or permission. An obvious deduction from my knowing where your treasure was would be that I might have free access to it without your knowledge or permission. It might trouble you if I could tell you what your treasure was, but could also tell you where it was located. You may think that is impossible, but it is not. Scripture affirms that it is actually so, and it is really, really true.

Years ago, my youngest granddaughter—who is old now, but was five or six then—absolutely delighted in counting money. Every day, she had to count what little bit I had. When Alice and I wanted to

buy something specifically, we would save the money so we could pay cash. Usually, I put it in a book or something like that. One day I came home, and Lacey was all smiles. She said, “Papa,” and I said, “Yes, we are.” She said, “I found your hiding spot, and I know exactly how much money you have in it.” It thrilled her that she had found where I was saving that little bit of money and knew exactly what was in it. It really was not hidden, but it was in a private spot.

What Constitutes Treasure

But in one sense, the word everyone has treasure. It may not be silver or gold. It may not be paper money. It may not be jewelry, but it's still considered a treasure. It could be family. It could be friends. It could be children. It could be spouses. It could be anything that's counted as treasure. Different objects constitute treasure. I want you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, holding that you were going to come back there. But I want you to turn to Proverbs chapter 15 and look, if you would please, at verse 6. Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 6. Look at what the Bible says. Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 6. The Bible says, "In the house of the righteous is much treasure, but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble." So in the house of the righteous is much treasure. Now if you would turn right over to Proverbs chapter 21 and look, if you would please, at verse 20. Proverbs 21 and verse 20. Again, the Bible says, "There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man spendeth it up."

Now, in these two passages that I just read in the book of Proverbs, the Hebrew word for treasure is also—it means literally a treasure, a storehouse, supplies of food or storehouse weapons. So I want you to turn, if you would, in your Bibles, first of all now, to Jeremiah chapter 50 and look at verse 25. I just gave you a Hebrew word. I want you to see this. There's a special reason. Look at it, if you would please, in Jeremiah chapter 50 and verse 25. Look at what the Word of God says, Jeremiah 50 and verse 25. The Bible says, "The Lord has opened his armory and has brought forth the weapons of his indignation, for this is the work of the Lord God of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans." Note, if you would please, "the Lord has opened his armory." The word "armory" in Jeremiah 50 and verse 25 is the exact same Hebrew word that is translated as "treasure" in the

two passages in Proverbs. So our Lord's armory was a storehouse of weapons.

Treasure as Weapons and Judgments

So yes, ladies, your husband's weapons are a treasure. That's what the Word of God declares them to be. That is for sure. They are valuable for many reasons, but that certainly is true. I want you to turn back in your Bibles now to the book of Deuteronomy chapter 32, and you're going to see the exact same Hebrew word again. Notice Deuteronomy chapter 32, and let's begin reading there with verse 34. Deuteronomy 32, and look, if you would please, at verse 34.

God asks, "Is not this laid up in store with me and sealed up among my treasures? To me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." So God is talking about his judgments, and he said, "Is not this sealed up among my treasures?" It is true, then, that weaponry is indeed treasures. God calls it his armory, and he calls his judgments his treasures as well.

When we think of treasure, we think about earthly wealth, silver and gold, and the loss of money. But the truth of the matter is, you can have treasure without having those things. In 1 Timothy, chapter 6, the Scripture says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Once again, there is a treasure right there: godliness and contentment.

Spiritual Treasures: Godliness and Contentment

He goes on to say, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art

also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." He tells you to begin with godliness with contentment, which is great gain. Then he talks about the love of money, and how people have erred and snared themselves there. He tells you to flee these things, but follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. These things, he says, are treasures. They are treasures in and of themselves. Now our treasure—listen to me carefully—is in our hearts and minds. I want you

Laying Up Treasure in Heaven

In Matthew chapter 6, verse 19, the Lord says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Have you figured up a way? Have you figured out a way to lay up treasures for yourself in heaven? Obviously, we do not have a vault in heaven. And if we did have a vault, we could not access it on a daily basis or weekly basis or even a monthly basis. So how in the world do we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven?

I'm sure there are many good answers. But one answer that is very plain in the Bible is that we lay up treasure in heaven by our obedience to God and his word. That is certainly one of those ways we prepare treasure in heaven: by keeping our hearts, ordering our steps, walking pleasing in his sight, and bringing our lives into conformity to his word. This produces what the word of God calls treasure in heaven.

The opposite is also true. When a person does not walk obediently and does not walk as pleasing to the Lord, he produces an evil treasure, but he does not lay that treasure up in heaven for himself.

The Heart's Treasure Revealed in Speech

Now, I want you to look at this with me. Turn right over to Matthew chapter 12 to begin with. Look at verse 35. The Scripture says, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good

things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Now note that a good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things, and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.

If you would turn right on over to the book of Luke, chapter 6, and if you want to mark this passage, we will come back before I close, Lord willing. In Luke chapter 6 and verse 45, you are going to see the same truth, except it might be enlarged just a little. Our Lord says, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil."

"For of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." When we walk in the word, order our lives by the word of God, and apply the word, we are not only laying up treasure in heaven for ourselves, but also bringing forth truth to others.

Matthew 13:52 says, "Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." He said, "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

Now he is talking about the treasure of the mind, the treasure of knowledge. A man who has good treasure in his mind and heart has no need to steal from anyone. He can bring forth treasure that is old, which he has known and understood for a long time, and he can also bring new treasures—things he has recently learned and meditated upon through studying the word of God. This is what a scribe does: he meditates and brings forth out of the treasure of his heart.

The problem is that many people have no idea about the treasure of the heart and the treasure of the mind. All they think about is laying up treasure on this earth. Our Lord points out in Luke 12 how foolish and ridiculous this really is. He says, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness," and then makes this tremendous statement: "For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

The Foolishness of Earthly Treasure

Every one of us has seen bumper stickers saying, "He who dies with the most wins." Well, that is not true. We have a friend who was a seamstress. She had a bumper sticker on her car that said, "She who dies with the most materials wins." That is still not true either. Our Lord says we need to beware of covetousness: a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

He spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

God calls a man a fool who works for everything he can get in this life and does not lay up treasure for himself in heaven. Our Lord says it is absolutely foolish and worthless. It is like the article I read years ago about a multimillionaire who died and was carried in a very fancy casket to his burying place. One of the pallbearers leaned over and whispered, "How much did he leave?" The other answered, "He left it all." That is exactly true. So our Lord gives us another story in Mark chapter 10.

You remember the rich young man who came running to the Lord Jesus Christ, knelt, and said, “Good Master, what must I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Our Lord said, “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Honor thy father and thy mother.” The young man answered, “All these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” Our Lord said, “Well, if you want to really have treasure in heaven, you go and sell everything you have and give to the poor and follow me.” The Bible says the young man went away extremely sorrowful. Why? Because he had great riches.

What our Lord is saying is that anyone who lays up treasures for himself on this earth but not in heaven is actually foolish. Treasure in eternity is laid up by having treasure in time in our hearts. Eternal treasure is laid up by obediently following the Word of God and applying the Word of God.

It is true that those who do not obey the Word of God and do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ heap up treasures as well. But it is not the kind of treasure that you and I would desire. In James, chapter 5 and verse 3, our Lord talks about these individuals: “Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.”

Verse 4 says, “Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.” God says that the wicked are laying up treasures for themselves, but they are treasures of judgment and condemnation, not treasures in heaven.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, the Apostle Paul speaks about our having the ministry of the Holy Spirit in us. He says, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” In verse 6 he continues, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Then he says, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

This is another passage dealing with treasure, and it brings us to the point of this entire message. All of the preaching, all of the godly living, and all of the godly witnessing are based upon a treasure we have in our earthly vessel. That treasure is nothing else than the Holy Spirit of God. We have this treasure in earthly vessels.

Believers as God's Peculiar Treasure

Now, that leads me to this question. I do not want you merely to ponder this question; I want you to think about it: What kind of

treasure are you? What kind of treasure are you? Everyone has treasure. Alice has lots of jewelry. Some of it is fake, some is real, some is valuable, and some is not. She prefers certain pieces of jewelry over other pieces of jewelry. Why?

Some of it has been inherited, and it has great sentimental value. It may not be worth anything to a jeweler, who would probably say it is worthless, other than the fact that it has great sentimental value. So why is it, then, that she considers some of it valuable and some of it worthless? Why is it that she cherishes some and really could care less about the other?

So I ask you this question to prove a point: What kind of treasure are you? Have you ever considered the fact that God's people are called in Scripture His peculiar treasure? I want to show you this first in the Old Testament and then in the New Testament.

In Exodus 19:5, God says, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. For all the earth is mine." God said, if you will hear My voice and obey Me, you will be My peculiar treasure unto Me above all people. He was speaking of those who would obey His voice and keep His covenant.

Psalm 135:4 says, "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure." There are other passages, but these two should be sufficient. The word for treasure in these passages is the Hebrew word segullah. It literally means a valued property, a peculiar possession which is considered a treasure. Thus, in the Old Testament, God's covenant people were His peculiar treasure.

Now consider 1 Corinthians 3:16. The Apostle Paul tells these Corinthian Christians, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Usually, this passage is taken out of context, and I am not dealing with the context right now; I want to point out these two verses.

Please consider what he just said: "Know ye not?" In other words, are you ignorant? Are you stupid? What's wrong with you? Don't you know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? The question demands that these believers

recognize what they are: the temple of God, with the Spirit of God dwelling in them.

In verse 17, he says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Thus, in two verses he has told believers that we are indeed the temple of God.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 19, the Apostle again says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Again, he says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

We quote these passages many times without thinking, without understanding what is really being said. When we think of the temple, we think of the large edifice built by Solomon or later by Herod. We think about all the porticoes and courts, the holy place, and the most holy place. The temple was very big. There were places for the common people, places just for the priests, and a place basically just for the high priest as well. Remember, it was the high priest who went into the holiest of all only once a year, and that without the shedding of blood. It was in the holiest of all where God met with His people. He said in the Old Testament, "There will I meet with you."

Hold 1 Corinthians, but turn back in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 30. Then we are going to go to the book of Numbers. Look in Exodus chapter 30 and verse 36.

The ointment had to be compounded and brought into the holiest of all. In Exodus chapter 30 and verse 36, God said, “And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy.” He was speaking of the perfume that was to be made and put in the most holy place, where He would meet with His people.

In Numbers chapter 17 and verse 4, we read, “And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony,

where I will meet with you." It was in the Holy of Holies where God met with the people.

When the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, he said, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God," which temple ye are. Then, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, he said, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

There are two words in the Greek New Testament for temple. The first is hieron. It simply refers to the temple—the whole entire edifice. If I were to say, "Look in this large church building downtown," the phrase church building would refer to the entire building. I would not be singling out the pastor's study, the Sunday school room, or the auditorium. It is simply a church building. That is what hieron means: the entire temple.

But there is a second Greek word, naos, and that is the word translated temple in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Here is the distinction: hieron refers to the entire structure; naos refers to the Holy of Holies, the place where God dwells. What did he say?

"There will I meet with you." Look again at 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 16: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" What did God do? God met with the people in the holiest of holies. Verse 17 says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy," the naos, the holy of holies, "which temple ye are." That is why chapter 6, verse 19, says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple," the naos, "of the Holy Ghost? Which ye have of God, ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price."

So what is he saying? He is saying that we are the temple of God. First Corinthians teaches us that we are the temple of God, the most holy place where God dwells and where God meets with us. Ephesians chapter 2, beginning with verse 19, says, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together

groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

We are built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and the apostles and prophets, and verse 22 tells us, "in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." In other words, we are the place where God dwells; we are the place where God meets with us.

Access to the Holy of Holies

Hebrews chapter 10, beginning with verse 19, says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Verse 20 continues, "By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies

Washed with pure water, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised. Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. Now notice verse 19: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” Do you realize every true Israelite would have been delighted—aha, do you have a left arm or a right arm?—just to be able to go in the Holy of Holies?

The high priest could only do it once a year. Now Scripture tells us that we have full and free access to the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, we may run to Him because He indwells us. Even our deaths are counted precious in His sight. That is what the Bible says in Psalm 116:15: “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

What kind of treasure are you? I am trying to show you that, just as in the Old Testament the covenant people were God’s peculiar treasure, now in the New Testament we are also God’s peculiar treasure. Remember Matthew 6:21, the Scripture with which we

began: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” That same truth is spoken again in Luke 12:34, for our Lord said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

When I was a child, I watched cartoons. I will tell you, cartoons today are vastly different from those of my childhood. Nobody had to tell us, when Wile E. Coyote fell off a mountain and a rock hit him, “Don’t try this at home.” We knew better than that. The cartoons of old usually taught some type of moral character or demonstrated some weakness. Today, it is all Superman, super ventures, super kids, super animals, and all kinds of crazy things beyond the foggiest imagination.

One cartoon I watched was Donald Duck—Donald and Daisy Duck. You remember he had three nephews, Huey, Dewey, and Louie. Then he had Uncle Scrooge. Uncle Scrooge was extremely wealthy. Many times the cartoon showed him inside a huge vault filled with money. He would dive off a diving board into his money, land it, throw it up, roll in it, and revel in it. What did that demonstrate? The money was his God. The money was his treasure.

Your Treasure Cannot Be Hidden

That's what he delighted in, spoke about, and wanted. Here is a simple reason why your treasure cannot be hidden: your treasure is where your heart is. In the Bible, the heart is the mind, and the mind thinks all of the time. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. It cannot be hidden because you are constantly thinking about your treasure, constantly talking about it. It is on your mind. You love it, enjoy it, adore it, and delight in it. It is on your lips all of the time, and you wish to show it to others.

I never will forget preaching in North Georgia and staying with a family. The man was retired and evidently had lots of money. He had one of these little dippy-do sports cars—an expensive little sports car—and wanted to take me for a ride. I said, "No, thank you."

I said, "It's pretty, and I'm sure it's fast, but you don't have a crane to get me out of it. So I'm not getting in it. That's all there is to it." The whole time I was with him, it was this car, this car, this car: "I

got this car. I've done this. This car has been here." I thought to myself, "Well, I know where his love is. It's in that stinking car."

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. You love it, adore it, live for it, and cannot refrain from talking about it. So where is your treasure, and what is your treasure? Is your treasure the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it the word of God? Is it money, fame, recognition, beauty, your children, or your spouse? Whatever controls your mind is your treasure. It cannot be hidden. All I have to do is walk with you, talk with you, and listen to you, and pretty shortly I can tell you what your treasure is. You could do the same with me, because where your treasure is, there is where your heart is going to be.

Now, here is my question: You are God's treasure, according to the Scripture. Is He your treasure? Remember that the Levites in the Old Testament did not receive an inheritance in the land. Why? Because God was their inheritance. That's what He said: "I am your inheritance." So if we are God's peculiar treasure, and our bodies are the holiest of holy where God dwells, is He our treasure?

I want to show you something. Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament, Malachi chapter 3. You remember, our Lord said that where your treasure is, that is where your heart will be. You cannot hide your treasure, because you are going to talk about it. You are going to spill the beans, so to speak, because that is on your heart, that is in your mind, and that is what you love and adore.

Here is a passage you and I really need to consider. Look at Malachi chapter 3, verses 16 and 17: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Did you hear that? "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." They are talking about the Lord. He is their treasure. He is on their mind. He is in their heart. The Lord

hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, "and that thought upon his name." And what does he say? "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." In other words, God has special jewels, just like our ladies have special jewels. God said, "They'll be mine."

"And I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Now, for my second application, I want to tie this together for you. I want you to turn back to two passages. Turn back to Matthew 6, verse 21, and then get ready to go to Luke chapter 6 and verse 45. Watch this. Matthew 6:21 gives a very simple statement from our Lord: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Now look at Luke 6:45. I read it earlier and told you I was going to come back to it. Look at what he said: "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil."

Conclusion: Is God Your Treasure?

Are you looking? “For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” Whatever our treasure is in our hearts, it is coming out. It cannot be hidden. Anyone can know what your treasure is just by listening to you. We will spill the beans on ourselves. You reveal it daily. It is in your mouth, your walk, and your heart. Since it is in your heart, it comes out of your mouth. Where your treasure is, there's where your heart is going to be.

If you are God's peculiar treasure, I would hope that you would consider Him your peculiar treasure, since He indwells you and your body is considered the temple of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before thee today. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. And we pray, Father, that we would be your peculiar treasure. And Lord, that you would be our peculiar treasure. May we think about thee, may we speak about thee. May you be in our hearts, on our minds, on our

lips. And may we walk before thee, recognizing that thou art God and God alone. Give us your grace, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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