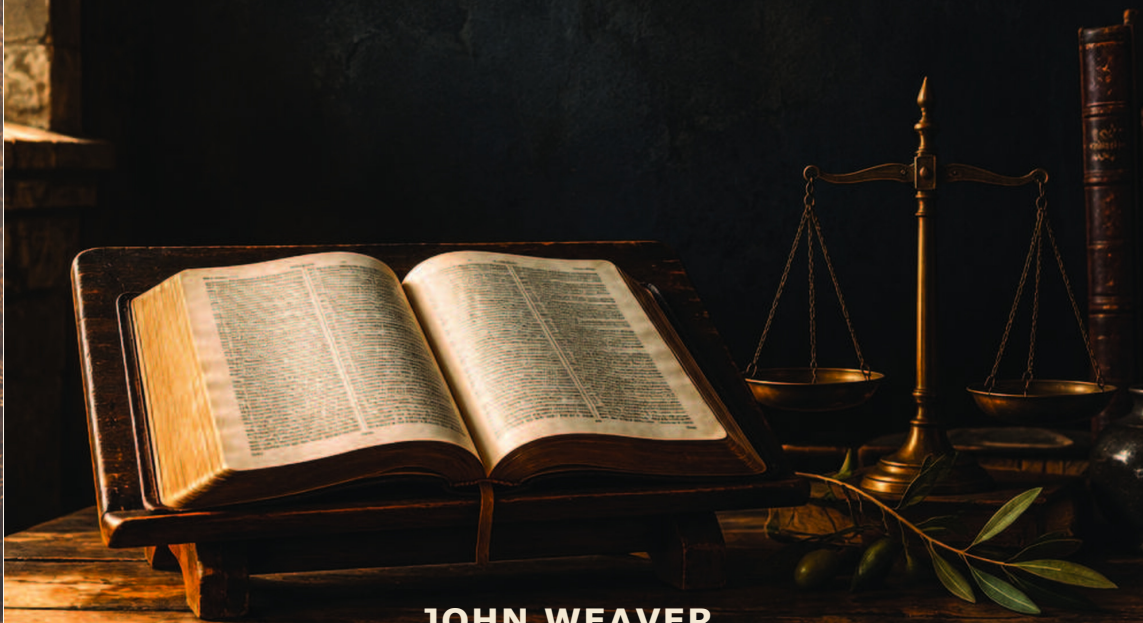
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"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



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085

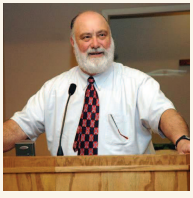
Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

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“Your desires are not going to overcome your actions.”

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CHAPTER 1

Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation

Introduction: Truth and Freedom in Christ

Probably some of you have never heard in your entire life some of the things I will share with you. We have been fed so much propaganda and brainwashed so much that we have not even realized it. Once you begin researching and finding truth for yourself, it staggers the mind. The very first thing you want to do is reject what you know is the truth. But after you think about it, reread it, and think about it some more, you begin to say, "Well, you know, I've just been taught wrong." That's all there is to it, because here it is in black and white.

The Bible tells us in John 8, beginning with verse 32, that our Lord said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They answered him, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" Jesus answered them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in

the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Abraham Lincoln is not the great emancipator. Jesus Christ is, and Jesus Christ alone, because only Christ can free men from their sins. Physical freedom is not real freedom anyhow. One may be free physically and yet be chained, controlled, and enslaved by his own lusts and sin. That is what Jesus Christ eventually told these Pharisees in John 8, verse 44: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." They had just said, "We be Abraham's seed. We were never in bondage to any man." You see, it is only Jesus Christ who enables man to be really and truly free.

Biblical Perspective on Slavery and Freedom

In 1 Corinthians chapter 7, beginning with verse 20, the Word of God says, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." "Art thou called being a servant?" or being a slave? "Care not for it." In other words, it does not matter. "Care not for it, but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant" or slave, "is the Lord's free man. And likewise, he that is called, being free, is Christ's slave."

So it does not matter whether you are a slave or whether you are free. If you are a slave and are in Christ, you have been made free in Him. If you may get your freedom, use it rather. But if you are already free and are in Christ, then you become a slave to Jesus Christ.

Lincoln's Myth as the Great Emancipator

All down through history, Abraham Lincoln has been known as the great emancipator, but only to the historically ignorant and the politically correct crowd. He is always presented as a good-hearted, concerned, and gracious benefactor of black people. He is adored and practically worshipped by those who do not know the truth. However, in recent years, the veneer of his deity has begun to crack, and some have recognized Abraham Lincoln for exactly what he was. They have discovered not only that he is not really a savior, but also that he was never, ever an emancipator anyhow.

Dr. Rood later is going to discuss the subject "Was Abraham Lincoln a Christian," and I am not going to try to get into his talk. But let me tell you a story that happened to a friend of mine, Dr. Gary Roper. Dr. Roper has a ministry where he goes by many of these minute markets and puts out good Christian books and historically accurate books.

He was in one minute market putting out some of these books, one of which was entitled "Stonewall Jackson, the Christian." When the lady behind the cash register saw the book, she said, "Oh, Stonewall Jackson, the Christian. I didn't know Stonewall Jackson was a Christian. I knew Abraham Lincoln was."

Dr. Roper said, "Well, there's a difference between the two."

She asked, "What is it?"

He said, "Well, Stonewall Jackson was a Christian practically all of his life. Lincoln never became one until 50 years after his death."

That is what I mean when those who do not know the facts praise and recognize him as the great emancipator. But let me give you an illustration of how the veneer is really beginning to crack.

Testimony from Ebony Magazine

In the February 2000 issue of Ebony Magazine, a black magazine designed for blacks, it carried an article by a black man, Bennett Larone, Jr., concerning the Emancipation Proclamation and Abraham Lincoln. The headline says, "New book says most famous act in American history never happened."

"The presidential campaign of 1860 was over. And the victor was stretching his legs and shaking off the cares of the world in his temporary office in the state capitol in Springfield, Illinois. Surrounded by the perks of power, at peace with the world, the president-elect was regaling old acquaintances with tall tales about his early days as a politician. One of the visitors interrupted this monologue and remarked that it was a shame that the vexatious slavery matter would be the first question of public policy the new president would have to deal with in Washington."

"The president-elect's eyes twinkled as he was reminded of a story. According to the eyewitness, Henry Villiard, President-elect Abraham Lincoln told the story of a Kentucky Justice of the Peace whose first case was a criminal prosecution for abuse of slaves. Unable to find any precedent, he exclaimed angrily, 'I will be damned if I don't feel almost sorry for being elected when the niggers is the first thing I have to attend to.' This story, shocking as it may sound to Lincoln admirers, was in character. For the president-elect never showed any sincere sympathy for blacks, and none of his cronies were surprised to hear him suggest that he shared the viewpoint of the reluctant and biased justice of the peace."

"As for the N-word, everybody knew that old Abe used it all the time, both in public and in private. One of the supreme ironies of history, the man who told the story was forced by circumstances to attend what he called the nigger question. And within five years, he was enshrined in American mythology as the great emancipator who freed blacks with a stroke of a pen out of the goodness of his heart. Since that time, the mythology of the great emancipator has become part of the mental landscape of America."

“Generations of school children have memorized its cadences. Poets, politicians, and long-suffering blacks have wept over its imagery and drama. No other story is so enduring. No other American story is so comforting. No other American story is so false. Abraham Lincoln was not the great emancipator.” This is still the black man talking. “The testimony of 16,000 books and monographs to the country, contrary notwithstanding, Lincoln did not emancipate the slaves greatly or otherwise. As for the Emancipation Proclamation, it was not a real Emancipation Proclamation at all and did not liberate any African-American slaves. John F. Hume, the Missouri anti-slavery leader who heard Lincoln speak in Alton, Illinois, who looked him in the eye at the White House and said, ‘The proclamation did not, whatever it may have otherwise accomplished at the time it was issued, did not liberate a single slave.’”

That was the article in Ebony magazine in the year 2000. How could a black man writing in a black magazine say that Abraham Lincoln was not the great emancipator and that he never freed any

slaves? We must ask several questions. If Lincoln was genuinely interested in freeing the slaves, why did he wait until January 1, 1863, to make the proclamation effective? The proclamation had actually been issued September 13, 1862. Why wait until January 1, 1863, to make it effective? Moreover, if Lincoln was genuinely interested in freeing the slaves, why did he not do it the first day or the first week he was in office? Why wait until three years down the line to issue an emancipation proclamation?

Lincoln's Own Words on Race and Slavery

If Abraham Lincoln really and truly wanted freedom and equality for the slaves, why did he say the opposite? In a debate with Senator Stephen Douglas in 1858 in Ottawa, Illinois, Lincoln said: “I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality. And inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position.”

"I have never said anything to the contrary." Abraham Lincoln. By the way, I hope sometimes you will read some of the debates between Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. Stephen Douglas was a little man. In fact, his nickname was the Little Giant. Although he was small in stature, he was giant in other ways. In one debate with Abraham Lincoln, he was getting the best of Lincoln. Lincoln became so frustrated that he looked at little Douglas and said, "Why, I ought to reach over, just gobble you up and swallow you right down." Douglas said, "Bless God, if you did, you'd have more brains in your stomach than you got in your head." Those two certainly went at each other.

But Abraham Lincoln said more than just this in the debate with Stephen Douglas in Ottawa, Illinois. On September the 18th, 1858, in a speech in Charleston, Illinois, Lincoln said this: "I will say then that I am not now nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races. That I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or

jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people. And I will say in addition to this, that there is a physical difference between the white and the black races, which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together, there must be a position of superior and inferior, and I, as much as any other man, am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race."

Did Lincoln believe a black man was his equal? The answer is no. Was he concerned about the slaves? The answer is no. In Lincoln's first inaugural address, he said, "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so."

Later, when Abraham Lincoln wrote Horace Greeley, he said, "My paramount object is to save the union and not either to destroy or save slavery. If I could save the union without freeing the slaves, I would do it. If I could save the union by freeing some and leaving others in slavery, I would do it. If I could save the union by freeing all, I would do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because it helps save the union."

Those are Lincoln's own words: "I have no desire to free the blacks. I have no desire necessarily to keep them in bondage. Whatever I do is not for their benefit, but it is for my benefit and what I believe will save the Union."

General Don Piatt, Lincoln's friend, who traveled with him extensively and knew him intimately, said: "Lincoln knew well that the North was not fighting to free the slaves, nor was the South fighting to preserve slavery. In that awful conflict, slavery went to pieces." Here General Don Piatt is saying Lincoln knew that slavery was not the issue.

Before I get through today, I'm going to show you so much documentation, it might blow your socks off. Many people do not even know that General Ulysses S. Grant, when he was a colonel of the 21st Illinois Infantry, expressed himself rather plainly on what he called the Negro question. Listen to what General Grant, while he

was a colonel, said: "The sole object of this war is to restore the Union."

"Should I become convinced it has any other object, or that the government designs using its soldiers to execute the wishes of the abolitionists, I pledge you my honor as a man and as a soldier, I would resign my commission and carry my sword to the other side." Grant added: "If I am convinced that the North is fighting just to free the blacks, I will resign my commission and I'll carry my sword to the other side."

Very obviously, those who were in positions of authority understood that the war was not over slavery. On another occasion, President Lincoln said this: "We didn't go into the war to put down slavery, but to put the flag back. To act differently at this moment would, I have no doubt, not only weaken our cause, but smack a bad faith." Those are the words of Abraham Lincoln. He said, "I didn't begin the war to end slavery. I didn't begin the war to put down slavery."

I could multiply quotes, but it should be painfully obvious that neither Lincoln nor those around him gave a hoot for the black man. Generally speaking, they were not concerned over the slavery question. So you have to ask yourself: How did slavery become an issue? What in the world fomented or brought to light what Lincoln thought was necessary for issuing the Emancipation Proclamation?

Before answering that question, understand that Lincoln at one time offered that if the seceded states would come back into the Union before a certain time, they would be allowed to keep the slaves. I also remind you that there was a proposed 13th Amendment, which Lincoln endorsed. That proposed constitutional amendment would allow the states to keep their slaves and would say that the federal government had absolutely no authority or power to interfere in any state with the domestic institutions thereof or those held to servitude. That proposed 13th Amendment was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate on March the 12th, 1861. If the South had been fighting over slavery and to keep their slaves, why would they even begin the war? Why would Beauregard fire on Fort Sumter on April the 12th if the war was over

slavery, when it was being handed to them on a silver platter? Slavery was not the issue. Slavery was certainly not the problem.

The Proclamation as a War Measure

I want to point out the fact that Abraham Lincoln knew, as did others, that when he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, he did not have the constitutional authority to do so, nor did he have any other authority to do so. The Northern Historian, Rhodes, Volume 4, page 213, says this: “There was, as everyone knows, no authority for the proclamation in the letter of the Constitution, nor was there any statute that warranted it.” Lincoln had no constitutional authority to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, nor did he have a statute to back it up.

Lincoln himself maintained that the proclamation was merely a war measure and not a real attempt at emancipation. In a letter to Secretary of the Treasury Simon P. Chase, he admitted that the original proclamation had no legal justification except as a war measure. Here is what he said on September 3, 1863: “The Emancipation Proclamation has no constitutional or legal justification except as a war measure.” Those are the words of Abraham Lincoln. He knew, therefore, that he had neither constitutional nor statutory authority to issue the proclamation.

The only possible source of authority could have come from the Act of Congress of July 17, 1862, when Congress said, “that the President may employ, organize, and use as many persons of African descent as he pleases to suppress the rebellion and use them as he judges for the public welfare.” The only possible source of legitimacy for the proclamation was the power to seize the property of the belligerents. But may I remind you of something? Congress did not have the power to give away that which they did not own.

Congress does not possess the power to give away that which is not theirs. The slaves did not belong to Congress; they belonged to people in the South. Simply because Congress does not own anything or does not have any private property of its own, that does not stop them from giving away your private property. They did it back then, and they still do it today. Of course, they are still trying to redistribute the wealth exactly the way they did back then.

The Proclamation Freed No Slaves

The Emancipation Proclamation did not free any slaves—not one. It did not free the slaves that Mrs. Lincoln owned or the slaves that General Grant owned. General Robert E. Lee released his slaves before the war ever began and gave them their freedom. General Grant kept his slaves long after the war was over. When someone asked him why he had not freed them, his answer was, "Good help is hard to find."

The Emancipation Proclamation did not free Mrs. Lincoln's slaves, General Grant's slaves, or any slaves in the northern states, where there were still slaves. Nor did it free any slaves in the southern states where the Union armies were in dominance and the territory was under their control and authority. Unhappily, most people have never even read the Emancipation Proclamation and do not know what it says.

Reading the Emancipation Proclamation

Here are a portion of its words: "Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States by virtue of the power in me vested as commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States."

Notice the phrase, "in a time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and the government of the United States." What is the authority of the United States? It is the Constitution. The Constitution is our covenantal agreement between the states and the federal government. It defines and delineates the power of the federal government.

Was the South fighting against the authority of the United States? The answer is no. The very first act of the Confederate Congress, in the very first provisional Confederate Constitution, was to adopt the Constitution of the United States in its entirety unless it was repealed or in conflict with the Confederate Constitution. The South was not fighting against the authority of the United States because the authority of the United States was the Constitution.

Here is what he says: "Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said

The proclamation said that the states and parts of states wherein the people were in rebellion against the United States were designated. Then Lincoln began naming places that were excepted. Do you realize the only place where Lincoln was trying to free the slaves was in the states over which he did not have power, authority, or control, nor did the Union Army have control? He was not trying to free them in the North, nor in the sections in the South where his army did have control. Then he went on to say in the Emancipation Proclamation: “And which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.” What did he get through saying after he said, “Here’s the parts that they’re freed in”? All the other parts were left as if this Emancipation Proclamation had never been issued.

And in this paragraph: “And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated states and parts of states are and henceforward shall be free; and that the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.” Now, let me ask: Why in the world would Lincoln endeavor to free the slaves where he had no authority to do so? Why would he seek to free slaves over which he had absolutely no control?

Well, let him answer it himself: “As a fit military measure.” That is what he said: “As a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing.” The only reason the Emancipation Proclamation was issued was that it was a war measure. It was really and truly never intended to free the slaves, except to use them against their masters inside a rebellion so that they might help the North defeat the South.

Lincoln's Motives: Inciting Slave Rebellion

On September 13, 1862, the day after, or the same day as, the preliminary proclamation was issued, Lincoln met with a delegation of abolitionist Christian ministers, those Christians supposedly for abolition. Here is what he told these preachers bluntly: “Understand, I raise no objection against it,” that is, slavery. “Understand, I raise no objection against slavery on legal or constitutional grounds.”

"I view the matter," that is, emancipation, "as a practical war measure to be decided upon according to the advantages or disadvantages it may offer to the suppression of the rebellion." Lincoln said that he had no objections against slavery, especially on a constitutional basis. How could he, because the Constitution sanctions slavery? The only thing he was issuing this proclamation for was as a war measure by which he could defeat those whom he believed were his enemy.

Why did he issue that proclamation on January 1, 1863? Militarily speaking, the war had not been going well for the North. First Manassas was a colossal defeat. When 22,000 Confederates met and defeated 33,000 Northern troops and sent them packing back to Washington, it was a colossal embarrassment. When Stonewall Jackson took 16,000 Confederates and defeated 45,000 Union troops in the Shenandoah Valley, winning victory after victory over numerous Union generals, it was a profound embarrassment for Lincoln and his administration. When Robert E. Lee defeated the Union armies in the Peninsula Campaign in 1862, once again there was trouble brewing.

Then the Battle of Shiloh forced the Union to retreat away from Richmond. The Battle of Sharpsburg was a stalemate, even though it was one of the bloodiest battles fought on American soil. But when the Battle of Fredericksburg happened in December 1862, it was a stunning defeat for the North, and the Grand Army of the Republic retreated once again.

All I am trying to show you is this: battle after battle had been lost by the North. Lincoln was being defeated on every hand, and it looked as if the European powers were going to recognize the Confederacy. If they stepped in and helped the Confederacy, that

would certainly be not only a slap in Lincoln's face, but probably ensure his defeat as well.

One British observer, Earl Russell, commented in a letter on January 17, 1863, concerning Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: "The proclamation of the President of the United States appears to be of a very strange nature. It professes to emancipate all slaves in places where the United States authorities cannot exercise any jurisdiction. But it does not decree emancipation in any states or parts of states occupied by federal troops and where, therefore, emancipation might have been carried into effect. There seems to be no declaration of a principle adverse to slavery in this proclamation."

"It is a measure of war and a measure of war of a questionable kind." Earl Russell was saying that all the Emancipation Proclamation was, was a measure of war.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was intended not to free the slaves per se, but only to cause the slaves to defect from the Southern armies. As you heard yesterday, when Dr. Rood talked about black Confederates, a multitude of black men fought as soldiers for the Confederacy. They were teamsters and cooks, and they were used to help build fortifications. If these blacks defected from the Confederate Army, what a tremendous loss it would be. Moreover, if a slave rebellion had occurred in the South, the catastrophic effects upon the Confederate army would have been immense.

A thousand torches and a thousand black hands would have effectively emptied the Confederate lines, because those Confederate soldiers would have come back home to defend their families and their property. But the fact that there was no slave uprising, no slave rebellion, speaks volumes for the relationship between the blacks and the whites in the South.

As Dr. Rood pointed out yesterday, it was the blacks who were protecting the white women and children and the homes while the white men were usually away fighting. The anticipated effect of the Proclamation upon the South did not transpire, but everyone knew what Lincoln wanted: the slaves to rise up in rebellion and murder their masters. Listen to what the London Herald writes concerning the Emancipation Proclamation.

Another symptom of increasing ferocity, a new source of frightful crime on the one side and the provocation of horrible vengeance on the other, was disclosed in the demand made in New York for the abolitionist proclamation. So far as its nominal purpose went, this would be as futile as Mr. Lincoln's other edicts. Before he could emancipate the Southern Negroes, he would have to conquer the South. But the demand was not made with a view to the real liberation of the slaves.

It was meant to diminish the rebel army by calling away many officers and men in defense of their homes. The object was not Negro emancipation, but servile insurrection; not the manumission of slaves, but the subornation of atrocities, such as those that Comorn and Marut against women and children of southern families. For the Negro, the Northerners cared nothing except as a possible weapon by which they might more safely and effectually wreak a cruel and cowardly vengeance upon the South. Inferior in every respect to the Sepoys, the Negro race, if once excited to rebellion, would outdo them in acts of carnage, though falling below them in military courage. They might be useful as assassins and incendiaries, but as soldiers against the dominant race they would be utterly worthless.

These new abolitionists did not conceal their motives. They had not the decency to pretend conviction. They sought avowedly nothing but an instrument of vengeance against their enemy, and an instrument so dastardly, involving such outrage, was so horrible that even a government which employed a Mitchell or a Butler must shrink from such a load of infamy. Those people in Europe knew the purpose of the Emancipation Proclamation. It was not to free the slaves, but to create an insurrection and have the slaves murder their masters.

Northern Backlash and Draft Riots

While the Emancipation Proclamation did not have its desired effect in the South, it did have an effect in the North. Most Northerners were aghast at the thought that they were fighting to emancipate blacks in the South. They were so horrified that mobs attacked and killed blacks in many northern cities. Race riots broke out in full swing, not only in New York but elsewhere. Along with the

proclamation came Lincoln's new conscription law, which infuriated Northerners. They were not going to fight for the blacks. Especially in New York, people began randomly killing any and all blacks who got in their way. Colonel Arthur Fremantle of the British Army was an eyewitness to the riots in New York.

Listen to what he wrote: "The reports of outrages, hangings, and murder were now most alarming. The terror and the anxiety were universal. Now they're hanging blacks. All shops were now shut. All carriages and omnibuses had ceased running. No colored man or woman was visible or safe in the streets or even in his own dwelling. Telegraphs were cut. Railroad tracks torn up. The draft was suspended and the mob evidently had the upper hand."

He continued: "The people who can't pay 300 bucks naturally hate being forced to fight in order to liberate the very race who they are most anxious should remain slaves. It is their direct interest not only that all slaves should remain slaves, but that the free northern Negroes who compete with them for labor should be sent to the South also."

Here is a British observer, Colonel Arthur Fremantle, saying that they were randomly killing and hanging blacks everywhere in New York. They not only did not want the blacks freed; they wanted the free blacks there sent to the South as slaves. Another report on the riot in New York states: "Violent mobs roamed the streets for days, viciously attacking police, affluent Republicans and blacks."

"Rioters tore through expensive Republican homes on Lexington Avenue and took, or more often destroyed, pictures with gilt frames, elegant pier glasses, sofas, chairs, clocks, furniture of every kind. The mob set on fire to an orphanage for black children and began attacking black men and boys in the tenement district along downtown waterfront. Furthermore, anti-Republicanism remained the refrain of the violence as crowds returned to Horace Greeley's Tribune office. The building that housed Greeley's New York Tribune's office was set on fire. The mob then hanged a black man by the name of William Jones and burned his body."

"Many other racially inspired and unspeakably violent murders occurred for the better part of a week." New Yorkers were running

crazy, murdering blacks and destroying the homes and offices of those radical Republicans in Congress. What stopped the riots? Abraham Lincoln did. He called five regiments of Union soldiers to New York to quell the riots, and they quelled them by shooting a thousand Northerners—killing their own people.

The Emancipation Proclamation also caused a desertion crisis in the United States Army. Thomas DiLorenzo writes: “At least 200,000 federal soldiers deserted. Another 120,000 evaded conscription, and at least 90,000 northern men fled to Canada to avoid the conscription, while thousands more hid out in the mountains of central Pennsylvania to place themselves beyond the reach of the enrollment offices.”

What were the Northerners doing? They were evading the draft. They said, “We're not going to fight to free the blacks.”

Many in the Federal Army who stayed harbored great resentment against the blacks, against Lincoln, and against the Emancipation Proclamation. One Union soldier said, “If emancipation is to be the policy of this war, I do not care how quickly the country goes to pot.” A Massachusetts sergeant wrote in a letter that “if anyone thinks that this army is fighting to free the Negro, they're terribly mistaken.”

Another officer declared, “I don't want to fire another shot for the Negroes, and I wish that all the abolitionists were in hell. I do not fight, nor do I want to fight for Lincoln's Negro proclamation one day longer.” They were quite upset at Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln was dishonest, dishonorable, and despicable. He was not interested in blacks, whites, or the Constitution. He was only interested in the Whig program and establishing his own centralized program in Washington, D.C. He effectively destroyed our Republican form of government. He wanted to have a centralized bureaucracy like his idol, Henry Clay.

Lincoln, however, condemned his own self in a lecture delivered at Springfield, Illinois, in 1837. The lecture is entitled “The Perpetuation of Our Free Institutions.” He said:

Lincoln's Ambition and the Enslavement of Free Men

“If destruction be our lot, we ourselves must be its author and its finisher. As a nation of free men, we must live through all time or die by suicide. That will be the time when the usurper will put down his heel on the neck of the people and batter down the fair fabric of our institutions. Many great and good men may be found whose ambitions aspire no higher than a seat in Congress or a presidential chair.

“But such belong not to the family of the lion or the tribe of the eagle. What? Think you that such places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar or Napoleon? Never.

“Towering ambition disdains a beaten path. It seeks regions unexplored. It seeks no grandeur in adding story to story upon the monuments already erected to the memory of others. It scorns to tread in the footsteps of any predecessor, however illustrious.”

"It thirsts, it burns for distinction, and if possible, it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves or enslaving free men." Lincoln said that if you have a thirst for power, you will never be satisfied with a presidential chair. You will have your power and your way, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves or enslaving free men.

Lincoln did not emancipate the slaves. He enslaved free men with his centralized, socialized, protectionist, and mercantilistic form of government. Abraham Lincoln did not free the slaves; he merely enlarged the plantation. We are now all slaves. Why? Because we no longer have our constitutional republic. We now have a centralized, bureaucratic, power-hungry, dictatorial democracy that steals from the working man and gives to the indolent, the criminal, the pervert, and the enemies of liberty, freedom, and righteousness.

Conclusion: A Society Built on Death

We are where we are today because of the policies of Abraham Lincoln. One of my favorite texts of Scripture is found in Proverbs, chapter 8. Our Lord says in verse 36, "All they that hate me love death." Any society, culture, or government built on anything other

than the purity, truth, and righteousness of the Word of God is nothing but a society, culture, and government of death.

That is all fallen man can do. All he can do is give death; he cannot give life. Everyone has heard of the communistic utopia or the socialistic utopia. When you hear the term utopia, you think of perfection, peace, liberty, tranquility, and all this kind of thing. I had three years of Greek. During my first year, I encountered the word for utopia and have never forgotten it. Our English word utopia is made up of two Greek words, "ou topos." "Topos" is the Greek word for place, and "ou" is a negative meaning no. The word utopia literally means no place.

In other words, the communistic, socialist, bureaucratic utopia does not exist. It is a figment of the imagination; there is no reality to it. The only reality we have is the reality of God's Word, God's truth, and God's righteousness. That is reality. When you build your society, culture, and government on a utopia, it does not exist. It is not real. All you are creating is a society, culture, and government of death—one that enslaves free men.

I've asked, What do you think George Washington, Patrick Henry, and Sam Adams would do if they were in America today? What do you think Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson would do? No, Lincoln did not free the slaves; he enlarged the plantation. Father, thank You for Your Word and truth. Give us grace to serve Thee with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

A Death Wish

Introduction: The Reality of Death Wishes

In Numbers 14, beginning with verse 1, we read: “And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron. And the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt? Or would God that we had died in this wilderness? And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.”

Many people have used the expression, “I wish I was dead.” Some have used it more often and more frequently than others. The usual response is, “Be careful for that which you wish, for your wish may be granted.” It is undoubtedly true that some people have a death wish of some kind or the other. All you have to do is look at the way they drive, and especially how they live and act.

Charles Bronson, the movie star, made a great deal of money from several movies entitled “Death Wish.” Naturally, in his movies, he was the good guy, fulfilling the wishes of the bad guys by executing them and taking them out. Yet it is amazing to discover that there are indeed death wishes among, supposedly, the people of faith. Moreover, it is possible to have a death wish and not even realize it. Do you realize and understand that the Bible speaks of what is known as a sin unto death?

In 1 John 5:16-17, the Word of God says, “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death.”

First Sin Unto Death: Unbelief and Provocation (Numbers 14)

"I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin unto death." There are some sins that are not unto death, but our Lord tells us plainly that there are some that are a sin unto death. What are some of those sins unto death? I am sure that I probably cannot list all of them. However, I can give you several because they are revealed in Scripture. The very first one revealed in Scripture is in Numbers chapter 14. The sins unto death in this chapter are, first of all, unbelief and provocation. By the way, unbelief and provocation usually go together.

Look in verse 2: "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would God that we had died in this wilderness."

What is the context for such a death wish? The spies had searched out the land. There were twelve spies, and ten of them brought back an evil report against the land. Only two, Joshua and Caleb, brought back a true report. The other ten spies reminded the children of Israel of the giants that were in the land. For instance, look in Numbers 13, verse 31: "But the men that went up with them said, We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land through which

we have gone to search it is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants."

"And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sights." When the ten spies gave this evil report, it caused the hearts of the people to sink into unbelief, and thus they provoked the sovereign God of heaven and earth. That is why they said in verse 2, "Would to God we had died in the land of Egypt, or would to God we had died in this wilderness." In other words, they considered it better to be slaves in Egypt than to be free and face responsibilities.

They had rather be enslaved than fight for their liberty and freedom. Consequently, in their unbelief, they charged Moses and Aaron with criminal negligence: "And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword, and that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" Then one said to another, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." In other words, "Moses and Aaron, you brought us out here to kill us."

Joshua and Caleb, the two who brought the accurate and true report, tried to give the people the truth, but they refused to listen. "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes. And they spake in all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we pass through to search it is an exceeding good land. And if the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give us a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel ye not against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Fear them not."

That was certainly good counsel. It was what God wanted and desired. But what was the response of the people when they listened to the truth? "But all the congregation bade stone them with stones." In other words, "We'll kill you. We'll destroy you. We don't like what you're saying, so we're going to destroy the messengers."

The only thing that stopped them from stoning Joshua and Caleb was what happened next. Verse 10 says, “But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.” When they saw that Shekinah glory, they backed off. They knew that God was present.

God charges the people with unbelief and provocation. Verse 11 says, “And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me for all the signs which I have showed them?” God says they disbelieve. They are full of unbelief, and their unbelief has provoked Him. In verse 22 He says, “Because all those men who have seen my glory and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice.” God had given them signs, wonders, and miracles. He had delivered them. Yet in all this they had not believed Him; they continued to provoke Him.

They wanted to die? God said, “I’ll tell you why. I’ll help you fulfill your wish. In fact, I’ll just kill everybody, and I’ll make a greater nation out of Moses.” Verse 12 says, “I will smite them with pestilence and disinherit them and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.”

Why did God not smite the entire group? Because Moses interceded. Moses said to the Lord, “Then the Egyptian shall hear it for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land, for they have heard that thou art the Lord among this people, and thou art seen face to face, and that the cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them by day time in a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire by night.” If God killed these people, Moses said, the heathen would ask what had happened.

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 14:26-35 (KJV)

They're going to say you brought them out. And the only reason you killed them was you were not able to bring them in. Lord, it'll be a reflection upon you. Well, God says, "All right, Moses, I'll tell you what. I will not disinherit the entire congregation.

But the people that wish they were dead, I shall grant them their wish."

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you.

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

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

So what did God do? God immediately killed the ten men who brought up the evil report, and He said to the others, "You wish you had died in the wilderness? I'm going to grant you your wish. You'll die in the wilderness. Every one of you. And all these little children that you said are going to be a prey? They will get into the land, but you shall not get into it."

In Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 19, and in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 6, the Bible tells us it was because of their unbelief that they could not enter into the land. I want you to understand a simple truth: unbelief provokes God.

The Greater Revelation, the Greater Provocation (Hebrews 10)

The greater the signs, the greater the miracles—or I will add this, the greater the revelation—the greater the unbelief, and the greater the provocation. The more truth God gives you, when you refuse to believe the greater amount of truth, therefore you have a greater provocation, and you bring upon yourself a greater judgment.

People naively say, when they read a passage like Numbers chapter 14, "I'll tell you one thing. Had I been alive back in that day, I would have believed." But the fact is, they won't believe today. What good does it do to say, "I would have believed back then, but I will not believe right now"? How much more is God provoked by a fuller and more complete revelation?

Look in your Bibles to Hebrews 10, beginning with verse 28. The Bible says, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses." So if you despise the limited revelation that God had given in the Old Testament, what does God say? You died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Ah, but look at verse 29: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Now, God says, in light of the full revelation that He's made in Jesus Christ, in light of the full revelation that we have in the Word of God, in light of the full revelation of truth, how much sorer or worse punishment shall a man be worthy of when he despises that full and

What shall be said of those who have the final revelation that God has made in Jesus Christ? If you died without mercy in the Old Testament under two or three witnesses, God said it should be even worse in the New Testament when you have all the truth and the full revelation of Jesus Christ, yet refuse to believe. God says that unbelief provokes Him to anger: "I've given you the sign. I've given

you the miracle. I've given you the truth. And yet you refuse to believe."

Our Lord said in Proverbs 8:36, "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death." Anyone who hates Christ, anyone who hates God, has a death wish. Unbelief and provocation are sins unto death.

Second Sin Unto Death: Rebellion and Defiance (Numbers 16)

What is the second sin unto death? It is rebellion and defiance. In Numbers chapter 16, we read: "Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, the sons of Reuben, took men, and they rose up before Moses with certain of the children of Israel." There were "250 princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, You take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them." They continued, "And the Lord is among them. Wherefore, then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord." When Moses heard it, he fell on his face.

There were three ringleaders: Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They were upset with Moses and told him, "You're taking too much upon yourself." In other words, "Moses, you're acting with too much authority. Why don't you know all of God's people are holy? God is amongst all of us. We can do whatever we want to do. We don't have to do what you tell us. We don't believe that the priesthood is necessarily reserved for Aaron and his sons, and we don't necessarily believe that you have to be the leader of this people."

"Why, any of us can do that. And moreover, I've got 250 princes. I mean, here are men that have power and money. And they're backing up Korah and Dathan and Abiram." I want you to hold Numbers 16. We're coming right back there. But look in your Bibles to Jude, verse 11. Right before the book of Revelation, you have the book of Jude. Jude, verse 11. And look what is said concerning Korah. Notice Jude and verse 11. In fact, I may come back in the next week or two and preach from this next verse or this next phrase in

this verse. Notice if you would, Jude, verse 11: "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah." Now, Korah there is Korah. They perished in the gainsaying of Korah. Now, what in the world is gainsaying?

Well, the word gainsaying occurs several times in Scripture. Let me just show you very quickly. Look in your Bibles to the book of Luke, chapter 21, and verse 15. Luke 21, verse 15, I think you're going to get the idea. Luke 21, verse 15, our Lord says, "For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Now there's that word gainsay. If you'll look in your Bibles to the book of Romans chapter 10. Romans 10. And notice if you would please verse 21. Romans 10, verse 21, you'll see it again. The Bible says, "But to Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

Now, you don't have to turn to Titus 1 and verse 9, but there Paul told Timothy that the gainsayers must be stopped. Well, what in the world is gainsaying? When the Bible says that they perished in the gainsaying of Korah, what does that mean? Well, the word gainsaying literally means to speak against. It means to dispute. It means to argue with. It means to contend with. It means to contradict. What in the world was Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and the 250 princes doing? They were contradicting. They were arguing. They were contending.

They were disputing against God and against Moses and against Aaron. Numbers 26:9–10 makes it exceedingly clear that the gainsaying was against God and also against Moses and Aaron: “And the sons of Eliab, Nemuel, and Dathan and Abiram, this is that Dathan and Abiram which were famous in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah when they strove against God. And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah. When that company died, what time the fire devoured 250 men and they became a sign.”

The Bible says that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and those 250 men that perished became a sign. What were they a sign of? They were a sign of rebellion and defiance. What were they doing? They were striving against Moses and Aaron and striving against God.

Numbers 16 is exceedingly important. I want to give you three reasons why it is vitally important. First and foremost, this chapter teaches us that all rebellion is ultimately against God. Let me say that again: all rebellion is ultimately against God.

What were Dathan and Abiram and Korah doing? They were striving against Moses and Aaron. But what does the Bible say in Numbers 26:9? They strove against Moses and Aaron when they strove against God. In other words, they may have said they were striving against Moses and Aaron, but ultimately it was against God Himself. Let me spell this out very plainly. Whenever you attack God's lawfully ordained and constituted authority, exercising His authority in the proper sphere and in the proper way that God has ordained, you are in essence attacking God Himself.

Are you listening to me? When children dishonor and disobey their parents, they're disobeying and dishonoring God Himself. Why? Because God has constituted those parents as a lawfully ordained authority. As long as those parents are exercising that authority in the sphere of biblical truth, to oppose the parent is to oppose God; to dishonor the parent is to dishonor God.

The same thing can be said ecclesiastically. Hebrews 13:7 says, “Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God.”

We are talking about pastors and elders: “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” And, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

The same truth is applied ecclesiastically. I cannot come to your house and say, “Everybody in this house ought to wear blue shirts.” I have no authority to tell you what color shirt to wear. But I do have authority to come to your house and say that you should dress modestly, whatever color you are wearing. Whenever I exercise biblical authority in the sphere God has ordained me to exercise that

authority, to resist the one whom God has ordained is to resist God Himself.

You remember what our Lord said in Matthew chapter 10, when He sent His disciples out: “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.” The opposite is also true. He that rejects the disciples of Christ rejects Christ; he that rejects Christ rejects the Father who sent Christ.

The same thing is true of civil authority. Romans 13:2 says that civil authority has been ordained of God, and “whosoever resisteth the ordinance shall receive to himself condemnation.” I am not against government or civil government. I believe God ordained civil government. I do not want to overthrow it; I want to throw wickedness out of civil government and have it work in the proper sphere and function God ordained. If a biblical, godly civil ruler is exercising authority in that sphere, to resist him is to resist God.

All rebellion is ultimately against God. You might say it is against Moses and Aaron, the preacher, or the civil ruler who is exercising his power lawfully, but in reality it is against God. Secondly, rebellion can only be against lawful authority. If there is no lawful authority, it is not rebellion; it is only resistance to tyranny. If I have no lawful authority, I have no right to order, command, direct, or demand. If I have no right, I may be lawfully and righteously resisted.

One of the problems we encounter as bureaucratized Americans—and if that's not a word, I just made it up—is that we're so used to being ordered around and told what to do that we never question authority. In other words, we never question whether the one giving the orders has any lawful authority to give them. We're simply so accustomed to being told what to do that we do it.

When it comes to bureaucracy and unrighteous civil government, question authority. If someone does not have lawful authority, he has no right to tell you what to do or what not to do. Many times, those demanding that you do something not only lack lawful authority to demand it; usually, the regulations they want you to comply with do not even apply to you to begin with.

I've had this happen to me many times. It will make a bureaucrat mad as a wet setting hen for you to question his authority and say, "Show me the law. Show me the law." The point is this: if there is no lawful authority, it is not rebellion; it is simply resistance to tyranny. I do not care who the person is. If there is no lawful authority, he has no right to interfere in my life or demand anything of me. If he has no lawful authority, I may resist him and do so righteously, without sinning against God.

Here's the third truth about rebellion and defiance: not only are rebellion and defiance ultimately against God, and not only are they directed only against lawful authority, but we also find in this passage the strength, persistence, and stubbornness of rebellion and defiance. It is absolutely amazing to discover how hard-headed rebellion really is and how difficult it is to stamp it out.

Dathan, Abiram, Korah, and the 250 princes had all rebelled against Moses and Aaron. Once again, it was God's determination to kill them all. In Numbers 16:20-21, the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, “Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.”

Once again, it was through the intercession of Moses that the congregation was spared. In verse 22, “they fell upon their face and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?” So God said, “All right, I'm not going to kill all of them. I won't do that.” But then He said, “I tell you what I am going to do. I'm going to kill the rebels.”

The Lord therefore told Moses, “Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.” Moses went unto Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. He told them, “Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in their sins.”

Moses had tried to work things out and had sent for the men to come and talk to him. They refused, saying, “We're not going up to talk to him. If he wants to talk, let him come down here.” These men were wicked and stubborn. Moses then asked for an uncommon death for these rebels. He wanted the people to know that it was not

he who was doing this; it was God who was killing them. He again told the congregation, “Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins.”

“So they gat them up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram on every side. And Dathan and Abiram came out and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.” Moses said, “Hereby you shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing in the earth, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertained unto them, and they go down quick into the pit, then you shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.”

It came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking, that the ground clave asunder under them. The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, their houses, and all the men that appertained to Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished among the congregation.

This was an uncommon death. The earth simply opened up and swallowed them. Moses had said, “If these people die a common death, then God has not sent me. God has not spoken by me.” Since they did not die a common death, but an uncommon death, God had sent Moses and had spoken by Moses.

What was the response of the children of Israel when they saw this? “And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them, for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.” They said, “Let’s get away from there. God is angry with these men. They are rebellious, defiant, wicked, and wrong.”

God had taken care of Dathan and Abiram and all of theirs. But what about the 250 princes? Once God got rid of the ringleaders, He turned His attention to their supporters. “And there came out a fire from the Lord and consumed the 250 men that offered incense.” God miraculously sent fire from heaven and destroyed them.

The Stubbornness of Rebellion

Stop and think just for a moment. Suppose you had been alive during this incident. Or, since you were not alive then, would you not think certain things if you had witnessed this?

Remember, they had witnessed the rebellion firsthand. They had seen the earth open, swallow the rebels, and close again. They had seen fire come down from heaven and consume 250 specific princes.

Would you not have been impressed by the fact that God is holy and must be obeyed? Would you not have understood that judgment, rebellion, and defiance are under the judgment and condemnation of God? Would you not have concluded that God chooses, appoints, and ordains whomsoever he will and whomsoever he pleases, and that it is not our right to question God? Would you not have grasped that it is unwise and unhealthy to attack God's lawfully ordained authority?

After seeing the earth open and swallow men alive, and seeing fire fall from heaven and kill the 250 princes, would you not have concluded that God himself destroyed the rebels? How could you not conclude these things? But let me show you the stubbornness and hard-headedness of rebellion. Look in verse 41: “But on the morrow.” That means the next day. Twenty-four hours had not elapsed.

“But on the morrow, all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, You've killed the people of the Lord.” Who do you think you are, Moses? Who do you think you are, Aaron? You've just murdered God's people. You killed them.

“And it came to pass when the congregation was gathered together against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation, and behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared.” The Shekinah glory again. “And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation, and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.”

"And they fell on their faces. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them. For there is wrath gone out from the Lord, the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation, and behold, the plague was begun among the people, and he put on incense and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed."

"Now they that died of the plague were 14,700 men, besides them that died about the matter of Korah." Another nearly 15,000 people dead. Why? Because they were suffering.

They once again attacked Moses and Aaron, saying, "You kill God's people. It was you that had done it." Rebellion and defiance are so stubborn and hard-headed that they will either be corrected in grace or in judgment. Rebellion is so difficult to overcome. It will either be overcome and remedied by the grace of God in repentance or by the judgment of God in destruction.

Is it not far better to repent than die? Proverbs 29:1 says, "He that being often reproved and hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy." God says, You hear and hear and hear, but you will not hear or listen. I will cut you off quickly, and that without remedy. Proverbs 8:36 says, "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death." Unbelief and provocation result in a death wish. Rebellion and defiance result in a death wish.

Third Sin Unto Death: Disobedience and Dishonor (Numbers 20)

Thirdly, look in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 20. Here is the third illustration of a death wish. "Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation into the desert of Zin in the first month. And the people abode in Kadesh, and Miriam died there and was buried there. And there was no water for the congregation, and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses and spake, saying, Would God that we had died with our brethren when our brethren died before the Lord.

Would God we had been killed in the judgments? And why have you brought us up out of the congregation, Lord, into this wilderness that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt to bring us into this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink."

In verses 3 through 5, the people are once again expressing a death wish. However, in this instance, it is not the people who die, but Moses and Aaron. Sometimes you might wish you were dead, but you might not die. Someone very important to you may. Why? Because your attitude and your actions affect others.

The Bible says, "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." It was the people who expressed a wish to die, but it was Moses and Aaron who died. I am sure—in fact, I could say positively—that neither Moses nor Aaron ever expressed an outward desire to die or to have God kill them. I told you in my introduction that it is possible to have a death wish and never verbalize it, and never even know it.

Now you ask me, how is it possible to have a death wish and not even know it? Because while you may not be thinking that you want God to kill you or that you want to die, your actions are requesting it. What did God do? God killed Aaron on Mount Hor. I am going to tell you why in just a moment. He killed Moses on Mount Nebo. Let me show you why. Look in Numbers 20, verse 6: "And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly into the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell on their faces, and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,"

Now, Moses, the people are complaining. They want water. So here is what you do: "Take the rod and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron, thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes. It shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock, so shalt thou give the congregation and their beasts drink." Moses took the rod from before the Lord as he commanded him, and Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock. He said to them, "Hear now, you rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?"

Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice. The water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. The Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron: "Because you believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." What does it mean?

It means they were going to die before they got there. In Numbers chapter 20, verse 23, the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and ye shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah." The Lord commanded Moses to take Aaron and Eleazar his son up Mount Hor, strip Aaron of his garments, and put them on Eleazar. "And Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there." Moses did as the Lord commanded. They went up Mount Hor in the sight of the congregation, and Aaron died there on the top of the mount. God killed him; God took his life.

Numbers chapter 27, beginning with verse 12, records the same judgment concerning Moses: "Get thee up unto this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou shalt also be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For you rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes." And, of course, God killed Moses there.

You will also find this in Deuteronomy 32, verses 49 and 50. Moses acknowledged that this instance in Numbers chapter 20 brought God's judgment upon him. In Deuteronomy 1, verse 37, he said, "Also the Lord was angry with me for your sake, saying, Thou shalt not go in thither." Then, in Deuteronomy 3, beginning with verse 25, Moses said to God, "I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon." But the Lord was wroth with him for their sakes and would not hear him. The Lord said, "Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto this matter. Get thee up to Pisgah." Moses acknowledged

that the reason he could not go over was this instance at the water of strife.

When God gave Moses directions concerning the people's complaining, He expected Moses to follow them. The people wanted water. In Numbers 20, God told Moses to take the rod—the rod of authority—and speak to the rock. Moses was angry and upset. Instead of speaking to the rock, he smote it twice. Water still came out, and the people were satisfied. God graciously gave the water even in the face of Moses and Aaron's disobedience, but He judged them for their disobedience and dishonor.

Here are three particular sins that are sins unto death: unbelief and provocation; rebellion and defiance; and disobedience and dishonor.

The Offense of Moses and Aaron Explained

What was the exact offense for which Moses and Aaron were excluded from the promised land? It appears to have consisted in several particulars. First, God commanded Moses to take the rod in his hand and speak to the rock, and that would produce water. Moses apparently did not think speaking to the rock would be sufficient; therefore, he smote the rock without any command to do so. That was rebellion on Moses' part, and it is called rebellion in Numbers 27:14 and other passages. God said, "Moses, you speak," but Moses did not. Second, he smote the rock twice.

These actions evidenced a great agitation of spirit and certainly a want of attention to the presence of God. First Corinthians 10:4 tells us, “And the rock that followed them was Christ.” The rock was a symbolical representation of Jesus Christ. The rock had already been smitten. In Exodus 17:6, God told Moses to smite the rock. If that rock was a type of Jesus Christ, Isaiah 53 tells us that He was smitten for our transgressions. But Christ was only smitten once.

Moses smote the rock a second time, which was violative of the typology of Christ suffering once for the sins of His people. Moses was unattentive to the typology that the rock was Christ. Instead of speaking, he smote, unauthorized, in great anger and agitation.

Thirdly, he permitted his spirit to be carried away by a sense of the people's disobedience. Being provoked, he was led to speak unadvisedly with his lips. He looked at the people and said, “Hear now, you rebels! Must we fetch water out of this rock for you?” Not, “Must God give you water,” but, “Must we, must Aaron and I, do this for you?” He failed to acknowledge that it was God who was working the miracle.

Unbelief was the great transgression. In Numbers 20:12, the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore, you shall not bring this congregation to the land which I have given you.” Unbelief was a great transgression. In Numbers 27:14, it is called rebelling against God.

What aggravated Moses and Aaron's sin was that it was done publicly. All the congregation was there before them. In public, they disbelieved God, dishonored God, and disobeyed God, indicating to the people that God would grudgingly supply their needs and that they must fetch the water by smiting the rock. Our Lord said, “You failed to sanctify me. You failed to honor me.” Therefore, God said, “You'll die. You won't go into this land.” It was disobedience and dishonor that brought death to Moses and Aaron.

Applications: Avoiding the Death Wish

When we are willfully disobedient and willfully dishonor God, we have a death wish. We may not express it, say it, or even think about it, but we have a death wish. Our Lord says, “He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.”

Let me make a couple of applications. The first should be obvious: there is a sin unto death. Today I have listed three of them: unbelief and provocation, rebellion and defiance, and disobedience and dishonor. These are sins to avoid at all costs. If you commit them, you have a death wish.

The second application is this: those who hate Christ have a death wish. When we think of death, we normally think of physical death, but death may come in many forms and shapes. There is an economical death, a familial death, a spiritual death, a physical

death, an ecclesiastical death, and an eternal death. What did our Lord say? “All they that hate me love death.”

If you disobey and dishonor God in your finances, if you are rebellious and defiant and will not submit to the truth of God, if you disbelieve Him and provoke Him, you will die financially. There is an economic death. The same thing is true in our family. When wives do not treat their husbands as God tells them, husbands do not treat their wives as God tells them, children do not treat their parents as God tells them, or parents do not treat their children as God tells them, “all they that hate me love death.” You will die familiarly.

What about a church? When a church disbelieves God, provokes Him, rebels, is defiant, disobeys, and dishonors, it dies. You remember what our Lord told the church in Revelation? “Thou hast a name that thou livest, but thou art what? Dead.”

God can kill us physically, and He can kill those who are without Christ eternally. All who refuse to bring their lives into conformity with the Word of God have a death wish. “He that sinneth against me,” said Christ, “wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.” There is a sin unto death, and many people have a death wish without ever verbalizing or thinking about it. Their actions request that God kill them, in one way or another, because of their lives, disobedience, sins, rebellion, and defiance.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us.

Teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. Lord, enable us not to be full or filled with unbelief and provocation. May we not be rebellious and defiant, disobedient and dishonoring to Thee. Rather, may our lives be brought into conformity to Your Word. Father, those who obey Thee have a life wish and a life desire. May we love life and love Thee, for Thou hast said that Thou hast come to give us life and to give it more abundantly. May we embrace Thee, embrace Thy truth, and live as unto Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Stephen Dill Lee

Introduction: The Charge and Its Meaning

It is always a privilege to share not only the truth of God's Word, but the truth of history as well. Tonight I am bringing a message on the charge to the Sons of the Confederate Veterans. Practically all of us are able to recite the charge, or at least part of it. It was given to us by Lieutenant General Stephen Dill Lee in 1906. The problem is that the charge, whenever we have heard it read or recited it, tends to become like many hymns and sermons: we hear the words and say the words, but we never really stop and think of the implication of those words.

For instance, we call it the charge. Even the word charge itself is very important. In Genesis 2:16, the Bible says the Lord God commanded the man, and the word commanded literally means to put under an oath or to give a charge to. Further in the Bible, the word charge refers to a watch, a sentry post, and certainly deals with a guard station. It is used like that not only in Genesis, but throughout the book of Numbers as well. So when you talk about a charge, you are talking about an oath, a sentry post or a watch station. Webster in his 1828 dictionary gives sixteen definitions of

the word charge, but when you wade through them and get to the very word that would apply to what Lieutenant General Stephen Dill Lee gave the Sons of the Confederate Veterans, you find this description: "That which is enjoined, committed, entrusted, or delivered to another, implying care, custody, oversight, or duty to be performed by the person entrusted." In other words, the biblical definition and Webster's definition are exactly the same.

Thus, when you and I repeat the charge or hear it read to us, we are acknowledging that there is a duty, a responsibility, a care and an oversight being laid upon us. We, like Adam, have been placed under a commandment. We have a watch, a duty station, a sentry post. Every time that charge is read, we are renewing and affirming our responsibility. Lieutenant General Stephen Dill Lee, commander of the United Confederate Veterans in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1906, charged us with these words: "To you, sons of Confederate veterans, we submit the vindication of the cause for which we fought."

"Your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name, the guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, the perpetuation of those principles he loved which also made him glorious and which you also cherish."

Now, the phrase we usually attach, "remember it is your duty to see that the true history of the South is presented to future generations," was not in General Lee's original speech. However, later in that convention, the essence of that statement, as I shall share later, was brought out by Commander Owens.

General Stephen Dill Lee was born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1833. He was a highly respected Confederate officer, rising to the rank of Lieutenant General. After the war, he settled in Mississippi and became a very successful farmer, but he also became president of Mississippi Agriculture and Mechanical College and served in the state legislature. He was committed to the preservation of history, especially southern history. He was one of the original organizers of the United Confederate Veterans and served as its president from 1904 to 1908. In 1906 he addressed the Confederate Veterans in New Orleans, Louisiana, and from this address we derive the charge read at every meeting. He delivered that charge there and died on May 29, 1908 in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

It is not my intent tonight to deal with the life of General Lee—he was distantly related to General Robert E. Lee, was the youngest Confederate general, and many good things could be said about him—but to deal with the charge. So let's begin with the vindication of the cause.

The Vindication of the Cause

The first line in this charge is a duty station of vindication. Listen to what he said: "To you, sons of Confederate veterans, we submit the vindication of the cause for which we fought." Some have used the word commit or submit, but the thought is exactly the same. So he is telling us that our first responsibility, our main duty, is to vindicate the cause for which we fought. Now, you've got to ask yourself, what in the world does the word vindication mean? How can we vindicate our cause if we do not know how to vindicate? Once again, if you'll go to Webster's 1828 Dictionary, you'll find an interesting thing on the word vindication.

By the way, it's from the Latin vindiciae, and some of you will remember Hubert Languet's book, Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos, a vindication of liberty against tyrants, and Deo Vindice, which is God vindicates, which is the motto. But notice these definitions of vindication. Listen carefully because they're going to be important later. Number one: the defense of anything or a justification against denial or censure—notice—against objections or accusations, as the vindication of opinions of a creed, the vindication of scriptures against the objections and cavils of infidels. The very first thing he says is it is a defense of anything, a justification of something. So when we begin to vindicate, what are we doing? We're justifying, defending against all libelous accusations, against all censures. We're taking a stand. Here's the second part: the act of supporting by proof or legal process, the proving of anything to be just, as the vindication of a title, claim, or right. Now stop there just for a moment and think. If you vindicate something, you're not only justifying and defending, now you're offering proof of what you say. You are giving hard evidence. And then number three: defense by force or otherwise, as the vindication of the rights of man, the vindication of our liberties, the rights of our conscience. So when you put those three things together, to vindicate is to defend or to justify.

So how do we vindicate our ancestors? We defend them and justify their attitudes and their actions. We do not let people libel them and censure them. We do not come up and say, "Well, whatever you want to say against our forefathers is fine." No, no. We take a stand and say we will not allow that to happen. And then the second part is once we begin to defend and justify them, we now have some proof that we hand over and say, here is the right position. Here is an original truth or a reliable truth. Here is where you can find it for yourself. You know, the Bible says something like this in Titus, chapter 1, verses 10 and 11. Paul said that there are many unruly and vain talkers, deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped. Listen carefully. You cannot stop mouths with, "I believe" or "I think" or "in my opinion," or "this is what we've always held." No, no, no. You must offer evidence, hard, reliable evidence of sources that are either original or reliable. So it doesn't just come to we're going to defend verbally. We must have something to refute those false accusers and those libelous individuals. So let's ask, where's our documentation? Where's our source material?

How do we back up our position? How do we prove that our forefathers were indeed honorable and godly and righteous men and were fighting for a just cause? And then the third thing is this. Vindication means defense by force or otherwise. Well, certainly we don't expect anyone to engage in fistfights. You understand that. But one must be ready to fight in the sense that if you do not have enough conviction to stand for your forefathers and to stand for what you believe, or if you cut and run at the very first sight of pressure or persecution or resistance or political correctness, then you're never ever going to vindicate the cause for which our forefathers fought. In other words, there must be a determination to stand. There must be a determination to say, look, I know the truth. I have the proof of that truth and I'm not going to give in and I'm not going to give up and you're not going to scare me away and you're not going to scare me off. I'll stand right here. And let me tell you something. You know, the truth of the matter is, in reality, we're still fighting that war. You say, how can you say that? If you would examine the principles for which our forefathers fought in 1861 to 1865, it's those principles for which we are fighting right now in

2006. Do you remember what President Jefferson Davis said? Let me tell you. Here's what he said. "The principles over which we fought will be fought for again on another battlefield and in a different venue." The truth of the matter is, the war still goes on. Well, you could say the war has ended. Well, the war may have ended, but the fighting goes on, and we must fight until we have our liberty, our freedom, and our independence as it has been bequeathed to us by the Founding Fathers. Have you ever considered the alternative? Failure to fight means that we bequeath to our children and our grandchildren nothing less than slavery and servitude to a centralized bureaucracy that has and is destroying everything that our ancestors held dear. Once again, let me give you a quote. Listen to Jefferson Davis. He said, "Never teach your children to admit that their fathers were wrong in their effort to maintain the sovereignty, freedom, and independence which was their inalienable birthright." Let me just stop there just for a moment. Let me repeat this. "Never teach your children to admit that their fathers were wrong in their effort to do what? To maintain their sovereignty, freedom, and independence which was their inalienable birthright."

He goes on, "I cannot believe that the causes for which our sacrifices were made can ever be lost, but rather hope that those who now deny the justice of our asserted claims will learn from experience that the fathers built it wisely and the Constitution should be constructed according to the commentaries of those men who made it." You can never deny the principles for which our forefathers fought. If you're ashamed of those, you're destroying everything that our founding fathers built upon.

What was President Jefferson Davis doing? Vindicating. Vindication means that we defend, justify, document, and fight for the principles for which our forefathers bled and died. It was General Lee who said, "To you, sons of Confederate veterans, we submit the vindication of the cause for which we fought." But what is it that we are to vindicate? He said, "the cause for which we fought." How can we vindicate the cause for which we fought if we don't even know the cause for which we fought?

Why did the South fight? Was it really over the slavery issue? You respond, no. A thousand times, no. Prove to me that it was not over the slavery issue. Where is your documentation? Where is your evidence? Where is your proof? If you're going to begin to refute the false charge that the war was over slavery, where in the world would you begin? How can you dispel the false, slanderous, and libelous charge that we just fought to have our slaves?

One of the simplest ways to dispel that false charge is to produce a copy of the proposed 13th Amendment that was signed by President James Buchanan and publicly endorsed by Abraham Lincoln. On March the 2nd, 1861, the United States Senate passed a proposed 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which had already passed the House on February the 28th, 1861, which would have prohibited the federal government from ever interfering with domestic servitude within the confines of any state. You can find that in the United States House of Representatives, 106th Congress, second session, document numbers 106 through 214. Here is Article 13, the proposed 13th Amendment: "No amendment shall be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give to Congress the power to abolish or interfere within any state with the domestic institutions thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said state."

Two days later, Abraham Lincoln in his first inaugural address promised to support the amendment, even though he believed the Constitution already prohibited federal interference with Southern slavery.

Here are his words, I am quoting him. He said, "I understand a proposed amendment to the Constitution has passed Congress to the effect that the federal government shall never interfere with the domestic institutions of the states, including that of persons held to service. To avoid misconstruction of what I have said, I depart from my purpose not to speak of particular amendments, so far as to say that holding such a provision to now be implied constitutional law, I have no objection to it being made express and irrevocable." Abraham Lincoln says, "I already believe that's constitutional law, but I have no objection to this amendment being passed and being made express and irrevocable." If the South was only going to fight

over the slavery issue, why would we go to war over something that's being handed to us on a silver platter? March the 2nd is over a month before the war broke out at Fort Sumter. If it was over slavery, why did we fire the shot at Fort Sumter? Why didn't we just say, well, praise the Lord, let's just keep our slaves and be buddy buddies again? No. The truth of the matter, it was not over slavery. What was the cause for which the South fought? There are a number of causes. Were there theological implications in that war? Yes. The clergy in the South viewed it as a war of atheism against Christianity. Were there economic issues? Yes. Look at the tariffs where the North was demanding 40, 50, and 60 percent. Were there sectional differences? Yes. Were there political implications? Yes.

States' rights were there. Limited government was there. Taxes were there. All of these played a very important part. But the point is this: If we're going to vindicate something, we must have the answers. We must know the cause for which we fought. And it was not over slavery. I admit it may have become an issue later on, but it certainly was not the issue at the beginning. It was none less than General Grant himself who said if he found out that the war was to over slavery, he would resign his commission and lay down his sword and join the South side. President Jefferson Davis said this, and I love this quote. Every time I read this, I just close my eyes and I can hear him say it. "Our cause. What is it we're to vindicate? Our cause. "Our cause was so just, so sacred that had I known all that has come to pass, had I known all that was to be inflicted upon me—and boy, he did suffer—and all that my country was to suffer, all that our posterity was to endure, I would do it all over again." "Let the rising generation learn what their fathers did and let them learn the still better lesson to emulate not only the deeds but the motives which prompted them. May God grant that sons ever greater than their fathers may rise whenever their country needs them to defend their cause." "Nothing fills me with deeper sadness than to see a southern man apologizing for the defense we made of our inheritance and denying the great truths on which all of our institutions are founded."

"To be crushed by superior force, to be robbed and insulted were great misfortunes. But these could be born while there yet remained manhood to assert the truth and a proud consciousness in the

rectitude of our course. When I find myself reviled by southern papers as one renewing dead issues, the pain is not caused by the attack upon myself, but by its desecration of the memories of our fathers and those of their descendants who stayed in defense of their rights, their lives, their property and their sacred honor."

Did you hear what Jeff Davis said? The cause for which we fought was so right and so just and so sacred. Knowing all that he had suffered, all the South had suffered, if I had to do over again, I would do it all over again. How many times have you been told by people when you're talking about this? "Well, you're beating a dead horse. That's a dead issue. The war is over." No, dear friend. We cannot desecrate the memories of those men who gave everything they had—their life, their liberty, their sacred honor—to defend that which they knew was absolutely right.

Preservation of the Confederate Soldier's Character

Secondly, General Lee charges us with the preservation of the Confederate soldier's character. Listen to what he said. "To your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name. The guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, the perpetuation of those principles he loved and which made him glorious and which you also cherish." Chaplain Randolph McKim, Confederate chaplain, said this, "We must forever do honor to our heroic dead. We must forever cherish the sacred memories of those four terrible but glorious years of unequal strife."

We must forever consecrate in our hearts the old battle flag of the Southern Cross. Now listen, the people that forgets its heroic dead is already dying at the heart. And we believe we shall be truer and better citizens if we are true to our past." Not a tremendous statement. "The people that have forgotten their heroic dead are already dying at heart." We have been given the charge to protect the Confederate soldier's good name. Do you realize the Bible says in Proverbs 22 and verse 1 that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches? And what does the charge say? Listen carefully: "To your strength to your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name." Here's a legitimate question. How much strength do you have? How much time do you have to defend

your ancestors? How far are you willing to go to stand for what they fought and died for? The Bible says in Proverbs 24 and verse 10, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." You see, it's easy to stand when the sailing is smooth, it's a little more difficult when the pressure is on and persecution arises and there's danger and there's sacrifices to be made. What about all the back-breaking, sweat-breaking and heart-breaking times when it seems like everyone else is against us and the politically correct crowd are on the throne? Let me give you a quote from Jeremiah 12 and verse 5. Here's the question that God asked. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with the horses?

And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustest, they weary thee, how wilt thou do with the swelling of Jordan?" What's he asking? If you can't keep up with those running on foot, what are you going to do when the enemy comes against you with horses? If you cannot take the little rivulet, what are you going to do when Jordan over-swells her banks? It is to your strength—not part of it, not pieces of it, but all of it—that should be given to the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name. The South was right, the North was wrong, and our Confederate men were honorable, brave and courageous men. The question must be asked: How do we preserve their character? He said it's to your strength that you're to preserve the Confederate soldier's good name. How do we preserve their good name? Is it just simply by defending them when they are attacked? Certainly that's part of it. But General Lee tells us particularly how we are to defend the Confederate soldier's good name. He goes on: by emulating their virtues and the perpetuation of his principles. Emulate means to copy, to follow, to take for yourself, to do the same thing as. So how do we preserve the Confederate soldier's good name? He says we do this by emulating, copying their virtues and also by the perpetuation of the principles. In other words, the very thing that the Confederate soldiers believed, we believe.

The very thing they taught, we teach. The very thing they prayed for, we pray for. In other words, General Lee is saying: to preserve their character, we too must be like them—honorable, virtuous, courageous, honest, hardworking, righteous, and above all, biblical in our theology and Christian faith. I don't care how hard you try,

you cannot discover the greatness of General Robert E. Lee or Stonewall Jackson or Richard Stoddard Ewell without discovering it in their Christianity. Why did General Lee say that duty is the most sublime word in the English language? Because that's exactly what Scripture says. In Ecclesiastes 12:13, the Word of God says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his commandments. That is the whole duty of man." The Ten Commandments show duty to God and duty to man. Duty sums up our responsibility to God and man. So to perpetuate their principles, we must emulate their virtues. How can we pass these principles and virtues to the next generation if we do not embrace them ourselves? How can we expect our children and grandchildren to believe in self-defense, states' rights, limited government under a constitutional republic? How can we expect them to resist tyranny, wickedness, and oppression if we will not? General Lee says the way to preserve the Confederate soldier's good name is to emulate their virtues and perpetuate their principles.

Protection of True History

In other words, the way to preserve their character is to follow in their steps, believe as they believed, act as they acted, and inculcate the same virtue in our children and our grandchildren. Are you ashamed of your Confederate ancestors? Of course not. Would you be ashamed if your children or your grandchildren grew up to fight honorably against wickedness, tyranny, and corruption? Would you be ashamed if they grew up to stand for states' rights, self-defense, limited government, and were labeled politically incorrect? Would you be ashamed? Mildred Lewis Rutherford, a wonderful scholar many of you read, told of a young man who came to her and said, "I had a grandfather who fought for the South. But I'm sure that now he would have understood and been ashamed of the fact that he fought for the South." Rutherford looked at the young man and replied, "Most probably, he'd be more ashamed of a grandson who didn't know diddly squat about history." That's a fact, folks. That's a fact. Thirdly, the protection of their true history. During his speech to the United Sons of Confederate Veterans in 1906, General Lee said this. Two paragraphs.

He says, "I urge monuments to the Confederate soldier. First, for the sake of the dead. But most for the sake of the living. That in this busy industrial age, those stones to the Confederate soldier may stand like great interrogation marks to the soul of each beholder. Are you also ready to die for your country? Is your life worthy to be remembered along with theirs? Do you choose for yourself this greatness of soul? not in the clamor of the crowded street, not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng, but in ourselves, our triumph and defeat."

He continues, "To you brave people of the South, to you true-hearted Americans everywhere, to you world-conquering race from which he sprung, to all men everywhere who prize in man the manliest deeds, who love in man the love of country, who praise fidelity and courage, who honor self-sacrifice and noble devotion, will be given an incomparable inheritance, the memory of our Prince of Men, the Confederate soldier."

He said, it's to you. That which has been passed is a tremendous inheritance. It is the memory of the Confederate soldier. That for which he fought and bled and died. The courage that he demonstrated. The righteousness of the cause. His fidelity. His faithfulness. To you, sons of Confederate veterans is this inheritance given.

It was Commander Thomas Owen who spoke after General Lee spoke and he said this, he spoke of the work which the sons had undertaken and pledged them to carry it forward and hand down the burden to posterity so that the descendants of those who fought the valiant fight for the cause would look

upon them in their true light as men who fought for principle and for the Constitution of the United States and not as rebels." Where did that latter phrase come from? "To you is to be given the protection of the true history of the South"? It came from Thomas Owen. He said, this is the burden passed upon you because we want everyone to know our men were fighting for that which is right.

I have a message entitled, "Who Were the Rebels?" Although the South has been called rebels, in reality, we were not the rebels. The North was the rebels. Rebellion can only be to lawful authority; if

there's no lawful authority, then it's resistance, not rebellion. The South was not rebelling against the Constitution. The South wanted the Constitution as it was intended by the Founding Fathers. It was the North who hated and despised the Constitution and wanted to destroy it and the Union of the States.

Application: Standing for Principles Today

Commander Owen said we need to remember the Confederate soldier as men who fought for principle and for the Constitution. The guardianship of their history has indeed been bequeathed to each of us. The question is this: How will you guard it? How will you handle that sentry post of duty? How do you handle that watch position? Let me tell you, and I'm going to give you a biblical principle. I've heard people say all the time, "Brother Weaver, I'd die for Christ." My response is this: If you will live for him now, you will die for him when the going gets tough. If you will stand for truth and righteousness now, while it's easy, you will stand later when persecution is hot and heavy. If you give up now, you'd certainly give up a whole lot easier then.

Ask yourself this question: If I had the opportunity to give sacrificially, to stand patriotically, and to vote particularly for a return of those principles, would I do it? Would you be willing to sacrifice our welfare system and centralized bureaucracy for states' rights, limited government, the right of self-defense, and for liberty and freedom under God as our founding fathers intended? Would you vote that way? Would you stand for that? Would you give sacrificially for that?

Listen again: "To you, Sons of Confederate veterans, we submit the vindication of the cause for which we fought. Your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name, the guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, the perpetuation of those principles he loved, which made him glorious. And I hope this is true of you, which you also cherish." Do you cherish those principles?

Conclusion and Prayer

Let's pray. Thank You, Father, for Your love and Your grace to us. Thank You for this tremendous charge, and I ask that You would help us to understand the implication of each one of those words and bring our lives into conformity. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

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CHAPTER 4

7 Sanctification & Sexual Purity

Introduction and Scripture Reading

We are bringing to a close this series on sanctification and sexual purity. First, we look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, beginning with verse 1:

"Furthermore, then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles who know not God, that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter—or the matter—because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we have also forewarned and testified. For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit."

In 2 Samuel chapter 11, verse 27, referring to the death of David and Bathsheba's child, we read: "And when the morning was passed, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. And the Lord sent Nathan unto David, and he came unto him and said unto him, 'There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up, and it grew up together with him and with his children. It did eat of his own meat and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and his own herd to dress for the wayfaring man that was coming to him, but took the poor man's lamb and dressed it for the man that was come to him.'"

David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, because he had no pity." And Nathan said unto David, "Thou art the man."

The Lord said unto David through Nathan:

"Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, 'I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul. And I gave thee thy master's house and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah. And if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with a sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart out of thine house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.' Thus saith the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of the sun.'

"For thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun." And David said unto Nathan, "I have sinned

against the Lord." And Nathan said unto David, "The Lord hath also put away thy sin, thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die."

Review of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7

In 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 1 gives us the exhortation. Paul exhorts us concerning sanctification and sexual purity. The practical necessity is that we must be taught, and the personal application is that we must actually apply the truth. There is also the progressive reality: we are to abound more and more.

In verse 2, we have the explanation. Paul taught by the commandments of God; he was explaining, expounding, and applying. In verses 3, 4, and 5, we have the exposition: "For this is the will of God," an affirmation, "even your sanctification," an explanation, "that ye should abstain from fornication," a negation. Verses 4 and 5 provide a clarification: "that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God." We then considered the elaboration, beginning with the willfulness of this sin.

He says, "that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in the matter," and so it is a willful act, a defrauding. The word defraud means to go beyond and to take that which does not belong to you. Secondly, in verse 6, we saw the elaboration concerning the warning against the sin: "because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we've also forewarned and testified." He tells you why He is the avenger of all such. Why? Because "God has not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness."

The Wickedness of Despising God's Word (v. 8)

Now we have the elaboration in verse 8 as to the wickedness of the sin, because he says, "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who also hath given unto us his Holy Spirit." This is a very important point. Whenever we reject the Word of God, we are not rejecting man, but God. When we despise the preached Word of God, we are not despising the preacher who gave those words, but

God who gave those words. He says very clearly, “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God.”

Whenever you and I violate any of God’s law or any of God’s word—not only in the area of fornication or sexual impurity, but in any area where God has clearly and definitely spoken—we are despising God. That is an awesome and horrible thought: when we sin, we are despising God.

Case Study: David's Sin and Its Effects on God

Look back in your Bibles to 2 Samuel 11–12, because here is a case study of exactly what Paul has been exhorting, explaining, expounding, and elaborating against. We all know that David committed adultery with Bathsheba. Let us take the time to point out four main areas of how sin affects God.

Keep in mind that we will return to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. He said, “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God.” So let us ask the question: How does sin affect God? I am not interested right now in how sin affects us; we covered some of that last week. We all know that the wages of sin is death. But how does sin affect God, and especially the sin of sexual impurity? First of all, in 2 Samuel 11 and verse 27, we see that sin is a displeasure to God: “And when the morning was passed, David's sin fetched her to his house, and she became his wife and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.”

Sin Is a Displeasure to God

The word displeased literally means to be evil in His eyes. In other words, the thing that David had done was bad, wicked, and evil in the eyes of God.

The same word is used in the book of Numbers 23 and verse 34. Many of you know the story about Balaam. Balaam was a false prophet. God had told Balaam not to go, but Balaam went anyhow. You remember how the angel stood with his sword drawn to kill Balaam in the way. The ass crushed his foot against the wall, and Balaam began to smite his ass and cursed him, saying, “Why in the world are you doing this to me? Why I’ve never mistreated you?” The

ass answered him. He spoke back. Then God opened Balaam's eyes, and Balaam saw the angel standing there with his sword drawn, ready to kill him.

So the Bible tells us in the book of Numbers chapter 22 and verse 34, "And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, 'I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me.'" Then he said, "Now therefore, if it displeaseth thee, I will get thee back again." In other words, if it is evil in your eyes, if it is bad in your eyes, I am going to get myself back again. I will turn back.

The same word appears again in 2 Samuel 11 and verse 25. This is when David was planning on murdering Uriah the Hittite. "Then David said unto the messenger, 'Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee,'" or be evil, bad, or wicked in thy sight. "'For the sword devoureth one as well as another. Make thy battle more strong against this city, and overthrow it, and encourage thou him.'" When David was planning on murdering Uriah, he told Joab, "Don't let this thing displease you. Don't let it be evil. Don't let it be wicked in your sight."

In 1 Chronicles 21:7, the Word of God says, "And God was displeased with this thing, therefore He smote Israel." God was angry with David's numbering of the children of Israel, and therefore God smote them. He was displeased. In other words, God saw it as evil and wicked.

Then, in Isaiah 59:15, we read, "Yea, truth faileth, and he that departed from evil maketh himself a prey, and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment." Note this: the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him.

Most of us have never, ever considered the fact that our sin does have an effect upon God. When David sinned, the very first thing Scripture says is that God was displeased. That is, God saw it as bad, evil, and wicked. Now let me show you the applications from the fact that sin is a displeasure of God. What does it do?

First of all, it teaches us that God sees all of our actions and all of our attitudes. The Bible teaches us that God is absolutely omniscient. God sees all. God knows all. When sin displeases God, the very first

thing it teaches us is that God sees all of our actions and that God sees all of our attitudes.

Proverbs 15:3 says, “The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good.” This is such a powerful verse: the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. He sees all of our actions, and He sees all of our attitudes.

Do you remember what the Bible says in Hebrews 4:13? “But all things are open and naked unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

In other words, you might can hide from man, but you can't hide from God. You might can hide from the preacher, but you can't hide from God. You might can hide from your parents, but you can't hide from God. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. There is absolutely no way that anyone can escape the omniscience of God. David says in Psalm 139, "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising." David said, "I can't even sit down without You knowing it. I cannot stand up without Your knowledge of it." He says, "Thou understandest my thought afar off." I cannot even think without You knowing what I think. "Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. There is not a word in my tongue, but lo, Thou knowest it altogether."

God knows not only what we have spoken, but what we would speak and what we could speak. "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain unto it." No one can escape the omniscience of God. No one saw Cain murder Abel, but God did. No one saw Achan take that wedge of gold, those shekels of silver, and that goodly Babylonian garment, but God did. No one else heard Sarah laugh derisively in her tent, but God did. No one else may have seen David with Bathsheba, but God did. You and I cannot escape the omniscience of God.

Mel Trotter was an old drunk. He had stolen the shoes from off his baby and was taking them to pawn so he could get something to drink when he passed by a gospel meeting. He heard some singing,

and it caught his attention. He went in, listened to the preaching, and God converted Mel Trotter. God saved him and changed him.

Mel Trotter began a mission for drunks and derelicts. One of his aims after conversion was to get people to live right. In that area of the city there was a lover's lane, and Mel Trotter would go down there at night and preach to discourage the young people from fornication. Some moved and left, others laughed, and others ignored him. Finally, he had an idea: he installed on Lover's Lane a big neon, flashing eyeball. On it were the words, "Thou, my God, seest me." Within a week's time, Lover's Lane was desolate. No one would go there because they were reminded that God saw their actions. If something displeases God, it means that God must see it and take notice of it.

Secondly, for our sin to displease God teaches us that God weighs all our actions and attitudes. Proverbs 16:2 says, "All the ways of man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits." What is the Lord doing? He is weighing our attitude and our action. Do you remember what He said to Belshazzar? "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." God not only sees what we do; God weighs what we do.

Thirdly, this teaches us that our actions and our attitudes have a definite impact upon God. God is no impersonal being. God is not just force—“May the force be with you.” No, that is hogwash. God is not just force or some abstract concept. God is a being, and our attitudes and our actions have an effect upon Him.

There is a difference between God's intrinsic glory and God's ascribed, or external, glory. In the strictest sense of the word, there is not one thing that can be added to God, nor one thing that can be done to God, because God is God and He is absolutely perfect.

Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 16. This is a Messianic psalm. The psalmist says, “Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” This psalm speaks of Jesus Christ. In fact, if you skip down to verse 10, you see it plainly: “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou

suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." This passage is applied to Jesus Christ repeatedly in the New Testament.

Go back to verse 1. Christ is speaking to the Father: "Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee." The perfection of the work of Jesus Christ, and the righteousness and holiness of that work, added nothing to the Father, because the Father is already perfect. What did that work do? Verse 2 says that it extended not to the Father, but to the saints that are in the earth and to the excellent, in whom is His delight. If the perfection of Jesus Christ added nothing to the Father, then very clearly we can add nothing to the Father, and nothing that we do can detract or subtract from the Father, for the Father is perfect.

That is His intrinsic glory. But the truth is, God also has an ascribed or an external glory, and what we do and do not do affects that. That is, we can dishonor God, or we may honor God. We may dishonor Him by rebelling against Him and sinning against Him, or we may honor Him by obedience. So there is this external or this ascribed glory. I am talking about the ascribed or the external glory, not about His intrinsic glory. For in and of Himself, nothing can be added to God.

In Isaiah 43, God says, "Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices." Now look what God says: "But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins. Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." How did men make God serve with their sins? By the fact that they were claiming to be His people, while at the same time dishonoring Him, transgressing His law, and rebelling against Him. They were affecting His external or His ascribed glory. He was saying, "You've made me to serve with your sins."

In 1 Kings 3, verses 9 and 10, Solomon says, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad, for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" And the speech pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. So God can either be pleased or displeased by our attitudes. He can either be pleased or displeased by our actions. So God is no impersonal God.

While we cannot add to Him nor take from Him, it is true that He has an external glory, an ascribed glory. We may either honor Him or dishonor Him. We may either please Him or displease Him. When David committed fornication, when David committed adultery, and when David committed murder, it displeased the Lord. David was not rendering unto God the glory that God so richly deserved.

Secondly, sin is a despisement of God. We read in 1 Thessalonians 4, "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God." Look at what God tells David in 2 Samuel 12: "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandments of the Lord to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart out of thine house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."

Has it ever dawned upon you that when we are rebellious, disobedient, and transgress the law of God, we are not only displeasing God, but despising Him? It is not merely a despisement of His Word; it is a despisement of God Himself.

Sin Is a Despisement of God

The Hebrew word for "despise" in verses 9 and 10 is bazah. It literally means to despise, disdain, contemn or condemn, think scorn, or think as vile. In other words, we are treating God as a vile, wicked thing.

Leviticus 26:43 says, "Thus is the land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lie desolate without them." That is, He is going to send the people into captivity. "And they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred or hated my statutes." God says that our sin is not merely a displeasure to Him; it is indeed a despising of Him, and a despising of His Word. This is the truth to consider as we turn to Numbers 15.

Numbers 15, verse 29: "You shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel and for the stranger that sojourneth among them.

But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people."

God says that the man who sins deliberately, presumptuously, purposely, and premeditatedly shall be cut off from among his people. Why? Verse 31 says, "Because he despised the word of the Lord, and had broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him." Our sin, then, does not merely displease the Lord; our sin is a despisement of the Lord. It is a despisement of His word, and it is a despisement of His person.

Do you remember the story of Esau and Jacob? Jacob was sodding pottage when Esau came in from the field and said, "Feed me some of that same red pottage." Jacob said, "I will if you'll give me your birthright, sell me your birthright." Esau said, "Man, I'm at the point of death, what gives this birthright to me?" He was not about to die, and certainly Jacob was not going to let him die. But the Bible says, "Thus he despised his birthright."

He treated it as scum, as vile and contemptuous, as something wicked and worth nothing. Do you realize that when we sin against God, we treat the Word of God and God Himself as worth absolutely nothing? We treat Him as vile and contemptuous.

The Bible is the written Word of God, and Jesus Christ is the living Word of God. Now, returning to the Bible as the written Word of God, 2 Timothy 3, verse 16, says, "For all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished in every good work." All Scripture is given by inspiration. Theopneustos: all Scripture is exhaled, breathed out of the mouth of God.

John 1, verse 1, says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 says, "...and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The Bible is the written Word, and Jesus Christ is the living Word. In John 12, verse 48, Jesus Christ puts these two things together: "...He that rejecteth Me..."

"...and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him in the last day, even the word which I have spoken." You cannot have one attitude toward the Word of God and a different attitude toward Christ, nor one attitude toward Christ and a different attitude toward the Word of God. When you sin, you are despising not only the Word of God, but Christ Himself, who is the living Word. That is why God says sin is not merely a displeasure; it is indeed a despisement of Him. Therefore Paul wrote, "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit." When a child of God sins, it not only displeases God; it is a despisement of God.

Sin Is Disobedience to God

Thirdly, look in verse 13. The third truth is this: sin is a disobedience to God. David said in verse 13, “David said unto Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’” Note, “I have sinned against the Lord.” David, the king of Israel, had much more character than Clinton, the President of the United States. At least David had grace enough to say, “I have sinned against God.” David sinned against other people as well, but David realized that his primary sin was against God. That is why, when he confessed his sin in Psalm 51, he said, “Against thee and against thee only have I done this iniquity and done this sin in your sight.” So David said, “I’ve sinned against the Lord.” Do you realize?

No one can displease the Lord and despise the Lord without disobeying the Lord. They all go together. If you obey God, you are not displeasing Him and you are not despising Him. But when you disobey God, you are displeasing Him and you are despising Him.

Look in 1 Kings 13 and verse 21: “And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, ‘Thus saith the Lord, forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandments which the Lord thy God commanded thee.’” Then he pronounces a death sentence upon this prophet who disobeyed God. Notice again: “Thus saith the Lord, forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee.” So when he disobeyed, he also displeased and despised at the same time.

Adam's original sin, in Romans 5:21, is called disobedience: "Through one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Through one man's disobedience. Israel's sin in Nehemiah 9:26 and Romans 10:21 is called disobedience. In fact, all of the activity of the unconverted is known as disobedience. Read Ephesians 2:1-3, Ephesians 5-6, and 1 Peter 2:7. All sin is disobedience. Why?

If I asked, "What is sin?" and you were to give me a biblical definition and a biblical site, I hope you would go to 1 John 3:4: "For sin is the transgression of the law." Sin is the transgression of the law.

When you read the word lawlessness in the Bible, the word is anomia. The Greek word nomos is law. When you put an alpha on the front, anomos or anomia means no law, or lawlessness.

When we sin against God, we not only displease Him, despise Him, and disobey Him; we become lawless and act as if God had not even spoken. Let me ask you a question. Suppose there is a subject so near and dear to you that you are passionate about it. You begin telling me all the ramifications of this subject; your heart is in it, your soul is in it. As you tell me its importance, I merely turn and walk away, totally ignoring you, acting as if you were not even speaking. Would you be insulted? You most certainly would. Would you be upset? Yes. Well, that is exactly what God is saying.

There is another word in the Bible: transgressor. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have transgressed the way of the Lord. We have turned everyone to our own way." In fact, Christ was numbered with the transgressors. To transgress literally means to walk over or to walk on. Before you can sin against God, you must first ignore God and act as if He has not even spoken; then you walk over, transgress, step on, and stomp down His law to do what you want to do. Sin, then, is a displeasure to God, a despisement of God, and disobedience to God. If you will skip down to verse 14, sin is a direct reproach upon God.

Sin Is a Direct Reproach upon God

Let us go back to that ascribed or external glory. God tells David through Nathan, "Howbeit because by this deed thou hast given

great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." What? "By this deed, thou hast given great occasion of the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." In other words, what David did was a direct reproach upon God and encouraged God's enemies to blaspheme. The word blaspheme means to scorn, to give occasion to despise, and to provoke.

I want you to think about this, and I will illustrate it. I was up in Sharpsburg, and Pastor McCurry said to me, "Have you seen what the Germans have put on the internet?" I said, "No, I haven't." He said, "Let me pull it up and show you." Here was a cartoon in a parade with Bill Clinton in the back seat of his limousine. It was a convertible; the top was all open.

In front of him was a statue, a scaled-down model of the Statue of Liberty. Bill Clinton, with a wicked grin on his face, had his arms under her arms, with his hands on her breast.

A lot of people think that is funny, but I think it is absolutely pathetic that the world is now laughing at America because of our fornicating, wicked, ungodly president. Sin is a direct reproach upon God. What Clinton has done has brought reproach upon America. What we do when we sin is bring reproach upon God. Not only that, we bring reproach upon God's people. We let the wicked say, "Well, if that's a Christian." We bring reproach upon God's church and upon our family.

While slandering God and God's people, insulting God's church and our families, sin also encourages the wicked. It makes them laugh, encourages them to scorn, and encourages them to ridicule. Turn with me to Ezekiel chapter 36 and see how serious God is. We are talking about the fact that sin is a direct reproach upon the Lord.

"Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 'Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings. Their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured out my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols for which they had polluted it.'"

God says, "I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries. According to their way and according to their doings, I judged them." And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name. When they said to them, "These are the people of the Lord and are going forth out of his land." But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, wheresoever they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, "Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the heathen, whether you went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them, and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." So what did God accuse his people of doing?

Their sin was a direct reproach upon Him. They went to the heathen and said, “We’re God’s people.” And God says, “Look at the way you live. Look at how you turn to idols. Look how you disobeyed Me. You are nothing but a direct reproach upon Me, and you’re encouraging the heathen in their wickedness and in their sin.”

This is why church discipline is so important and so clearly taught in the New Testament. Evil, wickedness, and sin, if they are not repented of, must be dealt with. Otherwise, a direct reproach is brought not just upon the church, but upon the Word of God and God Himself. So when Paul lays out his exhortation to sexual purity, explains it, and expounds it, he says, “I want to leave you with this. If you reject what I’m telling you, if you despise what I’m telling you, I want you to remember, he that despiseth, despiseth not man, but the Lord.” Our sin is not only a displeasure, a despisement, and a disobedience; it is also a direct reproach upon God. What an encouragement not to sin and to be holy and godly. What child of God wants to embarrass God, dishonor Him, displease Him, despise Him, and disobey? Not a real child of God.

Conclusion and Prayer

Sometimes we do these things without thinking. We need to repent of them and make things right. What will be a great deterrent to

sexual impurity? Think on these things: if we despise, we are not just despising man; we are despising God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

Let us pray. Father, we are thankful today for Jesus Christ, for His love, grace, and mercy. We pray that You would indeed make us holy and godly and keep us pure. May we not sin against Thee, displease Thee, despise Thee, disobey Thee, or bring direct reproach upon Thee. May we be obedient and live holy, godly lives. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 5

The Beard, its Historical and Biblical Significance

The Biblical and Historical Significance of the Beard

Introduction and Personal Testimony

There is a wealth of material in the Bible concerning the biblical and historical significance of the beard. In Leviticus 19:26–28, God tells the people, “You shall not eat anything with the blood, neither shall you use enchantment, nor observe times. You shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard. You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you. I am the Lord.”

Leviticus 21 refers even to the priests: “And the Lord said unto Moses, speak unto the priests, the sons of Aaron and say unto them, there shall none be defiled for the dead among his people, but for his kin that is near unto him, that is for his mother and for his father, for his son, for his daughter, for his brother and for a sister or virgin that is nigh unto him, which hath no husband. For her may he be defiled, but he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people,

to profane himself. They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh. They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God. For the offerings of the Lord made by fire and the bread of their God they do offer. Therefore they shall be holy."

Many years ago, I preached this message on the biblical and historical significance of the beard. It has basically been around the world, and I have received comments concerning it from Italy, South Africa, England, and Wales. It is one of the most listened-to messages on SermonAudio and one of the most downloaded messages. Since I preached it many years ago, it has been copied, plagiarized, and, in some instances, vilified. I have seen it with another pastor's name attached to it, which I really do not mind. In the instance I am thinking of particularly, he added just one or two little things.

I showed Alice and said, "Look at this, look at this." It is on the internet, by the way. He even used an illustration that I have. Since he did not know me, he said, "There is in Pastor John Weaver's office…" I said, "Well, that's fine, too." I certainly do not mind the message being preached, re-preached, or reclaimed by anyone.

I am somewhat like Paul: I rejoice that at least the Word of God is being preached and getting out. A number of preachers and other people have asked me to redo this message. Let me begin by telling you what I am not going to do.

First, I am not defending my beard. It does not need defending. The fact that I have had it for over forty years demonstrates and proves that I genuinely believe what I am going to share with you. None of my grandchildren has ever seen me without a beard, and probably my children do not even remember me without one unless they occasionally glance at a picture. So I am not defending the beard.

Secondly, I am not trying to bind my convictions upon your conscience. I pray that the Word of God will be opened to you, that you may see the truth of what I am preaching. But it is your responsibility to study the Scripture for yourself and search out the

matter. The Bible tells you in Proverbs 25:2, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.” It is your responsibility to search out this matter according to the Word of God.

Thirdly, listen carefully: I am not saying that a man without a beard is less holy than one who has a beard. Moreover, I am not saying that a man with a beard is more holy than a man without one. But I am going to show you shortly from Scripture what a beard does indeed represent and why I believe, especially from Scripture, that a godly man should have a visible beard.

Judging Righteously and Avoiding Misconceptions

Fourthly, I am not asking you, the men particularly, to grow a beard for my benefit. I would never encourage anyone to do anything that they do not understand that is based upon the pure Word of God. I am not the Lord of your conscience. Jesus Christ is the Lord of your conscience, so you are to be bound by His Word and not my word. But I would ask you to submit to the Word of God and to be easily entreated, as James says, to the engrafted Word of God, which I believe will give you a great deal of understanding upon this subject, and you will find out that, in reality, a beard is not only a very important matter; it is a biblical matter, according to Scripture.

Now, let me tell you what I am going to ask you to do at the very beginning. I am going to ask you to do that which our Lord commands in John 7 and verse 24, when He says, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Unhappily, most people judge by appearance. They do not judge by righteous judgment or just judgment.

If you want to go by appearance, I could take you down to our local post office, and I could take you through the FBI's most wanted list, or the pictures they have there of the men that they want, and I could show you where probably 90% of the wanted men on the FBI list are clean-shaven. I could conclude then, based upon that, that anyone who is clean-shaven is a criminal and is probably wanted by the FBI. Now, you would say that would be an erroneous judgment. It would. But I would be judging by appearance. You see what I am

saying? Our Lord says that we are not to judge by appearance. We are to judge just and righteous judgment.

There is another objection that appears in relationship to that. In times past, there were individuals who lived the hippie lifestyle and wore their beards, and oftentimes they were dirty, unkempt, and certainly rebellious. Just because someone abuses or misuses a truth does not mean that we disobey or disregard the truth. For instance, we do not cease observing the Lord's table just because the Roman Catholics have turned it into a perpetual mass. We do not cease baptizing people just because there are some who teach baptismal regeneration. We do not discard marital sex just because there are adulterers and fornicators. You do not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Just because someone abuses and misuses a truth does not mean that the truth is wrong. It just means that they are wrong for abusing and misusing the truth. In fact, the truth of the matter is that there is a growing trend, especially among young people, to go for what is known as the Kung Fu or the Kojak look, which in our day is referred to as the unisex look. If you go into some of the larger department stores, you will usually see bathrooms designated for gentlemen and ladies, and then unisex. I can point you to several down in Florida. Sometimes they will say, “family bathroom.” A family bathroom? I get tickled because I go into these bathrooms and see a sign that says “baby changing station.” I stayed there all day and tried to get somebody to change babies with me, but nobody would take mine. Who wants to change babies? I know what it means, but I get tickled every time I see that sign.

What is happening is this: since the unisex look is going around, men are looking like women and women are looking like men. Certainly, we ought to condemn that, because it is condemned in the Word of God. There is indeed a biblical significance to a beard and to a man looking like a man.

Second, understand that a man who has a full beard is not prohibited by the Word of God. In fact, the beard is commended in the Word of God, and there are definite regulations laid down in the Scripture concerning the beard.

You see, the biggest taboo—and it was not so much today as it was back in the 1970s, when I first preached this message—was a bearded pastor. In other words, back then pastors simply did not have beards. Everybody was basically clean-shaven, is what it amounted to. Even the university I originally attended in the 1960s did not allow beards. I have known Christian men who were not accepted in other churches because they had a beard, and Christian men who were turned down for teaching positions because they had a beard. So the taboo I am pointing out is not God's taboo, but man's taboo.

Thirdly, I would like to encourage you to think biblically today. We claim to be Christians, and we claim to love the Word of God, yet for all practical purposes, most professing Christians neglect the Word of God. We neglect to study these subjects. I will guarantee you, I could probably count on one hand the number of preachers, and especially the number of Christians, who have ever looked in the Bible to see what the Bible has to say about a beard. Very few.

In fact, I will tell you how I came to preach this message. One of my pastor friends, whom I have known for years, had a beautiful head full of gray hair and a beautiful gray beard. I looked at him and asked, "Why did you grow a beard?" His response was, "Because of what the Bible teaches about the beard." I asked, "Well, what does the Bible teach about the beard?" He said, "I'm not going to tell you. If you want to know, go home and study it out for yourself." That is exactly what I did, and that is why I came to preach this message years ago.

Listen to what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 10, verses 4 and 5. The Apostle Paul said, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds," and, "casting down imaginations and every high thing or every high thought that exalted itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." That means if we think about a beard, government, education, money, family, or whatever we think about, we are responsible to bring every thought captive to Jesus Christ. We are responsible to think biblically. Most people have never thought upon this subject at all.

I have heard someone offer this objection: “Well, I just don’t know if it’s right or wrong for a man to have a beard.” My response is this: that is not really for you and me to decide, because God has already determined that. He created men so that they may have beards. The question, in reality, is not whether it is right or wrong to have a beard, but whether it is right or wrong to shave. You cannot shave it off; it keeps growing back.

You have to keep shaving over and over. Years ago, one person—a woman—said to me, “Your beard is offensive to me.”

If someone says beards are offensive, my first response is that they need to take that up with God, because God gave beards to men.

Secondly, biblically, to offend someone means to encourage that person to do what you are doing without having your knowledge. The Greek word is skandalon for “offend,” found in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8. It is where we get our English word scandal.

I smiled and said to the only woman who ever said that to me, “Dear lady, my beard could not possibly offend you, because you could not do what I am doing, even if you had my knowledge.”

When I brought that brief series on Romans 14 about avoiding conflicts between Christians, I pointed out that when someone says, “Your beard offends me,” what they really mean is, “You need to shave it off; I do not like it.” That’s what they really mean.

In other words, “You please me.” Anyone who has a problem with a beard, or with any other biblical subject, has a problem not only with God but with the law of God. How can I say that? The Bible says in Psalm 119:165, “Great peace have they that love thy law and nothing shall offend them.” If you are offended, obviously you do not love the law of God, because He says, “Great peace have they that love thy law and nothing shall offend them.” Clearly, then, there is a problem between someone and God’s Word. Men have beards because that is the way God has created us.

You must ask yourself: Why did God give men beards? Why do men have beards? You must also ask: What does a beard signify? A beard truly is both a public and a private testimony. It is a public testimony when it is grown, neatly trimmed, and groomed, because those who see it will often ask about it. It is also a private testimony

when the man who has it looks into the mirror and remembers why God gave him that beard, what it means, and what his life should be. I will try to show you five things. First, I want to share with you the history of beards.

The Beard in History

Before considering the biblical passages, I wish to point out that history may be studied and analyzed simply by looking at the rise and fall of the beard. Historical truth is important. It is not equal to biblical truth, yet all history is God's history, for God is the God of history. History reveals either the lack and ignorance of, or the knowledge and importance of, biblical truth upon civilization. You can look at civilization and see that when the Word of God is supreme, certain things transpire. When the Word of God is not supreme, and rationalism and man's thoughts are supreme, certain things transpire as well.

An interesting tidbit of history is that Egypt was about the only country in antiquity that forbade a man to have a beard or to let his beard grow out. The Egyptians disliked facial hair. They shaved themselves and forced their slaves to shave. Any biblical scholar will tell you that Egypt is a type of the world. In the Bible, Egypt has always represented contrariness to God, to His law, and to His people. Egypt, then, by and large, was a nation of beardless men.

Yet when you look at the sculptures, and even at an ancient picture, of Pharaoh, you will see that Pharaoh always had a sharp, pointed goatee. But if you look very carefully at the picture or sculpture, you will see a very thin line going up his cheeks and over his ears. The beard was a fake beard; it was simply tied on.

There is a reason for that. Even women sometimes in Egypt had these fake beards. For instance, Queen Hatshepsut dressed like a man and is shown with a fake beard. In Egypt, the fake beard was used either for celebrations or public appearances. There was also a religious significance attached to it, because the beard was considered a divine attribute of the gods to the Egyptians. Thus, when the pharaoh, the queen, or some other public person donned a fake beard, they were showing and demonstrating that they

identified themselves as a living god. The Pharaoh had that fake beard tied on so he could identify himself with deity.

Another interesting thing is that, if you study the history of Egypt, you will find that Egypt's enemies are always depicted with beards. Maybe that is another reason the Egyptians found facial hair disgusting: they identified it with an enemy of Egypt. In Greek and Roman mythology, the false gods are usually presented as beardless. Some were presented with beards, that is true, but in their paintings and sculptures, the false gods were usually beardless.

The Council of Carthage was a church council in the early 200 AD, discussing problems in the church. One problem was immodest dress. We might wonder how they could have problems with immodest dress in 200 A.D. Today we see miniskirts, shortened halters, and tank tops, and we say, “We’ve got problems with immodest dress.” But they had problems with immodest dress in 200 A.D. also.

Listen carefully to what the Council of Carthage called modest dress: “Concerning a modest dress, any man who appears in church with long hair and a clean shaven face will be excluded from communion, for that man is immodestly dressed.” A man with long hair and a clean-shaven face was considered immodestly dressed. If you came to church that way, you were to be excluded from communion.

Tertullian, one of the early church fathers, wrote his treatise on the beard and said that its purpose was to keep lust down. I have heard some women say, “Well, he looks better without a beard.” He may, but Tertullian said one of the reasons for the beard was to keep lust down. The fourth Council of Carthage, in 398, said, “The clergyman shall not let his hair grow, neither shall he remove his beard.”

Many of the ancients believed and taught that God gave man a beard to distinguish him from a woman, and therefore that it was wrong to antagonize nature by shaving. Clement of Alexandria, one of the early church fathers, probably wrote more against shaving than any other Christian writer combined. Clement called the beard “man’s natural adornment” and said, “it is never permissible to

remove it." He also said, "the hairs of the beard have been numbered." He warned his readers, "to seek beauty in hairlessness is sheer effeminacy if done by men."

He continued, "God planned that the woman be smooth skin, taking pride in her natural tresses, the only hair she has as the horse in its mane. But man, he adorned like the lion with a beard." Women, therefore, were like horses with their long, fluid manes, while men were like lions with the beard. "This then is the mark of the man, the beard."

By this he is seen to be a man. It is older than Eve. It is the token of superior nature. It is therefore unholy to desecrate the symbol of manhood, hairiness. Isn't that amazing? So when the barbarian hordes invaded the Roman Empire, they had long hair and clean-shaven faces. It was at this particular time, when Rome fell, that Christendom as a whole became what you and I would call Romanized.

The barbarians then began to infiltrate the church, and all of these pagan rites and rituals were incorporated into the church. At that particular time, since the barbarians had long hair and clean-shaven faces, that is basically what began to happen. The men had long hair and clean-shaven faces. It is interesting that, if you look at the early pictures of Christ, even pictures today, Christ is always pictured with long hair and a beard.

Have you ever wondered about that? Let me tell you dogmatically, in no uncertain terms: our Lord did not have long hair. How can I say He did not have long hair? Well, first of all, you have to remember that when our Lord was alive, Caesar was on the throne. The style was known as the Caesar cut or the Caesar style. It was short hair on the top of the head and never even touched the ears. That was the style during our Lord's lifetime. Moreover, specifically, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 14, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him."

The Greek word for shame is atimia, which literally refers to that which is vile, shameful, dishonorable, ignominious, disgraceful, and a reproach. If it was a reproach, shameful, and vile for a man to have long hair, you have to remember that Jesus Christ was and still is the

sinless Son of God. He would never, ever have done anything that would have been vile and reproachful. Moreover, the Bible tells us in Isaiah 42 and verse 21, concerning Christ, “The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake. He will magnify the law and make it honorable.” Therefore, if the law says it is unnatural and a shame for a man to have long hair, I can assure you Christ never had long hair.

Christ is also presented in these pictures and works of art as having a beard. That is because you could not deny that it was very plain and clearly said, not only in Scripture, but in truth and history as well. I want to point out a glaring inconsistency. Have you ever thought about this? Have you ever considered the glaring inconsistency of people who literally worship the Lord Jesus Christ, who had a beard, and then turn around and try to say it is wrong for a man to have one?

It was during the sixteenth century that one of the great awakenings occurred, known as the Reformation. Bloody Mary, Queen of England, was on the throne, 1516 to 1558. In 1517, Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the castle church door in Wittenberg, Germany, and began to teach and preach that the just shall live by faith. If you go back and look at some of these men as they began in the Reformation and afterward, you will notice short hair and beards. Isn't that amazing?

On the other hand, during the Renaissance, when man's rationalism prevailed, men had long hair and clean-shaven faces. The same was true in France during the Enlightenment, when so many were agnostics, atheists, infidels, and deists. They had long hair and clean-shaven faces. During the War of Northern Aggression, however, the pictures of godly men consistently show them with beards: Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, Jeb Stuart, James Longstreet, and Richard Stoddard Ewell. In some old pictures of the Confederate veterans, 90 percent have beards.

Beards were worn from that period basically until World War I, when German liberalism began to infiltrate this society. Then beards began to disappear, and once again long hair and clean-shaven faces came out. Thus, you can study civilization with the rise and fall of a beard.

A few men down through the ages cried out against clean-shaven faces. In 1528, William Tyndale was one of them. He pointed out that shaving is borrowed of the heathen and proclaimed that the shaven nation had put Christ out of his room.

Shakespeare said this in his play Much Ado About Nothing: "He that hath a beard is more than a youth, and he that hath no beard is less than a man." In 1859, an Englishman, James Ward, wrote a book, The Defense of the Beard, a pamphlet listing eighteen reasons why men were bound to grow a beard unless a man was indifferent to offending the Creator and good taste.

The next year, a work was published with this title: Shaving, a Breach of the Sabbath and a Hindrance to the Spread of the Gospel. In this book, the author described the beard as a divinely provided chest protector. They had long beards coming down here. One sentence from that book reads: "beard shaving and the common use of the razor, an unnatural, irrational, unmanly, ungodly and fatal fashion among Christians."

One of the more humorous quotes concerning the beard came from Tom Robbins: "Of the seven dwarves, only Dopey had a clean-shaven face, and that should tell us something about the custom of shaving."

The bearded races of mankind have commonly held the beard in high honor. It is a sign of full manhood; the very young male or eunuch was beardless, and the bearded woman was considered a witch. Whenever you see pictures of Adam, or God, or the prophets, kings, and nobles, they are always presented with beards. The Semites—those descended from Shem—the Hebrews and Israelites have always held a beard in great esteem. Among the Hebrews and Israelites, "it is more injurious for anyone to have his beard cut off than among us to be publicly whipped or branded with a hot iron."

Many men in that country would prefer death to such a punishment. The wives kiss their husbands' beards, and the children their fathers' when they come to salute them. The men kiss one another's beards reciprocally when they salute in the streets or return from a journey. They say that the beard is the perfection of the human face, which would be more disfigured by having it cut off

than by losing the nose. They admire any fine beard and envy those who have one. “Pray do but see that beard,” they cried, “and the very sight of it would persuade anyone that he to whom it belongs is an honest man.” If anyone with a fine beard was guilty of an unbecoming action, they would say, “What a disadvantage is this to such a beard? How much such a beard should be pitied?” To correct anyone's mistakes, they would tell him, “For shame on your beard. Does not the confusion that follows such an action light upon your beard?” If they entreated anyone, or used an oath affirming or denying anything, they would say, “I conjure you by your beard, or by the life of your beard, to grant me this,” or, “By your beard, this is or is not so.”

They further said, by way of acknowledgement, “May God preserve your blessed beard,” or, “May God pour out his blessings upon your beard.” In comparison, they would say, “This is more valuable than anyone's beard.”

If you understand these sayings, you begin to understand a lot of Scripture. Remember the dishonor that David did to his own beard when he was escaping from King Saul and fled to Achish, king of Gath, the Philistine. When David understood that some of the men were saying, “Well, is not this David? Did not he kill all of our men?” he changed his behavior before them and feigned himself mad in their hands, scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard (1 Samuel 21:13). He was clawing at the door, foaming at the mouth, and letting the spittle run down upon his beard. Then Achish said unto his servants, “Lo! You see, the man is mad.”

“Wherefore then have you brought him to me? Have I need of madmen that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?” David’s actions—scrabbling and clawing at the door and letting spittle fall upon his beard—persuaded Achish that he was crazy, because Achish understood that no man in his right mind would ever defile his beard.

When David was driven from the throne by Absalom, he had taken Mephibosheth, Saul’s grandson, into his home. Mephibosheth was lame upon his feet, and Ziba, his servant, lied about him, saying,

"Mephibosheth said, 'Well, the kingdom of my father is going to be returned to me this day.'" But when David returned after Absalom and his army were destroyed, Mephibosheth came down to meet the king. In 2 Samuel 19:24 we read, "And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes from the day the king departed until the day he came in peace." Mephibosheth was mourning over the travesty done to David, and the proof that Ziba had lied was that Mephibosheth had not dressed his feet, trimmed his beard, or washed his clothes. The beard was always a cherished and sacred thing.

Israel brought the beard safely out of the bondage of universally shaven Egypt. It was the outward and visible sign of a true man. To rudely touch the beard was to cruelly assail a man's dignity. Children and other kinfolk might gently touch it as a sign of love. A fugitive might reverentially raise his hand to it while praying for succor or help. He who placed his own hand upon his beard and swore by it bound himself by the most solemn of oaths; to violate that oath would render him infamous among his fellow men. To touch the beard in allegiance of love established peace and trustfulness between two parties.

Remember when Joab went to Amasa? He took him by the beard to kiss him and said, "Art thou in health, my brother?" It was a pretended act of love and friendship, but Joab had an ulterior motive. Scripture says, "And Joab said to Amasa, 'Art thou in health, my brother?' And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand."

"So he smote him there under the fifth rib and shed out his bowels to the ground and struck him not again, and so he died." So what did Joab do? Joab was following a customary greeting, which was a sign of trust and friendship, of respect and devotion. He took Amasa's beard, and he was going to kiss that beard, and he asked for God's help, "my brother." Amasa was so concerned with the compliment, in all probability, getting ready to return that compliment, because he would in turn then kiss Joab's beard. He took no notice of the sword in Joab's hand, and Joab then literally murdered him and

shed out his blood. In other words, it was during this act of kindness and respect and honor, and he did not suspect the deadly blow from Joab, nor did he suspect his treasonous attitude toward him.

By the way, may I remind you: maybe this will shed light on this Scripture for you. In Luke 22 and verse 28, Judas had already told the people, "Him who I kiss, hold fast." When Judas came to betray Christ, Christ said, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Judas would have gone up to take our Lord's beard and kiss it. Undoubtedly, Judas had learned this method from Joab, who was a traitor and a deceiver.

The Beard as an Assumed Fact in Scripture

Secondly, I want you to note that the beard is an assumed fact and reality in Scripture. When I say the beard is an assumed fact, an assumed fact is something that is taken for granted. It is a presuppositional truth. It is something like the doctrine of God. The Bible never, ever tries to prove the existence of God. The Bible just assumes it. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." Never does the Bible try to prove there is a God; it just assumes it. Likewise, in the Bible, there is no definite command for men to grow a beard. However, it is assumed that a man will have a beard because that's the way God created him, and his facial hair is going to grow. Moreover, there are divine regulations concerning the beard in the Bible. The Hebrew word for beard is zaqan, and the Hebrew word for elder is zaqen. So the elders in Israel got their names from their beard; hence, the word actually means "a bearded one." So you have seen the history of the beard and the fact that the beard is an assumed fact. Let me give you, thirdly, the value of the beard.

The Hebrews always looked upon the beard as the glory and pride of man. They would say that the glory of the face is the beard. It was a badge of honor, dignity, and manhood. Anyone wishing to express the value of an object would say, "It is worth more than a man's beard." When a woman wanted to express the value of something, she would say, "It's more valuable than my husband's beard." Men often took oaths by their beards.

The Value and Meaning of the Beard

Every one of us knows the story of the three little pigs and the big bad wolf. What did he say? “I’m going to huff and puff and blow your house down.” And what did the little pig say? “Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin.” What was he doing? He was taking an oath. I realize pigs do not have beards, but that was a fairytale. Historically and biblically, men took oaths based upon their beards. Even Shakespeare, in his plays, has men swearing and taking oaths by their beards.

Proverbs 20:29 says, “The glory of young men is their strength. And the beauty of old men is their gray head.” The ornament of young men is their strength, and the honor of old men is the gray hairs; and here it is in the Hebrew, the hanging gray from the chin. It was not necessarily talking about the gray hair up here. Some of us are not able to have gray hair up here, but it does refer to the hanging gray from the chin.

Whenever you see a man with a beard, you ought to consider several things. First, to pull it is to inflict an indignity. I have had my beard pulled only once that I can remember, and anger flew over me instantaneously—not that I wanted to be angry, but the individual did not realize what he was doing. I quickly said, “No, you never, ever pull a man’s beard. It’s an indignity; it’s an insult.”

Secondly, to have it forcibly cut off or mutilated is a symbol of disgrace, which the Bible shows. Thirdly, to remove the beard voluntarily is a sign of mourning, which they occasionally did in the Bible. To stroke the beard is a preface to uttering seemingly important words, or words of weight and value. To kiss the beard is a sign of great respect, honor, friendship, and brotherly love.

You cannot understand a number of verses in the New Testament if you do not understand this simple fact. For instance, 1 Corinthians 16:20 says, “All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.” In Romans 16:16, Paul again says, “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.” First Thessalonians 5:26 says, “Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss,” and 1 Peter 5:14 says, “Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

How do you greet the brethren with a holy kiss? It was customary, not only in the Old Testament but in the New Testament, when brethren met, out of great respect and affection, to take each other's beard and kiss the beard. Yes, I have had men kiss my beard. One man did it particularly every time he saw me. He understood this passage, and I was not offended by it. In fact, I thought, Well, at least he understands the Scripture.

I am simply saying that you cannot understand the value of the beard unless you understand these Scriptures. That is how men normally greeted each other in the Old Testament and the New Testament—by kissing each other's beards. Now let me show you how valuable a beard was.

In 2 Samuel 10:1-7, the Scripture says: "And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. Then said David, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father shewed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon. And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it? Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away."

When they told David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed. The king said, "Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return." When the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, they hired the Syrians of Beth-Rehob and the Syrians of Zobah, twenty thousand footmen, the king of Maacah with a thousand men, and twelve thousand men of Ishtob. David sent Joab and all the hosts of the mighty men. The children of Ammon came out and put the battle in array. David wiped out the Ammonites and the Syrians.

But the point is this: Hanun took David's diplomats, shaved off one half of their beards, cut their garments off, and exposed their buttocks. The Ammonites knew exactly what they were doing when

they mutilated the Hebrews' beards. They knew it was a deadly insult. Notice how times have changed. When the diplomats sent word to David that their beards had been mutilated, their garments cut off, and their buttocks exposed, David said, "Tarry ye at Jericho until your beards be grown." That was the insult. To put it bluntly, it did not concern them that their fannies had been exposed.

What embarrassed and humiliated the Ammonites was that their beards had been mutilated and defiled. It was an insult. You can buy more clothes, but you cannot grow a beard overnight. David then destroyed the Ammonites and the Syrians. Here was a whole war fought over beards.

Moreover, in 1764, a pretender to the Persian throne named Karim Khan sent ambassadors to Mir Mahanan, the Prince of Bengaravik on the Persian Gulf, to demand tribute. In return, Mir Mahanan cut off the ambassadors' beards. Karim Khan was so enraged that the next year he went with a large army, assaulted and took the city and almost the entire territory, avenging the insult. To touch the beard was therefore an insult unless it was done as an act of friendship and a token of respect.

Beards have been so valued through the years that it would be interesting to look not only at pictures of the Bible prophets, but also at preachers down through the years. Most old preachers, up until the turn of this century, had beards. Charles Haddon Spurgeon had a very beautiful beard, and he demanded that all his deacons have beards. You could not be a deacon in Spurgeon's Tabernacle unless you had a beard. A picture in my library shows Spurgeon and all his deacons, every one of them well bearded.

Why did God give men beards? What does a beard signify? First, the beard represents and signifies life unto God. Only living men can grow a beard. In the Bible, it was the leper who had to be shaven. Leprosy is representative not only of sin and death, but also of the judgment of God. God smote Miriam with leprosy when she rebelled against Moses, and He gave Gehazi, Elisha's servant, the leprosy that Naaman had because of his sin and deceit.

This is the law of the leper in Leviticus 13:29–30, 33: "If a man or a woman have a plague upon the head or the beard, then the priest

shall see the plague, and behold, if it be in sight deeper than the skin, and there be in it a yellow thin hair, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a dry scall, even a leprosy, upon the head or the beard. And he shall be shaven, and the scall shall he not shave, but the priest shall shut him up, that had the scall seven days more."

If a man had leprosy, he had to be clean shaven. Leprosy is a sign of sin and death and the judgment of God. When you get to the healing of a leper in Leviticus chapter 14, once again, when he came and presented everything that God demanded, he had to be clean shaven. Then, when the priest pronounced him clean, only then was he allowed to grow his beard.

So the beard, first and foremost, is a symbol of life unto God. It signifies life. We are free from sin, free from death, and free from the judgment of God. Secondly, a beard signifies submission unto God.

A beardless man, or one with a clean-shaven face, indicated that he was a slave or in submission to man. To be deprived of a beard was, and still is in many places, a badge of servility, a mark of infamy that degraded a man from the ranks of men to those of slaves and women. Joseph wore his beard while he was in prison. He was sold into slavery. But when Pharaoh called him to stand before him, Joseph shaved his beard. Why? Because he was a slave, and he was going to appear before Pharaoh. It would have been an insult and a dishonor to Pharaoh for him to have stood there with his beard. Genesis 41:14 says, "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon, and he shaved himself and changed his raiment, and he came unto Pharaoh."

Why did Joseph shave himself? Because to be beardless signified that you were in submission to man, that you were a slave. Since Joseph was a slave, he took the mark of a slave. Genesis 41:40 records Pharaoh's words to Joseph: "Thou shalt be over my house according to thy word, shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou." In other words, Joseph was subject to Pharaoh; Pharaoh was his master, even though everyone else would be Joseph's servant.

Biblically speaking, then, the beard indicates that men are in submission to God. I am not saying that Joseph was out of the will of

God when he shaved his beard, because God certainly put him there. I am saying that, in the context of what happened, changing a man's beard indicates that he is in a position of servitude or submission to man. Nor am I implying that simply because a man has a beard, he is in subjection to God. Unhappily, that is not true. Multitudes of bearded men throughout the world are in rebellion against God and the Lord Jesus Christ, lost in their sins. The beard, in reality, signifies submission unto God; men who have beards but are not submissive to God are betraying the symbol of what the beard represents.

It is like long hair on a woman, which symbolizes submission to her husband. Plenty of women have long hair but are not submissive to their husbands; their long hair does them no good at all. Their lives betray the symbol.

Thirdly, a beard indicates separation unto God. In Bible times, when a man looked at another man's beard, he knew whom that man worshiped and who was his God. A beard basically told you who your God was. Pagans usually marred their beards.

When God says, “Thou shalt not mar the corner of your beard,” this is the corner of the beard. To mar the corner would be to have what we would call the goatee. The pagans did that in honor of the sun, the moon, the stars, and the heavenly bodies. Herodotus, one of the early historians, said that the Arabs were accustomed to shave the hair around the head and leave a tuft standing on the crown in honor of Bacchus.

In Leviticus 19:26–28, God says, “You shall not eat anything with the blood, neither shall you use enchantment nor observe times. You shall not round the corners of your head, neither shall thou mar the corners of thy beard.” Why? In Leviticus 21:5–6, the priest was not to make any baldness upon his head, neither were they to shave the corners of their beards.

The Hebrews had full beards, and that full beard represented separation to God. When you saw a man with just the goatee and the mustache, it meant in Bible times that he was a worshipper of Bacchus, Baal, Astarte, or one of the heavenly bodies. The beard in Scripture represents life, freedom, and separation with God.

But the symbol is nothing without reality. When God's people act like the wicked, God will punish them exactly like the wicked. God indicates that He will cut or mar the corners of their beard. In Jeremiah 9, Jeremiah 25, and Jeremiah 49, when God speaks of those who are in the utmost corners, He is not talking about geographical places, but about the beard. God says, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them that are circumcised with the uncircumcision, Egypt and Judah and Edom and the children of Ammon and Moab and all that are in the utmost corners that dwell in the wilderness, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart." They were circumcised physically and in the covenant, but they were acting like the heathen. God says, You want to act like the heathen? Fine, I'll judge you like the heathen. You find the same thing in Jeremiah 25:23 and Jeremiah 49:32: "I will mar the corners."

The Beard as a Sign of Blessing, Mourning, and Judgment

Fourthly, the beard signifies the blessings of God upon His people. Psalm 133 says, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments, as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life evermore." When Aaron and his sons were anointed with that oil, it was poured on their heads, ran down their beards, and continued even to their garments. Thus, a well-groomed and well-cared-for beard indicates the blessings of God upon that individual and his dedication to the service of God.

The Beard and Divine Judgment

The beard was plucked out, shaved off, or left unattended only during a time of great mourning and calamity. We have already pointed this out in Mephibosheth. When Job lost everything he had, including his ten children, Job 1:20 says, "Then Job arose and rent his mantle and shaved his head and fell down upon the ground in worship." In Ezra 9:3, when Ezra saw the sin of all the people, he

said, “And when I heard this thing, I ripped my garment and my mantle and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard and sat down astonished.”

In light of this, consider what happened to our Lord Jesus Christ. When God was going to bring judgment upon His people because they refused to repent and return to Him, He indicated that great judgment by telling them that He was going to shave their beards. Years ago, when I first grew my beard, which has been about forty years now, I would have nightmares. I would wake up clean-shaven and not know how I had become clean-shaven. I am serious; I would wake up with chills because I did not know what had happened. Why would that affect me, or why should it affect anyone? When God is going to bring judgment upon His disobedient people, He does it under the symbol of shaving their beards. Listen to Isaiah 7:20.

“In the same day, shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired namely by them beyond the river that is the Assyrians, by the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet, and it shall also consume the beard.” What did God say to those people? “I’m going to shave you bald.” Why? Because the beard represents life unto God. It represents submission to God, separation to God, the blessings of God, and dedication to God. But these people refused to repent and surrender to God. God said, “You want to live like the heathen? Fine, I will judge you like the heathen.”

He said in Isaiah 15 in verse 2, “He is going up to Bajeth and to Dibon and high places to weep. Moab shall howl over Nebo and over Medeba. All their heads shall be baldness and every beard shall be cut off.” In Jeremiah 48 in verse 37, God said, “For every head shall be bald and every beard shall be clipped. Upon all the hands shall be cuttings and upon the loins sackcloth.” God said, “I’ll shave you bald.”

In Ezekiel chapter 5 in verse 1, to represent what God was going to do, God told Ezekiel, “And thou son of man, take the sharp knife, listen, take me a barber’s razor and cause it to pass upon mine head and upon my beard, then take the balances to weigh and divide the hair.” Just as Ezekiel shaved his beard, God was going to shave the nation. When God sets forth the severity of His judgment upon His people because of their sin and rebellion, He does so under the

picture and emblem of taking away the beard. The greatest indignity that could be inflicted upon a man is to have his beard plucked out.

It was a sheer and a sure sign of the judgment of God upon him. If you wanted to know what happened to our Lord Jesus Christ, you need to understand this. Isaiah 50 and verse 6 says concerning our Lord, “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” Our Lord gave His cheeks to those who plucked off the hair.

They reached up, took handfuls of the beard, and jerked it out. That had to be excruciatingly painful. But they did not jerk the beard out merely to increase the pain. It was a custom that symbolized a person being under the curse, judgment, and wrath of God: God's shaving you.

Was that not true concerning our Lord, who was our substitute? Did He not bear our wrath and take our punishment? Why was His beard plucked out? To show that He stood as our surety and substitute, suffering the judgment of God in our stead.

One last point: understand the purpose of the beard. God gave beards to men. The question is not whether it is right or wrong to have a beard; the question is whether it is right or wrong to shave. The beard is the distinguishing mark of a man. A bearded man can never be mistaken for a woman. Beards were regarded as sacred ornaments given by God to men to distinguish them from women.

The Purpose of the Beard and Applications

Deuteronomy 22:5 says, “The woman shall not wear that which pertains to the man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are an abomination to the Lord.” Keil and Delitzsch wrote of this verse: “The immediate design of this prohibition was not to prevent licentiousness or to oppose idolaters practices, but to maintain the sanctity of that distinction of the sexes which was established by the creation of man and woman and in relation to which Israel was not to sin. Every violation or wiping out of this distinction was unnatural and therefore an abomination in the sight of God.”

So what Keil and Delitzsch are saying in their commentary is that this verse is directed against any and all who would obliterate or blur the distinctions between the sexes, and idolatry was often associated with unisex or transgenderism. You remember in Acts chapter 19 where Paul got into trouble with the people because they worshiped Diana of the Ephesians and kept shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Diana was represented as a woman with multiple breasts. Why would they put multiple breasts on a statue of a woman? Because that is the distinguishing mark of a woman. But when you look at Diana, she not only has multiple breasts. She also has a beard because that's the distinguishing mark of a man.

And those who worshiped her, oftentimes men dressed like women and the women dressed like men to give sacrifices. Many of the pagans did the same thing. If you look in Greece, if you look in Rome, if you look in ancient Egypt, there was a deliberate attempt to break down the distinction between the sexes. And thus, the ancients believed that the beardless man was an effeminate man. And thus, when the pagans even then made their statue of Diana, they gave her a beard. Lange in his commentary says this, "to destroy the divine institution distinction between the sexes leads to licentiousness, immorality and confusion. Whatever leads to render the male sex effeminate or the female sex masculine is an injury to both." A short haired man might be mistaken for a woman if he had very tender looks. But a short-haired man with a beard could never, ever be taken for a woman.

Herodotus, whom I mentioned earlier, one of the early historians, when the barbarians invaded the Roman Empire, said this. Since the barbarians had long hair and clean-shaven faces, he said, "they had been smitten by a deity and turned into a woman." Isn't that amazing?

Now, let me just make a couple of applications. The first one is this. We cannot deny, disparage, or denigrate any part of the Word of God. All Scripture is inspired of God and is given for our instruction and edification. If there was no importance concerning the beard, why would God not only give regulations concerning it, but why would He use it then as a symbol to express His divine judgment? Very obviously there is something to the beard.

Secondly, there has lately been, for which I'm thankful, a resurgence of the beard. I think that is an indication that men as a whole are growing weary with the effeminacy of our modern-day society. I think there is another implication: men are indeed growing weary of servitude, serfdom, and slavery. Once again, you have to remember that the beard indicated freedom from those things. When men wear beards, they are saying, in essence, “I'm willing, and I want, to be in submission to God, separated to Him, and blessed by Him.”

Thirdly, the beard is to picture our life unto God, our submission to God, our separation to God, and the blessings of God upon us. But the symbol is nothing without the life. I said that the beard is to be a public and a private testimony. I've had innumerable people over the years ask me why I have a beard, and I take the opportunity to explain and answer.

Each time I look in the mirror, see the beard, and trim my beard, I have to think: This beard tells me I'm to be in submission to the one true and living God. The question is, am I? I'm to be separated unto Him, am I? I'm to have His blessings upon me, do I? The beard is important historically and biblically, and there is a reason why God gave men beards.

We need to understand that and be able to apply it. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ for Your help, Your grace, Your mercy, and Your truth. We pray, Lord, that You would teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, and give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

The Vindication of Henry Wirz (Andersonville Prison)

Introduction and Biblical Foundation for Vindication

Open your Bibles, please, to Matthew chapter 10. I will probably be going rather hurriedly this morning because I am going to bring you the message this afternoon. It is almost impossible to do a decent job on this subject within just an hour, so I encourage you to study it even more. I will be bringing a message on the vindication of Major Henry Wirz, W-I-R-Z. Many of you have probably heard of Major Wirz, who was the commandant at Andersonville Prison. A number of years ago, I preached a message on the truth about Andersonville, and I am thankful for the opportunity to preach at his memorial. Although I knew he was an innocent man, I had not really delved into all the facts until I began to study.

I trust that you will understand the importance of vindication, as well as justice and righteousness. In Matthew chapter 10, beginning in verse 23, our Lord said: “But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. The disciple is

not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known."

When you and I hear the word vindication, anyone who has been unjustly accused and condemned would automatically desire vindication. Vindication is a very important subject, especially to anyone who happens to be a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. You do not have to be a member of the Sons for vindication to be important to you. Lieutenant General Stephen Dill Lee, Commander General of the United Confederate Veterans in New Orleans in 1906, gave this charge: "To you, Sons of the Confederate Veterans, we submit the vindication of the cause for which we fought."

To your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name, the guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, and the perpetuation of those principles he loved, which made him glorious and which you also cherish.

Vindication of the cause and defense of the Confederate soldier's good name go hand in hand, because when we vindicate, we actually defend. Any and every individual interested in truth, honor, justice, and righteousness should also be concerned about vindication, because we should abhor injustice. In fact, the Bible says in Psalm 89 and verse 14, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." When you get to Proverbs 21 and verse 3, the Bible says, "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable unto the Lord than sacrifice." Stop and think about that: to do judgment and justice is more acceptable unto the Lord than to sacrifice.

The motto of the Confederacy was Deo Vindice, or "God vindicates," or "Our vindication is of God." It is true that the real, genuine, true vindicator is God himself. But the interesting thing is that God oftentimes allows vindication in time and in history. We are talking about the vindication of Major Henry Wirz, W-I-R-Z. Psalm 7 and verse 10 shows that God does indeed vindicate oftentimes in

time and in history. David proclaims, “My defense is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.”

“God judges the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he, that is the wicked, turn not, he, God, will whet his sword. He hath bit his bow, and made it ready. He, God, hath also prepared for him, that is the wicked, the instruments of death. He, God, ordaineth his errors against the persecutors. Behold he, that is the wicked, travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He, the wicked, made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief, that is the mischief of the wicked, shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.”

God oftentimes vindicates the righteous by destroying the wicked—not every time, but many times. Consequently, we understand that the true vindication of every individual will come at the Judgment Day.

Background of Major Henry Wirz

Captain Heinrich Hartmut Wirz, better known as Henry Wirz, was promoted to major later in the war, so you will sometimes hear him known as Captain Wirz or Major Wirz. He was a Swiss citizen who immigrated to the United States in 1849. He graduated from the University of Zurich and obtained medical degrees from Paris and Berlin. Thus, he was not only a Confederate officer but also a medical doctor. Wirz was badly wounded at the Battle of Fair Oaks in May of 1862, and he lost the use of his right arm.

Since he was unable and unfit for active duty, he was assigned as a clerk to Libby Prison in Richmond. His commanding officer was Brigadier General John Henry Winder, and Winder was so impressed by Wirz that he soon promoted him to the rank of major. Wirz was not only a capable, qualified officer; he was also very intelligent. He spoke fluent English, German, and Dutch. On the advice of General John Henry Winder, President Jefferson Davis decided to send Wirz on a secret mission to England and to France.

When Wirz returned to America, he rejoined Winder, who was then in charge of all the Union prisoners east of the Mississippi. Due

to an increase of federal prisoners, it was decided to build a prison camp in Andersonville, Georgia, sometimes referred to as Camp Sumter. In April of 1864, Winder appointed Wirz as commandant of this new prison camp.

There were only two Confederate officers tried for war crimes after the war was over. One was Major Wirz, and the other was Captain Champ Ferguson. From everything I have read about Champ Ferguson, there is indeed a great disparity between the version of the South and the version of the North. The Northern version said that Champ Ferguson murdered innocent civilians. However, if he did—and I am not defending him if he did—he did it on a much smaller scale than that which was done by Lincoln, Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, and Hunter, and that which they did on a much larger scale. As one person accurately observed, we punish the smaller criminals and elect the larger ones to office. That is usually the way it goes. Champ Ferguson, like Major Wirz, was hanged by the Yankees.

The Charges and Trial of Major Wirz

When the Union Army arrived at Andersonville in May of 1865, it immediately began photographing the emaciated and sickly prisoners. The next month, these pictures appeared in Harper's Weekly, causing considerable anger and calls to the War Department that something should be done about these crimes. It was decided to charge General Robert E. Lee, Secretary of War for the Confederacy James Seddon, and a number of other Confederate generals and politicians with conspiring to injure the health and destroy the lives of United States soldiers held prisoner by the Confederate States. Charges were also to be filed against President Jefferson Davis. In August of 1865, President Andrew Johnson ordered that the charges against all Confederate generals and politicians be dropped.

However, he approved charging Major Wirz with wanton cruelty. Moreover, Major Wirz was charged with a number of murders. He supposedly murdered a number of Yankee prisoners.

There was a major problem with this allegation: all those alleged murdered victims had no names, and none could be verified. In fact, some murders Major Wirz was charged with committing not only

happened before he was appointed Commandant of Andersonville, but even before Andersonville became a prison. Wirz was charged with conspiring with Jefferson Davis to destroy the lives of soldiers in the military service of the United States of America. Several individual acts of cruelty to Union POWs were also alleged. I hate to use the word misfortune, but in the providence of God, Wirz happened to be the only remaining member of the prison staff. Therefore, he was made to answer for all the misery that occurred at Andersonville Prison. Wirz became the victim of public hysteria and a pawn in a plot to implicate President Jefferson Davis in war crimes. After two months of turbulent trial, part of the time Wirz was so sick that he was carried to his own trial on a cot.

He could not really defend himself, and you will understand momentarily why he was so sick. The trial lasted for two months. It was basically a kangaroo court. Afterward, he was convicted on all counts and sentenced to be hanged.

Everything that happened at Andersonville was beyond Major Wirz's control and capacity to correct. He did not intentionally deprive any prisoners, for which there is a great deal of testimony in his favor. Moreover, it is impossible to issue supplies when none are available, or to provide medicine when there is no medicine. As bad as Andersonville Prison was, Northern prisons were much worse. The South did not have the means to provide for its prisoners, soldiers, or civilians. The North did have the means. Yet Southerners in Yankee prisons suffered atrociously. More Southerners died in Yankee prisons than Yankees died in Southern prisons.

Comparison of Northern and Southern Prisons

We always hear how bad it was in Southern prisons, especially Andersonville, but never how bad it was in Northern prisons. Elmira, New York, had a 25 percent death rate during the year it was open; one quarter of all Confederate soldiers confined there died. At Camp Douglas in Michigan, prisoners were deprived of clothing during a Great Lakes winter to discourage escape. During that winter, 3,000 to 6,000 Confederate soldiers shivered and died in gunny sacks with holes cut for their heads and arms.

On July 19, 1866, Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War for the federal government, published a report about prisoners held during the war. The figures in Stanton's report belie the cruelty often associated with the Confederates held in Northern prisons. He did give some statistics: from first to last, the Confederate armies captured and held 270,000 federal prisoners in the South, while the Federal Army captured and held 220,000 Confederates. The Confederates who died in Yankee prisons numbered 26,576; Northerners who died in Southern prisons numbered 22,576. In other words, the Confederacy captured and held 50,000 more prisoners, yet had 4,000 fewer inmate deaths.

At least 12% of the Confederate prisoners died in northern prisons, while only 9% of federal prisoners died in southern prisons. If we are going to talk about how bad it was at Andersonville, we need to talk about how bad it was in all these other Yankee prisons as well.

The Confederacy did not have a war policy that purposely and deliberately designed the maltreatment of Yankee prisoners, while the North did have a policy designed for the maltreatment of Confederate prisoners. As early as May 21, 1861, the Confederate Congress passed a law concerning Yankee prisoners. Here is what the law says:

“All prisoners of war taken, whether on land or sea, during the pending hostilities with the United States, shall be transferred by the captors from time to time, and as often as convenient, to the Department of War, and it shall be the duty of the Secretary of War, with the approval of the President, to issue such instructions to the Quartermaster General and his subordinates as shall provide for the safe custody and sustenance of prisoners of war, and the rations furnished prisoners of war shall be the same in quantity and quality as those furnished to enlisted men in the Army of Confederacy.”

Yankee prisoners in Confederate hands were to have exactly the same rations—the same amount and the same quality—that were issued to Confederate soldiers.

The North, however, had a different policy. The official policy regarding Confederate prisoners was passed by both houses in

Senate Resolution Number 27, which can still be found in congressional records:

"Rebel prisoners in our hands are to be subjected to a treatment finding its parallels only in the conduct of savage tribes and resulting in the death of multitudes by the slow and designed process of starvation and by mortal diseases occasioned by insufficient and unhealthy food and wanton exposure of their persons to the inclemency of the weather."

It was passed by both houses. Major Wirz was unlike Northern officers in that he did not purposefully or deliberately harm any prisoners. Thus, he can be vindicated in a number of ways. That is the message: the vindication of Major Wirz.

Vindication by the Charges Themselves

I cannot do justice to Major Wirz's vindication in an hour's time, but let me give you several things to consider. First of all, Major Wirz is vindicated by the charges against him. First and foremost, he has to be vindicated by those charges because the specifications against him were not only untrue, but unreliable and unable to be proved. It is impossible for him to have committed some of the specified charges. He was convicted under all of them, in spite of the fact that some charges were said to have occurred on specific dates when he was not even at the prison; he was out of the country.

For example, here is specification number six: "On February the 1st, 1864, Henry Wirz did confine and bind a United States soldier, unknown name, and from such torture, he died on the sixth day." On February the 1st, 1864, Henry Wirz supposedly confined and bound a soldier and tortured him until he died. Yet Wirz was not appointed commandant until April of 1864.

The prison at Andersonville did not even accept federal prisoners until February the 24th, 1864. It is impossible for Wirz to have committed a murder on February the 1st because he was not commandant, there were no prisoners there, and he was still in Europe. He had not even come home from his assignment there. Here is specification number 10: "On August the 20th, 1864, Henry Wirz did order a rebel soldier, unknown name, to fire upon a U.S.

soldier, unknown name, inflicting a mortal wound from which he died."

Specification number 13 says: "On August the 3rd, 1864, Henry Wirz, with a pistol called a revolver, did beat and bruise the head, shoulders, and breast of a soldier, a prisoner of war of no name, inflicting mortal wounds from which he died on August the 4th." May I remind you that Major Wirz was a one-armed man? He did not even have the use of his right arm, which means he would have had to beat the prisoner with his left. You let a one-handed man come and try to beat me. I might get shot by someone else, but I believe I could defend myself against a one-armed man.

But notice: he is charged with doing this. Regarding these two charges, the camp records, as well as inmate testimony, prove that during the entire month of August 1864, Henry Wirz was known to be in poor health, convalescing at his home, five miles from the prison. He could not have participated in these events. Why? Because he was sickly and emaciated; his right arm had become infected with gangrene. It was impossible for Wirz to have committed these murders, and the charges against him are false.

When you stop and think that, out of all the allegations against Wirz—of murders and men tortured—there are absolutely no specifications of a name, a rank, or a unit. They are all unnamed. Out of all the thousands of Union prisoners in Andersonville, if Wirz had done this publicly and openly, surely someone not only could have seen it but given a name. But no one did.

We must also consider the legal aspect of corpus delicti. Corpus delicti is a Latin term meaning literally "the body of the crime." It is the essential facts that prove a crime has been committed. The doctrine of corpus delicti requires the state to prove that a crime has been committed. How can you prove that a crime has been committed without a name, without a body, or without a victim?

Moreover, since the war was over, why was Major Wirz tried by a military tribunal instead of a civilian court? So he is vindicated as to the charges against him. Secondly, he is vindicated by the circumstances. Why did the South hold so many prisoners in Andersonville? The answer is that the North refused to allow

prisoner exchanges. They even refused to take their own men back when the South offered to give them their soldiers without an exchange.

Vindication by Circumstances: The Prisoner Exchange

This was not simply a refusal. It was a refusal to honor a document that had been agreed upon, written out, spelled out in black and white, and signed by the North and the South. If Andersonville Prison was designed to hold 10,000 men and held 32,000, why did the prisoners reach such a staggering number? Were we really capturing that many Federal soldiers? Were we really fighting that well? The truth is that the number became so high because the North refused to exchange prisoners. The South not only wanted to exchange the prisoners; it even volunteered, as I said earlier, to give back those Yankee men without exchanges. It was the Lincoln government that refused to accept its own men.

In June of 1864, the Union had ceased exchanging prisoners because it had greater manpower and resources, and believed that exchanges would serve the Confederacy better than the Union. Union Brigadier General Seymour visited Andersonville and other southern prisons. Afterward he wrote: “The southern authorities are exceedingly desirous of an immediate change of prisoners. Their urgency is unbounded.” In other words, we wanted to get rid of them because we could not support them.

He continued: “It is the poorest policy for our government to deliver to them 40,000 prisoners better fed and clothed than ever before in their lives, in good condition for the field, while the United States received in return an equal number of men worn out with privations and neglect, barely able to walk, enjoying their last breath, and unfit to take to the field as soldiers. It is much wiser to leave the prisoners where they are.”

Now, he said that we would be delivering to the South 40,000 prisoners better fed and better dressed than they had been in their entire lives. I have news for you: a number of Confederate prisoners would argue with that. Read the prison documents and diaries, and you will find that Confederate prisoners were reduced to eating rats,

cats, dogs, maggots, and rotten food, while wearing gunny sacks. I do not think that qualifies as well-fed and well-dressed. Read about Point Lookout, Elmira, and Camp Douglas. Read The Immortal 600, written by Muriel Jocelyn. You will be amazed at how Confederate prisoners were deliberately placed under the cannon fire of our own cannon, hoping that it would kill our own men. They were placed there by the North, purposely and deliberately. General Ulysses S.

Grant said concerning the prisoner exchange: “The exchange of prisoners would mean a reinforcement of the rebel army. An exchanged rebel soldier behind barricades and fortifications fighting on the defensive was equivalent to three Union soldiers attacking him.” He added, “If we hold these men caught, they're no more than dead men. As the time of enlistment is over, if we liberate them, we will have to fight on until the whole South is exterminated. It is hard on our men held in southern prisons not to exchange them, but it is humanity to those left in the ranks to fight our battles. At this particular time to release all rebel prisoners north would ensure Sherman's defeat and would compromise our safety here.”

One of the orders issued by General Ulysses S. Grant was written to Edwin Stanton, the Secretary of War. It can be found in the official records. Grant wrote that General Foster would not be allowed to exchange Confederate prisoners. The order, dated August 21, 1864, stated: “Please inform General Foster that under no circumstances will he be authorized to make an exchange of prisoners of war.”

“Exchanges simply reinforce the enemy at once, while we do not get any benefit for two or three months and lose the majority entirely. I telegraphed this from just hearing that some 500 to 600 prisoners have been sent to General Forrester.” These were the six hundred confined in the South, the immortal 600. They suffered greatly. The book The Immortal 600 records what they endured.

Edwin Stanton was also speaking about Union soldiers when he said, “There’s reason to fear that many”—that is, many Yankee soldiers—“voluntarily surrender for the sake of getting home.” In other words, northern soldiers were voluntarily surrendering so they could be exchanged and return home.

James Madison Page was a second lieutenant in Company A of the Sixth Michigan Cavalry. He was a Union man, a federal officer, and a prisoner at Andersonville. In his book, The True Story of Andersonville Prison, he vindicates Major Wirz and demonstrates that the fault basically lay with the federal government. He wrote: "This may surprise you, but in July of 1864, Henry Wirz had paroled five prisoners to act as emissaries for the others. These emissaries carried a petition to Washington that was signed by almost every Union soldier in Andersonville, demanding that the United States government abide by the original exchange agreement. Their efforts were not successful. Some returned to Andersonville to report to their fellows. When the Andersonville emissaries returned from Washington, there was not one word about the exchange of Negro soldiers being in the way of our release."

It was not even thought of then. For the past forty-two years, that matter has been published and broadcast in the North as a reason we were not exchanged. Grigsby, who was a prisoner there, is right in this: the Washington authorities had concluded to stop the exchange before there were any Negro prisoners. In spite of all the Northern post-war moralizing, the real reason Union soldiers were not exchanged is that the Northern government considered them expendable.

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton said, "We will not exchange able-bodied men for skeletons, and we do not propose to reinforce the rebel army by exchanging prisoners." This is a Yankee, a Northern soldier, saying the fault is with our own government. Lincoln, of course, was against the exchanges, and after him, Edwin Stanton, the Secretary of War. Stanton was primarily against exchanging prisoners for two basic reasons.

Number one, he thought exchanging prisoners recognized the existence of the Confederacy as a nation. And, by the way, it was a nation because we had lawfully seceded from the Union. Secondly, he said that Union soldiers basically only served for a year, after which they were sent home. Whereas Confederates fighting on their own turf, when released, went back in the army. Thus, he was saying that the Union believed it was getting the lesser part of the bargain, so to speak, by exchanging prisoners.

That basically left all these prisoners in Southern prisons. Again, Lieutenant James Madison Page says, “When we heard Secretary of War Stanton’s reply in regard to the exchange, we felt we were forsaken by our own government. The War Office at Washington preferred us to die rather than to exchange us.” Many prisoners, being but human, raised their clenched, trembling hands toward heaven and with fearful oaths cursed the authorities at Washington and the day they were born. “Oh, what hatred was engendered for our Secretary of War.” Another prisoner, John W. Urban, said, “We sometimes felt embittered against the government for not making a greater effort to release us.”

Among ourselves, we were often tempted to say bitter things. But in the presence of our enemy, any insinuation of this kind against our own government would excite air and indignation. It was a sad fact, however, that hundreds died feeling in their hearts that the government they loved so well and fought so hard to save was indifferent to their sad fate. Has anything changed? What about the prisoners in Vietnam? No. The government is indifferent to their sad fate.

The northern prisoners—Yankee prisoners—in Andersonville drew up resolutions and sent them to the United States government and to the Sanitary Commission. Consider two of them, remembering that these came from Andersonville Prison:

“Resolved, that while allowing the Confederate government all due praise for the attention paid to the prisoners, numbers of our men are consigned to early graves.

“Resolved, that 10,000 of our brave comrades have descended into untimely graves, caused by the differences in climate, food, etc.; and whereas these difficulties still remain, we would declare our firm belief that unless we are speedily exchanged, we have no other alternative but to share the same lamentable fate of our comrades.”

Must this thing go on? Is there no hope? We have suffered patiently and are still willing to suffer if, by so doing, we can benefit the country. But we most respectfully beg Lee to say that we are not willing to suffer to further the ends of any party or clique, to the detriment of our families and our country.

Signed by P. Bradley, Chairman of the Committee on Behalf of Prisoners. It was Pastor J.

William Jones, a pastor, chaplain, author, and historian, said this: “The Confederates were anxious to exchange man for man. It was the settled policy on the other side not to exchange prisoners. The Confederates offered to exchange sick and wounded. This was refused. In August 1861, we offered to send home all the Federal sick and wounded without equivalent. In other words, we would not get anything back; we would just send them home.”

This offer was not accepted until the following December, and it was during that period that the greatest mortality occurred. The Federal authorities determined as their war policy not to exchange prisoners. They invented every possible pretext to avoid it, while seeking to quiet the friends of their prisoners and fire the Northern heart by shamelessly charging that the Confederate government refused to exchange and industriously circulating the most malignant stories of rebel barbarities to helpless veterans of the Union.

I ask again, has anything changed? The reason there were so many prisoners at Andersonville and other southern prisons was that the North would not exchange them. They would not even take them back when we offered to give them without exchange. It is true that men in Andersonville died from starvation, malnourishment, and disease. But it was not just the prisoners who died; the guards died as well. Out of a thousand guards at Andersonville Prison, 226 died of the same diseases and privations as the federal prisoners.

Supplies were short in the South. The North had blockaded the South, destroyed crops, and even made medicine contraband of war. Confederate fighters and Southern civilians died, and many children died. You could not get quinine or any medication. So he is vindicated by the circumstances. Thirdly, he is vindicated by his captives.

Vindication by Captives and Compassion

James Madison Page said in his book, “Captain Wirz was unjustly held responsible for the hardship and mortality of Andersonville.

But the federal authorities must share the blame for these things with the Confederate, since they well knew the inability of the Confederates to meet the reasonable wants of their prisoners of war, as they lacked a supply of their own needs, and since the federal authorities failed to exercise a humane policy in the exchange of those captured in battle."

Augustus Mosner, another prisoner from Andersonville, said, "I swear positively that I never heard of Captain Wirz kicking or shooting a prisoner, nor in any way maltreating him, except as I have stated." Mr. Kanzler, who was a compagnie of the 1st Regiment of Illinois Light Artillery and also a prisoner at Andersonville, said, "In my estimation, Captain Wirz did the very best he could under the circumstances, and few could have done as well as he did. He was not a deliberately cruel man, and no cruelty originated with him. When I say this, I say what I know from my personal observation to be true. He had to carry out his orders, and he had to keep the prisoners from escaping. Captain Wirz was a good-hearted man by nature and had nothing cruel about him. Had I not been confined to my bed with sickness at the time of Captain Wirz's trial, I should have gone voluntarily and testified on his behalf."

He continued, "I had no idea of the fate that was hanging over him and never understood why so many gave false testimony against him. These men either knew better than to testify as they did, or they were absolutely ignorant of the truth in regard to the matter. Men who testified strongest against him had absolutely no acquaintance with him and knew nothing about him. They were not capable of judging him or his treatment of the prisoners."

Numerous Confederates and other captives were willing to testify on behalf of Major Wirz. However, they were not allowed to testify because of the judge advocate. If the judge advocate found out you were going to testify favorably, he would dismiss you. There were men with subpoenas in their hands who went there to testify, and the judge advocate took the subpoenas from them and said, "You're dismissed. We do not need your testimony."

Captain Wirz is also vindicated by his compassion. Lieutenant Page from Michigan said, "I met Wirz while on one of his visits to the hospital. He stopped his horse, and I explained briefly the situation

and the condition of my comrades. Said I, 'If something is not done for them at once, in a few days death will be the result.'"

This is the substance of his reply: "I'm doing all I can. I am handicapped and pressed for rations. I am exceeding my authority now in issuing supplies. I am blamed by the soldiers for all this suffering. They do not realize that I am a subordinate governed by orders of my commanding officer. Why, sir, my own men are on short rations. The best I can do is see that your sick comrades are removed to the hospital."

"God help you, I cannot." His eyes were filled with tears. I was crying myself; I saw how deeply he felt. He was pale and emaciated, and his wounded arm was troubling him. He said nothing about the fact that gangrene had set in. I said to myself, Here is a man obliged to endure the odium resulting from the sins of others.

There were some guards from Alabama, originally the Andersonville, who were reassigned. Page said this about these horrible guards: "We parted with our Alabama guards early in April. It was a disappointment to us, for we had found friends among them, real friends who shared with us their scant allowance; others who had nothing gave all they had a tear." Those horrible guards shared their scant allowances with the prisoners, and those who had nothing to give wept for the prisoners. At Major Wirz's trial, the defense showed, to no avail, that the prisoners and their guards received the same rations, with similar deleterious effects among them both.

It was also shown at his trial that letters were sent to his superiors demanding and asking for more rations and more food for the prisoners. So he is vindicated by his compassion.

Fifthly, he is vindicated by his condemnation. Major Wirz was convicted on all counts. It must be pointed out, and I want to emphasize again, that any witnesses who would exonerate Major Wirz were excluded from the trial by the judge advocate.

Vindication by Condemnation and Character

A simple truth is this: If you can control the testimony at the trial, you also control the outcome of the trial. So when judges in our day

and time say, “I will determine what evidence can be allowed,” what they are saying is, “I will determine the outcome of the trial.” Of 160 witnesses called by the government—not by the defense—only 10 or 12 testified to any alleged cruelty on the part of Major Wirz. Approximately 145 of the government's own witnesses, almost all of whom were former inmates at Andersonville, testified that they had no knowledge of Wirz ever murdering or killing a prisoner with his own hands or otherwise. Thus, 145 of their own witnesses testified for Major Wirz.

The most damaging testimony against Major Wirz came from Felix Delabonde. Delabombe was the only witness who identified by name a victim allegedly killed directly by Major Wirz. He fabricated both the victim's identity and his testimony against Wirz. Claiming to be a Frenchman and a descendant of Lafayette, Delabombe was discovered after the trial to be Felix Osner.

Osner was born in Saxony, Prussia, and lied to conceal that he had formerly belonged to the 7th New York Volunteers and had deserted during the war. Moreover, he had never set foot in Andersonville and had not been a prisoner there. His testimony was false, malicious, and perjured. A skilled orator and convincing liar, he so impressed the military commission that it gave him a written commendation. Before Major Wirz's trial ended, Osner was appointed to a position in the Department of the Interior, a payoff for his blatant perjury. Once his true identity and status were discovered, only eleven days after Wirz had been hanged, he admitted that he was Osner and had perjured himself in Wirz's trial. Consequently, he vanished into obscurity. Thus, the only witness who gave damaging testimony was a liar and a perjurer.

Sixthly, Major Wirz is vindicated by his character. Henry Wirz rejected an offer of pardon three times, both the night before and the day of his execution. First, four men visited him in prison with an offer of full pardon and liberty if he would directly or indirectly implicate Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy. Wirz replied, “This offer of life could not persuade me to treason and treachery to the South nor my friend.”

Second, his attorney, Louis Shade, brought him the same message, and the third time it was carried by Reverend R. E. Boyle.

Each offer was conditioned upon his testifying against Jefferson Davis and saying that Davis was responsible for the deaths at Andersonville. Wirz stated that such an allegation would be untrue and that he would not base his freedom on a lie.

It was mid-morning, or almost mid-morning, on the 10th of November, 1865. Henry Wirz had finished his last letter to his wife. Mr. Shade, his attorney, related the offer of pardon conveyed to him. Wirz listened until he had finished and then replied, “I would not become a traitor to him or anybody else to save my life.” Later that morning, Reverend Boyle conveyed the same message of pardon to Wirz. Wirz replied, “Although I am innocent of these cruel charges, I will not purchase my liberty by perjury.”

If Wirz was the murderer and the cruel, heartless man that the government said he was, how simple it would have been for him to deliver another man into their hands and save his own life. The very fact that he refused to implicate Jefferson Davis, knowing that if he did, it would be a lie, shows you the character of Henry Wirz.

Execution and Final Applications

The execution took place on the 10th of November, 1865. The gallows was surrounded by Union Army soldiers who throughout the entire procedure chanted, “Wirz, remember Andersonville, remember Andersonville.” He was accompanied by a Catholic priest. Wirz refused to make a last minute confession complaint claiming that he was not guilty of committing any crime. Before he was hanged, Major Russell read the death warrant and then told Wirz, he deplored his duty. Wirz replied, “I know what orders are, Major, and I’m being hanged for obeying them.” Wirz displayed no fear and faced his death stoically.

He said, “I die innocent.” When the trapdoor was sprung, his neck was not broken. He did not die instantly. To the shouts and taunts of the mob, he slowly swung on the rope until he choked to death. Father Boyle wrote in a letter to Jefferson Davis, “I attended the major to the scaffold. And he died in the peace of God and praying for his enemies.” He continued, “I know that he was indeed innocent of all the cruel charges on which his life was sworn away, and I was

edified by the Christian spirit in which he submitted to his persecutors."

The vindication of Captain Henry Wirz is the condemnation of a corrupt, abusive, unconstitutional government. If Wirz is vindicated, Washington is condemned. It cannot be any other way. Corruption is not something new. Wherever there is no rule of law, there is tyranny. Wherever there is governmental corruption, there is governmental tyranny. Today, a multitude of governmental crimes are disguised and hidden under the realm of national security and governmental immunity. Times have not changed. Consider this great irony: over the spot where Wirz died, symbolic of the justice from which he was denied, the very spot stands the United States Supreme Court.

Undoubtedly, we should understand that, as it was then with the South, so it is now with the South. Men may pervert justice and righteousness, but they cannot escape the just penalty of God. God says that if a man perjures himself and gives false testimony, as stated in Deuteronomy 19:16–20, it shall be done to him as he thought to have done to his brother.

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 5:24, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after." Those who think they have gotten away in time and history will face their sins in eternity, because the Word of God says in Deuteronomy 32:23, "Be sure your sins will find you out."

The truth is that the sovereign God of heaven and earth is the great vindicator, and He will make sure that everything is set straight, because there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed.

Many of you remember Sam Davis. I have a message on his death, but L. O'Wheeler Wilcox wrote a poem about Sam Davis. I believe this same poem could be applied to Major Wirz. Think about it in relationship to Major Wirz:

"When the Lord calls up Earth's heroes to stand before his face, O many a name unknown to fame shall ring from that high place."

And out of a grave in the Southland at the just God's call and beck shall one man rise with fearless eyes and a rope around his neck. For men have swung from gallows whose soles were white as snow. Not

how they die or where, but why, is what God's records show. And on that mighty ledger is writ Sam Davis' name. For honor's sake, he would not make a compromise with shame. You could say, and on that mighty ledger is writ Major Wirz's name. For honor's sake, he would not make a compromise with shame.

They offered life and freedom. If he would speak the word, in silent pride he gazed aside as one who had not heard. They argued, pleaded, threatened. It was but wasted breath. “Let come what must, I keep my trust,” he said, and laughed at death. He would not sell his manhood to purchase priceless hope. When kings dragged down a name and a crown, he dignified a rope. Ah, grave, where was your triumph? Ah, death, where was your sting? He showed you how a man could bow to doom and stay a king.

The transcripts of Andersonville Prison are public record. The transcripts of the trial are public record. They can be read. Where are the transcripts for Elmira, Fort Douglas, Fort Delaware? Point and look out. There are 13,000 graves that stand in orderly rows in Andersonville, Georgia. Where are the graves in Michigan, New York, and Maryland? Can I tell you, they dug one hole and dumped them all.

Major Wirz deserves to be honored and deserves to be vindicated.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your truth. We thank you for your word. And we ask, Father, You would indeed teach us to love righteousness, to love truth, to love holiness, and give us grace that, Lord, that we may serve Thee effectively with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

When God's People Become His Enemies

Introduction: God's Strange Work of Judgment

Our Father, we are thankful today for the Lord Jesus Christ and for so great salvation. We are thankful for the blessed Holy Spirit and the Word of God, ministering to the saints of God. We pray that You will teach us tonight, help us, and build us up in the most holy faith. Give us grace that we may serve You acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Your name we pray. Amen.

I want you to turn and hold Isaiah 63, but I want you to look at Isaiah 28 in verse 21, and then we are coming right back to Isaiah 63. I just want to read one verse, just so I can make a comment on it. Notice Isaiah chapter 28, if you would please, and verse 21. Isaiah 28, verse 21.

"For the Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work, to bring to pass his act, his strange act." I read that verse to lay the groundwork for Isaiah 63:10: "But they rebelled and vexed his Holy

Spirit. Therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." The title of the message tonight is, "When God's People Become His Enemies."

Judgment there is called God's strange act and God's strange work. In Job 31:3, God's judgment is again called His strange work. I preached a message entitled "God's Strange Work," using Job 31:3 as my text and Isaiah 28:21 as a supporting passage. While I was preaching, showing that God's judgment is called His strange work or His strange act when He has to judge His own people, I said, "Maybe I need to consider when God's people become His enemies." That thought came to me as I was preaching.

The Modern Church's Decline

I went home, began to think, and looked until I found what I want to share tonight. To me, this is a very awesome message in that sense of the word, because it is a solemn and awesome thought that God's people may become His enemies. There is certainly absolutely no doubt that the professing church has fallen far below the norm of Scripture.

In fact, I receive complaints and lamentations from believers all across this country that it is impossible for them to find a biblical church in the area where they live. Good and godly men have confronted pastors and elders concerning unbiblical conduct and actions in the pulpit and out of the pulpit, only to be dismissed as rabble-rousers, troublemakers, and even bigots. I know godly individuals who have been asked to leave churches and kicked out of churches because of their biblical stance, when the church itself was totally unbiblical. It appears, on the one hand, that modern-day Christianity has no desire to return to biblical Christianity.

Vance Havner, a late evangelist who died a few years back, summed up our situation very well when he said, "Christians have been subnormal for so long that when one ever gets normal, everyone else thinks he's abnormal." That is certainly the truth. The church today is vastly different from the New Testament church. We have fallen away doctrinally, practically, and ethically, and what we have become, basically, is a pragmatic church.

The Church's Pragmatic Drift

In other words, if it works, we will do it. It does not really matter if it is biblical or not; if it will get people in, get attention, or get us publicity, that is exactly what we will do. To substantiate that statement, consider all the extra-biblical programs, games, entertainment, and blatantly unbiblical attitudes and actions regularly exhibited in the average church.

Let me make this very clear: The Church of Jesus Christ was never intended to be an entertainment center, a babysitting service, a psychological den, a feel-good-about-yourself society, an arm of the state or federal government, and certainly not a political action committee. The church of Jesus Christ was ordained by God the Father to exalt His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to proclaim His gospel, to edify His saints, to call sinners to repentance, and to worship and praise Him alone.

The modern church has not only failed, but is failing in every one of these areas. The truth of the matter is, we have become everything except that which we should be. The modern church has become the enemy of the one true and living God. God's people basically have become His enemy.

Is it possible for God's people to become His enemies? Is it possible for God to fight against His own people? Could that not be the reason that we are absolutely defeated, discouraged, downtrodden, and dominated by our enemies—that God Himself is fighting against us?

Biblical Basis: Isaiah 63:7-10

Look at the context of Isaiah 63, beginning with verse 7. We are talking about God's people: “I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.”

"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them: and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." We are talking about God's people. But they, that is, God's people, rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit. Therefore He, God, was turned to be their enemy, and He, God, fought against them. When Israel rebelled against God, Israel became God's enemy, and God became their enemy, and God actually fought against them.

God's Immutability and Judgment

You have to remember that God is immutable. That means He does not change. Malachi 3:6 says, "I the Lord change not." Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Since God is immutable, if God fought against His people in the Old Testament when they rebelled against Him, certainly He will fight against His people in the New Testament era, and afterward, when His people rebel against Him. When we fight against God, and God fights against us, He wins and we lose. It is just that simple.

Historical Example: Jeremiah 21 and Lamentations 1

Has God fought against His people literally? Oh, yes. Look in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 21, beginning with verse 1. This is the answer God gave to King Zedekiah when Zedekiah sent word to Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord and see if Nebuchadnezzar would leave Jerusalem:

"The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, when King Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur, the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Maseiah, the priest, saying, Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us. For Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, maketh war against us. If so be that the Lord will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us."

Here is what King Zedekiah wants: "Jeremiah, pray for us that Nebuchadnezzar would leave us alone, that he would leave and we would not have to fight." Now watch verse 3: "Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall you say to Zedekiah, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your

hands, wherewith you fight against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans which besiege you without the walls."

And God says, "I will assemble them in the midst of this city, and I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger and in fury and in great wrath. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. They shall die of a great pestilence. And afterwards saith the Lord, I will deliver Zedekiah, king of Judah, and his servants, and the people as such as are left in this city, from the pestilence, and from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life. And he shall smite them with the edge of the sword. He shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy."

Did God fight against them? He said, "Not only am I going to help Nebuchadnezzar, I'm going to turn the weapons back that are in your hands, and moreover, I will fight against you personally." If you turn to the book of Lamentations, at the end of Jeremiah, you see that Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet.

SCRIPTURE READING - Lamentations 1:1-9 (KJV)

> He is the one who saw Jerusalem fall. I wish I had time to really go over the book of Lamentations with you. There are five chapters. Actually, the five chapters are five poems. And each one of these poems views the fall of Jerusalem from a different perspective.
>
> How does the city sit solitary that was full of people? How has she become as a widow? She that was great among the nations and princess among the provinces, how has she become tributary? She weepeth sorely. And her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers, she hath none to comfort her. All of her friends have dealt treacherously with her, and they are become her enemies. Judah is going into captivity because of affliction and because of great servitude. She dwelleth among the heathen. She findeth no rest.
>
> All her persecutors overtook her between the straits. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feast, all her gates are desolate, her priests die, her virgins are afflicted,

> and she is in bitterness, her adversaries are chief, her enemies prosper, for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions, her children are gone into captivity before the enemy, and from the daughter of Zion all her beauties departed, her princes are become like hearts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer. Jerusalem remembered the days of her affliction and her miseries, and all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her. The adversaries saw her, did mock at her sabbaths. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore she is removed.
>
> All that honored her despised her, because they have seen her nakedness. She sigheth and turneth backwards. Her filthiness is in her skirts. She remembereth not her last end. Therefore she came down wonderfully. She had no comforter. O Lord, behold mine affliction, says Jeremiah, for the enemy hath magnified himself.
>
> Did God's professing people become his enemies? The answer is yes. Did God fight against them? The answer is absolutely.

The Modern Church's Powerlessness

It is a sad picture. But in reality, this also is a picture of the modern-day church. The modern-day church has basically lost its power, its position, and its prominence. Once the Church of Jesus Christ was a force to be reckoned with. There were statesmen back then who would even consider running for office without an endorsement of the church and without the sanction of the church indicating that he was indeed a good and godly man. But the truth of the matter is that today the church is mocked, ridiculed, despised, and disparaged as helpless, powerless, and worthless.

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

We may have the money, the prestige, and the prominence, but we certainly do not have the power. So how then can the church become the enemy of God? How can God's people become His enemies? My answer is that it happens in the exact same way that the professing people in the Old Testament became the enemies of God. The Apostle Paul explains this for us in Colossians 1:21: "...and you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now thee reconciled."

Before our conversion, we were enemies in our minds. What does that mean? It means we thought unbiblically. We thought as lost people think. We thought and lived as the old man. Scripture tells us that if we have been saved by the grace of God, we have put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness. When we begin to think like the old man and think humanistically, we are becoming, in our minds again, the enemies of God.

You have to understand that thinking and acting go together. In Proverbs 23:7, the Bible says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:18, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." So as you think, so shall you live. When we think and act unbiblically and unscripturally, for all practical purposes, we are fighting against God.

It does not really matter what our profession is. I could tell my wife all day long that I love her, but as long as I am running around with other women, it is very obvious that I do not love her. I can tell the Lord I love Him, but as long as I am doing absolutely contrary to Him, it is quite obvious that I really do not love Him. It does not matter what our profession is; as long as we are being disobedient, we are actually fighting against God.

So how do we become God's enemies? I want to give you three things and show them to you from the Bible. The very first way we become God's enemies is by rejection and disobedience to His law. We become God's enemies by rejection of and disobedience to His law.

First Way: Rejection of God's Law

Here is a truth that you need to understand: a king rules by his law. It does not matter whether we are talking about the King of heaven or an earthly king. He rules by his law. The one true and living God has given His law, and His law is an expression of His will. His law tells us how we should live. Therefore, when there is a rejection of God's law, it is in reality a rejection of God Himself and His kingdom.

Consider Hosea 4:1: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land." God has an argument, a controversy, with the children of Israel. What is it? "Because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land." Would you like to know the consequences and results when there is no knowledge of God, truth, or mercy in the land? Verse 2 says, "By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood."

Therefore shall the land mourn, and everyone that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. Yet let no man strive, nor prove another, for the people are they that strive with the priest. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me, seeing thou hast forgotten the law by God, I will also forget thy children.

God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have forgotten My law, I will also forget your children." God's law is an expression of His will. Our children are an expression of our will: we wanted them, God gave them to us, and we had them. So God says, you reject and forget the expression of My will; I'll reject and forget the expression of your will. You want to know what's wrong with all the young people in this country? We've forgotten God and His law, and He's forgotten them. Forgetting God is the same as rejecting God, because both lead to disobedience.

Deuteronomy 8:10-14 says, “When thou hast eaten and are full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments and his judgments and his statutes which I command thee this day. Lest, when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein, and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

SCRIPTURE READING - Isaiah 5:1-7, 24-25 (KJV)

Usually, when you have prosperity and are unusually blessed, what most men do is forget God. They become unappreciative, unthankful, and ungrateful, and assume that they do not really need God. Forgetting God is the same as rejecting God.

Isaiah 5:1-7: “Now will I sing unto my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fetched it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein. And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard than I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked, that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. Now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down, and I will lay it waste. It shall not be pruned, nor digged, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I also will command the clouds, that they know rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant. And he looked for judgment, behold, oppression, for righteousness, but behold, a cry.”

Isaiah 5:24-25: “Therefore as the fire devoured the stubble, and the flame consumed the chap, so their root shall be as

> rottenness, and their blossom shall grow up as dust, because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against this people, he has stretched forth his hand against them and smitten them, and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." Why did God fight against them?

The answer is very clear: because they despised the word of the Lord and cast away the law of the Lord. Look in Jeremiah chapter 5, beginning with verse 1: "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it."

God said, "Jeremiah, you can run back and forth through the streets of Jerusalem. If you can find one man—just one—who does what is right, I will pardon the entire city." Verse 2 says, "And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely." In other words, they had a profession, but their life was totally contrary to their profession.

Skip down to verse 7. He is still talking about His people: "How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Skip down to verse 23: "But this people hath a revolting and rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you."

"For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that layeth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of

birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge? Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

Now, let me ask you a question. You know that the ten northern tribes, the Northern Kingdom, went into captivity into Assyria, and that the tribes of the southern kingdom went into captivity into Babylon. Why did God send these people into captivity?

I know you can say, because of their sins, but let's be more specific. Turn to 2 Kings chapter 17, beginning with verse 7: "For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and had feared other gods."

Now, wait a minute. How do we know that Israel feared other gods? How can I tell whether or not you fear other gods? Let's watch it. Verse 8 says, "And walked in the statutes or the laws of the heathen whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel and of the kings of Israel which they had made." In other words, they forsook God's law and walked in the laws of the heathen.

The passage mentions the kings of Israel. You must remember that Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, was the one who made the golden calves—one in Dan and one in Bethel. It was idolatry. What they were doing was rejecting God's law and substituting the law of false gods and the law of a wicked, perverted man. They were obeying man's law, and foreign God's laws, and rejecting God's law.

Now, let me show you how this thing worked out. Verse 9 says, "And the children of Israel did secretly, that is originally, they did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God." But now watch openly: "And they built them high places in their cities, from the tower of the watchman to the fenced city. And they

set up images and groves in every high hill and under every green tree. And there they burned incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away from before them, and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger. For they served idols, where the Lord had said unto them, You shall not do this thing." Yet the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets and all the seers, saying, "Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets."

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 17:14-17 (KJV)

> Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their necks like unto the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them. And they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them. Watch! And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the hosts of heaven, and served Baal, and caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divinations and enchantments, and sold themselves to the devil, and the Son of the Lord to provoke him to anger. Why did God send Israel into captivity, rejecting His law? refusing to obey Him.

Judah did not fare much better. Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. In other words, Judah did the same thing that Israel did, and God sent her into captivity into Babylon.

I want you to look at Micah chapter 6. I am trying to show you that you become God's enemies when you reject and disobey His law. This is a devastating passage. God says to His people, "Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied. And thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee, and thou shalt take hold, but thou shalt not deliver. And that which thou deliverest I will

give up to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap. Thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil. And sweet wine, but thou shalt not drink wine." Why? Here is why: "For the statutes of Omri are kept." Omri was the father of Ahab, and he was a wicked pervert. "For the statutes or the laws of Omri are kept and all the works of the house of Ahab and you walk in their councils," that is, in their laws, "that I should make me a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof a hissing, therefore you shall bear the reproach of my people."

What is God doing in Micah chapter 6? He is fighting against them. What was He doing in 2 Kings chapter 17? He was fighting against them. You have to understand, folks, when people forsake, reject, and forget God's law, they are fighting against God; therefore God becomes their enemy and fights against them. Why? Because God is going to defend His honor, His glory, and His will.

Can we become God's enemies? Oh, yes. Has the modern church become God's enemies? Oh, yes. We have substituted our laws for God's law.

Here is the second way we become God's enemy: by offering Him hypocritical and ritualistic worship. John 4:24 says, "God is spirit. And they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." It is an absolute necessity, if we are going to worship God, that we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Second Way: Hypocritical Worship

But you know what happened in the Old Testament? Israel, who had been given God's law, who had been given the offerings and the sacrifices, who had been given the tabernacle and later on the temple, took God's worship and turned it into mere rituals and ceremonies. It was just something they did without thinking. It was really insignificant. They simply did it, just like modern-day Christians when they simply go to church.

Because that is what they have always done, they go and plop down on the pew, sing a few songs, listen to a sermon, pitch a few bucks into the offering plate, walk out, and somehow think that they

have worshipped God. No. You could do that all day long, seven days a week, 365 days a year, and never worship God.

Isaiah 29, verses 13 and 14, says, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people," now He is talking about His own people, "this people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but remove their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men. Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

The Hebrew word for marvelous here is palah, which means something wonderful, something extraordinary, something surpassing, something distinguished by action. When you look at the word wonder here, the Hebrew word refers to an act of God's judgment. So God is saying He is going to judge these people who utter Him with their lips and with their mouth, but whose hearts are far from Him.

In Matthew chapter 15, beginning with verse 7, our Lord quotes from Isaiah 29. He does it in Mark 7 as well, but in Matthew 15 He says, "You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth not unto me with their mouth, and not unto me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

“But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Our Lord calls such worship hypocritical, for only hypocrites offered it. Their hearts, love, affection, and spirit were elsewhere. They were not really interested in God’s worship. It was a ceremony and a ritual.

The average professing Christian runs into a church fifteen minutes late with a quarter in one hand and a quarterly in the other and somehow thinks that he is worshiping God. This is not an exaggeration. Alice and I were visiting our daughter and her family in Tampa, Florida, and we went by a Baptist church. On the board out front was this announcement: “Come to our early service. In by 8. Out by 8:30.”

Stop and think about it. If you welcome people, have an opening prayer, sing a song or two, take an offering, and have a benediction

and closing prayer, that would leave no more than five to ten minutes for anything else. Do you know what that church was doing? They were soothing the consciences of people on their way to spend the day at the beach: “I’ve been to church. I’ve been through my little ritual and ceremony. This is it.”

That is why our Lord says this is hypocritical. Only hypocrites give that kind of worship. Second, He calls such worship vain: “In vain do they worship me.” Vain means useless, fruitless, and absolutely worthless. He will not have it, receive it, or accept it. It is totally unacceptable to Him.

Third, He demonstrates how they have replaced God’s law with man’s law. I have been preaching for fifty years, and I know this is true because I know churches where it has happened. As long as you are in church Sunday morning and Sunday night and Wednesday night, give regularly and faithfully, and perhaps attend visitation once or twice a month, they do not really care if you are an adulterer, a fornicator, a fraud, a thief in your business, or dishonest. No, you are a good Christian; you support the church and are there. I know individuals who were guilty of horrendous adultery and yet remained on the deacon board. Why?

Because we have our laws. If you do this, this, and this, we pronounce you a good Christian. It does not matter if you violate God's law. That is exactly what our Lord is talking about in Matthew 15 and Mark chapter 7. Let us see how God absolutely hates and despises this kind of worship.

Isaiah chapter 1 begins, “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” We are talking about God's people now—God's professing people. Here is what he says to them: “Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.” Who is he talking to? The rulers of Judah and Jerusalem.

“ To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain, useless,

worthless, unacceptable oblations, incenses and abominations unto me; the new moons and the sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot argue with it. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. They are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them."

"And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." What is he saying? You are coming to me, going through a little ritual, going through a ceremony, and you are disobeying me? You are refusing to obey my law and follow my statutes, and you think I am pleased with it? I cannot stand this. I hate it. I will not have it.

He says it again in Amos chapter 5.

I do not see how anyone can get around this passage. Here is what God told His people: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them. Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beast. Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy vows. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as mighty streams."

Now you have to ask yourself this question: God, did You not appoint the feast days? Yes. Did You not appoint the new moons and the solid assemblies? Yes. Did You not appoint the singing? Yes. All of this was divinely appointed. But the people made it a ritual and a ceremony. They came in and went out with no heart, affection, love, or adoration—just pure, simple ritualism. And God said, "I hate it. I will not have it."

Have you ever stopped to think what David meant when he said in Psalm 103, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless his holy name, and forget not all of his benefits," who daily loaded thee with all of these blessings? "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me." How many of us, when we sit in church

listening to the preaching of the Word, actually engage our hearts and minds? Do we listen, think, meditate, apply, thank God, and praise Him in our spirits?

Most of the time, it is simply in and out. How can we claim to be the Lord's people when we offer Him defective, worthless, useless, and unacceptable worship? If we are His people, we ought to act like it. That is why He condemned the people in Isaiah 1 and in Amos chapter 5. He said, "You say you are My people, but you are acting like the heathen. You are not even worshiping Me." Obedience is the foundation for true worship. Where there is no obedience, there is no worship.

Third Way: Befriending the World

Our Lord makes it clear: if you love Me, keep My commandments. We become God's enemies when we befriend the world. There is really something wrong with a modern-day church when the wicked feel comfortable there. I know we want sinners to be converted; I am not denying that.

But if a man is a sinner, goes to church, and the Word of God is preached, he is going to be very uncomfortable, because that Word will rebuke his sins.

But look what the Bible says in James 4:4: "You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Now, look at verse four again: "You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that friendship of the world is enmity with God?" Enmity with God. First of all, he said, "friendship with the world." He is not talking about God's creation, or enjoying Yosemite National Park, Sequoia National Park, or Glacier National Park. He is not talking about enjoying creation outdoors. No, that is not the world he is talking about. He is talking about the world system: everything that is opposed to God and His Word.

He said, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world, that is, the world system, is enmity with God?" The word enmity is a very strong word for hatred. Whosoever

is a friend of the world is the enemy of God. The word enemy here is actually echthros, meaning to be a foe, to be hostile, hateful, and opposed. Whoever is a friend of the world is hostile toward God; he is God's enemy.

James shows this in context: “For whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” In other words, you are not interested in God or His will; all you want is to satisfy your own pleasure and lust. Therefore, “ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmied with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

“Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw an eye to God, and he will draw an eye to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to happiness. Humble yourselves in the sight of God, and the Lord shall lift you up.”

One is worldly in this context when he is covetous, lustful, proud, arrogant, quick-tempered, aggressive, and desirous of everything that is opposed to God. A worldly individual in this context is one who lives for his pleasures, his will, and his desires. In other words, here is a man totally consumed with himself and getting ahead in life. He is going to do whatever it takes for both of them to please himself and to get a hidden life. James says the remedy for this is to draw nigh to God, repent, cleanse your hands, and submit to the Lord. Unless we do, he says, we are in a state of enmity.

Do you understand that it is one thing to be in the world and quite another thing to be of the world? God's chosen people should never be identified with the world. Yes, we are in the world, and we are to use this world as not abusing it because it is God's world. But we are not to be tied up with the wicked.

There is a man in the Bible by the name of Jehoshaphat. He was a king, king of Judah, and, believe it or not, he was basically a good king and a godly king. However, he did something very stupid. He allied himself with King Ahab of Israel. Ahab was the wickedest king of Israel, and God, the Jehoshaphat of Judah, went to help Ahab.

After Jehoshaphat returned from the battle to his house in peace at Jerusalem, Jehu, the son of Anani, the seer, went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.” Should you help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? The answer is no. You should not help them, love them, side with them, or identify with them. Because Jehoshaphat did, wrath would come upon him from before the Lord.

Our Lord made His position exceedingly clear in Matthew 12 and verse 30 when He said, “He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not scattereth abroad.”

Conclusion: Call to Friendship with God

I want you to think about this tonight: how God's people can become His enemies. Obviously, we can. And when we are His enemies, He fights against us. I travel all over the country, and it is almost impossible to get a dozen pastors together to work on any one project. Why? Because everybody wants to be the head. If I cannot be the head and cannot get the glory, I am not going to do it. Or if it does not benefit my church, I am not going to do it. Christians are like that. Could it be because we have basically rejected God's law? Could it be because we have failed to give Him proper, acceptable worship? Could it be because we have befriended the world? God is actually fighting against us, and therefore we cannot accomplish a thing.

You remember, God broke the ships that He's Zion gave her, because again, He joined up with the wicked. God breaks our ships. If you do not want to be an enemy of God, you not only need to be His child; you need to be His friend. In John 15 and verse 14, our Lord said, “You are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Abraham was the friend of God. Abraham obeyed God. If we are going to be His friends, our lives should be lives of obedience,

marked by obedience. If we are not His friends, the only other alternative is to be His enemy. When God fights against us, we lose, and He wins.

Yes, God's people can become His enemies, and we do not want to be His enemies. We need to be as holy, godly, and obedient as we can by the grace of God, bringing our lives continually and constantly into conformity to the Word of God.

Let us pray. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ tonight that You would help us, that You would speak our hearts, and that You would help us, Lord, to see really and truly the awesomeness and solemnity of this truth: that it is possible to be God's people and yet at the same time be His enemies. Help us, Lord, not to be Your enemy, but to be Your friend by obedience. Help us to give Thee the honor and glory that Thou dost deserve, recognizing Thy law and Thy sovereign authority and power, and giving Thee, Lord, spiritual worship which is acceptable. May we not be a friend of all that is wicked and contrary to Thee, but be Thy friend and obey Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 8

The True Lord Protector

Introduction: Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector

Psalm 127:1 says, "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." I want to expound upon this verse today.

Oliver Cromwell assumed the title of Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, though he refused the crown. There was a battle between Oliver Cromwell and Charles I of England. Cromwell was the leader of the Roundhead Army, while Charles I was commander of the Cavaliers. Cromwell was indeed an unusual man. He was never trained in war, but from the very beginning, like Stonewall Jackson in one sense, and like Nathan Bedford Forrest, he showed consummate genius as a general.

Cromwell's Military Genius and Godly Army

Cromwell understood that successful revolutions were always fought by the common man, especially local men. So he gathered around himself a thousand hand-picked Puritans who were farmers, herdsmen, and men acquainted with the outdoors and used to being

in the field. His regiment was nicknamed Ironsides and was never beaten, not even one time, though at times they were greatly outnumbered, sometimes three to one. Cromwell's troops would go into battle reciting the Westminster Confession or singing the Psalms of David, striking terror into the hearts of the enemy.

One of Cromwell's main tactics was to use his cavalry to bust right down through the middle of the oncoming soldiers. As they burst through those soldiers, they would come out the other side and circle either the left or right, forcing the soldiers into a mob and creating confusion. Then the other troops would strike as well and literally destroy their enemy.

Cromwell amassed a body of troops and became their commander-in-chief. His troops were the only body of troops, as far as I know, that preached, prayed, and fought. There were fines in that army for profanity or drunkenness. Usually, the profanity and drunkenness came from those who had simply attached themselves to his troops and commands, but they would always charge into the enemy either quoting Scripture or singing Psalms.

Cromwell Refuses the Crown

Charles I invited an Irish Catholic army to aid him, an action for which he was later tried as high treason. He was found guilty and beheaded shortly after the war. Years later, Cromwell was offered the crown of England. He refused with these words: "I will not build Jericho again." Cromwell proposed the revival of the title Lord Protector, which had precedence going back to the fifteenth century. Under the terms of the Instrument of Government, executive power under Cromwell passed into the hands of an elected Lord Protector advised by a Council of State. Cromwell was declared Lord Protector for life and formally installed at Westminster Hall on December 16, 1653. As you read through Scripture, you will find that there is indeed a true Lord Protector, but it is not Cromwell.

Exposition of Psalm 127:1 – The True Lord Protector

It is the sovereign God of heaven and earth. The truth that the Lord God of heaven and earth is indeed the true Lord Protector is given to us very plainly 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." In Psalm 127:1 there are two parallel truths, and each teaches our absolute dependency upon the sovereign God. First, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Clearly, it is the Lord, and the Lord alone, who can build without failure, without diminishment, or without destruction.

The Meaning of 'House' – Family and Children

The word "house" could refer to what we would call an ordinary dwelling. It could refer to the temple or to a church building, a place of worship, but it could also refer to a family. What we have failed to realize many times is that the word "house" does not necessarily have to reflect a physical structure. Albert Barnes said on Psalm 127:1: "The statement is universal. That is, 'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' The statement is universal and is designed to indicate a universal dependence upon God in human undertakings. Though it is not improbable that there may have been an allusion when this psalm was composed to some building which was contemplated or commenced. If the psalm was a composition of David or Solomon, the allusion may have been to the temple about to be erected."

The language, however, is so general as to be applicable to any enterprise of that kind. When you read the word "house," do not necessarily always think of a physical structure.

Everyone knows the story of Noah and the ark. Noah, his wife, his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives entered into the ark, and then God sent the flood. Notice what God says in Genesis 7:1: “And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark. For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” When God told Noah to bring his house into the ark, He was not talking about a physical structure. He was talking about his sons, his daughters-in-law, and his wife.

In Exodus 1:21, we read about Shiphrah and Puah, the two midwives who refused to obey the king and murder the male children of Israel. The Bible says: “And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God that he made them houses.” Does that mean

He built them physical houses? Probably not. He may have allowed them to have physical houses, but it means that He gave them families.

Now look back at Psalm 127:1: “Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it.” Then begin with verse 3: “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” The context of this psalm, when it speaks of a house, also speaks of children. We are not necessarily talking only about a church building, a temple, or a physical structure. We are also talking about children.

The Futility of Human Effort Without God's Blessing

It should take only a moment of reflection for us to understand why our country is in such turmoil, why our families are in such destruction, and why there is so much degradation, chaos, and rebellion in the ordinary everyday home. We have taken our children and tried to rear and teach them apart from the sovereign power of God.

We may have used the means, but the means apart from the blessings of God are absolutely worthless and useless. Without the power of God and without the blessing of God, all is lost. Our labor is in vain. It does not matter concerning the level of our skill, the amount of our strength, the industry of our will, the height of our education, or the resources at our command. All will be in vain unless God sovereignly blesses our work and works in each heart.

Has it ever dawned upon you that you cannot convict your children? You cannot convert your children. You cannot save your children. I have tried, and you have tried in many ways and many times, but the truth is you cannot save your children. You cannot open their eyes. You cannot give them understanding. One man said that he could prove that light traveled faster than sound because the instruction and the counsel that he gave his children at eighteen, they never heard until they were forty. The truth of the matter is this: “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.”

Unless the Lord blesses our efforts and our works and our use of the means, all is in vain. In other words, this is teaching us absolute dependence upon the Lord.

Physical houses may be destroyed by fire. They may be destroyed by tornadoes, hurricanes, or an earthquake, or by an assault of an enemy, unless God sovereignly protects them. But the same is true of our children. Unless God sovereignly works in their hearts, all of our teaching and all of our instruction are simply in vain.

The Watchman and the City – Dependence on God for Protection

The second part of this verse gives the parallel truth: “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.” “Except the Lord keep the city” conveys an idea of dependence, this time in another illustration. The preservation of a city wholly depends upon God, regardless of the precautions that its inhabitants may use or may not use.

By extension, this applies to a nation or to a country. The principle is the same. You can use the argument from the lesser to the greater. If a city is dependent upon the sovereignty of God for protection, how much more must a nation or a country be dependent upon the sovereignty of God? If it takes God to protect a small, insignificant city, how much more does it take God to protect an entire country?

Benjamin Franklin's Appeal at the Constitutional Convention

You remember what Benjamin Franklin said at the Constitutional Convention on June 28, 1787: "I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it possible that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, 'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain to build it.' I firmly believe this. And I also believe that without his concurring aid,

we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.

"We shall be divided by our little partial local interest. Our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter this unfortunate instant despair of establishing governments by human wisdom and leave it to chance, war, conquest. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessing on our deliberations be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service."

What was he saying at the founding of this country? If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without your heavenly Father, is it possible, is it probable that a nation can rise up without his aid? The answer is no.

The Bible said, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." In Bible times, most cities were surrounded by walls, sometimes double walls. Along those walls, they would place watchmen, who were responsible to warn of approaching danger. The theme of the watchman runs basically throughout the Bible. The watchman had a responsibility to warn of danger. If he did not warn of danger, he was guilty—guilty of treason.

The Role and Responsibility of the Watchman

He was a traitor to his own people. However, if he warned and they refused to listen, then their blood was not on his hand. He delivered his soul. Look in your Bibles. Hold Psalm 127. But go to the book of Jeremiah chapter 6 and look at verse 17. Jeremiah 6 and verse 17. Then we're going to Ezekiel chapter 3. Notice verse 17. I want you to note what is said. God says this: “Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.” That's what I said: watchmen. There was a trumpet. The trumpet was to be blown when there was danger. When you hear the trumpet being blown, you know there's danger. Listen to the trumpet. Listen to the watchman. But they said, “We will not hearken.” Look in Ezekiel chapter 3. Ezekiel chapter 3 if you would

please. And notice if you would please verse 17. Ezekiel 3 verse 17. God says to Ezekiel, “Son of man, I've made thee a watchman of the house of Israel.

Therefore, hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me. So God made Ezekiel a watchman and said, “You give them warning from me.”

Again, God declared that the watchman was to have a trumpet. He said, “But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the hand of the watchman. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman in the house of Israel. Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked man from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his wicked way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”

The watchman had a responsibility to warn. If he did not warn, he was guilty. If he did warn, and the people simply did not listen, then he delivered his own soul.

Now notice what the Bible says: “Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” When you read that verse, you may think the watchman has gone to sleep on his post. But that is not what the verse is saying. The word “waketh” does not imply that the watchman was asleep. It actually means to be sleepless and then to watch.

Just as in modern times, the watchman had a period of time for which he was responsible, usually four hours. It is very difficult for a man to be on his toes more than four hours straight at a time, especially at night. If it is Phil’s time to watch, I go and wake him out of his sleep. He is now sleepless; he is awakened, and he takes his four-hour watch. “Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” In other words, the watchman is not asleep; he has been awakened to go to his post.

He is watching. But unless the Lord keeps the city, his watching does no good. Albert Barnes says, “The allusion is to the watch or guard appointed to keep a city. And the idea is that whatever may be the diligence, the care, the fidelity of the one thus appointed to guard a city, its safekeeping must depend upon God alone. Fires may break out in spite of the watchman. A tempest may sweep over it. Bands of armed people may assail it. Or the pestilence may suddenly come into it, and spread desolation throughout its dwellings. There may have been an allusion to this to some immediate arrangement for guarding Jerusalem when this psalm was composed, but the remark is so general that it is not necessary to confine it to that. It is universally true that after all the care for their own preservation, which people can employ, their safety depends wholly upon God.”

Psalm 127 and verse 1 is not a denial of personal responsibility. God is not saying there is no need to have watchmen, no need to be on your toes, or that you should sit back and do nothing. He is saying that it does not matter how you fulfill your responsibility, how eager or alert you are: ultimately, safety is of the Lord.

God is not going to instantaneously make us proficient with arms if we have never fired, if we have never shot, and know nothing about weapons. It is our responsibility to have weapons and to know how to use, clean, assemble, disassemble, and service them. But no matter how many weapons we have, or how well we handle them, unless the Lord protects us, those weapons are absolutely useless. We have to fulfill our responsibility with complete dependence upon Him. If He does not keep us, bless us, or use us, all is in vain.

Spurgeon said concerning this verse, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Around the wall the sentinel paces with constant step, and yet the city is betrayed unless the alert watcher is with them." The alert watcher is God. We are not safe because of watchmen if Jehovah refuses to watch over us. Even if the guards are wakeful and do their duty, the place may be surprised if God is not there. "I the Lord do keep it" is better than an army of sleepless guards.

The psalmist does not bid the builder cease from laboring, suggest that the watchman neglect his duty, or imply that men should show their trust in God by doing absolutely nothing. Rather, he supposes

that they will do all they can, and then forbids them fixing their trust in what they have done. All creature effort will be in vain unless the Creator puts forth His power to render second causes effectual.

Holy Scripture endorses Cromwell's order: "Trust in God and keep your powder dry." Only here the sense is varied, and we are told that the dried powder will not win the victory unless we trust in God. Happy is the man who hits the golden mean by so working as to believe in God, and so believing in God as to work without fear.

We have a responsibility. But in fulfilling that responsibility, we still have to trust absolutely in God. If He does not make the means effectual, all will be in vain.

Look at verse 1 again: "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." The word "keep" means to guard, to protect, to keep, and to watch. Unless the Lord—the great guard, the great watchman, the great protector, the Lord Protector—keeps the city, all is in vain. Are there times that God does not keep cities, nations, and countries? Are there times that God purposefully and deliberately gives cities, nations, and countries into the hands of their enemies?

God's Sovereignty in Delivering Nations to Enemies

And the answer is yes. I want you to turn, if you would, first of all just to the book of Judges. Judges chapter 2. We're going to look at a number of other passages. But Judges chapter 2. And notice if you would verse 14, this will just give you a smattering of an answer. And then we're going to look at really some in-depth scriptures. But notice Judges chapter 2 and verse 14. Look what the Bible says. Talking about Israel now. Well, look in verse 13. You'll see why.

"And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of the spoilers that spoiled them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies." Note, if you would, God sold them. God gave them into the hands of their enemies. What was the result? They could not stand before their enemies.

Look in Judges chapter 3 and verse 8. Again, the children of Israel have sinned against God. Verse 8, "Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia. And the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years." Look in your Bibles to Judges 3 and verse 12. "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord." Wow.

Here's three simple verses that show clearly, undeniably, that oftentimes God will sell His people into the hands of their enemies because of their sin and their rebellion. In other words, God ceases to be the protector. Were watchmen still upon the walls of these cities? Yes. Did these cities still have arms? Yes. Did Judah and Jerusalem still have an army? Yes. Did it do any good? No. I want you to turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 13. In 2 Chronicles chapter 13 King Abijah and Judah are fighting against apostate Israel and King Jeroboam has set an ambush behind Judah. Look in 2 Chronicles chapter 13 and let's begin reading there with verse 14. 2 Chronicles chapter 13 and verse 14. King Jeroboam now has set an ambush. In fact, let's read verse 13, "But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come behind them, so that they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them." So Judah's got enemy in front and enemy behind. Now look what happens in verse 14, "And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle was before and behind."

"And they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. Then the men of Judah gave a shout, and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah, and God delivered them, that is Israel, into their hand. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter. So there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men. Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers."

Was it Israel, the northern kingdom, professing to be God's people as well? Yes, they were—but they weren't. They were serving

the two golden calves in Dan and Bethel. God took little Judah and let her defeat a far greater nation, not only because Israel had sinned against God, but because Judah trusted in God.

It is absolutely astounding. We are so fickle and so sinful. Do you realize it is possible to trust in God at one time and for victory, and later to refuse to trust in God and trust in yourself? If God sovereignly, powerfully, graciously, and mercifully delivered you at one time, that should be sufficient to make you trust in Him at all times.

But look in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 14, verses 8 and 9, to see what King Asa of Judah was up against: "And Asa had an army of men that bear targets and spears out of Judah, three hundred thousand out of Benjamin that bear shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand. All these were mighty men of valor." He had 580,000 men. "And there came out against him Zerah the Ethiopian, with a host of a thousand thousand, that's a million, and three hundred chariots, and came to Mareshah." Thus, 580,000 were facing over a million.

Outnumbered two to one and facing three hundred chariots, that would tend to upset you. Look at verse 11: “And Asa cried unto the Lord his God and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God, let not man prevail against Thee. So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar. And the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves.”

“For they were destroyed before the Lord and before his host, and they carried away very much spoil.” What did God do? God gave Asa a tremendous victory. Five hundred eighty thousand defeated over a million! You would think that would be sufficient to establish the principle that we trust in God. But look in 2 Chronicles 16. When King Asa was attacked by Baasha, king of Israel, instead of relying upon the same God who delivered him from the Ethiopians, he hired Syria to attack Israel.

How did he hire him? By taking not only the money out of his house, but also the money out of the house of God. In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign, Baasha came against Judah and built Ramah so that none could go out or come in to Asa. "Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasuries of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and my father. Behold, I have sent thee silver and gold. Go, break thy league with Baasha, king of Israel, that he may depart from me. And Ben-Hadad hearkened to the king Asa, and he sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel."

"And they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard of it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease. Now Asa the king took all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof wherewith Baasha was building. And he built therewith Geba and Mizpah." Thus two cities were built out of this timber.

"And at that time, Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand." Verse 9 says, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."

Asa had trusted God to defeat a huge army, yet could not trust Him to defeat a smaller one. He turned from God to get a man off his back. He did not like wars; therefore, he would have them until he learned to trust God and do what was right.

When a people sin against God, it does not take a great army to defeat them. America talks about Russia, the bear, China, and all the people in China. But Joash, king of Judah, had sinned against the Lord and against Jehoiada the priest, and the princes of Judah,

along with King Joash, had led the people into idolatry. The account continues in 2 Chronicles 24:17.

After the death of Jehoiada, the princes of Judah came to the king and made obeisance to him. The king hearkened to them, and they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers and served groves and idols. The wrath of God came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this trespass. Yet God sent prophets to bring them again to the Lord. They testified against them, but the people would not give ear.

The Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people and said, "Thus saith God, Why transgress you the commandments of the Lord, that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He has forsaken you." They conspired against him and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord. They murdered the high priest's son who was preaching against them. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. When Zechariah died, he said, "The Lord look upon it and require it."

At the end of the year, the host of Syria came against Judah and Jerusalem, destroyed all the princes of the people, and sent the spoil to Damascus. The Syrian army came with a small company of men, and the Lord delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash. A tiny Syrian army took out Joash and Judah.

If you are not going to trust in God and obey Him, you do not necessarily have to fear the Russians or the Chinese. You might as well fear Castro and little Cuba. Little Cuba could do to us what the Syrians did to Judah. If God is not protecting us and watching over us, it does not take many to destroy a nation. God delivered a great nation into the hand of a very small army. When God does not keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Now look in 2 Chronicles 28. King Ahaz is here.

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. But he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord like David his father. He walked in the ways of the

king of Israel, made molten images for Baalim, burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. He sacrificed and burned incense in the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree. Wherefore, the LORD his God, watch, delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria. They smote him, carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. He also was delivered into the hands of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand men in one day, which were all valiant men. Here is why: because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. One day, 120,000 men. You have to remember that this was with bows and arrows and swords. It was not with tanks and missiles and grenades, bombers, and fighter jets. I am simply pointing out, folks, that when God does not protect a nation, it is not protected.

In 2 Chronicles 29:8 we read, “Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as you see with your eyes.” He goes on to say, “Our fathers have fallen by the sword, our sons, our daughters, our wives are in captivity.” What did God do? God delivered them over.

What would be the point in God delivering His people over into the hands of their enemies? You may answer, “Judgment. They deserve it. Justice.” I understand that. But there is another answer given to us in the Bible. In 2 Chronicles chapter 12, verse 8, God tells us a reason why He delivers His people over to the hands of their enemies: “Nevertheless they shall be his servants,” that is, the servants of the king who conquered them, “they shall be his servants, that they may know my service and the service

God says, “I've delivered them into the hands of their enemies that they may know My service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.” What is He trying to teach those people whom He delivered over? Not just that they deserve it, and not just for justice, though that is certainly part of it. God said, “I'm going to send you

into captivity. I'm going to let your enemies conquer you, that you may know my service and the service of these other countries."

Deuteronomy 28:47 says, "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things. Therefore thou shalt serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things. And he shall put a yoke of iron about thy neck, until he have destroyed thee." God said, "I'm going to let you learn something. I will let you learn the difference between my kingdom, and my law, and my love, and my grace, and man's law, and man's injustice. And when you serve these pagan countries, you will know that my kingdom and my love and my law are gracious indeed."

Some folks only learn the hard way. And dear friend, this is the hard way. The same God that delivers us out of the hands of our enemies is the same God that can deliver us into the hands of our enemies. He is our defense. He is our protector. If He doesn't protect us, we are not protected.

Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, had come against Judah and Jerusalem. At this time there was a godly king, Hezekiah, encouraging the people, although they were greatly outnumbered. Sennacherib had destroyed a multitude of cities and countries. Hezekiah said, "And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street by the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, for all the multitude that is with him."

Hezekiah said to the people, "Don't worry. Yes, there's a multitude with him, but there's really and truly more with us because we have the Lord on our side." With the enemy was the arm of the flesh, but with Judah was the Lord their God to help them and fight their battles. The people rested themselves upon Hezekiah's words, which means they trusted in the Lord. Did it work?

In 2 Chronicles 32:21-22 we read: "And the Lord sent an angel which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains of the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with

shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his God, they that came forth of his own bow slew him there with a sword. Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side." Did trusting in the Lord work? Yes. Hezekiah and the people were ready to fight, and they had weapons, but their weapons were worthless without God's sovereign protection.

Applications: Trusting God, Not Means

Let me make a couple of applications. First, no amount of preparation, weaponry, or alertness will help us unless God sovereignly protects us. Period. Proverbs 21:31 declares, "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord." Psalm 33:17 says, "A horse is a vain thing for safety, neither shall he deliver any by his great strength." You could paraphrase that by saying a tank is a vain thing for safety, or a naval vessel is a vain thing for safety. Neither will deliver any by its great power or strength.

There is no safety or protection outside the Lord of glory, the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Should you have weapons? Yes. Should you know how to use them? Yes. But you do not trust in the weapon. You trust in the Lord to make it effectual, to use you, awaken you, help you, and help you shoot straight. If God does not do it, you are not protected.

Secondly, David said in Psalm 4:8, "I will both lay me down and sleep in peace, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." We have to understand that our personal safety, our family safety, our ecclesiastical safety, and our national safety are of the Lord.

I love the story about the widow woman who, right after her husband died, had trouble going to sleep. She was fearful that someone was going to break into the house. One night, she was up late reading her Bible and came across the verse, "The Lord thy God that keepeth thee neither slumbereth nor sleepeth." When she read that, she closed her Bible and said, "Well, Lord, there's no need for both of us to stay awake. If You don't mind, I think I'll go to sleep."

That is true. The Lord God that keepeth thee neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. Often in the Bible we read, “And the Lord gave them rest round about from all their enemies.” That is simply God’s sovereign protection.

The last application is this: If we do not want to experience the service of man, we had better devote ourselves to the service of the Lord. If we do not want to know what the kingdoms of the pagans are like, we had better make sure that we give God the praise, honor, glory, and thankfulness in His kingdom. The Bible tells us in Joshua 21:44, “And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers. And there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hands.” If you want all your enemies delivered into your hands, you have to know that the path to victory is through obedience and faith. Proverbs 16:7 says, “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” If we want safety and protection, we must trust in the Lord and obey Him.

Conclusion: The True Lord Protector

He is the true Lord Protector. “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.”

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your blessing and help. Teach us to trust in Thee: to use the means, yet not trust in those means, but trust in Thee to make them effectual. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In Thy blessed and holy name we pray. Amen. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

Hard Hearted And Evil Hearted

Introduction and Scripture Reading

Matthew 27 gives us a striking picture of hard-hearted and evil-hearted men. This is our text. "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And when they had bound him, they led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor. Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned in that I betrayed the innocent blood.' And they said, 'What is that to us? See thou to that.' And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went out and hanged himself."

Everyone has known someone who was hard-hearted, and a few of us have known individuals who were evil-hearted. But probably none of us have ever known such men as the chief priests and the scribes who lived in the day of Jesus Christ. They were indeed corrupt men who had their conscience seared with a hot iron. They

had no shame, and they held nothing but contempt, not only for Jesus Christ, but also for just about everyone else. All they were interested in was basically what they desired and what they wanted.

The Nature of Corrupt Minds

The apostle Paul describes such men in 1 Timothy 4:2 as "speaking lies in hypocrisy and having their conscience seared with a hot iron." He tells us several things about the kind of individuals represented by these chief priests and scribes. In 1 Timothy 6:5 he says, "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness, from such withdraw thyself." These are men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that gain is godliness. They are the kind of men from whom we are told to withdraw ourselves.

In 2 Timothy 3:8 he says, "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth. Men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith."

Interestingly, in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and in 2 Timothy chapter 3, the word "corrupt" is used in each verse. However, it is a different Greek word. In 1 Timothy 6:5, when Paul speaks of "perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds," the word "corrupt" means that which corrupts in reference to the mind, morals, vigor, and strength, and leads to destruction in every area of life. This word is also used to designate the worm or moth that eats and destroys clothing and provision. A moth can get into your garment, and it may be a slow process when the moth begins to eat, but it is a devastating process, and it is a sure process. In 2 Timothy 3:8, the word "corrupt" refers to depravity and corruption, and that which leads to death. In other words, it is that which causes one to destroy, be destroyed, or to perish.

Interestingly, in both of these passages, in 1 Timothy 6 and 2 Timothy 3, that which is corrupted is the mind: "Men of corrupt minds." Such corruption of the mind, we must understand, is a corruption of our faculties. Our faculties, our mind, are that by which we perceive and understand. It is our mind that judges a feeling and that with which we determine. So if our minds are corrupt, then everything about us is going to be corrupt as well.

According to 1 Timothy chapter 6, corrupt minds are minds that are destitute of the truth. They are minds that are materially oriented.

Then, of course, he says, these are “reprobate concerning the faith.” The word “reprobate” literally means that which is rejected, that which is unapproved, that which is spurious, and that which is to be cast away. These men are men of corrupt minds. They are destitute of the truth. More than that, they stand against the truth, and they actually resist the truth.

Now, remember, the title of this message is “Hard-Hearted and Evil-Hearted.” All of us have heard songs. In fact, there was an old country song years ago about a hard-hearted woman and a soft-hearted man. Men can be just as hard-hearted as women. The truth is, most of us have probably never really known people who are hard-hearted and evil-hearted at the same time. We certainly read of hard-hearted people who not only murder their own children or watch them murdered and have absolutely no remorse. Yet it is very difficult for you and me to conceive in our minds that there are people who actually exist who are incapable of feeling and are entirely destitute of compassion and empathy.

Religious Intolerance and Murder

Our Lord reminded His disciples in John 16:2, “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God's service.” Have you ever considered death at the hands of the religiously intolerant? If not, stop and think about that. If you have never considered death at the hands of the religiously intolerant, I would encourage you to read Fox's Book of Martyrs.

You also might want to bone up on the Spanish Inquisition. There is absolutely nothing worse than murderers who murder freely and without remorse because they believe that is exactly what God would have them to do. Read about and witness the gruesome and horrible tortures and murders and mutilations of the Islamic jihadists, even toward women and children. They murder seemingly without an ounce of remorse; they do so gladly and with rejoicing, thinking that is exactly that which their God demands of them.

In the context of Matthew 27, Judas has betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, he sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. His actions were traitorous, treacherous, and treasonous. He personally knew that Jesus Christ was absolutely innocent and was absolutely pure, and yet he conspired with our Lord's enemies.

The Plot to Kill Jesus

Murder was in the hearts of the chief priests and the scribes and the Pharisees. It is true they wanted Jesus Christ, but they wanted Him dead. Matthew 26:3 says, “Then assembled together the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted”—that is, they plotted and planned—“and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill him. But they said, ‘Not on a feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.’” So here they are, wanting Jesus Christ dead.

And they're planning on killing him. But we're not going to do it on a feast day because we don't want to upset the people. We don't want them to be against us. We want to do what we want to do, but we want the approval and the recognition of the people at the same time. You have to understand now that chief priests were those who presided in ecclesiastical affairs. The elders were basically judges in civil matters, and the scribes were supposedly doctors of the law who were directing both the chief priest and the elders. So it was these men then that comprised the Sanhedrin, the Jewish body that controlled the religion and the people at that particular time.

Now, the interesting thing is this. If you look back in Matthew 26 in verse 3, the Bible says, "Then assembled together the chief priests," plural. When we think of the chief priest, we normally think of singular, a high priest or a chief priest, but now it's plural. So we have to ask, why is it plural? Here is why. Listen carefully. I'm going to show you the scripture.

The answer is because Caiaphas married the daughter of Annas, who was joined with him in the priesthood. I want you to hold Matthew 26 and 27, but look in your Bibles, first of all, to Luke chapter 3 and verse 2. Look in Luke 3 and verse 2. Then we're going to go to the book of Acts. But look in Luke 3 and verse 2. Here's an

interesting thing. And you're going to see that really times have not changed. But notice in Luke chapter 3 and verse 2, the Bible says, "Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness." So interestingly, both of these are named as high priests. If you look in your Bibles to Acts chapter 4 and verse 6, and this passage is very, very revealing. Acts chapter 4 and verse 6, we're still talking about Annas and Caiaphas. Look at this, if you would. In Acts chapter 4 and verse 6, the Bible says, "And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem."

What? Caiaphas, Annas, John, Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest. Are you listening? Nepotism abounded in the priesthood in Christ's day, just like nepotism abounds in our government today. You have a family or a clique that is in power and they want to stay in power. I don't care if you're talking about the Rockefellers, the Kennedys, the Clintons, doesn't matter who, it's the same thing.

“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, ‘What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?’ And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time, he sought opportunity to betray him.”

Judas's Betrayal and the Thirty Pieces of Silver

One has to absolutely wonder if there had been any previous communications between Judas and the high priest. Obviously, the high priest wanted Jesus Christ dead, and that was probably common knowledge. But look at verse 14: Judas is the one who instigated this betrayal. He went unto the chief priests and said, “What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?” The account does not say that the chief priests approached Judas; it says that Judas went unto them. The initiative is attributed to Judas.

I’m sure he knew that they would be sympathetic. I’m sure that he knew that they would want to get in on this deal. But he is the one who initiated it. Notice what he said unto them: “What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?” Isn’t it amazing? Suppose I went up to Henry and said, “What will you give me, and I will deliver

him unto you?" What would be Henry's first question? "Who is the him?" Who are we talking about? Oh, they knew automatically who Judas was talking about.

I find it interesting that Judas was almost ashamed to call the name of Jesus Christ right here. He simply said, "I'll deliver him unto you." The Bible says, "And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time, he sought opportunity to betray him."

Anytime anyone betrays Jesus Christ, it is with opportunity. It is convenient. In another passage, the Bible said he sought a convenient time to betray him. We always want to do things when it is convenient with us, and it does not reflect upon us at all.

The Bible says they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. Have you ever wondered about the thirty pieces of silver? Hold Matthew 26 and 27, but turn to the book of Zechariah, the book right before Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament.

SCRIPTURE READING - Zechariah 11:12-13; Matthew 27:9 (KJV)

It was prophesied concerning these thirty pieces of silver. Zechariah 11:12-13 says:

"And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

That passage in Zechariah is applied to Jesus Christ in Matthew 27:9. The Bible says, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value."

Why did they say, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet," Jeremiah, not Zechariah? Well, Jeremiah certainly probably related this as well, but Zechariah was the one who gave this as well. And so, they took this thirty pieces of silver. Notice: "the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value."

Notice the latter portion of verse 9: “whom they of the children of Israel did value.”

Zechariah calls the thirty pieces of silver “a goodly price.” A goodly price for what? Have you ever wondered why they covenanted with Judas for thirty pieces of silver? Why not fifty, a hundred, twenty-nine, or forty-six? Why was it thirty pieces of silver? The Bible says, “of whom the children of Israel did value him.” What was thirty pieces of silver a goodly price for?

If you turn to Exodus 21, you will find what thirty pieces of silver was a goodly price for. Look at verse 32: “If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant”—that is, a slave—“he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.” Thirty shekels of silver was the price of a slave.

When they covenanted with Judas for thirty pieces of silver, they were valuing Christ like a slave. They thought no more of Jesus Christ than a slave. Therefore, when the chief priests and the scribes came up with thirty pieces of silver, it was a demonstration of their absolute contempt for Jesus Christ. He was no more than a servant and no more than a slave to them.

Albert Barnes says of the thirty pieces of silver: “The money usually denoted by pieces of silver, when the precise sum is not mentioned, that is a shekel, a silver Jewish coin amounting to about 50 cents. The whole sum, therefore, for which Judas committed this crime was $15.” That is a paltry sum.

Yes. $15. But when you consider that the average wage in that day was one penny, according to Matthew chapter 20, thirty pieces of silver would amount to a half year's wages. After this agreement, Judas began to seek an opportunity to betray Jesus Christ. We know how Judas—and I am using this word facetiously—lovingly betrayed Jesus Christ with a kiss. The show of affection certainly did not fool Christ for one second. Before Judas kissed Him, our Lord said unto him in Luke 22 and verse 48, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" He knew exactly what Judas was going to do and exactly what that kiss meant.

When Judas betrayed Christ with that kiss, Jesus Christ was taken, captured, and carried before the Sanhedrin. He was taken to

Pilate and condemned. Pilate gave Jesus Christ over to the will of the people, although he personally knew that Jesus Christ was absolutely innocent. In fact, it is amazing that three times in Scripture Pilate declares the innocence of Jesus Christ.

In John 18 and verse 38, Pilate said unto Him, "What is truth?" Then he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no fault in him at all." In John 19 and verse 4, Pilate therefore went forth again and said to them, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that you may know that I find no fault in him." Finally, in John 19 and verse 6, when the chief priests and officers cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said, "Take him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him." Three times Pilate declared His innocence.

Why did Judas betray Jesus Christ? We know that his betrayal was ordained from before the foundation of the world. We understand that. In fact, our Lord Himself said in Mark 14:21, "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. Good were it for that man that he had never been born." So we know that the betrayal of Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

But I am not now asking theologically why Judas betrayed Jesus Christ. I am asking, humanly speaking, why would he betray Jesus Christ? Is there an answer? There is. In fact, there are several. A couple of them may be conjectures, and I will tell you those conjectures, but I will show you from Scripture why I believe that he actually betrayed Jesus Christ. It is true that some people think, as a good possibility, that Judas had a particular motive.

The Motive and Repentance of Judas

Judas could have thought that he would betray Jesus Christ, get the money, and, since Jesus Christ was absolutely innocent, He would not be condemned. Therefore, Judas would be better off financially, Christ would not be condemned, no one would ever know it, and it would be over. That could be a possible conjecture. We do not know.

Another conjecture is this: Some think that Judas was trying to force Christ to play His hand. In other words, he actually thought that Christ might kill His enemies and set up His kingdom right

there. That is a conjecture. There is nothing in the Scripture that even indicates that. But if you want to know why Judas betrayed Christ, I will show you.

In John chapter 12, beginning with verse 1, we read: "Then Jesus, six days before the Passover"—that is when He must die—"came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard."

Notice these next two words: “very costly.” Mary “anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then said one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, ‘Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?’” Three hundred pence was nearly a year’s wages. Why did he say this? “This he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the bag and bare what was put therein.” Why did Judas betray Christ? He was a greedy, covetous thief. He wanted the money. He had probably been stealing from the bag the disciples had entrusted to him. Who knows? The Bible says he was an absolute thief. So he wanted the money.

Judas had betrayed Christ, and Christ had been taken and condemned. “When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And when they had bound him, they led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor. Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have sinned in that I betrayed the innocent blood.’”

“And they said, ‘What is that to us? See thou to it.’ And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went out and hanged himself.” When Judas understood that Christ was condemned, the Bible says he “repented himself.” That is, he changed his mind.

There was nothing biblical or spiritual about that repentance. It was merely a worldly repentance that led to sorrow but not to

salvation. Judas repented, but not like Peter. Peter repented, believed, and was pardoned. Judas repented, despaired, and was ruined.

The apostle explains the difference between worldly repentance and godly repentance: “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of. But the sorrow of this world worketh death.” Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation, but the sorrow of this world only works death. It certainly worked death in Judas. It was a mental, emotional, and physical death for him. He hanged himself.

Before he hanged himself, Judas restored the thirty pieces of silver and declared, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” John Trapp, the old Puritan, said this concerning the repentance of Judas: “Here was contrition, confession, restitution. Most men go not so far that yet profess large hopes of heaven. There was wanting or lacking that transmutation, conversion, and obedience of faith that should have completed his repentance.”

“He died in the birth as that foolish child Ephraim. He confessed to men and not to God. And by his confession, he sought no more than to ease his heart as drunkards by vomiting rid their stomachs.” What was Judas concerned with? Himself. All he was trying to do was get rid of the guilty conscience.

I remember years ago reading about a man who walked into a police station in Alabama. He confessed to having murdered a man in an unsolved murder that had happened twenty years earlier, and he wanted them to arrest him. They refused because they did not think he had murdered the individual. When he could not be arrested, he went back home and hanged himself, and they found him dead. What was he trying to do? Rid his guilty conscience of the guilt. That is all Judas was trying to do.

Albert Barnes makes this statement concerning Christ and Judas’s words, “I have sinned in that I betrayed the innocent blood”: “This confession is a remarkable proof that Jesus was innocent. Judas had been with him three years. He had seen him in public and private. He had heard his public teaching and his private views. He

had seen him in all circumstances. And if he had done anything evil or advanced anything against the Roman emperor, Judas was competent to testify to it.

"Had he known any such thing, he would have stated it. He would have appeared to vindicate himself. His testimony, being a disciple of Jesus, would have been to the chief priests far more valuable than that of any other man. And that he might not only have escaped the horrors of a troubled conscience and an awful death, but have looked for an ample reward. That he did not make such a charge, that he fully and frankly confessed that Jesus was innocent, and that he gave up all of his ill-gotten price of treason is full proof in the belief of Judas, the Savior was free from crime and even the suspicion of the crime." And that is true.

Judas comes back and says, "I have sinned in that I betrayed the innocent blood," and throws down the thirty shekels of silver. The response of the chief priests, scribes, and rulers is absolute evidence not only of their hardness of heart, but their evilness of heart. They professed no love for God, and certainly no love for man.

The Hard-Hearted Response of the Religious Leaders

What they just said violated all ten commandments. In Matthew 27, after Judas confesses, they say, "What is that to us? See thou to it." They had no concern for God; they violated the first four commandments. They had no concern for Judas; they violated the last six commandments.

They had no concern for Judas, his despairing attitude, his heartfelt confession of his evil deed, or the innocence of Christ. Their answer denoted that they had nothing to do with his remorse of conscience or his belief that Jesus Christ was innocent. It signified that if Judas had sinned, he must answer for himself. That was absolutely no concern to them.

They saw Judas in his abject state of despair, recoiling at his wickedness and the vileness of the deed he had committed, and their attitude was, "What's that to us?" It was no skin off their nose; it did not affect them. They were simply saying, "Your so-called repentance and retraction and ruin are nothing to us. If you want to alleviate

your guilty conscience, if you want to kill yourself, see thou to that. We used you. We got that which we wanted, and now we could care less what happens to you. Go kill yourself. We don't care. It doesn't affect us one way or the other."

How would you like to go to a pastor for counseling when you are in despair, depressed, and troubled, and the pastor looks at you and says, "Well, just go kill yourself and take care of all the problems. It does not matter to me what you do." I would not want to be around that preacher. These are the pastors. These are the religious men. They say to Judas, "See thou to it." They did not even consider him a neighbor, a friend, or even a man. They could care less. They used him and discarded him.

There are a lot of religious, civil, and political leaders who do the same thing. Look at what we do to our so-called soldiers. We use them and discard them. It is the same thing, the same principle.

Secondly, the confession of Judas that he betrayed the innocent blood did not really matter to them. You have to consider its impact. His all-wise providence ordered it that a testimony bearing the innocence of Jesus Christ came from the mouth of the vile wretch who betrayed Him. The Jews might have argued that His disciples knew Him to be a wicked man and that one of His disciples had betrayed Him. Yes, one of His disciples betrayed Him, but that disciple came back and said, "He is absolutely innocent. I am the one that is wrong."

In the eyes of the chief priests and scribes, Jesus Christ deserved to die because they counted Him a blasphemer and believed He violated their law. He did violate their law, but not God's law; He violated their interpretation and misrepresentation of God's law. Therefore, when Judas came back and said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," it did not faze them one little bit. According to their view, they deserved to live and Christ deserved to die.

It is absolutely true that they were just as guilty as Judas because they were involved in the deal to betray Jesus Christ. Yet they somehow believed they were guiltless. They believed that, since they did not actually betray Christ and since Christ was legally

condemned by Pilate, they were clear and clean in the matter. Do you remember that Naboth was legally condemned by the elders of Jezreel? It was false testimony, but he was legally condemned at Jezebel's instigation and order. Did Ahab tell Jezebel to have Naboth killed? No.

She said, “Art thou not the king of it? Give me that stamp. Give me that seal. I’ll take care of this for you.” And she put a stamp on the order for them to have Naboth there, have false witnesses come, and then take him out and stone him. They not only murdered Naboth, they murdered his sons as well. And when she found out, she told Ahab, “Go down and get your garden. Naboth is dead. He’s not alive.” But isn’t it interesting, when God sent Elijah to Ahab, the first thing that Elijah says to Ahab is, “Hast thou killed and also taken possession?” Did Ahab kill Naboth? No. Did he sign the order?

No, he knew it was being done. He was a perpetrator. He was an actor, although he was not the one who actually did it. And you know what Peter did when he was preaching in Acts chapter 2? He looked at those Jews and he said, “You have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain Jesus Christ.” He says, “You’re all guilty.”

Now let me ask you, why were the chief priests and the scribes and the elders so intent on putting Jesus Christ to death? Why did they want him dead? Well, the answer is this: because their hearts were not only hardened, but they were evil. Here were men who were not interested in truth. They were not interested in righteousness, holiness, or justice. They were only interested in themselves.

In John chapter 11, beginning with verse 47, “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council and said, ‘What do we? For this man doeth many miracles.’” In other words, they could not deny it. So they had to do something. Verse 48 says, “If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him. And the Romans shall come and take away both our place and our nation.” If they let him alone, all men would believe, and they would lose their place, their power, and their position. Therefore, they had to do something. They had to kill him. That way they could keep their place, their power, and their position. Are you listening?

The same principle is applicable today. If the Word of God were followed, obeyed, and applied, most governmental bureaucracy would disappear overnight. There would be no place for the powers that be, because the Bible teaches liberty, freedom, and self-responsibility. Do you know why our government is so dead set against Christianity and biblical law? Because if Christianity and biblical law were raised up, they would lose their position and power.

The leaders are more interested in the status quo than in reform and restitution. They are not interested in making things right; they are interested in keeping things wrong so they can maintain their control and power. What did they say to Judas? "What is that to us? See thou to it." It really does not matter to our elders and civil rulers whether we kill ourselves or not. What difference does it make to them if twenty-two veterans commit suicide every single day?

There is no skin off their nose. That is just somebody else they do not have to support, somebody else they do not have to have at the VA hospital taking up their time. "What is that to us? See thou to it." That statement reveals absolute hard-heartedness and absolute evil-heartedness. They could care less about God and consequently could care less about man.

Applications and Warnings

The first application is this: Sin may be tasty in the beginning, but in the end it is heartache, misery, and death. Scripture says it is sweet to the mouth, but bitter to the belly. Matthew Henry, speaking of the sin of Judas, states: "Now, in the end, now he curses the bag that he carried, the money he coveted, the priests he dealt with, and the day that he was born. The remembrance of his master's goodness to him which he had so basely requited, the bowels of mercy he had spurned, and the fair warnings he had slighted, steeled his convictions and made them even more piercing. Now he found his master's words true: 'It were better for that man that he had never been born.'"

Sin will soon change its taste. Though it be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, in the bowels, it will be turned into the gall of asps, like John's book in Revelation 10 and verse 9. All sin is

tantalizing, tasty, enticing, and exciting in the beginning, but in the end it brings forth death.

The second application is this: consenting to sin and being an accessory to sin is to be guilty of sin. Psalm 50:16 says, “But unto the wicked God saith, ‘What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?’” Then: “Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentest with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.”

How do they consent to thievery and theft? By not saying anything, by not revealing it, by not reproaching it, and by not judging it. How did they become partakers with adulterers? By not declaring its wickedness and vileness. They were silent, and God charges them with being absolutely guilty.

Matthew Henry says: “It is folly for us to think that the sins of others are nothing to us, especially those sins that we are in any way an accessory to or partakers in. Is it nothing to us that God is dishonored, souls wounded, Satan gratified, and his interests served, and that we have aided and abetted it? If the elders of Jezreel to please Jezebel murder Naboth, is it nothing to Ahab?”

“Yes, he is killed, for he's taken possession. The guilt of sin is not so easily transferred as some people think it is. If there was guilt in the matter, they tell Judas, that he must look to it, he must bear it. First, because he had betrayed him to them. His was indeed the greater sin, but it did not therefore follow that theirs was no sin. It is a common instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts to extenuate our own sin by the aggravation of other people's sins.”

“But the judgment of God is according to truth, not according to comparison.” I could look at Doc and say, “Oh, what an awful man. He's horrible. Thank God I'm not as bad as he is.” What? But I am. I noticed I had to pick him—he's here—but you notice what I'm doing. I could say, “Whoo, at least.” By the way, this happens in prison. This happens in prison.

The murderers are over here, and the thieves are over here. The thieves will say, “At least I’m not a murderer.” The murderer will say, “I didn’t rape a child. I’m not a pedophile.” They are extenuating and

excusing their own sins by looking at the aggravated sins of everyone else. You cannot do that. Your sin is your own, and sin is sin, guilty before God.

God's judgment is always according to truth, not comparison. Thirdly, the actions of Judas should have excited the chief priests and scribes to repentance. They heard his confession and saw his restitution, but they were unmoved by his suicide. Such is evidence of a seared conscience, and it aggravates their criminality. In refusing to consider Judas's actions, they condemned themselves. In one sense, they were worse than Judas, because at least Judas was sorrowful and made restitution. They were not even remorseful; they rejoiced in the death of an innocent man. Their sin was actually worse. God is telling us that the perpetrator and the actor, the planner and the actor, are both guilty in His sight.

Fourthly, when we are unmoved at the plight, disaster, and remorse of others, we need to examine our own hearts. If I am unmoved by people on the prayer list who are in dire straits fighting cancer, and do not consider praying for them, thinking of them, or helping them, I had better examine my heart. If I am unmoved even at the fall of my enemy, I had better examine my heart. There is a sense of relief when our enemies fall, but it should also be in our hearts: "Lord, I wanted him gone, but not necessarily just like that. That's awful." When we think of a wicked man dying a wicked death and then facing a holy, righteous God, that is nerve-wracking. Proverbs 24:17 says, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth."

We may be thankful, but we are not rejoicing over it.

Sin always hardens our heart. Do you realize that the more we sin, the easier it is to sin? The easier it is to sin, the harder our hearts become; and the harder our hearts become, the more evil our hearts become. That is why Proverbs 4 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

When you read through the New Testament, even the apostles, the disciples of Jesus Christ, were asked, "Is your heart also hardened?" The Bible says several times that their hearts were hardened. We are not talking about the wicked; we are talking about

the disciples of Jesus Christ. So we need to learn to keep our hearts with all diligence, for out of our hearts are the issues of life.

We do not want to become hard-hearted and evil-hearted. We know people like that, and the wicked are like that, but we are not to be like that. That is why, in Romans chapter 12, our Lord—quoting from the Old Testament—said, “If your enemy hungers, what? Feed him. If he’s thirsty, what? Give him water.”

God didn't tell you to go out and buy him a T-bone steak, or the most expensive drink in the world, or a Frappuccino or Starbucks coffee. Give him water. Why are you to feed your enemy and give him water? To keep your own heart, and to make sure you don't become hard-hearted and evil-hearted.

Just because he does wrong does not mean that you are going to do wrong. Keep your heart with all diligence, lest you become hard-hearted and evil-hearted.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word, for Your truth, and we pray, Father, that You would speak to our hearts. Keep us, Lord, warm. Make our hide tough and our hearts tender. And help us to be in honor to the Lord Jesus Christ and to worship Him alone, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

Does This Make You Want To Pray?

The title of the message today is, “Does This Make You Want to Pray?” I’m going to be quoting a lot of scriptures just to save time, in order to try to save my voice since I’m coming down with a little sinus problem. But there are a number of passages I do want you to turn to. In Psalm 12, we read all eight verses:

“Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity every one with his neighbor, with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaketh proud things. Who have said, ‘With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us?’ For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in the furnace of the earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord. Thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked walk on every side when the vilest of men are exalted.”

Introduction: The Need for Timely and Urgent Prayer

When it comes to prayer, the truth of the matter is most of us pray. I am sure that each one of us would probably acknowledge and confess that we do not pray as often as we should. We can also say that we can be in an attitude of prayer when it is absolutely impossible to be actually on our knees in prayer. But the truth of the matter is we miss many opportunities to pray. There are times that it is very convenient, and there are times that it is inconvenient, but yet we must pray.

It is possible to pray on our beds before we go to sleep. It is also possible to pray early in the morning when we awaken. In fact, the truth of the matter is we should be praying before we ever, ever put our feet on the floor.

David said it like this in Psalm 63 and verse 6: "I will remember thee upon my bed and meditate on thee in the night watches." So David says, when I lie down at night, I'm going to remember you. And when I awaken, I'm going to meditate on you in the night watches. So if you wake up during the night, one of the simplest things to do is just simply start praying.

That is a good opportunity to pray. David said in Psalm 119:148, "My eyes prevent or precede the night watches, that I might meditate upon thy word." Even lying on his bed, David was meditating upon the Word of the Lord.

Early in the morning, before we get out of bed, is another excellent time to pray. David said in Psalm 63:1, "O God, my God, early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee. My flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Notice that he said, "Early will I seek Thee." Isaiah said similarly in Isaiah 26:9, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness." Each time we talk about praying and meditating upon the Word of God at night, we should also remember seeking the Lord early in the morning.

David also had stated times of prayer. He said in Psalm 55:17, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and

he shall hear my voice." Thus David had three specific, stated times of prayer, although he prayed often.

Psalm 32 is one of the penitential Psalms. David is confessing and acknowledging his sins, but he gives us important truths: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto thee."

Notice at least three truths here. First, David said that everyone who is godly will acknowledge and confess his sins. A godly man does indeed know about his sins, and they weigh heavily upon him.

Secondly, the prayer of the godly would be in a time when God could be found. That is what he meant in verse 6: "for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." The implication is very clear: there is a time when God cannot be found. Many falsely and erroneously assume that their access to God will always be unhindered and unfettered. They are patently wrong. David says there is a time when God cannot be found.

Thirdly, he says in verse 6, "surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto thee." He is talking about times of great calamity, floods of great waters when many would not be able to come to God. Why? Because of stress, distress, pressure, danger, and death. Oftentimes, when someone is hurting and under extreme pressure and stress, he cannot think. He cannot set his mind upon God and spiritual things. All he can do is concentrate upon his hurt and his problem.

So David says, first, all the godly will confess and acknowledge their sin. Second, they will do it in a time when God may be found. Third, there is a time when people will not be able to pray and seek the Lord because of the stress of the situation. Undoubtedly, people prayed when the waters began to descend in Noah's time, but their prayer was too late. Men and women probably prayed when the fire and brimstone fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah, but their prayer was

too late. People probably prayed when the Tower of Siloam fell and killed those eighteen people, but their prayer was too late.

The Bible says in Isaiah 55:6, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” The verse clearly teaches that there is a time when God cannot be found and when God is not near. Our prayers, then, have to be timely, and they also have to be urgent. Psalm 12 gives an excellent example of a timely and urgent prayer. When should we pray, and how should we pray in a timely and urgent manner? It is time to pray when the wicked are in control and prospering.

A Passionate Petition

They are spreading corruption universally speaking. It is a time to pray when people are proud, arrogant, and haughty. It is a time to pray when the righteous are persecuted and prosecuted and in grave bodily danger. It is a time to pray when there is faithlessness, idolatry, blasphemy, and ridicule. If we look at Psalm 12, we will understand this urgent praying.

A Passionate Petition (Psalm 12:1)

The very first point is a passionate petition. Verse 1 says, “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men.”

I like the way David begins his prayer. He simply says, “Help, Lord.” There is no formality. It is a cry of urgency. David does not have time to be formal, flowery, or to beat around the bush. The situation is urgent, and so he is very passionate in this petition. He just cries, “Help, Lord.”

It reminds me of the prayer of Peter. In Matthew chapter 14, verse 30, Peter was walking on the water, but when he saw that the wind was boisterous and the waves were great, he began to sink. What did Peter say? “Help, Lord.” He cried out, essentially, “Lord, save me.” He did not have time to begin a formal prayer, or for flowery language and posturing. Peter realized that if the Lord Jesus Christ did not do something instantly, he was a goner. It is the same thing David is praying about in verse 1 of Psalm 12.

David recognizes the urgency of the situation. The Hebrew word for "help" is also the word "save." David is not just crying for divine help; he is also crying for divine salvation. The word rendered "help" is largely used for what we would call all manner of saving, helping, delivering, and preserving. David sees the desperateness of his situation and cries out to God.

One of our problems in Christendom is this: We do not see the desperateness of the situation that we are really and truly in. We do not understand the times in which we are living, the danger that we are genuinely in, or even the plans of the enemies. I am afraid that if you and I really and truly understood what was going on, it not only would depress us, but it would certainly make us cry to God in a desperate plea like David is doing: "Help, Lord."

When David cried, "Help, Lord," he understood that no human could help him. Government would not help him. People cooperating would not help him. He understood that this call for divine aid, divine help, and divine salvation was urgently needed. David needed help, and he needed it now. His attitude was this: "God, if You do not help, if You do not save, all is lost, all is gone." He is acknowledging that only God could take care of the situation.

What is it that disturbed David so greatly that made him cry out in this passionate petition, "Help, Lord"? One of the answers is given to us in verse 1: "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

Has the deterioration of the church ever really bothered you? Have you ever become upset over the fact that there is a lack of godly, faithful men in our society? Has it ever bothered you that such men of honesty, integrity, and character are few and far between and very rarely found? Have you ever contemplated that when the upstanding, righteous, and faithful men perish, no one arises to take their place?

They are simply gone. David is seeing a particular situation among his people and society: the godly man and the faithful man are dying out; they are failing and becoming less and less. We understand that if the godly die, obviously they are gone. But why

does God oftentimes remove the godly and the faithful? We look around and think they are needed so desperately.

God says in Isaiah 57:1, "The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart." That is, no man considers this, meditates upon this, or is really concerned about the fact that the righteous are dying off. Now watch: "The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart."

"And merciful men are taken away, here it is, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Wow. So God says oftentimes He removes His righteous and godly and faithful men out of this world so that they will not see the evil that is coming upon them, or upon this world.

This passage actually teaches us two truths. First of all, God often takes the righteous out of this world so that they will not experience the evil that is to fall upon it. You will find that in 2 Kings chapter 22, verses 18-20. There was a king by the name of Josiah, and when he heard the Word of God when it was read to him, he trembled. He fell on his face, rent his garments, cried out to the Lord, and sent someone to inquire of the Lord.

And here is what the Lord said to him: "As touching the words which thou hast heard, because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes and wept before me. I have also heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered unto thy grave in peace. And thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place."

So God said, "Josiah, you have been a godly man. I am going to remove you. You are going to die in peace; you will not see all the evil that I bring upon this place."

When the Bible says that the righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come, you have to understand this: when God removes the righteous, the godly, and faithful men, evil cannot but help to come. There is not

going to be anyone around to fight against it, to expose it, and to decry it. Usually society becomes far more corrupt when the godly are taken away.

Let me put it to you very plainly: without righteous men there cannot be any righteous influence. Without godly men there cannot be any godly influence. Without faithful men there is no one to communicate honesty and integrity. Proverbs 11:8 says, “the righteous is delivered out of trouble and the wicked cometh in his stead.” When God delivers the righteous out of trouble, the wicked falls in his stead. What happens when a wicked man gets in trouble?

He does whatever is necessary to get himself out of trouble. He becomes more corrupt, more wicked, and more vile. When wicked men are in trouble, corruption abounds. Have you ever noticed, as you have studied Scripture, that there is a difference between godly rulers and ungodly rulers? Proverbs 28:12 says, “when righteous men do rejoice there is great glory, but when the wicked man rises a man is hidden.” When the wicked rise, a man is hidden. A righteous man, or a godly man—a man with any sense—is going to get out of the way of the wicked because he knows the wicked is going to try to run over him.

Proverbs 29:2 says, “when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice but when the wicked bear rule the people mourn.” Look in Atlanta, Georgia; look in Tallahassee, Florida; look in Washington, D.C., and find righteous men with character, integrity, and honor, and men who will stand for biblical truth and the principles laid out in the Word of God. Where are those men? You may look in any state capitol. I noticed the other day, I read an article: Congress has now called the Millionaire Club, because everybody up there is a millionaire. You are not necessarily a millionaire when you get up there, but before you leave, you are usually a multimillionaire.

And did you know they said that the average Senate race cost an individual over eight million Federal Reserve notes? Why in the world would somebody want to spend eight million Federal Reserve notes to get a job that only pays several hundred thousand a year? Stop and think about that. The question I'm trying to ask is this: I don't care if you look in the business world, the political world, or

the governmental world. Wherever you look, you're going to find that men of character, honesty, and integrity are rare. They are very, very hard to find.

When godliness goes, faithfulness inevitably follows. Without the fear of God, men have no love of the truth. Common honesty is no longer common, and common irreligion always leads to universal godlessness and corruption.

David is describing in Psalm 12 a situation almost like this, practically the same. In Micah 7, Micah says, "Woe is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleaners of the vintage. There is no cluster to eat. My soul desires the first ripe fruit." There is nothing. He is starving.

Now notice what has happened and why. "The good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood. They hunt every man his brother with a net, that they may do evil with both hands earnestly. The prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward, and the great man he uttereth his mischievous desires, so they wrap it up. The best of them is a briar, and the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge.

“The day of thy watchman and thy visitation cometh, shall be their perplexity.” God says, “I’m going to nail you, watch. Trust you not in a friend, put you not confidence in a guide. Keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonored the father, and the daughter riseth against her mother. The daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man’s enemies are the men of his own house. Therefore while I look unto the Lord I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me.”

Micah is saying the same thing that David is saying: God is the only one who can get us out of this trouble. If you and I really understood that the godly man is ceasing and the faithful are failing among the children of men, it would make us cry out urgently too, saying, “Help, Lord.” In other words, we are in a world of hurt, and we do not really understand it.

There is a second reason why David cried, “Help, Lord,” revealed in verses 2–4: a proud populace. Verse 2 says, “They speak vanity every one to his neighbor. With flattering lips and with a double

heart do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaketh proud things. Who have said, 'With our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?'"

A Proud Populace (Psalm 12:2-4)

These verses demonstrate clearly the result of the loss of godly and faithful men. Where godliness and faithfulness decline, wickedness arises. Where there is no fear of God, there is no respect of man. Luke 18:1–2 says that our Lord spoke a parable unto them that men ought always to pray and not to faint, saying, "There was in a city a judge who feared not God nor regarded man." If you do not fear God, you will have no regard for man, his family, his property, or anything.

Psalm 12:2 nails this down: "They speak vanity, everyone with his neighbor, with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak." Where truth and honesty fail, dishonesty and a double heart always arise. In Hebrew, "a double heart" is actually "a heart and a heart"—someone with two hearts. Someone tells you something but means something else, or says one thing and then acts and does another. That is a double heart.

So he is saying that once godliness disappears, once faithfulness is gone, man is left with nothing but insincerity, falsehood, and hypocrisy—not only in regard to himself, but in regard to others as well. There could be numerous illustrations of this truth. Remember what Cain did to Abel, how he deceived him; what Joab did to Abner and to Amasa; what Judas did to the Lord Jesus Christ; and what the Herodians did to Christ.

What the hypocrites still do to God is this: they say one thing and act in a different manner. Look again at verse 2, because there is a connection between flattering lips and treachery: "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour, with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." Notice that flattery goes with a double heart. Then, in verse 3, "The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips." There is flattering lips again.

Turn to Jeremiah chapter 9, and notice verses 4 and 5. Here we are talking about double tongues. In fact, let us go back to verse 3:

"They bend their tongues like their bow for lies, but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity." So here is nothing but pure flattery, and flattery and treachery are connected.

The flatterer gives one thing to your face, and then acts differently behind your back. Here is what God says in verse 3: "The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things." Flattering lips are what you and I would call lying lips; they are treacherous lips, deceitful lips, wicked lips, and also arrogant lips. I do not know about you, but have you noticed how unafraid and unabashed people are to blaspheme God?

You remember that supposedly comedian—I never watched her. What did she say when she got that award? She said, "A lot of people thank Jesus Christ." Then she said, "I want you to know Jesus Christ had nothing to do with this. This is mine." What?

Why in the world would someone have to say something like that? The problem is this: the individual who does not fear God will certainly have no regard for man. You remember Asaph in Psalm 73 was envious of the wicked when he saw their prosperity. Then he made this statement concerning the wicked: "They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression, they speak loftily, they set their mouths against the heavens and their tongue walking through the earth." In other words, these arrogant, flattering, lying, deceitful lips are not afraid to attack man or God. It does not bother them at all.

That is why Jude the Apostle calls them raging waves of the sea that foam out their own shame. Men cannot tame the tongue of flatterers. However, God has an unanswerable answer. He says He is going to cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaketh proud things. He will bring them down to the ground.

Now, let me show you the arrogance that I am talking about. Look in verse 4. Here is what these people think and say: “Who have said, ‘With our tongues will we prevail. Our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us?’” This does not mean that these people stood up and formally announced their defiance in rebellion against God. They could have, but they did not need to, because their words, lives, actions, and conduct evidenced very clearly that they were in rebellion against God. They were saying that God had nothing to do with their lives, that they framed their own lives, and that they were in absolute control.

It was with their tongue that they expected to accomplish everything. It was not necessarily by violence. They were relying totally upon their power of speech and their ability to influence others, deceive others, persuade others, and talk them into doing whatever they wanted them to do. “Our lips are our own.” We are our own lord. We have a right, they are saying, to control who we are and what we are. We have a right to live the way we want to live.

It is kind of like what Pharaoh said to Moses in Exodus 5:1 when Moses came up to Pharaoh and said, “Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go.” Pharaoh answered in Exodus 5:2, “Who is the Lord?”

Pharaoh says, “should obey His voice and let Israel go. I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” What is he saying? “I don't recognize any God above me. I am my own God. I am in control.” A wicked, corrupt, godless, and proud populace refuses to acknowledge God and refuses to acknowledge His sovereignty. They believe that they are in control.

When you have such a populace, “the wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted.” You look at the vilest men who are in positions of power, and you look at the wicked walking on every side. In Psalm 12, verse 1 is this passionate plea. Then, in verses 2–4, you have this proud populace, so arrogant and rebellious. The result appears in verse 5.

A Persecuted People (Psalm 12:5)

There is a persecuted people. He says, “for the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, Now will I arise, saith the Lord, I

will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." When wickedness reigns, persecution and oppression are the result. The Hebrew word for oppression in verse 5 is shod, which is translated in our Bibles as spoil, destruction, desolation, robbery, wasting, and oppression. It speaks of havoc, violence, ruin, destruction, and devastation. The haughtiness and arrogance of a populace always leads to persecution and oppression. When we hear the word poor, we normally think of someone who does not have any money, or someone who does not have a sufficient amount of money.

To say that is not what the Bible is talking about here. The word poor is translated in our Bibles as poor, afflicted, weak, lowly, humble, and needy. So, when the Scripture says, "for the oppression of the poor," it means that those proud, arrogant, haughty individuals are willing to take advantage of anyone they can. They normally take advantage of someone who will not fight back or who cannot fight back.

Sometimes that includes money, but sometimes it includes weakness, lowliness, humility, and many other things as well. Obviously, he is talking here about real, genuine persecution. Look in verse 5 again: "for the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy."

The Hebrew word for sighing also means crying out and groaning. It speaks of lamentation and woe. The persecution is real and genuine, and its reality is revealed in the next word. The word needy refers to those who are in need of deliverance, help, or whatever is required to deliver them from all this persecution.

Then God says, "Now will I arise, saith the Lord, I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." God says that He will arise and set these people in safety from those who puff at them. These are the people who say, "our lips are our own. Who's Lord over us? We'll do exactly what we want to do." God refers to all their talk and boasting as puffing. The word literally means to puff, to blow, or to snort. God says, in effect, that He will deliver the poor and needy from the one who is merely blowing hot air.

That person thinks he can accomplish something and do something, but God will show him that he cannot. His lips are not

his own, his tongue is not his own, and his power is not his own. David said it this way in Psalm 64:1: "hear my voice oh my God, in my prayer preserve my life from the enemy." I want you to look in Psalm 79. I can quote this, but I want you to see it. Here is a verse that I quote quite frequently.

Here is a verse that you need to pray, especially in regard to those Christians who are being persecuted, incarcerated for the faith's sake, and facing martyrdom. Notice Psalm 79 and verse 11: "Let the sighing or the groaning of the prisoner come before thee, according to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou those that are appointed to die." Isn't that a tremendous verse? Do you realize you could actually pray this for people you do not even know? There is a woman by the name of Asia Bibi, I think she is from Pakistan, who converted to Christ and has been incarcerated.

They are trying to kill her because they said that she blasphemed the prophet Mohammed, which she did not do. They are putting Christians to death left and right. Here is a verse: "Let the sighing, let the crying, let the groaning of the prisoner come before thee. According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die." Certainly, we can pray that prayer; David certainly did so.

You have, then, a passionate petition, a proud populace, and a persecuted people. Look in verses 6 and 7. Here is the point of the entire message: lastly, a preserved prosperity. Look in verse 6: "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in the furnace of the earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord. Thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever."

A Preserved Prosperity? The Danger of God Withholding His Word (Psalm 12:6-7)

Now, if what I am about to tell you does not make you want to pray, I really do not know what will. Having declared in verse 6 that the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in the furnace of the earth, purified seven times—the epitome of absolute perfection—he says in verse 7, "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord. Thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever." So here is my question: What is to be kept and what is to be preserved from this generation?

Remember that in Psalm 12 we are talking about a wicked, corrupt, rebellious generation who say, “Our lips are our own, our tongue is our own: who is lord over us?”

When you look at the remote context, David could be talking about the poor and the needy. That is a fact we have already observed. If you look in your Bibles at Psalm 72, you will find this truth repeated over and over in Scripture: the Lord is indeed going to deliver the poor and the needy. Psalm 72:11 says, “All kings shall fall down before him,” that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. “All nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and the needy, and 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.” I could point you to numerous passages that tell us God is indeed going to deliver the poor and the needy. That could be the remote context. But what is the immediate context?

Look back at verse 6: “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” Then He said, “Thou shalt keep them.” Keep them what? Keep His words, O Lord. “Thou shalt preserve them,” His words, “from this generation for ever.” Why in the world should God give His Word to a people who despise Him, hate Him, disregard Him, deny Him, and denigrate Him? Why should He speak to them or give them His Word?

Do you think for one minute that God is going to turn around and do something He has forbidden you to do? In Matthew 7:6 our Lord said, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” You do not give that which is holy to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, because they trample them in the mud, care nothing for the pearls, and then turn around and rend you. Our Lord is saying that we do not put holy, righteous, godly things in front of dogs and hogs. Here is a good illustration: if you go back and read 1 Samuel, you will find that Eli is the priest.

Eli had two sons who were priests under him, Hophni and Phinehas. They were wicked, ungodly reprobates. They committed adultery and whored with the women at the door of the tabernacle, and they stole the offerings of God. God rebuked Eli because he did

not restrain his sons. Finally, God came to judge, and He said this in 1 Samuel 2:30: "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me forever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Isn't that amazing? God says, No. You despise me; I despise you. You honor me; I will honor you. Keep this in mind. Hannah had given little Samuel to the Lord, and Samuel was there. When you get to 1 Samuel 3:1, the Scripture says, "And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli, and the word of the Lord was precious in those days, there was no open vision."

The phrase "there was no open vision" means that there was no public preaching and no public declaration of the Word of God. How could there be with a corrupt and vile priesthood? The Word of God was precious in those days. What makes something precious? Scarcity.

If I asked you to bring me a truckload of sand and someone else to bring me a truckload of gold, who would come back first? The man with the sand, because it is everywhere. The man with the gold would be gone a long time, looking for it and digging it out. The Word of the Lord was precious in those days because it was scarce.

There was no open vision. The people were in rebellion against God. They did not want God; they refused to listen to God, and God said, “I’m not gonna speak to you either.” Amos 8:11 says, “Behold the days come saith the Lord God that I will send a famine in the land not a famine of bread and water but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea and from the north even to the east. And they shall run to and fro and seek the word of the Lord and they shall not find it.” God says there is coming a time when there will be a famine—not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord. People will wander everywhere, and they cannot find it. They cannot hear it.

Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Proverbs 13:13 says, “whosoever despiseth the word shall be destroyed, but he

that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded." Let us see how this plays out. In Isaiah 30:8, God says, "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever." In other words, write this down; make sure this is not forgotten. God says concerning them, "that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord, which say to the seers, See not. And to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things," that is, the word of God, "speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits, get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." We do not want to have anything to do with God. "Wherefore, thus saith the Holy One of Israel, because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and stay thereupon."

Therefore, this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall whose breaking cometh suddenly in an instant, and he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces. He shall not spare, so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a shard to take fire from the hearth, or to take water with it out of the pit.

Here is a people that said, "We don't want God. We don't want God's Word. We just want to be left alone. We want to do our own thing." God says, "Fine." Is it any wonder that there is very little real and true preaching and exposition of the Word of God in this rebellious and corrupt generation? There are churches on every corner, but very little preaching. Hardly anyone is being taught.

We have gotten into an entertainment and feel-good mentality, and we want to build big works instead of building people. The last book in the Old Testament is Malachi, and the first book in the New Testament is Matthew. Four hundred years passed between Malachi and Matthew, and they are known as the four hundred silent years. God did not speak or reveal Himself during those years.

If God keeps His Word from this generation, if God preserves His Word from this people, there will not be a revival, a reviving, repentance, faith, or conversions. There might be a few here and there because God is faithful and will not leave Himself without witness. But if God preserves His Word and keeps them from a

wicked, corrupt generation who do not want those words, then practically everything is going to be lost in every sphere, in every area.

It does not matter whether it is political, governmental, economic, familial, or ecclesiastical. It will all be over. We have to understand something: where there is no truth, only lies will prevail. Where there is no righteousness, only evil will prevail. Where there is no godliness, only godlessness will prevail. Where there is no honesty, only dishonesty will prevail. Where there is no integrity, only men lacking character will prevail.

If God withholds His Word, we are in trouble. God does not need to send fire from heaven to destroy a civilization, as He did on Sodom and Gomorrah, or send a flood, as He did in the days of Noah. All God has to do is withhold His Word, His grace, and His mercy, and we will destroy ourselves. That is what David is talking about in Psalm 12. That is why David says, "Help, Lord"—Lord, do something—"because the godly man ceaseth and the faithful fail from among the children of men."

Applications: Cry Earnestly and Treasure God's Word

We need to learn to cry and pray earnestly and urgently, asking God to help and save. If we truly perceived the danger we are in, I am afraid it would shake us to our very core. Every one of us gets little snippets from the news about the pedophile ring in Hollywood, in Washington, and in Atlanta, and about congressmen who are adulterers, whoremongers, and sodomites. We hear those things and think, How horrible, how terrible. But if we knew even a tenth of the wickedness, corruption, and depravity in our capitals and in our land, it would shake us to the very core of our being. We would be overwhelmed. We live in our own little world: everything is all right right here, while the world falls apart around us. If we understood the danger, like David we would cry, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth and the faithful fail from among the children of men."

It should alarm and disturb us that God may withhold His Word from us. He did so in the days of Elijah and Jeremiah. When God sent Elijah out of the land for three years, that was a physical picture of a spiritual reality: the man of God was out of the land. There was

no word from God for three years—no rain. While Jeremiah was left in the land, God said to him, "Pray not for this people, for I will not hear thee."

We need to understand something: God has given us His Word. We need to read it, study it, memorize it, obey it, and apply it. This Word is the greatest treasure we have, and we need it, because God could indeed take it from us. In one sense, the Word He has is lost through a lack of preaching and teaching.

Alice and I passed a church building this morning, with signs in the yard: "God bless America." I thought, "Oh God, how in the world could You bless us? Look at our wickedness and ungodliness: the aborticide, the pedophilia, and all our sins." No, America needs to bless God, and then God can bless America.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth. O Lord, I pray this will make us want to pray and cry, "Help, Lord. Save, Lord. Do something for us, Lord. We cannot do it for ourselves. Thou hast said, 'Without Me you can do nothing.'" We look to Thee, cry to Thee, and ask for Thy grace and mercy. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 11

The Sin Of Bloodguiltiness

Introduction: Should We Pray for Deliverance from Bloodguiltiness?

Psalm 51 and verse 14. Many of you will recognize Psalm 51 as one of the penitential Psalms that David wrote. In fact, it is probably the most prominent and the most known penitential Psalm. I was reading through the book of Psalms, and I got to verse 14, where David said, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.” As I read that verse, an interesting question came to my mind: Should we be praying this prayer? Should we be acknowledging and confessing the sin of bloodguiltiness? Should we ask for deliverance from bloodguiltiness, as David did? Usually, if you would probably ask these questions of the average Christian, you would very readily, very quickly receive a very fat, big negative: no.

David's Bloodguiltiness Beyond War

The reason they would give for that answer is simply because, well, we’re not murderers and therefore we have no blood on our hands. I’m going to show you there is a lot more to bloodguiltiness than

simply being guilty of murder. David certainly had a lot of blood on his hands. He slew many men in war. Those slain in war were not necessarily counted as being bloodguilty or related to bloodguiltiness, because some of those men David slew were not only in self-defense but in defending Israel, and of course God Himself directed some of those wars.

If you will hold Psalm 51 but look in your Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 5, there is absolutely no way for you and I to know exactly how many men David actually killed. In 1 Samuel chapter 18, David and Saul were coming back from fighting the Philistines, and the women came out with their music and began to sing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." And so David undoubtedly was indeed a man of war, and he killed probably many, many men in

David was certainly a warrior, but many of his heroic acts and wars were directed by God Himself and therefore were not related to bloodguiltiness. In 2 Samuel 5:22–25, we read: "And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the Lord, he said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer."

Here God directed David not to make a frontal attack, but to come upon the Philistines from behind. David was not even to move until he heard the sound in the tops of the mulberry trees; then he was to go out and take care of them. Obviously, this was a biblical battle.

David was also saved from the sin of bloodguiltiness by Abigail, the wife of Nabal. While David and his men were in the wilderness, fleeing from Saul, they kept Nabal's sheep and cattle safe. When the time came to shear the sheep, David sent some of his young men to ask Nabal to share his blessings with them. Nabal railed against them, saying, "There be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Why should I share my meat with you?"

When David's men reported this, David told his men, "Gird ye on every man his sword." He intended to take care of Nabal. Abigail did not know of this until afterward. In 1 Samuel 25:23, she ran out to meet David with several asses laden with food for his men. She said, "Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send."

Abigail said to David, "Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling."

David answered, "Blessed be the Lord, yes, you have kept me from avenging myself, for had you not been here surely by morning light there had not been one man left standing." In this instance David was once again saved from bloodguiltiness. He was not necessarily protecting God's people or defending himself; he had merely been insulted. Although David was spared bloodguiltiness in this instance, he certainly failed in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

When David prayed in Psalm 51:14, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness," he certainly needed that prayer. In the life of Uriah, he had taken life without cause and without justification. He was not fighting in self-defense or to protect his people. He had Uriah murdered simply to hide and cover his sin. In 2 Samuel 12:9, twice in one verse, God charged David with the murder of Uriah the Hittite: "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the

sword of the children of Ammon." Twice in one verse God said that David murdered Uriah.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Samuel 11:15-24 (KJV)

Most people can name Uriah the Hittite. They say, "Yes, David is responsible for the death of Uriah." But David was responsible for the lives of other men besides Uriah. In 2 Samuel 11, beginning with verse 15, David writes this letter and sends it to Joab:

"And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die. And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were. And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war; and charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king, and if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for. And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate. And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

Notice what he said: "some of the king's servants be dead." How many men died with Uriah? The Bible does not say, but there were a number of men who died. David was therefore responsible not only for the blood of Uriah, but also for the blood of these innocent men whom he sent to their deaths in order to cover up his own sin. Certainly he did indeed have

blood on his hands. These men died needlessly in order that the murder of Uriah might take place.

The Meaning of Bloodguiltiness

When David prays, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness," the Hebrew word is dam, which is translated in our Bibles as blood, bloody, bloodthirsty, and bloodguiltiness. In fact, bloodguiltiness occurs only one time in our Bibles, here in Psalm 51:14. So we have to ask this question: Should we be praying and asking the Lord to deliver us from bloodguiltiness?

Once again, so many people will say, "But I haven't murdered anyone. I haven't plotted to have anyone murdered, so there is no blood on my hand." Well, let me mention this to you. A number of commentators say that the term bloodguiltiness refers to any major sin, and not simply the sin of murder. In other words, it refers to what we would call major, reprehensible sins, which will block God's favor and God's blessings from individuals specifically and from His people in general.

Biblical Evidence for a Broader Definition

Let me show you some passages demonstrating that this interpretation is indeed valid. Look first in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel, chapter 18. There, God is differentiating between a just man and an unjust man. He is also showing the difference between a just father and an unjust son, or a righteous father and an unrighteous son. Beginning with verse 5, notice what the Bible says: "But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right." Notice what this lawful, righteous man does not do and what he does do: "And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, and hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; he that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man

and man, hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly;"

The just man has kept and done all these duties, obligations, principles, privileges, and responsibilities. But notice verse 10: "If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of these things, and that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbour's wife, hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him."

The son has done the absolute opposite of what his father did. He has committed all these sins: he is a robber, a shedder of blood, an adulterer, a persecutor, covetous, violent, and unwilling to restore the pledge. Then, in verse 13, we read, "he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him." The word blood in verse 10 and the word blood in verse 13 are the same exact Hebrew word found in Psalm 51:14.

Every one of these sins is what we would call horrific, reprehensible sin. Each basically merits the death penalty. He is a thief, a murderer, an adulterer, a persecutor, a covetous and violent man. God says, "His blood is going to be upon him." He is indeed a bloody man in that sense; he deserves to die.

Isaiah chapter 1 shows that bloodguiltiness can also refer to what we would call any reprehensible sin. In verse 10, God begins in this paragraph, saying, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah." He is not talking to Sodom and Gomorrah; He is calling Judah and Jerusalem that because of their wickedness. Verse 1 identifies the vision as concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Thus, God addresses the rulers of Judah and Jerusalem as the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness.

Then He asks them, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of

rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."

Not everyone in Judah and Jerusalem was a murderer. Undoubtedly, there were some murderers there, and some of the rulers probably were guilty of some of those things. But what God is complaining about is that they had turned His worship into a mere ritual, into a mere ceremony, while violating His law as they worshiped Him.

This was not merely something they had done one time; it was something consistent and constant. When they came to Him, they had come guilty as all get out, with no idea and no plans to repent. They were going to continue in their sins. God said, "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you:"

In Isaiah, God says, “Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.” Prayer is hindered because of the sin of bloodguiltiness. Having hands full of blood denotes crimes, sins, and guilt of a high order. In murder, you would have blood on your hands; the stain would be proof that you were indeed a murderer. Yet the phrase is figurative in the sense that this whole people were given over to rapine and injustice, to the oppression of the poor and the widow. They were covered in their sins, and when they came to worship and pray, God said, “I will not hear because your hands are full of blood.”

David says essentially the same thing in Psalm 66:18: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” The word regard simply means to put in a high place. It is not necessarily that you are actually committing the iniquity yet, but that you are regarding it, holding it in your heart, respecting it, and giving it a place that it should not be given. David said, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the

Lord will not hear me." Solomon said it this way in Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." If you do not listen to God, even your prayer will be a stench in His nostrils; He will not listen to you.

In Isaiah chapter 1, God is accusing His people of murder, oppression, and other wicked sins which He abhors and has forbidden. Yet they continue to engage in these sins constantly and continually; therefore, He has turned His favor and blessings away from them.

Bloodguiltiness and Societal Justice

A similar expression appears in Hosea chapter 4, verses 1 and 2. God says, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land." What happens when there is no truth, mercy, or knowledge of God?

"By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood." Notice that he mentions killing in verse 2, but he also mentions adultery, swearing, lying, and stealing. Then he says, "blood toucheth blood." Interestingly, it can be not just murder, but any reprehensible sin that brings upon oneself bloodguiltiness.

Some of you will remember that Shakespeare wrote a lot of plays. One of them was Macbeth. In Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 1, Lady Macbeth has gone mad. Her husband has already died, and she cannot find any rest. She is sleepwalking. Her conscience is condemning her because of the murders they committed. They had murdered Duncan, Banquo, and Lady Macduff. As she walks in her sleep, her doctor and a lady-in-waiting hear her, and she keeps trying to wash her hands to remove the stain of blood.

Finally, she says, "Out, damned spot! out, I say!" There is a spot of blood on her hand, but she cannot get it off. A little later, she says, "I still have the smell of blood on my hand. All the perfumes of Arabia couldn't make my little hand smell better. Oh, oh, oh!"

Let me point something out. Without divine forgiveness, without the cleansing of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the spot will

never vanish from anyone's conscience, individually or from society in general. It takes the blood of Jesus Christ to wash away any and all sin. John said it like this in 1 John 1:7: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Then he said in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

He forgives our sin and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. We understand the sin of bloodguilt, where someone may have murdered, participated in it, planned it, or whatever. We understand that only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from our sins. But should we be praying and asking the Lord to deliver us from bloodguiltiness as David did? Most people will answer no because we have not killed anyone or planned to kill anyone. But let me give you another perspective on bloodguiltiness, something you may not have thought about. Here are some questions.

Have you ever really considered the lack of justice? Let me go farther. Have you ever really considered the lack of biblical justice? By biblical justice, I mean justice that is in agreement with and according to the Word of God.

To give you an illustration, we have so forsaken the law of God in this land that, in America, murderers are incarcerated instead of being put to death. The same is true for kidnappers, and menstealers, and rapists. You know what the Bible says in Genesis 9 and verse 6: “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” In other words, God demands the death penalty.

We are talking about justice and bloodguiltiness. Numbers 35:30 says, “Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall

inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel."

In verse 31, he says, "Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death." No atonement could be made for the murderer. There could be no commutation of his sentence, no intercession, and no ransom that would save him or procure a pardon for him. He was to be put to death. If he was not put to death, the land was defiled and polluted.

Look in verse 32: "And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest." In Israel there were cities of refuge. If you killed someone accidentally, you had to flee to the city of refuge. Once there, a trial was held. If you were found innocent, you had to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. You could not go back home. If you left before the death of the high priest and the avenger of blood caught you, he would kill you, and he would be free of your blood because you should have stayed there.

All God is saying is that there was to be no satisfaction. No one could go back to his home until the death of the high priest.

The interesting thing is this: he said in verse 31 that the murderer shall surely be put to death. If the murderer is not put to death, then the land is defiled and polluted. Most of us understand that many crimes in this country are committed by what we would call repeat offenders. You look at illegal immigrants who have been deported for certain crimes, yet are released, or somehow return to this country, and commit the same crimes over and over again. It is the same thing with other prisoners. Once he is let out, especially the murderer, it is usually he who murders again. So let me put it to you very plainly.

Here is the principle that God is enunciating in Numbers chapter 35: If the murderer is put to death as God demands, society lives. If the murderer is not put to death and the murderer lives, society dies. It is just that simple. God is saying, "Here is a principle of justice. Here is a principle of bloodguiltiness. Here is a man that deserves to

die. I have condemned him to death, and you are to take no ransom for him." If you do, then blood defiles the land; there is bloodguiltiness in the land.

Now, since we are talking about justice and bloodguiltiness, let me give you something else. Just as there is a failure to execute the wicked, which would result in bloodguiltiness, what about persecution of the righteous? When innocent men and women have been falsely accused, wickedly condemned, and wrongly sentenced, is that not incurring bloodguiltiness as well? May I remind you that the cities of refuge were not for the guilty; they were for the innocent. So if a guilty man fled to the city of refuge, there was a trial, and he was found guilty, and he was handed over to the avenger of blood.

Deuteronomy 19:9 says, "If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three: that innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee." Notice that if an innocent man was slain, blood was upon us, or upon them at that particular time.

"But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee. Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it. One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established."

The cities of refuge were only for the innocent; they were not for the guilty. Why did God have these cities of refuge? They were strategically located throughout the land, on each side of the river, so that no one would have to run far to reach one. If Francis and I were

out cutting wood, and the head of my axe slipped off, struck him in the head, and killed him, then I would have had to flee to the city of refuge. I did not mean to kill him; it simply happened. But if I took my axe and purposely struck him in the head, I might flee to the city of refuge, but they would turn me over to the avenger of blood, and I would be killed. God says there is to be absolutely no satisfaction taken for the murderer. Failure to protect the innocent also brings bloodguiltiness upon the land.

Does it bother you that numbers of innocent men and women have been railroaded, incarcerated, and had their lives destroyed because they refused to conform to the status quo? Some have even been killed—or should I say murdered. I hope you read this past week about the Amish man who just got six years in prison because he was making organic, homemade salves and creams to help people. They demanded that he stop making these salves and creams, which were made of all-natural ingredients, but he refused, and so they put him in prison for six years. The FDA wanted to persecute him, while it approves all kinds of things that destroy people all the time.

I watched a little video where Sheriff Mack was speaking, and he said, "The federal government today created a criminal. They did not catch one. They did not investigate one. They made one." Stop and think of all the innocent people who have been railroaded. I know preachers who have been put in jail for nothing other than refusing to take a license from the state. Since when is the state in the business of licensing ministries?

I never will forget what Lester Roloff said years ago. They were trying to license all of his ministries. A woman interviewing him said, "Now Pastor Roloff, you know what the Bible says, that you are to submit yourself to the higher powers," thinking that she was a higher power—a bureaucrat. Lester Roloff said, "I don't have any problem being in submission to the higher powers; it is you lower powers that are giving me fits."

That is about the truth. Think about that. These cities of refuge were for the innocent; they were not for the guilty. Since we are talking about the innocent and about bloodguiltiness, may I remind

you of the sin and murder involved in abortion? There have been 60 to 70 million babies legally murdered since Roe v.

Wade does not count the back-alley abortions and the self-induced abortions. Can you say bloodguiltiness? Can you say defilement and pollution? Can you say blood-soaked hands?

Look in your Bibles to Psalm 106. In this passage, a number of the sins of Israel are enumerated. Beginning with verse 37, talking about the Israelites, it says: “Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.”

What material difference is there between someone who would sacrifice their child to an altar or to a false god of Moloch or Ashtoreth or Venus, and someone who would sacrifice that same child to the God of convenience and irresponsibility? It is the same thing. God is saying that it is not just the actual act of murder that brings bloodguiltiness. A failure to execute those who deserve to die brings bloodguiltiness, and so does a failure to protect the innocent.

How fastidious is God when it comes to justice? He is so concerned that the Bible tells us in Romans, “He that spared not his own Son.” God is deeply interested in justice because He executed His wrath fully and freely upon His own Son when His Son was put there to be our propitiation, to be our sacrifice.

But look at Deuteronomy 21. Here is a good illustration, and it will bring us to the point I want to make. Beginning with verse 1 through verse 9: “If one be found slain in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him.” Here is a man who is murdered.

A man is found dead in the country, where there are no witnesses and no one else around. What happens? Look in verse 2: “Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain: and it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and

which hath not drawn in the yoke; and the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley: and the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried: and all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: and they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them."

Now watch verse 9: "So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord." Here is a man found murdered in the field, and no one knows who did it. The elders come forth, measure the distance, and identify the closest city. The principle is that someone has to take responsibility to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord.

The elders bring out a heifer that has not been wrought with nor had a yoke put upon her, and they cut off her head. This is not a sacrifice, because it is not done in the temple; it is done out in the field, though blood is being sprinkled by the priests. The elders wash their hands over the heifer they have killed and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen what happened." Let me tell you bluntly what they are saying: first, they are saying, "We're innocent. Our hands have not shed this blood. We did not commit this murder."

Secondly, their eyes had not seen it; that is, they did not know who had committed the murder. Thirdly, there is a very strong implication: if they had seen it, and if they did know who had done it, they would not have been executing a heifer. They would have executed the man who committed the murder. They were not guilty themselves, and they did not know who was guilty. Therefore, the heifer was executed until the murderer could be discovered.

As they executed the heifer, they said in verse 8, "Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood

shall be forgiven them." Notice verse 9 again: "So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord."

The impact and implication of Deuteronomy chapter 21, verses 1–9, is very plain: there is a community and societal responsibility for justice. Here is a man found murdered, and no one knows who did it. God said that something had to be done. The closest town, city, or jurisdiction had to go through this ceremony and say, "Lay not this sin to our charge." Where community or societal justice is not enforced, community and societal guilt follows—the sin of bloodguiltiness.

Community Responsibility and Modern Applications

Look back at Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 16. God says, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people." No gossip is allowed. But the latter half of that verse says, "Neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the Lord." To stand against the blood of your neighbor is to do nothing to protect your neighbor.

What if it was your neighbor who was killed? You cannot say, "I did not do it. I do not know who did it. It is not my problem." If it is your neighbor, if it is in your community or immediate society, it is your problem. It is connected to you. To stand against the blood of your neighbor is not simply to avoid bearing false witness against him. You must do whatever you can to see that he is not violently harmed. You must try to protect him; and if he is harmed, you must try to find out who did it so that justice may be rendered.

Rushdoony, in his Institutes of Biblical Law, says this concerning Deuteronomy 21:1–9: "Thus the entire community or society has a responsibility to right the wrongs within its jurisdiction. This is an aspect of the police power of the citizenry."

Let me make two observations. First, he says that the entire community or society has a responsibility to right the wrongs within its jurisdiction. Suppose I call the state of Michigan and protest the six-year sentence given an innocent man for making salves and creams that never hurt anyone. All they have done is destroy his

family, remove him from his wife and children, destroy his source of income, and he has committed no crime. I could call and protest. I am one individual—not that I should not do it—but one individual is very easily discredited or ignored. But when an entire community or society says, "We are not going to put up with this. This is wrong," it will be reversed. It will be taken care of.

It is like Everett Dirksen, the senator who has been dead for many years. He said, "When I feel the heat, I see the fire." In other words, I do not like to be hounded either. So it takes a community, and that is exactly what God is saying: there is a community responsibility.

Secondly, when Rushdoony says, "This is an aspect of the police power of the citizenry," he certainly does not mean or imply that a citizen has a responsibility to execute a murderer. He is saying that we must do whatever is necessary to see that justice is in force and justice is done. We must remember that if we deny justice, we deny God, for God is the God of justice. Justice and mercy are the habitation of His throne, the Scripture says. He is the God of justice; He is the just God.

Moreover, Deuteronomy 21 also demonstrates our responsibility to each other. It not only teaches restitution to God, but responsibility to each other. If one of your family members was murdered, would you not want to see justice done? Would you not want your neighbors and the people in your community to support you and demand that justice be done? Of course. But what if I took the attitude, "Well, it's not my kid."

"It's not my family. It doesn't bother me. No skin off my nose." But what we don't understand is this: what can be done over there can also be done over here. What is going to affect someone else inevitably, sooner or later, is going to affect me as well.

So here is teaching responsibility—community responsibility, societal responsibility. We have gotten to the place in this country where we say, "Let Washington take care of it. Let Tallahassee take care of it. Let Atlanta take care of it." They are not going to take care of anything except deprive us of more and more property and more and more rights.

John Trapp was an English Puritan. I was looking at Deuteronomy 21 and read what John Trapp said concerning it, and I was amazed. Many of us have never even heard of King Alfred. King Alfred was an early English king, and he was a Christian. In fact, there is a song called “King Alfred’s War Song,” which is a praise to the Lord Jesus Christ. You should look it up on the Internet.

John Trapp said this concerning King Alfred, since he was one of the original Christian kings: “King Alfred was the first that divided his kingdom into shires. He ordained also that his subjects be divided into tens or tithings, every of which severally should give bond for the good bearing of each other.”

Here were ten men. The ten men would be called a tithing because ten is ten percent. That meant I had to vouch for your conduct, and your conduct, and your conduct. I had to watch nine of you, but the other nine were watching nine more as well, and each of you nine was watching me. Trapp continued: “By this course men were not only careful of their own actions, but each had an eye to all the nine for which he stood bound, as the nine had over him; insomuch that a poor girl might travel safely with a bag of gold in her hand, and none thus dare meddle with her. The ancientest of these men were called tithing men.”

Isn’t that amazing? A poor girl could walk down the street with a bag of gold in her hand, and no one would accost her or dare touch her, because every man was watching out for the other man.

We have lost accountability and responsibility. Consequently, we have incurred bloodguiltiness because we have not seen and demanded that the wicked be executed when he deserves to be executed, nor have we demanded that the innocent be protected.

Let me make a couple of applications. Politicians and rulers should learn a lesson from David. King David never actually took a sword and plunged it into Uriah's heart. He never took a sword and murdered those other men who fell in battle. But he gave the order. Politicians, congressmen, presidents—whoever they are—who give the order for unjust wars and unjust military actions are actually guilty of the murder of innocent people. There is bloodguilt in this: this drone warfare.

I read one article that said the United States admits that a little more than 600 innocent civilians have been killed through drone warfare, but that it is really over 6,000. Who is responsible? Who gave the order? Look at the men and women who have been dispossessed of their own property. Look at the problems the Bundys and other ranchers have faced. Do you realize that a lot of that is because uranium was on the land and the Clinton Foundation, Harry Reid, and all those people were involved?

Someone is guilty, and someone will pay, if not in this life, then when they face the judgment of God. So politicians should learn from David. For Christians to sit back, say nothing, and do nothing is to incur the sin of bloodguiltiness. It is just as wicked to fail to fight for righteousness and justice as it is to fail to demand the punishment of the wicked.

Whenever there is a decline in biblical law and Christianity, there is always a decline in personal responsibility, accountability, and justice. Why does no one take responsibility or say, “I’m accountable,” or “The buck stops here”? Because we have failed to believe and act upon God's law. Wherever there is a decline in biblical law and Christianity, inevitably there will be a destruction of society.

Conclusion: Confession and Cleansing

Here is the question that we should ask: Why should God hear our prayers when, according to Isaiah 1 in verse 15, our hands are full of blood? Should we confess the sin of bloodguiltiness? Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. David said, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness.” When we fail to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, we’re guilty. Thankfully, it’s the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from our sin and cleanses the land. But we are still guilty for not applying His Word and His truth.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We pray that You would teach us, Lord, that You would help us, that You would give us wisdom and understanding, and help us, Lord, to stand for that which is right and holy and pure and just. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 12

What Do You Have In Your Heart?

Introduction: The Heart as the Fountain of Life

In 1 Chronicles 29, beginning with verse 17, David is praying:

"I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me in the uprightness of mine heart, I have willingly offered all these things. And now have I seen with joy Thy people which are present here to offer willingly unto Thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee. And give unto Solomon, my son, a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, and thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace for which I have made provision."

And David said to all the congregation, "Now bless the Lord your God." And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the King.

There have been numerous commercials on television in times past. They were produced by a leading credit card company and always ended with the question, “What do you have in your wallet?” Most people are interested in what they have in their wallet. But the more important question, based upon the Scriptures, is this: What do you have in your heart?

Our hearts are the most important part of our beings. I have preached many messages over the years, and I was asked again this past week which one of the messages I have preached during the last fifty-two years would be among the most important for Christians. My answer would be the message I titled “Keeping the Heart,” from Proverbs 4:23. I have preached that message all over this country. I think it is absolutely fundamental and necessary.

I preach that message to myself every day. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” It is not my intent today to preach that message again. However, I would encourage you, if you have not heard it, to listen to it; and if it has been a long time since you heard it, listen to it again. You probably should listen to it several times in order to make sure that the principles are down in your mind and in your heart. I have also preached a number of messages on heart preparation.

I believe those are important as well. But the truth is, today we have to understand that everything basically begins in our hearts.

According to Scripture, your heart is basically your mind. It is your understanding. The word heart is used sometimes to convey our affections; that is true. But when you look in the Scripture, usually it refers to the mind and the understanding. For instance, when you look at 1 Chronicles 29, verses 17 through 20, you are going to find the word heart occurring several times. Each time that word heart occurs, it refers, once again, to the mind and to the understanding. One of the leading Hebrew words is the word leb, and it is translated in our Bibles over and over as mind and understanding as well.

In reference then to our lives, the Bible teaches us in Proverbs 23 and verse 7, “As the man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” The passage there is simply telling us that everything basically flows out of the

heart. The heart is the fountain from which everything pours. Our actions, our conduct, our behavior, everything just flows right out of the heart.

New Testament Confirmation: Out of the Heart Proceed Evil Thoughts

This truth is enunciated also in the New Testament. In Luke chapter 6, verse 45, 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.” Obviously, our Lord is teaching that a good man is going to bring out good things because good things are in his heart. An evil man is going to bring forth evil things because evil things are in his heart. Then He makes this statement: “for of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Inevitably, invariably, whatever is in your heart is ultimately going to come out. If you look back at Matthew 15, our Lord is talking to His disciples.

Peter asked Him a question in Matthew 15: “Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.” In other words, teach us exactly what You are trying to say. And Jesus said, “Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man.”

He continued, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”

There are two statements here to which we should pay very close attention. First, our Lord said, “but those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart.” What He is saying is what has already been said: it is the fountain out of which everything pours. Everything comes from the heart. Second, He said, “for out of the heart proceed” what? The very first thing He names is evil thoughts. Then He adds murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies.

You cannot commit an evil act without first having an evil thought. Everything begins with a thought. Our Lord says that these evil thoughts come out of the heart, which would be the mind, because that is what is thinking, or the understanding, which is what is performing. He is establishing once again that our behavior, actions, and conduct are the result of whatever is in our heart.

Context of 1 Chronicles 29: David's Offering and Prayer

Go back to 1 Chronicles 29. I am going to explain especially verses 17 and 18, but I want you to understand the context in which those verses occur. The context of 1 Chronicles 29 is that David and the people have made preparation to build the temple. Remember that a lot of the money for building the temple came from the heathen. David conquered them, and out of the spoils of battle they dedicated gifts to maintain the house of the Lord. In 1 Chronicles 26:27, you will see that very clearly stated: "Out of the spoils won in battle did they dedicate to maintain the house of the Lord." A lot of the booty, the loot they acquired in battle, was simply set aside to build the temple.

The interesting thing is that most people have no idea how wealthy David really was, or how wealthy many of the Israelites really were. I want to show you how wealthy David was particularly. In 1 Chronicles 29, beginning with verse 2, David says, "Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for the things to be made of gold, and the silver for the things of silver. The brass for the things of brass, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, onyx stones and stones to be set, glistering stones and of diverse colors, and all manner of precious stones and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of my own proper good 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, even 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, which was the finest gold, by the way, 3,000 talents, he said, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made

by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord."

So David, over and above everything that he conquered in battle, gave this tremendous amount to the house of God.

Beginning in verse 6, the chief rulers, princes, and people also gave very willingly and graciously. He says, "Then the chief of the fathers and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work offered willingly, and gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents, and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasurer of the house of the Lord, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord. And David the king also rejoiced with great joy."

David gave a tremendous amount of money personally, and then the princes joined in and gave as well. In verses 10-16, David gives praise and worship to God for all that had been given to the house of God. He also offers a prayer. In verse 16 he says, "O LORD our God, all this store, that is all that gold, silver, precious stones, iron, whatever, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name, cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own."

In other words, David is saying, We really have not given you anything, because everything we have, you gave us. We are simply giving back to you. Our text comes in this prayer, praise, and worship that David is offering. In verse 18 he says, "O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, Keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee."

Contrasting Genesis 6:5 and 1 Chronicles 29:18: Depravity vs. Grace

One thing that caught my eye as I was reading through 1 Chronicles recently was this verse. David prays, "Keep this forever in the

imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people." When I read that, my mind could not help but go to another verse of Scripture. Hold 1 Chronicles 29 and look back in your Bibles to Genesis 6 and verse 5.

Here you see that same phrase again, only in a different context. Genesis 6:5 says, “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Isn’t that amazing? God saw every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man, and it was evil. But when you get to 1 Chronicles 29:18, David says, “keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people.”

Let us give a comparison and contrast. Genesis 6:5 is what man is by nature; 1 Chronicles 29:18 is what man is by grace. Genesis 6:5 is the work of man; 1 Chronicles 29:18 is the work of God. Genesis 6:5 is the work of man’s depravity; 1 Chronicles 29:18 is the product of God’s saving grace. These passages set before us two entirely different conditions of the heart.

The question, then, that must be asked in light of this is: What is in your heart? Notice that, comparing these two passages, you are going to have either depravity or grace. The question is very legitimate: What do you have in your heart?

Now stop and think about this. If a person has his heart filled with depravity and darkness, then his actions, his conduct, and his behavior are all going to be contrary to God, contrary to His law, and wicked and wrong. If, on the other hand, grace fills the heart of man, then his actions, his conduct, and his behavior will be characterized by obedience, submission to God, and an effort to honor and glorify Him. The question has to be asked: What is in your heart? The answer comes back: your life is really and truly going to evidence what is in your heart.

David's Prayer: Keep This in Their Hearts and Prepare Their Hearts

In verse 18, David says, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto

thee." What was David's prayer request of God to keep in the hearts of His people? Basically, it would be all of the good dispositions that God had worked in them. It was their willingness to sacrifice, their willingness to cooperate, and their willingness to work together. David understood that all of this was basically from God's grace. Therefore, David was asking God to fix in them what you and I would call a holy temper, or a holy disposition, or a holy attitude. In other words, God, they have done this and acted like this; continue to have this in their heart, so that they will continue to act like this.

David said, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people." That is one thing. Then he asks, "and prepare their heart unto thee." Thus David recognized that the great spirit of giving, graciousness, and cooperation was a result of God preparing their heart.

Proverbs 16:1 says, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord."

The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord. If our hearts are ever prepared to pray, God prepared them. If our hearts are ever prepared to study, God prepared them. If our hearts are ever prepared to witness, God prepared them. If a sinner is ever prepared in his heart to come savingly to Jesus Christ, God prepared his heart.

In John 6:37, our Lord said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and he that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." But in John 6:44, He says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up in the last day." Sinners may come, but they only come because of God's preparing their heart. He says no man can come—and can is a term of ability—except the Father who sent Him draw him.

Scripture reveals that although the ability is God's in preparing our hearts, the responsibility is ours to seek Him to prepare our hearts.

Consider the contrast in 2 Chronicles 12:14. Rehoboam was the son of Solomon and the grandson of David. One author said, and I like what he said, “Solomon only had one son, and he was a fool.” That is true. Solomon and all of his wives only had one son, and that

was Rehoboam, and he turned out to be a fool. Here is why: "And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." Why did Rehoboam do evil? He prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.

It is true that God must prepare our hearts. But we have a duty, an obligation, and a responsibility to seek Him to prepare our hearts.

Now consider 2 Chronicles 27:6. That was King Rehoboam; now we have King Jotham: "So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God." You cannot prepare your ways unless your heart is prepared. Rehoboam did not prepare his heart. Jotham did, and consequently he prepared his ways as well. Here are two men: one prepared his heart, and one did not prepare his heart.

Let me give you a couple of illustrations. Ezra, whom you can read about in the book of Ezra, was a scribe, and he understood his responsibility quite well. Ezra 7:10 says, "For Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, to do it, and to teach it in Israel, and to teach the statutes and judgments." Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of God, and then to teach the law of God. Obviously, he did have that duty and that responsibility.

Our part—and I am using that phrase very generally—our duty, our responsibility in seeking God to prepare our heart, is to rid ourselves of anything that is contrary to God.

For instance, in 1 Samuel chapter 7 and verse 3, the Israelites were fearful because of the Philistines. Samuel spake to the house of Israel and said, "If you do return to the Lord with all of your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." If you are really going to turn to the Lord, what should you do? Put away your strange gods. Put away Ashtaroth, the false god, and serve Him only.

In other words, you have a duty, an obligation, and a responsibility to obey Him. Do it. The ability is God's. The responsibility is ours.

Our Lord said basically the same exact thing in Luke 12 and verse 47: "And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many

stripes." Here is a servant who knew his Lord's will, but did not prepare himself to do that will. In other words, he ignored the will of his master.

Our part in preparation is to seek God first and foremost, to prepare our heart, and then turn from all that is contrary to God. It is like the man who says, "I'm going to live a life of sobriety from here forward." If he is going to live a life of sobriety, he had better stay away from the bars and the liquor stores. He has to prepare himself to live that life.

That is exactly what the Scripture is teaching us. We must be prepared to do this. We have the responsibility to seek the Lord and prepare our hearts, but we also have the responsibility to turn from everything that is contrary to God.

David says in verse 18, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, Keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their hearts unto thee." David is asking God to keep certain things in the hearts of His people, and people need to keep them in their hearts. God must prepare their hearts; that is true. But what is David requesting God to keep in their hearts? He says, "keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people." This what?

First Truth to Keep: God Tries the Heart

It is not merely a spirit of willingness to sacrifice, or a spirit of cooperation, although certainly that would be included. There is something more specific. In verse 17 David says, "I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things, and now I have seen with joy Thy people which are present here to offer willingly unto Thee."

There are two things he tells us that we must keep in our hearts. The first is that God tries the heart. The word "tries" is the Hebrew word bachan, which means to examine, to try, to prove, to scrutinize, and to test. God not only scrutinizes our hearts; He will test our hearts. He examines them in order to reveal them to us and to

others. God does not need this knowledge for Himself, because He is omniscient and knows everything, but we do not.

Genesis 22:1 says, “Now it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And Abraham said, Here am I.” The word tempt there literally means to test or to try. God was not tempting Abraham to sin; He was testing and examining him.

If you will hold 1 Chronicles, but look in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 1. Let me give you a very general illustration of the fact that yes, oftentimes our faith is tested and tried. Look, if you would, in 1 Peter 1, beginning there with verse 6. 1 Peter 1, verse 6. He says, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations," or manifold trials, or manifold tests. Verse 7, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto the praise and honor and glory of the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen ye love, and whom though now ye see him not yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." So he talks again here about the trial and about the testing of our faith.

Now, the interesting thing is this, as you read through the Bible, You're going to find that God often tests us and tries us, and the examination is so thorough, we do not necessarily understand when we just simply glance at the Bible. Let me just show you several verses, because there is, there are a number of verses where you will find a little word Reins, R-E-I-N-S. And each time you see it, it is usually in the context of being scrutinized or examined. For instance, hold 1 Chronicles 29, but go in your Bibles to Psalm 7, Psalm 7, Psalm 7, and look if you would please at verse 9, one of my favorite verses. I especially love the first part of it, Psalm 7, verse 9.

He says, "Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just." And then he says this, "For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." Wow! Now, are the reins different from the heart? Why would He say He trieth the hearts and the reins? Look in Psalm 26 and verse 2. Psalm 26, verse 2. David is praying again, and he asks the Lord, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me. Try my reins and my heart." So what is he talking about when he says, "Try my reins and my heart"? Look in Psalm 73 and verse 21.

Psalm 73, verse 21. Asaph says it like this, "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins." Wow. Turn right over to Psalm 139 and look at verse 13. Psalm 139, verse 13. Tremendous psalm. We'll come back to it later. But look what David says. Psalm 139, verse 13. He says to the Lord, "For thou hast possessed my reins, thou hast covered me in my mother's womb." Wow.

In Jeremiah 17:10, the Lord says, “I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins, to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” God says, “I search the heart, and I try the reins.”

Every time you read the Bible and see the word reins, you should know exactly what He is talking about. This word is not used only in the Old Testament; it is also used in the New Testament. Revelation 2:23 says, “And I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and the heart. And I will give to every one of you according to your works.” This is basically the same thing He said in Jeremiah 17:10.

What does it mean when Scripture says that God tries the reins and the heart? In all the Old Testament verses, the Hebrew word is keliah, which literally means kidneys, or reins: “God searcheth the kidneys.” When it is translated as reins in the Bible, it means that God is searching the innermost recesses of the heart. Nothing escapes His knowledge or His notice.

In the New Testament, the Greek word is nephros, which refers to kidneys or loins, or to the inmost feelings or thoughts.

I took Greek for three years, and one of my favorite words in the Greek language was splagchnizomai. I had several favorite words. The word for wife is gune; sometimes I would call Alice my gune. But splagchnizomai refers to your bowels. It speaks of loving with all your heart—actually, loving with all your bowels—because the ancients understood this as the inside of man. I would sometimes tell Alice, “I love you with all my bowels.” She would say, “That’s not as romantic as ‘I love you with all my heart.’” But it is the same principle.

The same thing applies to the word reins: “God searcheth the reins of the heart.” He is not merely searching the heart in general,

nor is this referring to the organ itself. It is the mind, the understanding, and all the recesses found there.

Here is what David is saying. This is the first truth that should never leave your mind, the first truth that should be established in your understanding: God will scrutinize and examine every area of your thought, every motive, every desire, and every intent. You will answer and give an account to Him in the day of judgment. In Romans 2:16, Paul said, “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” God will judge the secrets of men.

Proverbs 17:3 says, “The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts.” The Lord tests the heart. He examines and scrutinizes the heart. This is the one thing that should always remain in our minds: God is examining our thoughts.

There is a passage, I think in the book of Ezekiel, where God said, “I know your thoughts, every one of them,” before they come into your mind. God knows what you are going to think before you ever think it. Nothing can be hidden from the Lord. He is omniscient; He is all-knowing. Everything is revealed to Him.

God Has Pleasure in Uprightness

The second thing that David is praying for, and that must be maintained in your understanding, in your mind, and in your heart, is that God has pleasure in uprightness. David says, "I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart, I have willingly offered all these things, and now have I seen with joy Thy people, which are present here to offer willingly unto thee."

Second Truth to Keep: God Has Pleasure in Uprightness

Obviously, we are a pleasure-oriented people. We normally do that which pleases us. But has it ever entered into your mind that there are some things that please the Lord? Have you ever consciously asked the Lord, Father, help me to do that today that is pleasing in

thy sight? Have you ever set your heart, or set your mind, or set your understanding to do that which you knew was pleasing unto Him?

The word pleasure, when David said, "Thou hast pleasure in uprightness," is the Hebrew word ratzah, which literally means that which is acceptable, that which is pleasing, that which is delightful, that which is enjoyable, that which is favorable, and that which is approvable. God has pleasure in that which favors Him and that which He approves, that which is delightful to Him.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 1 that he does not cease to pray for these Colossian Christians. He says, "we cease not to pray for you," and then tells them some of the things that he prays and asks for them. Verse 10 says, "that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Notice the prayer: "that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." In other words, the Apostle Paul is praying that they might walk in such a way that delights and pleases their Heavenly Father, that they would walk in such a way that is acceptable and favorable unto Him.

The question is, how do we do that? Look in Colossians 3, verse 20. Here is a very interesting passage: “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.” This is well-pleasing unto the Lord. The Lord hath pleasure in uprightness. The word for uprightness is yoshur, which means that which is straight, that which is upright, that which is right, and that which is due. What is God’s right? What is God’s due? I can show you Scriptures in the Bible where it says, “give unto God the glory that is due unto His holy name.” There are things that we owe God. It is the fact that it is His due. Now look back at verse 20 of Colossians 3: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.”

If God looks at earthly parents and at earthly children, and says to these children, “I want you to obey your earthly parents,” then, as long as you obey your earthly parents, that is well-pleasing in His eyes. That is His delight. That is favorable unto Him. That is acceptable unto Him. He wants it. That is His due from you as

children, that you obey your parents. God is so well-pleased if our physical children obey their physical parents. How much more is He well-pleased if His spiritual children obey their Heavenly Father? If God can be well-pleased with children obeying their earthly parents, then obviously God is well pleased when we obey Him as His children.

Now go back to Colossians chapter 1. Look in Colossians chapter 1, verse 10: “that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” How do you walk worthy of the Lord? Then He explains: “being fruitful in every good work.” How are you fruitful in every good work? The answer is by being obedient. Then He adds this: “and increasing in the knowledge of God.” How do you increase in the knowledge of God? The answer is by being obedient. Our Lord is telling us very plainly that it is obedience that pleases Him.

I cannot please Him without walking worthily. I cannot please Him without obedience. I cannot please Him without studying and increasing in the knowledge of God.

David's Example and Prayer for Self-Examination

In 1 Chronicles 29:17, David said, “I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart,” that is one truth, “and hast pleasure in uprightness,” that is the second truth. Remember, he has just given all of this money for the building of the temple, and he says, “As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart, that is, in the straightness of my heart, I have willingly offered all these things. And now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.”

David is saying that there are two things we need to remember: God tries the heart, and God has pleasure in uprightness. Then he says, “As for me”—in other words, God, You are the sovereign God of heaven and earth; You are the omniscient God—as for me, under the scrutiny of Your eye and the examination that You give, I have given all of this in uprightness. I have done this for Your pleasure, Your honor, and Your glory.

That is a tremendous undertaking. When you can ask God to search your heart and truthfully say before the omniscient God of

heaven and earth, “I have done this in uprightness according to Your Word, for Your honor and Your glory; You can search me,” that is significant. I have preached for over fifty-two years. There have been times in my life when I genuinely thought I was serving the Lord, and the Lord opened my eyes to show me that I was serving myself. I thought I was doing something for God’s honor and glory, but then I understood that I was doing it out of the pride of my own heart or for the praise and recognition of man, and not for God at all.

God can indeed slap us down and humble us. When He opens our eyes and lets us see how miserable we really are, even as Christians, it is an eye-opener. So David is praying in verse 18, “Lord, You keep these things in the hearts of Your people.” Keep them mindful that You are the God who tries the heart and that You have pleasure in uprightness.

Psalm 139 shows how thorough David is. In verses 23 and 24 he asks, “Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me.”

"Test me, scrutinize me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." David is asking God to search him, test him, try him, and reveal any wicked way in him so that he might turn from it and repent. Then God would lead him in the way everlasting.

I often tell people there are two prayer requests that you need to pray, and you need to pray them one after the other. The first is, Lord, show me myself. If God only showed us ourselves—our pride, arrogance, sin, rebellion, wickedness, and disobedience, even as believers—it would slap us down to the ground so quickly it would make your head swim. We cannot know our hearts as God does. What does the Bible say in Jeremiah 17? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." We do not know our hearts, not the way God does.

The second prayer is, Lord, show me Thyself. Once God shows us ourselves, and then, if God reveals Himself, we know that all the answers to our problems are in Him. We see His holiness, purity, grace, mercy, goodness, kindness, and love. We pray, Lord, show us ourselves, but we also pray, Lord, show us Thyself.

What did David say in Psalm 51:6, the passage where David was confessing his sin? "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." God desires truth in the inward parts. Therefore, we need to be truthful and accurate with God, because God already knows.

I get tickled many times when people say, "Sometimes I get so aggravated, sometimes I get so angry, sometimes I get so mad, and I do not even want to pray." I tell them, "Go ahead and pray. Tell God about your frustration and anger, because He already knows. Be honest with Him and ask Him to help you deal with it." It is just that simple.

Look in Isaiah 33, beginning with verse 14. "The sinners in Zion are afraid. Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites." Then he asks these questions: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Application: Comfort for the Godly, Terror for the Wicked

He begins to talk about the obedient life: “He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from the holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil, he shall dwell on high. His place of defense shall be the munitions of the rocks. Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king and his beauty. They shall behold the land that is far off.”

When you examine verse 15, that verse simply deals with straight-out obedience in every area of life. God says, You want your munitions to be sure, your bread to be sure, your water to be sure, and to behold the King and all of His beauty? Obedience is the answer.

It is indeed a great satisfaction and comfort to a godly man to know that God examines the heart and the reins, and that God knows the motives, desires, and intents of the heart. How can I say that? There have been times in my life when I have really wanted to

help people. Times in my life, I have really tried to do certain things for the benefit of others. And guess what?

It blew up in my face. It turned out wrong. I did not intend for it to turn out wrong, nor did I desire or want it to, but it did. It was beyond my control and out of my hands. All I can do is sit back and say, Lord, You do know my heart. You know my intent, my motives, and my desire. You know everything.

That is the only consolation that you have. I tell people the two hardest truths I ever learned in my life in the ministry are, number one, you cannot help everybody; and number two, sometimes those you can help are your own family and your own friends. You try, but it does not work out. Yet God knows your heart and your motives.

It is just like Peter. You remember Peter denied the Lord three times? When you get to John 21, three times our Lord asks Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these?" Finally, the third time, Peter, being grieved, said, "Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee." What was he doing?

He was appealing to our Lord's omniscience. He was saying, Yes, Lord, I stumbled, I failed, I denied You three times. I know that was wicked, wrong, and disobedient, but You know that I love You. He was falling back on the omniscience of God.

It was Peter's pride and arrogance that said, "Though all men forsake thee and deny thee, yet will not I." Our Lord said, "Really? Before the cock crows twice, you'll deny me three times." Peter had to come back and say, Lord, I was wrong. You were right. But Lord, I love You, and You know that I love You.

This truth terrifies the wicked. When they stop and entertain the thought that God is going to hold them accountable—not just for their actions, conduct, and behavior, but for their wrong motives, wrong desires, and wrong intents—and He knows every one of them, what is a comfort and consolation to the child of God is consternation and terror to the enemies of God. We know that God tries the heart and that God has pleasure in uprightness.

If we desire to please God, then we must learn to walk in uprightness. We must consciously say, "Lord, I know You are examining my heart. I know You are trying my heart. I know You are

scrutinizing my heart. And Lord, to the best of my ability and knowledge, by Your infinite grace and mercy, I want to please Thee. I want to honor Thee. I want to obey Thee. I want to worship Thee. I want grace in my heart and not depravity."

Your actions will always reveal what is in your heart. Always. The question is not what is in your wallet; it is what is in your heart. For out of the heart the mouth speaketh, and out of the heart are the issues of life: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We thank You, Father, that You are indeed the God who tries our hearts, tests us, examines us, and scrutinizes us. We thank You, Father, that You have pleasure in uprightness, and we ask that You would help us to walk uprightly and to please Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

Can You Say Shibboleth

Introduction: The Cost of Pride

The passage was from Judges chapter 12, verses 1–7. The title of the message is “Can You Say Shibboleth?” In this text, 42,000 men died in one battle simply because of pride, anger, and the inability to pronounce the word correctly. Proverbs 16:18 tells us that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. The truth is that pride always brings us low; it deceives and destroys. Proverbs 29:23 tells us that a man's pride shall bring him low.

The Problem of Lost Servant Hearts

Even today, a multitude of pastors, preachers, and Christians are struggling to be champions and leaders, not necessarily because they want to lead a people, but because they want dominance and control. We are not content for God to be sovereign; we want to be the ones calling the shots ourselves. Arthur W. Pink said years ago that one reason we do not like the Pope is because we want to be the Pope ourselves.

The problem among pastors, preachers, and Christians is that we have lost a servant's heart. We have certainly lost the humility of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us in Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 and 6, "...let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross." Jesus Christ took upon Himself the form of a servant.

Hold Judges chapter 12, and turn to Luke chapter 22. Mark 10:45 says, "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Our Lord said He came to minister. Luke chapter 22, beginning with verse 24, tells us, "And there was also a strife among them."

Christ's Example of Servanthood

We are talking about the Twelve, the Apostles: "There was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." Isn't that amazing? "And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so. But he that is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve."

"For whether is greater he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth." Remember, Jesus Christ took upon Himself the form of a servant. Our Lord certainly had a servant's heart, and He demonstrated that truth in John chapter 13 when He took a towel, girded Himself, and washed the feet of His disciples. He did indeed take the place of a servant. He was willing to be meek and lowly at heart.

Now, in Judges chapter 12, there is no humility, meekness, or serving in our text. There is only pride, death, and destruction. Jephthah was a mighty warrior, a fighter par excellence, we might say. But one problem with Jephthah was that he was the son of a harlot. His brothers kicked him out because they did not want him to have an inheritance from their father. Judges chapter 11, verses 1

and 2, says: “Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, and he was a son of a harlot, Gilead begat Jephthah. And Gilead's wife bare him sons, and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house, for thou art the son of a strange woman.” Jephthah indeed was a mighty man of valor, but he was kicked out of his family’s inheritance.

He separated himself from his brethren because he was despised and disowned by his own brothers. In the process of time, the Ammonites gathered to war against the Gileadites. The Gileadites sought someone to lead them in battle and help defeat the Ammonites, so they turned back to Jephthah. Remember, he was a mighty man of valor.

In Judges 11, beginning with verse 4, we read: “And it came to pass in the process of time that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. And it was so that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob. And they said unto Jephthah, Come and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not you hate me and expel me out of my father’s house? And why do you come unto me now when you’re in distress? And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayst go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If you bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head?”

Jephthah's Background and God's Sovereign Choice

“And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, the Lord be witness between us if we do not so according to thy words.” So God used Jephthah to defeat the Ammonites. He may have been what the world today would call a bastard, or an illegitimate child, yet he was used by God, and used greatly.

Put down this principle in your mind and heart: God uses whom He chooses, and He chooses whom He uses. One does not have to meet our standards to be used by God. Remember, even in 2 Peter

2:16, God used a dumb ass. The Bible says that “the dumb ass speaking forbade the madness of the prophet.” If God can use Balaam’s ass to correct, reproach, and reprove him, then God can use whomever He chooses. The truth is, God does not need to use any of us. We are not indispensable; we are dispensable, because God is God.

God Opposes the Proud

uses whomever he chooses now. Let me just show you something. I want you to turn in your Bibles holding Judges 12 but to the book of James chapter 4 and 1 Peter chapter 5. I want you to see two verses in order that I might emphasize one word. Look if you would please in the book of James chapter 4 and notice if you would verse 6. James 4, verse 6, then we'll go over to 1 Peter 5. James 4, verse 6, the Bible says, "But he giveth more grace, wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace unto the humble." Now I want to call your attention to this statement, "God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble." Now if you will turn over just a few pages to 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 5. Look what the Bible says, "Likewise you younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another and be clothed with humility for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." Now I read those passages just to tell you that the word "resisteth" in James 4 and verse 6 and in 1 Peter 5 and verse 5 are

the same identical Greek word. For instance, the Greek word is antitassomai and it literally means to resist, to oppose, to fight against, range in battle against. So I want you to look at 1 Peter 5 and verse 5 again and you can apply this to James 4 and verse 6 as well. He says, "Likewise you younger submit yourselves unto the elder, yea all of you be subject one to another and be clothed with humility for God fights against the proud. God sets Himself in battle array against the proud. God opposes the proud."

"And giveth grace unto the humble." So when we are proud, arrogant, and haughty, God Himself opposes us, fights against us, and sets Himself in battle against us. When we are demanding, controlling, and seeking fleshly dominance and control, God places Himself in battle against us.

Ephraim in Judges chapter 12 is an example of what I am talking about. Ephraim and Manasseh were the two sons of Joseph, and God set Ephraim above Manasseh. In Genesis chapter 48, Joseph brought his two sons for Jacob to bless them before he died. Manasseh was the older son, and Joseph had him positioned so Jacob's right hand would be on his head. But the Bible tells us that Jacob guided his hands wittingly and put his right hand upon the head of Ephraim and his left hand upon the head of Manasseh.

This displeased Joseph. He said, "This is not so, my father, this is my firstborn." Jacob answered, "I know it, my son, I know it; but this is what God is going to do." Genesis 48:20 says, "And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall all Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim, and as Manasseh." He said, "Ephraim before Manasseh." Although Manasseh was the oldest child, Ephraim was set forth as the one who received the prominence.

Ephraim's History of Pride and Control

Evidently, from this prophecy Ephraim developed what you and I would call a Diotrephes complex. I mentioned that a few weeks back, but may I remind you that Diotrephes was the man in 3 John who would not receive the Apostle John or anyone John sent. Anyone who wanted to identify with John or any of John's ambassadors, he would kick out of the church. John said, "When I come, I'm going to take care of Diotrephes." But in the next verse he says, "Demetrius has a good testimony." It is almost insane today when you see people wanting to be a Diotrephes and not a Demetrius. Yet you see that on every hand.

In Joshua chapter 17, Ephraim thought himself to be a great people. Joshua 17:14 says, "And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying"—the children of Joseph being Ephraim and Manasseh—"Why hast thou given me but one lot, and one portion to inherit, seeing that I am a great people?"

"Forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto. And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for yourself therein the land of the Perizzites, and of the Giants, if Mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us.

And all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Bethshean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel. And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power. Thou shalt not have one lot only, but the mountain shall be thine, for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down, and the outgoings of it shall be thine, and thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong." Now the interesting thing is that they come to Joshua and say, "We are a great people."

When you and I read the word "great," we normally think, as most people would, that they were numerous, that they were plenty, that they were multitudinous. Certainly, that word is used that way in our Bibles. But this same word is also translated as "captain" twenty-four times. So they are not only saying, "We are a great people"; they are saying, "We are leaders. We are in charge," so to speak.

I want you to note that Ephraim evidently has a habit of wanting to be first and becoming upset if they are not first. So if you look in your Bibles to Joshua chapter 7, we will begin reading with verse 24 and read through chapter 8 and verse 3.

Now you remember how Gideon defeated the Midianites. Although Gideon had a huge army, God said, "You've got too many." They let everyone who was afraid go back home, and then God cut him down and said, "You still have too many." So God gave a test, and finally Gideon ended up with three hundred men to defeat the Midianites. Later, some of the other Israelites were called into the battle. But originally it was just Gideon and his three hundred, right? Now watch this, because they become upset because they only got in on the mopping-up action.

In Judges chapter 7, beginning with verse 24, we read: “Gideon sent messengers throughout all Mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites and take before them the waters of Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together and took the waters under Beth-barah and Jordan. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of

Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of Jordan. And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Watch now, why hast thou served us thus, that thou callest us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites?"

"And they did chide with him sharply. And he said unto them, What have I now done in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezar? And God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeb; and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him when he had said that."

Remember, it was God who gave Gideon the three hundred. Gideon had nothing to do with it. After the initial battle, when the Midianites were destroying themselves and Gideon needed help chasing them, he called for the others. Now they were saying, "What in the world are you doing? You should have called us to begin with." But the battle was the Lord's; it was not necessarily Gideon's. You remember, it was the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, but it was the sword of the Lord first.

So Gideon appeased them by appealing to the greatness of their deeds and the smallness of his deeds. He gave them the first place. He said, "What was I in comparison to you? You got Oreb and Zeb, the princes." Once he appeased their pride, their anger was abated. Gideon took the position of a servant. He humbled himself and said, "I don't need the glory. I don't need the praise. You can have it." That was all it took to satisfy the Ephraimites.

The Conflict in Judges 12

Ephraim was upset with Gideon because they were not in the battle originally. When you look in Judges chapter 12, now they are upset with Jephthah because they were not in the battle originally as well. And now they not only are upset with Jephthah; they threaten to murder him and his family. Look in verse 1: "And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together and went northward and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passeth thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thine house upon thee with fire." Really? Burning him alive? Burning his family alive? Now, according to verses 2 and 3, Jephthah

did call them, but they did not arrive timely. “And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon. And when I called you, you delivered me not out of their hands. When I saw that you delivered me not, I put my life in my hands and passed over against the children of Ammon. And the Lord delivered them into my hand. Wherefore then are you coming to me this day to fight against me?”

Please remember that Ephraim has always wanted the position of control out of dominance. That is why they were upset with Gideon. When you believe that you are in the position of control, or at least should be in control, there is no rush. It does not matter concerning the situation, the lives that are at stake, or the issues that are involved.

The truth is, when you take a superior, dominating, and domineering attitude, you are going to march to the beat of your own drummer. Ephraim’s attitude was simply this: “I will get there when I get there, and they will just have to wait for me. They cannot start without me.” Jephthah saw his opportunity and took it. The Ephraimites were not there; now they come out to fight against Jephthah.

They are threatening to burn him and his family alive, and they are going to defeat and destroy the Gileadites because they defeated the Ammonites—ostensibly because they were not given the opportunity to control the war or participate in the way that they desired.

Look what Jephthah asked in verse 3. He tells them what happened, then says, "Wherefore then are you come out unto me this day to fight against me?" Why are you provoking an attack? This is the first instance in the Bible where Israelite was fighting Israelite. They were not fighting a common enemy; they were fighting each other, and they came purposely to pick a fight. Jephthah's question makes clear that the Ephraimites had come out against him intentionally.

The battle between the Gileadites and the Ephraimites was a battle over control and dominion. Verse 4 says, "Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim

and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim because they said, You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites." The Ephraimites were accusing the Gileadites of being fugitives among their own people. You need to understand who is fighting and why they are fighting. This was a war between Israelites, not a battle against a common enemy. The men of Gilead gathered because the Ephraimites had deliberately come to fight them.

The Gileadites were Manassites, from the tribe of Manasseh. Deuteronomy 3:13 says, "And the rest of Gilead and all Bashan being the kingdom of Og gave I unto the half tribe of Manasseh, all the region of Argob with all Bashan, which was called the land of the Giants." The half tribe of Manasseh got this land of Gilead. The land was therefore connected with Manasseh, even though the conflict involved Ephraim and Gilead.

Joshua 17:1 says, "There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh for he was the firstborn of Joseph; to wit, for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan." Gilead then was the firstborn child of Manasseh. Manasseh was the firstborn child of Joseph. Thus the Bible identifies both Gilead's family connection and the tribe to which the Gileadites belonged.

Verses 5 and 6 continue, "And there fell ten portions to Manasseh beside the land of Gilead in Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan, because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons, and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead." Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh got land on this side of Jordan, while the other half-tribe of Manasseh and the other tribes got land on the other side. Some were on the west side and some on the east side.

Matthew Henry said, “Pride was at the bottom of this quarrel. Only by pride comes contention. Proud men think all the honors lost that go beside themselves, and then who can stand before envy?”

He continued: “The Ephraimites had the same quarrel with Gideon who was a Manasseh on their side of Jordan,” that is, the east side. Ephraim and Manasseh were nearer kin than any of the

tribes, being both sons of Joseph. “And yet they were more jealous one of another than any of the other tribes.”

Gideon was of Manasseh on one side of Jordan, and the Ephraimites were angry with him. Jephthah was of Manasseh on the other side of Jordan, and the Ephraimites were angry with him also. Henry said, “Jacob having crossed hands and given Ephraim the precedence, looking as far forward as the kingdom of the ten tribes, which Ephraim was the head after the revolt from the house of David, that tribe not content with that honor in the promise was displeased if Manasseh had any honor done to it in the meantime. It is a pity that kindred or relationship should be an inducement to love and peace should be ever an occasion as it often proves of strife and discord.”

“A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and contentions among brethren are the bars of a castle.” It should be love and peace, but it often ends in strife and discord.

Go back to Judges chapter 12 and look at verses 2 and 3. Remember that pride and arrogance are at the bottom of this quarrel. Here is Jephthah’s defense: “And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon. And when I called you, you delivered me not out of their hands. And when I saw that you delivered me not, I put my life in my hands and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the Lord delivered them into my hand. Wherefore then are you come up unto me this day to fight against me?”

These men, the Ephraimites, came for a fight, and they were going to have it. The Bible does not tell us how many men came, but if 42,000 of them were killed, I would imagine there had to be 50 or 60 thousand of them. They came prepared for war. Jephthah’s defense was, “Look, I called you. You didn’t get here timely.”

"I had an opportunity to defeat the Ammonites, I took that opportunity and I defeated them. God delivered them into my hand. That's all there is to it. I was not upset with you. I was not offended at you. You just didn't get here in time." That defense would be what you and I would call reasonable and temperate. He simply explained

what had happened. But his defense was met with the greatest of insults from men intent on provoking a fight.

Their response was one of scoffing and contempt. They called the Gileadites fugitives from Manasseh. Look, if you would, in verse four: "Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim because they said, You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites."

They were saying that the Gileadites were runaways and outcasts, an obscure set of men with no name, not worthy of anything, living between the illustrious tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, although the Gileadites were Manassites themselves. Matthew Henry paraphrased their response: "You Gileadites that dwell here on the other side of Jordan are but fugitives of Ephraim, the scum and the dregs of the tribes of Joseph, of which Ephraim is the chief. You're the refuse of the family and are so accounted among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites. Who cares for you?"

"All your neighbors know what you are. You're no better than fugitives and vagabonds separated from your brother and driven into a corner." That's inflammatory. It simply says that they were absolutely worthless. Here is pride, arrogance, and haughtiness, because the Ephraimites were not in control. They wanted control and dominance. Their attitude was, It will be my way or else; it is my way or the highway.

Here is the height of a domineering spirit, which today we call political correctness. It is the same when you call someone a racist, bigot, heretic, ignorant, or fool. You express strong disapproval for what they say, think, or believe simply because you cannot control what they think and believe. Political correctness extends not only into religion but, unhappily, also into Christianity.

So we now castigate and denigrate our brethren with whom we disagree; in some cases, we even disallow them to be Christians, just as these Ephraimites told the Gileadites, “You are not really of us. You are nothing but scum.”

Do you remember that Moses got into trouble with God for calling His people rebels? It is true that the Israelites were basically

rebellious people; God Himself said so. Yet it is rather like having a sister: if you call her ugly, that is one thing, but if somebody else calls her ugly, there is a fight. God can call His own people whatever He wants to call them.

But Moses, in Numbers chapter 20, became so exasperated with them that he said, “Here now, ye rebels, must I fetch water out of this rock for you?” Instead of speaking to the rock, as God had told him, he smote the rock.

You probably have never really looked at this passage in this light, but look in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 22: “But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the counsel. But whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”

He said that if you are angry with your brother without a cause, God will judge you for that. If you call your brother Raca, you are in danger of being called before the council, being judged by men. But if you call your brother a fool, you are in danger of hell fire.

The word Raca was a term of reproach popular in that day. It literally means an empty-headed, senseless, stupid man. When someone said Raca, he was saying, “You are empty-headed; you are senseless. You are stupid. You are worthless. You are nothing.” That is essentially what they were saying in Judges chapter 12 to the Gileadites: “You are worthless, scum, fugitives.” It was a highly insensitive insult considered a public affront.

Now that all these men had come to battle, Jephthah said, “You want it? You’ve got it. We’re going to fight.” A battle ensued, and the proud, haughty, arrogant, foul-mouthed Ephraimites were defeated.

Many therefore sought to escape. The Bible tells us that forty-two thousand men were killed. The Gileadites took the ford of Jordan, where the Ephraimites had to cross. When they asked, “Are you an Ephraimite?” they would say no, because they did not want to be killed. Then the Gileadites said, “You have to say Shibboleth.” They could not say Shibboleth; they said Sibboleth, and then they were killed.

Judges chapter 12, verses 5 and 6, says: “And the Gileadites took the passage of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? And if he said, Nay; then said they unto him, Say now, Shibboleth: and he said, Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.” The word Shibboleth actually means a stream.

The word Sibboleth means a burden. There was a discrepancy between the accents of the tribes. We have people in this country with many different accents. Years ago, Alice and I stayed with a family in New Orleans that had three children. Neither the two boys nor their sister had the same accent; all of them spoke differently. It was unbelievable.

Years ago, I landed in Boston, Massachusetts, and saw a state trooper standing there with his pants on, a leather strap here, and another strap around his chin. I asked him, “Could you please direct me to Eastern Airlines?” I had to change planes, and Eastern was in existence at that time. He answered me, and I looked at him and said, “Pardon?” He said it again. I looked at him and said, “Thank you,” and walked away. To this day, I have no idea what he said to me. He was speaking English; it was simply a strong Massachusetts brogue. I have a good friend from New Hampshire who always talks about the “heart”—your heart has to be right, the “heart.”

The Tongue's Destructive Power

That was the way it was in those days: they could not say Shibboleth. When they said Sibboleth, they were killed because the Gileadites knew they were Ephraimites. Do you understand that one of our biggest problems, even today, is our tongue? As I read this, I thought, I guarantee you, if those Ephraimites had a second chance, they would have bitten their tongues and not called the Gileadites scum and refugees. It would have saved forty-two thousand lives.

James 3:2 says, “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they

may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. So is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire out of hell."

"For every kind of beast, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind. But the tongue can no man tame. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessings and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be." The tongue is a very small member, but it boasts great things. It kindles a fire, sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire out of Hell. It cannot be controlled. Those forty-two thousand dead men, I can assure you, wished that the tongue had been controlled.

Applications: Can You Say Shibboleth?

What do I mean by the question, "Can You Say Shibboleth"? When the Gileadites asked that question, the Ephraimites could not pronounce the word correctly. The Gileadites were saying, "Are you a Gileadite? If you're a Gileadite, you're going to have to prove it, because you're going to have to say Shibboleth."

Does that mean you have to agree with me on every detail, pronounce everything the way I pronounce it, and see everything the way I see it in order to be my brother in Jesus Christ? No. An Israelite is an Israelite whether he can say Shibboleth or not. A Christian is a Christian whether or not he can say Shibboleth. You cannot reduce Christianity to conformity to one man's views, understanding, or perception.

There are differences in speech, accents, and understanding. God does not call each one of us to have the understanding of the others. Just as there were differences between Ephraim and Gilead in their

speech, there are differences between the northern kingdom and even the southern kingdom.

When Peter had denied our Lord, or was in the process of denying Him, Matthew 26:73 says, "And after a while they came to him that stood by him and said unto Peter, Surely thou art one of them for thy speech betrayeth thee." You are not one of us. In Mark 14:70, after he denied again, they said to Peter, "Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto."

We know you are a Galilean. We know you are one of them because you talk like a Galilean. You sound like a Galilean. The truth of the matter is that there are differences, and there are always going to be differences. You do not have to have divisions, but you can have differences.

I was preaching in Maine years ago and using an illustration. I got to talking about biddies, and I noticed everybody looking puzzled. I said, "You know, a baby chicken." Someone said, "Oh, peep peeps." I explained that, if you called them that, they were biddies down south. Then I got to talking about a catfish, and again everyone looked around. I said, "You know what a catfish is? It is that fish with whiskers. It has skin and not scales and has sharp spines." They said, "You mean a horned pout." I said, "No, I mean a catfish." You are going to have differences; that is all there is to it.

But it is pure, unadulterated arrogance, pride, and haughtiness to demand that everyone agree with you, or else fight against them, expose them, vilify them, and destroy them. The fact that I cannot pronounce Shibboleth the way you pronounce Shibboleth does not mean that I am not a Christian. It does not mean that I do not truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, nor does it mean that I am in rebellion against Him. All it means at the present time is that I do not have the present ability to see things as you see them or pronounce them as you pronounce them. I do not have to say Shibboleth the way you say Shibboleth, and you do not have to say Shibboleth the way I say Shibboleth.

Here is the second point. Jephthah is certainly to be praised for defending himself and his people against the Ammonites. The Ammonites attacked; it was pure self-defense. Moreover, Jephthah

was not responsible for the pride, arrogance, and haughtiness of the Ephraimites. They came prepared for war. They provoked and attacked, and Gilead defeated them. There is certainly nothing wrong with that. However, when it came to the fords of Jordan, I would not know and could not say whether that was justice or vengeance. There is a difference between the two, because the people were already defeated, and these were men scattered, simply trying to get back home.

It is possible that this was God's justice, and certainly these men would have been included among the forty-two thousand slain in that battle. But it would not have happened had it not been for the Ephraimites. The main responsibility lay with the Ephraimites themselves.

We have to learn valuable lessons from this passage. First of all, we are not God, and we do not have the absolute right to demand that others see things exactly as we see them. Secondly, we have no right to ridicule, mock, or reject our brethren who do not see things as we see them. God is the one who gives illumination and understanding. I have no right to ridicule and mock you just because you do not see things that I see; and you have no right to ridicule and mock me just because I do not see things the way you see them.

Third, we need to learn not to be hasty in our speech and to control our tongues. If those Ephraimites could have taken back their words and saved forty-two thousand lives, they would have been more than willing to eat those words, had they known the outcome. We need to make sure that we control our tongues.

Fourthly, it is our mouths that get us into trouble. Proverbs 21:23 says, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles." I quote this verse often, think about it often, and try to apply it. That does not mean that I am always successful, but I certainly understand it and believe it.

Each one of us has said things in times past that we wish we had never said, and we have brought trouble and heartache upon ourselves because of our mouths. There is a time to speak up, the Bible tells us, but there is also a time to bite that tongue and stay

quiet. If you control your mouth and your tongue, and keep them, you will keep your soul from trouble.

The fourth application is clear. If we have a servant's heart, we will seek to be meek and humble, and the Lord will reward us. Do not be afraid of the word meek. It does not mean that you are a mealy mouth foot mat for everybody. Meekness refers to discipline, strength under God. You are under His law and power; you go when He says go and fight when He says fight, not merely of yourself.

James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 say that God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. I would much rather have His blessings than His curses, and His help and support than His wrath and anger. If we have a servant's heart, we will always be willing to serve, because our Lord took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.

Ephraim in Judges 12 did not have a servant's heart; therefore, they were destroyed before God because of their own pride and their own domineering spirit. A man's pride shall bring him low.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray for your grace, mercy, goodness, and kindness to be extended to us. Help us, Lord, to learn from this passage and apply the truths and principles of thy word. We ask you, Father, for a servant's heart. Make us humble and meek, willing to serve, and willing to honor thee in all that we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, amen.

CHAPTER 14

Do You Want Mercy Or Judgement?

Do You Want Mercy or Judgment?

Introduction: The Question of Mercy vs. Judgment

Exodus chapter 21, verses 12 through 17.

God says, "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. But if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand, then I will appoint thee a place where he shall flee. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die. And he that smiteth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death. And he that stealeth a man and selleth him, or he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death. And he that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."

A very pertinent question is, do you want mercy or judgment? I can assure you that anyone in his right mind who would answer that question would say, "I certainly want mercy." But the way one

answers and what he ends up with may be something totally and completely different. One may desire mercy, but he may end up with justice. Why? Because that which one desires is not always that which one gets. He actually gets based upon his life and the way he lived.

The Bible tells us that wicked Balaam, who was a false prophet, said in Numbers 23 and verse 10, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Well, Balaam certainly did not die the death of the righteous, and his last end was certainly not like a righteous man's. The reason his death was not righteous was because he was a wicked man. He was ungodly. According to Joshua 13 and verse 22, Balaam was slain with the sword of the children of Israel.

God's Mercy and Its Limits

He may have desired a righteous death, but he did not live a righteous life. In order to die a righteous death, you must have a righteous life. Many desire mercy and request mercy, but their actions actually demand justice.

It may surprise you to find out that there comes a time when mercy ceases. There comes a time when God will no longer be merciful. Now stop and think about that. There are very few who truly ask for, or even demand, justice. We may demand justice in the lives of other people, but very few people really want justice in their own lives.

I was recently talking to a young friend who lives in California, Joe David Sepe. Joe David has probably listened to about 400 of my messages. In fact, he can probably tell me what is in some of my messages better than I can remember. As I was talking to him, he mentioned an illustration I had used years ago. To be honest, I had basically forgotten it. The illustration was simply this.

I was preaching in Illinois, and it was a pretty good congregation. In that congregation that night was a young Mormon boy. Needless to say, he was not really interested in my sermon. He did not like it. He was greatly upset and offended because I was certainly not preaching anything related to Mormonism. So angry that afterward

he came up to confront me, he tried to say certain things, and I would simply quote Scripture to answer him. The more I quoted, the angrier he became.

Finally, in desperation, he said, "Let me just ask you one question." I said, "Go ahead." Then he asked, "Is not God just?" My response was, "Absolutely. He is the just God." Then the young man said, "All I want from God is justice. All I want is what I deserve." I looked at him and said, "Son, that is exactly what you are going to get. But once you get it, you will have wished that he had given you mercy instead of justice."

But there are some people who are like that. It is true that our God is merciful. In fact, you can read about God's mercy in probably every book of the Bible. And anyone who's ever been saved by grace acknowledges now the only reason we're saved is because of God's grace and because of God's mercy. Someone has aptly pointed out that grace is that which gives us that which we do not deserve, and it is mercy that keeps us from getting what we do deserve. Certainly that is true.

But let me just show you a couple of passages as you hold Exodus 21. We are coming back there. Turn in your Bibles very quickly to Psalm 103. We'll just look at a few passages in the book of Psalm. I think that I could probably multiply these passages for a week, but these shall be sufficient. In Psalm 103 and verse 8, look what the Bible says: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." That's our God. He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Turn right over to Psalm 116 and look at verse 5. Again David acknowledges this truth. He says, "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." So God is the merciful God. Then, if you look in Psalm 117 and verse 2, again the Bible says this: "For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord."

Note: "For His merciful kindness is great toward us." Although God is known as the merciful God, and although God is rich in mercy and plenteous in mercy, there comes a time when mercy ceases and the only option that is left is justice and/or judgment.

Exegesis of Exodus 21:12-17

If you look back in our text in Exodus chapter 21, the main text I want to amplify today is found in verse 14: "But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die." God is telling us here that if someone is guilty of premeditated murder—someone who is blatant and maliciously murdering another person—and then flees to God's altar begging for mercy, God says, "Thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die."

If you look at the text in verses 12–17, you will find various actions that demand the death penalty. Verse 12 speaks about a murderer: "He that smiteth a man so that he die shall be surely put to death." Although God demands the death penalty for murder, He does not demand it for what you and I would call accidental killing. He says in verse 13, "And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand, then I will appoint thee a place where he shall flee," which refers to the cities of refuge in the Bible.

Then He says in verse 14, "But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die." Verse 15 says, "And he that smiteth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death." Verse 16 concerns kidnapping: "And he that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." Verse 17 says, "And he that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."

When you look back at verse 15, the word "smite" in the Hebrew could refer to murder, but usually it means hitting, wounding, beating, scourging, or striking. Thus, any man who strikes his father or his mother would be considered worthy of death. Then verse 17 says, "And he that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."

The cursing here refers to treating your parents with contempt and dishonor, making them despicable, despising them as vile, and despising them as persons. God says that merits the death penalty. There are biblical reasons for the death penalty in each of these cases. If you want to know what cursing father and mother means,

you can read Matthew 15 and Mark chapter 7, because our Lord amplifies and deals with that. But whether you are speaking of someone guilty of murder, striking a parent, or cursing a parent, the individual is despising the image of God in that person. In the case especially of parents, it is not just despising the image of God; it is also despising God's ordained authority. But the verse I want to call your attention to is verse 14 again.

He said, "Thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die." God is telling us that there is to be no sanctuary, refuge, or mercy for an individual who murders maliciously. In verse 14, we are talking about a man who comes presumptuously upon his neighbor, with malice in his heart and countenance, and with a bold, daring, and hostile nature, so that he murders his neighbor. In such an instance, God says there is to be no sanctuary, refuge, or asylum—absolutely nothing that keeps him from justice. Mercy has passed; mercy has ceased. The only thing left is justice. God says, "Take him from mine altar that he may die."

No Sanctuary for Willful Murderers

Pagans often thought and taught that if a man committed something worthy of death, fled to a place of sanctuary, and begged for mercy, he was to be spared. If anyone killed him once he entered the sanctuary, that person was considered cursed. Of course, it was a pagan scruple, something that is certainly not true. God attacks that scruple and says, "Look, if a man does something worthy of death, even if he flees to my altar and grabs hold of the horns of the altar, rip him from the altar and put him to death." That ought to throw light on what we are seeing today in our land when certain cities refer to themselves as sanctuary cities, where they harbor murderers, rapists, kidnappers, and human traffickers. God says no. Any individual who deserves death is to be ripped from his sanctuary, his asylum, and executed according to God's law.

John Calvin, commenting on Exodus 21:14, writes: “Lest by overlooking murders they should defile the land, God commands that murderers should be torn away even from His altar, whereby He signifies that they are as unworthy of divine or of human aid.

"For although the sanctity of the altar might afford an asylum for the protection of those who would transgress through imprudence or error, yet it would have been wrong that impunity for crime should have been derived from hence, because the sanctuary would have been thus converted into a den of thieves, and religion or Christianity would have been subjected to gross profanation. Wherefore, although criminals embracing the altar should implore God's aid, the law commands them to be torn away from thence to punishment, because it would have been disgraceful to abuse God's sacred name as affording license for sin."

Calvin continues: "Hence it appears how great was the folly of old in supposing that churches were honored when they were made asylums for the encouragement of evil deeds. This indeed was derived from the ordinary custom of the heathen, but it was a foolish imitation thus to mix up God with idols in a spurious worship."

Think about this, because we have cases like this all the time in this land. A number of years ago—I forget exactly where; I think it may have been Texas, but I could be wrong—there was a woman named Carla, whose last name I do not remember, who was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. Evidently, she was genuinely converted to Jesus Christ while in prison awaiting execution. Consequently, a number of preachers and other Christians implored the governor to spare her because she had become a Christian.

The truth is that someone who has done something like this should implore God for mercy, but mercy cannot be handed out until justice has been executed, in one sense of the word. For a state or governor to pardon someone worthy of death is a violation of Exodus 21:14. It is true that God forgives sin.

Commentary on Proverbs 28:17

A murderer can be saved and forgiven, but that does not mean a murderer will escape the judgment God has pronounced upon him.

Proverbs 28:17 says, "A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him." A man who

does violence to the blood of any person is a murderer. Let him flee to the pit, the grave; let no man stay him.

John Trapp, the old Puritan, commenting on this verse, said, “Let him die without mercy. Let no man mediate for him, lest he pay down as Ahab did, life for life, people for people. Lest he draw upon the land the guilt of blood.” Thus, “Let no man mediate for him” means that no man should try to intercede for him.

Matthew Poole said, “Let no man stay him. So it is a prohibition that no man should endeavor to save the life of a willful murderer, either by intercession or by offering satisfaction or any other way.” He then referred to Genesis 9:6, Exodus 21:14, and Numbers 35:31. Or, as the ancient and many other interpreters render it, “No man shall stay him”; none shall desire or endeavor to save him from his deserved punishment. “He shall die without pity, being an object of public hatred.”

Keil and Delitzsch wrote: “The proverb lying before us cannot thus mean anything else than that no one should give to the murderer as such any assistance, that no one should save him clandestinely, and thereby make himself a partaker of his sin. Grace cannot come into the place of justice till justice has been fully recognized. Sympathy, human forbearance under the false title of grace do not stand in contrast to this justice.”

Illustration: Adonijah's Temporary Mercy and Ultimate Justice

When you stop and think about Proverbs 28:17 and Exodus 21:14, how do we explain that? What illustrations help us understand exactly what God is saying? I want to give you two illustrations.

The first is a man named Adonijah. Adonijah was David's son. Absalom was dead, and Adonijah was now the elder brother of David's children. He simply assumed that he would be king when David was old and dying. Adonijah called Joab the captain of the host, Abiathar the priest, and a number of other individuals together. He was going to proclaim himself king and inaugurate himself as king. Basically, Adonijah was conspiring against David,

Solomon, Bathsheba, and Nathan the prophet, and he was caught red-handed.

Turn to 1 Kings chapter 1. We will be looking often between 1 Kings and 2 Samuel. Notice 1 Kings 1:5: “Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?”

“And he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom. And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him. But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David, were not with Adonijah. And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which is by En-rogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants: but Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not.”

You now have a conspiracy: Adonijah is going to take over the throne regardless of what David wants and regardless of what the Lord wants. David receives news of what is happening, first from Bathsheba and then from Nathan, and says, “I’m going to settle this.” He takes his crown and places it upon Solomon, causes Solomon to ride on his royal mule, and the people praise Solomon, saying, “God save the king.” Adonijah and his company hear the uproar, and someone tells him, “Our lord David has made Solomon king, and the people are shouting, ‘God save the king.’” Adonijah is now in a problem.

Look at what happens in 1 Kings chapter 1. “And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way.” Adonijah was afraid as well. “And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went and caught hold on the horns of the altar. And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon; for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me today that he will not slay his servant with the sword.”

Knowing that he is caught in his conspiracy, Adonijah runs to the tabernacle, grabs hold of the horns of the altar, and begs for mercy. Solomon answers: “And Solomon said, If he will shew himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die. So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house.”

Here is a man who had planned a conspiracy—indeed, a rebellion and revolution against his own father, against the Lord, and against the people of the Lord. Yet he begs for mercy, and Solomon says, “That’s fine. As long as you do right, there is not going to be any problem between us. But the day that you do wrong, you are going to die. It is just that simple.”

A very short time later, Adonijah was still trying to get the kingdom. This time he proceeded very deviously. He went to Bathsheba and asked her to intercede with Solomon so that he might marry Abishag, the Shunammite woman who had ministered to David as he died. She was not David’s wife; she was simply a young woman who ministered to him.

In 1 Kings chapter 2, beginning with verse 12, we read: “Then Solomon sat upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly. And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably.”

Isn’t it strange that Bathsheba, looking at one of David’s sons—David had been her husband, so he would have been her stepson—asked him, “Comest thou peaceably?” There had been real problems, and she knew about the conspiracy. He answered, “Peaceably.” Verse 14 continues: “And he said, Moreover I have somewhat to say unto thee. And she said, Say on. And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother’s: for it was his from the Lord.”

Adonijah was acknowledging that God had chosen Solomon and wanted him to be king, but he claimed, “It was supposed to be mine,

and everybody else wanted me to be king." That was not true; not everybody wanted him to be king. Nevertheless, he continued: "And he said, I pray thee, speak unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee nay,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife. And Bathsheba said, Well; I will speak for thee unto the king." Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon to speak for Adonijah.

"And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand. Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; I pray thee, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay."

"And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife. And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also? for he is mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah. Then king Solomon sware by the Lord, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life. Now therefore, as the Lord liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day. And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him that he died."

Adonijah initially was given mercy. He fled to the altar, grabbed hold of the horns, and begged Solomon to let him live. Solomon told him, in effect, that as long as he did right, he could go to his house and enjoy life. But now he was conspiring again, and Solomon had him executed. Judgment and justice were given to him in the end. He had appealed for mercy, and mercy had been given him temporarily, but his life was one of conniving, conspiring, wickedness, and rebellion. He requested mercy, but what he received was justice.

Illustration: Joab's Murders and Execution at the Altar

Here is the principle: Just because someone is given mercy temporarily does not mean that he will not receive justice ultimately.

God's paydays are not always on Saturday. Certainly, Adonijah received exactly what he deserved.

Adonijah is an illustration of begging for mercy and yet receiving justice. Here is another illustration: Joab. Joab was the captain of the host under David. He was a mighty man and an exceedingly great warrior, but he murdered two men in cold blood: Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether. Consider the counsel David gave Solomon concerning Joab as David was dying. In 1 Kings chapter 2, verses 5 and 6, David advised Solomon concerning what should be done to clean up the kingdom: “Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the host of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed

David said of Joab, “the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.” In other words, he is saying that what Solomon needed to do was execute Joab. David was not able to do so, and there are reasons.

But you have to answer this question: Why did Joab murder Abner, and why did Joab murder Amasa? The answer to the first question is that Abner killed Asahel, his brother, in battle. Our definitions of “play” are not exactly the same as the definitions they held in Bible times. Look in 2 Samuel chapter 2, beginning with verse 12.

By this time, David had been made king of Judah, but he was not yet king over all Israel. Saul was dead, Ish-bosheth his son was king, and Abner was the captain of the host of Ish-bosheth in Israel. Joab was the captain of the host over Judah. So it is written in 2 Samuel 2:12: “And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.” The servants of Ish-bosheth were on one side and the servants of David on the other. Abner said to Joab, “Let the young men now arise, and play before us.” Really? Joab said, “Let them arise.” Do you think that when they

spoke of playing, they meant, “Well, let’s just see what they’re made of”?

"Let them fight a little bit." No, it did not work like that. Watch verse 15: "Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which pertained to Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon."

"And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David." There were three sons of Zeruiah there: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. "And Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe." He could run. "And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner."

Abner warned him, "Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour." In other words, he told Asahel not to mess with him, but to take the armor of one of the young men who did not really know how to fight. Asahel would not turn aside. Abner said again, "Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?" He was saying, "Please do not make me kill you. I could never face Joab if I had to kill you."

"Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still." Abner slowed down until Asahel came close enough. He did not even turn back; he took the spear and pushed backward, and it killed Asahel.

This was a battle. Abner escaped, and the men of Israel escaped. They called off the battle, and Joab and the men of Judah went home, while Abner and his men went home—those who were left. Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, who was exceedingly weak, accused Abner of messing with one of his father's concubines. Abner became

unglued and said, "You mean to tell me that you are reproaching me over this woman?"

Whether it was true or not, I have no idea, but he was very incensed. He told Ish-bosheth, “This day, this day I’m going to turn the kingdom over to David. I’m going to go to David and I’m going to side with him, and you’re going to die and all Israel is going to be united under David.” You remember, David reigned in Judah for seven years and then thirty-three years over all Israel. So what Abner does now is go to David and make a covenant with him to turn the kingdom over to him.

“So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that were with him a feast. And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.” David and Abner had now made a covenant together, and Abner was going to bring all Israel to David.

“And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop.” Joab was not there; he was out fighting. They came back and brought in a great spoil with them, but Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace. “When Joab and all the host that was with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.”

“Then Joab came to the king, and said,”—can you imagine somebody walking into a king and talking like this? “What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.” By the way, Joab and David were related. But Joab still was captain of the host. “And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not. And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly,”

Joab smote Abner under the fifth rib, and he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother. When David heard it, he said, “I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner: let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.” So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. Joab actually murdered Abner for killing his brother in battle; it was not as though Abner had purposely killed Asahel.

He begged him to leave him alone. Let me show you something else. He not only murdered Abner; he also murdered Amasa. If you look in your Bible to 2 Samuel chapter 17, this may surprise you. If we understood the relationships between all these people, it would really amaze us. Did you know that Amasa and Joab were first cousins? Second Samuel chapter 17 and verse 25 says, “And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa was a man's son, whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah, Joab's mother.” Abigail and Zeruiah were sisters, which would make Amasa and Joab first cousins.

Joab had murdered Abner and disobeyed David concerning Absalom. Therefore, David made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab. Joab was demoted and Amasa was promoted. Second Samuel chapter 19 and verse 13 says, “And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab.” David now made Amasa captain in Joab’s place.

The problem was that David was returning home from the battle with Absalom when another rebellion began brewing, led by Sheba the son of Bichri. David said that if something were not done, it would be worse than what had happened under Absalom, and that they needed to take care of it. He asked Amasa to gather the men together within three days so they could deal with it.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Samuel 20:4-13 (KJV)

In 2 Samuel chapter 20, beginning there with verse 5. In fact, we can read verse 4:

"Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present. So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

"And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

"And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri. When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out. And Joab said to Amasa,

"Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri. And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab. And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him. And when he saw that every one that came by him stood still, when he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri."

There is something ironic, and in one sense humorous, about what happens next. Sheba has gotten himself into a city, and Joab and his men are surrounding it. They are going to destroy the city in order to get Sheba. “And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down.”

Then a wise woman cried out from the city, “Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.” When he came near, she asked, “Art thou Joab?” He answered, “I am he.” She said, “Hear the words of thine handmaid.” He replied, “I do hear.” Then she said, “They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abel: and so they ended the matter. I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?”

Now look at Joab’s answer: “Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.” Really? He had just murdered two innocent men. Joab murdered Amasa, his own cousin, because Amasa had been promoted and Joab demoted.

Remember that David counseled Solomon, saying, “You remember what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and how he murdered Abner and Amasa.” David said, “Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace. You execute him.”

In 1 Kings chapter 2, Solomon is on the throne, and David has given him counsel about what must be taken care of. “Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom. And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.”

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Kings 2:28-34 (KJV)

> And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord; and, behold, he is by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon him. And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the Lord, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me. And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. And the Lord shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and

> Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever:

"But upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the Lord." So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.

Do you remember that passage in Exodus chapter 21, verse 14, where God said, "If someone slays, murders maliciously, and he flees to my altar, remove him from thence that he may die"? Here is Joab holding on to the altar. He says, "I'm not getting up. I'm begging for mercy." But the time for mercy had passed, and all he got was justice. He had escaped justice temporarily, but he did not escape justice permanently. In due time, God brought it upon his own head.

Applications: Mercy, Judgment, and the Believer's Life

Now listen, I began this message by saying, "Everyone wants mercy." But what we want and what we get may be two totally different things. How we live, how we act, what we believe, and how we treat others, all of this does indeed matter. You may desire mercy, but if you live in such a way as you only merit judgment and justice, that is exactly what you are going to get. Your desires are not going to overcome your actions. Remember that passage where God says He judged every man according to his works? Wow, let me show you something.

In 2 Samuel 22:26, David, of course, is writing this psalm. You will find this psalm in Psalm 18. In fact, you will find this exact same verse in Psalm 18:25. David says, "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright." So with the merciful, God is going to show Himself merciful. He repeats this same verse in Psalm 18:25. Proverbs 11:17 says, "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." The merciful man doeth good to his own soul, but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

You remember in Matthew chapter 5, in the Beatitudes, our Lord says in verse 7, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. In Luke 6 and verse 36 He says, “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” James chapter 2, verse 13, says, “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy. God is telling us that we must be merciful individuals.

When God tells us to be merciful, we are to execute mercy according to God’s Word and His principles, not in violation of them. Here is a good illustration. A man is sitting beside or on the street corner, hungry and asking for food. He is sitting beside or on the street corner, hungry and asking for food. Let us suppose he is hungry because he has been sick and unable to work. He has been sick, unable to work, and he is hungry. If I am a merciful man, I am going to feed him.

Now take the same individual, hungry and begging for food on the street corner, but this time because he is too lazy and too sorry to work. If I give to him, it is not an act of mercy; it would be a violation of the Word of God. For God said, “If any will not work, neither should he eat.” There is therefore a vast difference between God’s mercy and what you and I would call human sentimentality or human emotionalism. So when we exercise mercy, it must be exercised according to the principles of the Word of God.

Simply because judgment or justice is not executed instantly does not mean that it will not be executed. There is a due time for judgment. One verse that you should memorize is Deuteronomy 32:35: “To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time.” Notice what he said: “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.” God will execute His judgment in His due time, and when His time comes, whatever He has ordained for them will make haste; it will happen. So many people think that because God does not smite them down instantly, they have gotten away with it. No, that is not true. God will judge them in

His time. We have to learn to be merciful because we have received mercy.

If we desire mercy for ourselves, our families, our churches, and even our nation, we have to understand that we do indeed reap what we sow. That is why James 2:13 is so important: “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.” God said, If you want My mercy, show mercy. With the merciful, He will show Himself merciful.

There will come a time when many will seek for mercy, beg for mercy, and ask for mercy, but they will not receive it, because there is a time when mercy ceases. What did He say in Isaiah 55:6–7? “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found,” indicating that there is a time when He cannot be found. “Call ye upon him while he is near,” indicating that there is a time when He is not near. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” But the only way God is going to pardon is if there is repentance and we call upon Him when He hears us and when He is near. Those who deny the Lord Jesus Christ and refuse to bow to Him may desire mercy, but all they will ever find is justice. Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ is God. God is merciful, but there comes a time when His mercy ceases. So the question, “Do you want mercy or do you want judgment?” is pertinent, because it will determine whom we believe, what we believe, and how we live—and that really determines what we are going to receive.

God said, "If that man does wrong and he murders, take him from My altar that he may die." He was at an altar begging for mercy, but all he got was justice. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. We ask that You would teach us and that we would be merciful based upon Your mercy, kindness, and graciousness. Help us to live for Thee and to love Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

How Not To Faint

2 Corinthians 4:16–18 says, "For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Introduction: The Reality and Consequences of Fainting

The question is, have you ever fainted? Do you know the consequences of fainting? When one faints, he is unable to function. Duties, responsibilities, and obligations fall by the wayside. Usually, fainting includes a loss of consciousness whereby one is rendered absolutely helpless as well as absolutely useless.

I have fainted one time in my entire life. I was a young boy in boot camp at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. We were on the CBR range—the chemical, biological, radiological—and were supposed to be given a ten-minute break. Those in the military know the joke

attached to that, though it is really not a joke because it is reality. The sergeants would usually say, "Take ten, expect five, and get two," and that is about the way it went.

They gave us a ten-minute break, and I was going to the latrine, about a hundred yards away. Before I could get there, the sergeant hollered, "Break's over! Back in the bleachers! Back in the bleachers!" I turned around and ran back as fast as I could. The grass had been cut, but I could not see that there was a hole about this deep and about that big around. Grass had grown up from the bottom and had been cut smooth, so it looked smooth. As I ran, my foot went into the hole. I twisted, fell on my foot, and heard the bone break.

I leapt up to the sergeant and said, "Sir, I just broke my foot." Do you know what that dumb sergeant asked? "Well, can you sit out the rest of the lectures and march back to camp?" And do you know what that stupid kid said? "Well, yes, sir, I guess I can."

The camp was two miles away. I had to sit through the rest of the lectures and then hobble back to the barracks, a two-mile hike. Obviously, I did not stay in formation; I simply made it back on my own, crippled. When I got to the barracks, I said to some of the fellows, "You're going to have to help me take this boot off." The boot was real tight. They unlaced it, and when they pulled it off, that foot and ankle went out like that. All of a sudden, the pain hit me like you would not believe.

The next thing I knew, I was awakening to smelling salts, because I had totally fainted and passed out. The sergeant could have stood over me and given me a hundred orders, but I would not have heard them, and moreover, I could not have obeyed them. I had fainted and was unable to defend myself, certainly unable to defend others as well. I could not obey an order, comply, or answer. For all practical purposes, when I fainted, I was absolutely useless.

Have you ever heard of fainting goats? Myotonic goats are known as fainting goats because when anything surprises or frightens them, their muscles go stiff for a short time and they fall over. From my understanding, the problem is actually in their brains. Fainting goats are born with a condition known as myotonia congenita, which

affects them when they are frightened or startled. Their muscles tense up, and instead of relaxing immediately, they stay stiff and tense; therefore, the goat falls over. Obviously, the goat does not lose consciousness. It is still aware that it is on the ground. But for all practical purposes, the goat is dead meat because it cannot run, flee, or do anything. It is just there.

We speak of people who faint and goats who faint, but the truth is that many Christians live in a state of faintness. They have fainted and never awakened. They are clueless, useless, and worthless as far as the work of the kingdom of God is concerned. They are zombie Christians, with the deer-in-the-headlights stare in their eyes, and they simply cannot function. Like fainting goats, they have fallen by the wayside and are unable to move or function. They are much like that wicked steward to whom our Lord had given a talent. He took that talent, tied it up in a sweatcloth, a handkerchief, and buried it. He was useless for the kingdom of God.

Biblical Reasons for Fainting

As you look through the Bible, there are many reasons for people fainting. Before I expound on 2 Corinthians 4:16–18, let us consider some of the reasons why people actually faint. Faintness of heart will also come from fear. When someone is fearful, he is also in what you and I would call a fainting stage. Faith and fear are opposites; they are contrary to one to the other. If you are exercising faith, you are not going to be living in fear. If you are living in fear, then you are not going to be exercising faith.

In Deuteronomy 20, this passage deals with the children of Israel going to war. Notice verse 3: “And they shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day into battle against your enemies. Let not your hearts faint. Fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them.” God says that when you are about to go to battle, do not faint. Do not be fearful. It does not matter about the multitude. It does not matter about their might. God says, “Do not be fearful. Do not faint.”

Verse 8 is very interesting, because the priests were now going through and weeding out those who were not capable of fighting: “And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall

say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart." Fear is contagious. Fear will cause others to fear and likewise cause them to desert their post as well. This is a very important truth: either your faith or your fear is always going to influence other people. Your faith will encourage them, but your fear will discourage them. This is a very practical truth on this point.

You are responsible, according to the Word of God, to fear not. It would pay great dividends for individual Christians to take the time to go through their Bibles and underline all the times God tells us to fear not. But you might as well mark her down: when one lives in fear, he is also going to be in a fainting state.

It is not God's people who are to be living in fear; it is God's enemies. In Joshua 2, the spies have come to Rahab, and Rahab is giving testimony. Notice what she said in Joshua 2:9: "And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you." In other words, we know who God is, we know what God has done to the Egyptians, we know how God has delivered you, and your terror has fallen upon all the inhabitants of the land; therefore, we are now faint-hearted. So it is God's enemies who are to be faint-hearted, and not God's people.

So, just marker down: fearfulness will always cause faintness. Now there is a second reason given in the Bible why people faint. Faintness of heart comes also from physical exhaustion and, listen carefully, insufficient nutrition. In Deuteronomy 25, God speaks about Amalek and how he attacked the children of Israel: "Remember what Amalek did to thee by the way, when you were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary, and he feared not God."

Note that he met them by the way; he purposefully pushed the attack. He smote the hindmost of them. He got the weakest, the sluggards, and the ones who were lagging behind, even all that were feeble, when they were faint and weary. The people had been traveling. They were exhausted and probably had not had time to eat, but yet that is exactly when he attacked.

The Bible says in Psalm 107:5, “Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.” Then Proverbs 24:10 says, “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.”

Oftentimes spiritual faintness will come from physical exhaustion and a lack of nutrition. Most Christians do not live healthy lifestyles. They are consumed with junk food, do not properly rest, and do not take care of their bodies or their minds.

I had a good friend years ago who was a diabetic. He would not stick to a diet. He loved potatoes, bread, and sweets, and he was always having problems. I told him, “If you don’t take care of yourself, you’re going to lose a limb. Mark it down. You’re going to lose a limb.” Within the next year or so, he had his leg amputated. Alice and I took care of him, his wife, and his child while his leg was healing. The interesting thing was that he still did not want to stick to his diet. I said, “I don’t understand this. You’ve already lost a leg. What in the world is wrong with you?”

He told me, “Preacher, I just love to eat. I had rather die than not eat what I like.” I said, “Keep eating what you like and you will die.” He did, within a year. Most people will not take care of their bodies or their minds.

I have read that teenagers and young adults have died from staying up forty hours straight playing stupid video games. Isn’t that insane? Yet when you exhaust yourself mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, you are setting yourself up to faint. Faintness of heart will not only come from fear; it will also come from physical exhaustion and a lack of nutrition.

Make sure that you are eating healthy things, not merely junk and processed food all the time. It will affect you. There is a website most Christians need to look at called Health for All, All of Life. It has great physical and medical information and is put up by Christian brothers whom I know, with information on every disease imaginable. Their point is that Christians ought not to be sick all the time. And that is true, because we are sick because we do not take care of ourselves. That is all there is to it.

Faintness of heart will also come from afflictions, tests, and trials. It does not come only from fearfulness, nor only from physical

exhaustion and lack of nutrition. I have often heard Christians who were thoroughly discouraged because they could not understand why they were suffering, going through afflictions, being tested, or facing all these trials. Not only could they not understand; most of the time, they did not even want to understand why those trials were upon them.

Now I want to give you two very reasons why trials do indeed sometimes come upon us. Look in your Bibles to 1 Peter 1. I am going to come back to this verse a little later in this message. Let us begin reading with verse 6: 1 Peter 1 and verse 6.

In verses 4 and 5, Peter is talking about our inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us. We are kept by the power of God through faith unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Then verse 6 says, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice," that is, in that hope, in that salvation, in that abundant mercy and grace given to us, and in that inheritance, "though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness." Why? "Through manifold temptations," or manifold tests and trials.

The word manifold means variegated: different kinds and different colors. Not everybody has the same temptations; there are many varied kinds of temptations. Verse 7 says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Everything that we go through—our tests, trials, tribulations, and afflictions—is for our good. They are for our purification, our sanctification, and our glorification. If we endure them as we should, they will redound to the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ at His appearing. We have to understand that everything that happens to us happens for a reason.

Peter is emphasizing that this rejoicing is in the hope, the salvation, the abundant mercy and grace given to us, and the inheritance reserved in heaven. These are the things in which we rejoice, even though for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness.

Secondly, if you would turn back in your Bibles a few pages to the book of Hebrews chapter 12, I want you to note something else.

Hebrews 12:2 says, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” In light of that truth, consider verses 3 and 4: “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”

The next time you want to give in, give up, or give out; the next time you are discouraged, depressed, want to faint, or want to quit, our Lord commands us to consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

It is true that we oftentimes have very severe trials, temptations, and afflictions, but we have never experienced anything like what our Lord experienced. Think of all that our Lord accomplished through His sufferings. The Bible says that He endured the cross, despising the shame, and endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself. Moreover, verse 4 says, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” So cheer up. You have not yet sweat great drops of blood. You have not yet resisted sin and wickedness until you bleed. There is a long way to go.

The next time we think we might want to faint, we need to consider the Lord Jesus Christ and everything that He has gone through. You can faint because of fear, physical exhaustion, nutritional deficiency, afflictions, tests, temptations, and trials. But there is another area in which you can faint: you can faint because of chastening.

Look down at verse 5 in Hebrews chapter 12: “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” Please understand this: chastening is for our benefit and blessing. It may not be appreciated at first; in fact, it is usually very grievous at first.

All the times that I was whipped and chastised by my father, I do not remember turning around afterward and saying, “Dad, I really appreciate this discipline. Thank you for chastening me.” I did not

do that. I probably could not have said those words anyhow if I had wanted to, because I was crying too much.

But the truth is that I thanked my father for it after I became an adult. Even today, though my father is in heaven with my mother, I still thank the Lord for what they taught me, how they raised me, and how they disciplined me. I am simply saying that at first, it is grievous.

In Hebrews 12:9, we read, “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence.” That is, we submitted to them and respected them. When I was a teenager, I talked back to my father one time—just once—and I found out how to respect what my father said. The passage continues, “Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?”

Our earthly fathers “verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure.” Sometimes they whipped us simply because they were upset with us; that would be after their own pleasure. “But He,” that is, God, chastens us “for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.”

“No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” God's chastening always works. I am afraid I have whipped my children many times and it did not work, but when God chastens His own, it always works.

Therefore, Hebrews 12:12–13 says, “Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.” In other words, God says, “I've whipped you. You're down. Now get up off your hands and knees. Let those hands dangle straight down. Stand up. Get on your feet and do what you were supposed to be doing to begin with.” You are not to faint. His chastisement is for your good and for His glory. So get up and go to work. Do what you are supposed to be doing.

David said in Psalm 27:13, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” Certainly, we do see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, and that

keeps us from fainting. Now turn to Psalm 103. I could quote it, but I want you to see it; this is a very important passage to me.

Psalm 103, verses 13 and 14, says, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Notice those words: "Like as a father pitieth his children." I got so tickled. I teach a young man each week who has a little boy, about two, going on three probably. Every time the little boy breaks or tears up his toy, he always takes it to daddy. His mother picked it up, but he says, "No, daddy, fix it. Daddy, fix it." His daddy was telling me that now, when something breaks, the little boy looks at his daddy and says, "Jack fixes it. I fix it." Daddy says, "No, no, no, no."

Listen to this: "Like as a father pitieth his children." That is what God does. He pities us. "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are but dust." Has this thought ever hit your mind, that God knows our frame? God knows our limits. God knows our weaknesses. God knows our strengths. God knows what we can do and what we cannot do. God knows our frame precisely. Let me say this another way: God knows what we can take and what we cannot take.

If God in His providence brings a test, a trial, an affliction, or suffering upon you—if God in His providence brings any of that upon you—mark it down: you can take it. You can handle it, because God knows your frame. He knows exactly what you can take and what you cannot take. He has promised never ever to put more on you than you are able to bear. Every time He places something on you, there is always a way out.

You need to memorize this passage and underline it in your mind. I can quote the Scripture, but I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and look at verse 13. Listen to what it says: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man."

The temptations that Joshua has, I have. The ones I have, Steve has. The ones Steve has, Gary has. The ones Gary has, James has. There are no superhuman afflictions or temptations placed upon anyone.

That is what God is saying: “There are no temptations taking you but such as is common to man.” But God is faithful, who will not

suffer you, or allow you, to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation, or the test or trial, make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it. The way of escape is usually through obedience and submission. That is the way to escape any of it.

I tell everybody—and it was not funny at the time, though we smile about it now—that Alice and I had identical twins. I had to stay on those girls because they would encourage each other. It seemed I was chasing them every time I turned around. Our baby daughter, however, I do not ever remember whipping. I may have once, but I do not remember. I could look at her hard, and she would start crying and say, "Daddy, I'm sorry, I'm sorry," and just melt. Obviously, I was not going to whip her when she was submissive and obedient and wanted to do what was right.

That is the way it is with the Lord. He has promised that there will never be any temptation that takes us except that which is common, and with the temptation He will always make a way out—a way of escape—that we may be able to bear it.

There may be other reasons why people faint in the Bible, but these are some of the main reasons God has given. Before returning to our text, I want to give you three Scriptures—three encouragements—not to faint. Most of you know them, but listen to Luke 18:1: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Always to pray and not to faint.

Encouragements Not to Faint from Scripture

I have heard Christians say, "Well, I've prayed about this for six months and I have not gotten an answer. I'm just going to quit." Really? Men ought always to pray and not to faint. Pray another six months. If you do not get an answer, then pray another six months. Do not give in. Do not give up. Do not give out. Men ought always to pray and not to faint.

In 2 Corinthians 4:1, the Bible says, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." The Apostle Paul was talking about the ministry. Since we have received this ministry, we faint not. We are not to faint in prayer, and we are not

to faint in the ministry. Then Galatians 6:9 says, “And be not weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” If we faint not.

I remember as a boy working in the cotton fields and peanut fields. We had to pull weeds, hoe cotton, and chop cotton. A whole field would be in front of you, and you would think, “I’ll never finish this field.” But if you take one row at a time and remain consistent, you are going to finish that field. You will pull every weed, chop every hill of cotton that needs to be chopped, and complete the work before you.

We are going to be reaping if we faint not.

Now, since I have shared with you reasons why we faint often, I want to point out some reasons that will enable and empower us not to faint. Turn back in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, beginning with verse 16. When the Apostle Paul says, "For which cause we faint not," the word faint is ekkakeo.

Exposition of 2 Corinthians 4:16 – Inward Renewal Amid Outward Decay

It is a present active indicative, which means that we are not now fainting, and we are going to keep on not now fainting. In other words, we are simply not going to faint. That is what he is saying in verse 16: "For which cause we are not fainting, and we will not ever faint. We will keep on not fainting."

That is why the Bible says in Hebrews 10:39, "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." That is the end. We are not going to give in; we are not going to faint.

When one faints spiritually, he is weary, wearied out, exhausted, utterly spiritless, and simply cannot go on. So let me ask you, what is it in this text that would encourage us to persevere? There are three things, since there are three verses there. Look at verse 16 again: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

The first thing that will enable us not to faint is that we must consider the increase and advancement of our spiritual lives as compared to the deterioration of our physical lives. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish"—that is, the physical man, our bodies—"yet the inward man"—the true man—"is renewed day by day."

Those whom God allows to reach old age realize the deterioration of the body. Our old man, our bodies, are fading, perishing, and dying. More and more we see our weaknesses, and they become increasingly apparent with age. We can no longer do the things we used to do. The Greek word for perish here is diaphtheiro. It means to come to ruin, to be consumed, to change for the worse, and to lose bodily vigor and strength. Thus he says, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man lose bodily vigor and strength, be consumed, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

While no one really wants to die, the truth is that we realize we will die. In that sense, death is discouraging. But the upside of physical death, the wearing out of our body, is that the inward man progresses in spirituality, holiness, and righteousness.

The word renewed is the Greek word anakainoo. It means to gain strength or vigor, health, and to be changed into a new life as opposed to the former corrupt state. So Paul says, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward, our physical man perish, yet the inward man reinvigorated, gains health and gains strength day by day.” As we recognize that we are dying in our physical bodies, it should encourage us to greater holiness and godliness. We understand the brevity of life, the certainty of death, and the blessedness of holiness and obedience.

The Apostle Paul is saying that this consideration means we are nearing our final goal. We understand that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. When we recognize that we do not have much longer in the flesh, it should excite and motivate us to more holiness, righteousness, and obedience.

We should become more and more aggressive in our spirit, being renewed day by day. When we realize we are dying and do not have much longer on this earth, we should keep saying, “I can’t quit now, I

can't give up now, I can't give in now. I mean, I can see the lights of home. Why in the world would I stop now?"

Obviously, we have a house of clay, and we can be content with this house of clay until we die. Have you ever stopped to think that Abraham and Sarah and Jacob and Isaac, and all these other fellows, dwelt in tents? Hebrews 11:9-10 says of Abraham, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles" or tents "with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He could be content to live in a tent as long as he had that which is coming in eternity.

This body is going to faint and fall off. Although it is perishing and being consumed, our inward man should be renewed day by day. The older we get—and you younger people need to listen to this—the more frail we become, the more it should stimulate us to holiness, righteousness, and obedience. One truth should be impressed upon the young: the older we get, the more we regret the sins of our youth, the sins of our middle age, and even the sins of our old age.

We can see clearly the disobedience, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. We berate ourselves and say, "How stupid could we have been? How could we have done such a thing?" We see it so clearly now, regret it, and pray over and over, asking, "Lord, Lord, as David did, remember not the sins of my youth."

When you consider that your old man is dying and that physical body is going to drop off, but the inward man is supposed to be renewed day by day, the comparison between the deterioration of your body and the spiritual advancement of your true self should encourage you not to faint. There is a second reason not to faint. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Note the words, "our light affliction."

Exposition of 2 Corinthians 4:17 – Light Affliction and Eternal Glory

The nearer we come to death, the nearer we come to our departure, the more we tend to see everything differently. "For our light

affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." I find it astounding what Jacob said to Pharaoh in Genesis 47:9:

"And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years."

He was 130 years old at the time. Then he said, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." At 130 years old, he said, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life."

Jacob had trouble with Esau. He had to leave and spend twenty years for his wives, sheep, and cattle. When he came back into the land, Dinah was raped, and Simeon and Levi murdered a whole city. Joseph was thought to be dead for fifteen years, and Jacob was deceived. Yet he said, "Few and evil have been the days of my life, few and evil."

Why would someone say that after all Jacob went through? The answer is that the older you get, the more you see that the goodness of God far exceeds and outweighs the bad days. The bad days seem to be very light afflictions when compared to the eternality of glory. Jacob had his bad days, as we all have our bad days, but each of us should be like Jacob, overwhelmed with the goodness and mercy of God.

In 1 Peter 1:6, he says, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations," many different tests and trials. Then verse 7 says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

The trial of your faith is much more precious than gold that perishes. It is a purifying, making everything more glorious when we see the Lord Jesus Christ, because it will be to His honor and glory.

Everybody remembers Job. He lost everything he owned and all his children in one day. Then he was afflicted from the top of his head to the sole of his foot with sores and boils, and he sat in ashes, scraping himself. For how long, I have no earthly idea. But Job said

in Job 23:10, "He knoweth the way that I take: and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

Isn't that amazing? Job would have considered everything he went through a light affliction. He understood that ultimately it would be for his purification, sanctification, and glorification. When we realize that all our tests, trials, and sufferings are compared with eternity and the glory that awaits us—

When we are talking about suffering, may I remind you that suffering is a gift of God? I have heard people say, “Well, I do not want that gift.” The truth of the matter is, He probably would not give it to you. The Bible says in Philippians 1:29, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” Just as faith is God’s gift, suffering is God’s gift. God does not give His gift of faith to everyone, and God does not give His gift of suffering to everyone. When God does give the gift of suffering, He enables the one receiving it to suffer gladly for His honor and glory.

It was just like the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, when he had that thorn in the flesh. He said, “I besought the Lord three times that he would remove this.” God said, “No, I’m not going to remove it. My grace is sufficient for thee.” What did the Apostle Paul say next? “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities.” He would rather have the grace and power of God and keep the affliction than have I be free of affliction and not have the power and grace of God.

All our sufferings will be counted as light, especially in the light of eternity. Look at verse 18. Here is the third reason: “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” We must consider that everything we see is temporal. It will pass away, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Exposition of 2 Corinthians 4:18 – Temporal vs. Eternal Focus

The big, nice, fancy house you now possess will one day rot and fall down. It will be gone. A hurricane, tornado, or fire may take it out; it will just be gone. The huge bank account will dwindle away. The world and the lusts thereof will pass away. The strong muscles we have will turn to flab. The smooth skin these ladies once had, and some still have, will turn to flab and wrinkle. It is temporal. It is going to pass away.

But he said that which is not seen is eternal. We cannot see God, yet God is eternal. We cannot see our inheritance in heaven, but it is eternal. We cannot see our heavenly home, yet it is eternal. God tells us to learn to focus upon what we cannot see more than upon what we can see. Remember Hebrews 11:27, where the Bible says of Moses, “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.”

"For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." How did he see Him? Obviously, it was by faith.

"Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." The entire fourth chapter of 2 Corinthians deals with ministry, honoring the Lord, and serving the Lord. As you read through this chapter, you will discover that nothing is to cause us to faint—not the enemy, not persecution, not ridicule, not suffering, not affliction, and not trials. In other words, we must not give in, we must not give out, and we must not quit. We must persevere, for it is His grace that sustains us, and it is by His strength that we stand.

If we consider the advancement of our spiritual lives as our bodies deteriorate, and if we consider that all of our suffering is nothing but light affliction, it came to pass. It did not come to stay. And if we consider the things at which you and I look right now are all temporal, and that which we cannot see is eternal, it should encourage us to keep on and not faint.

Applications: God's Power and the Reward of Perseverance

This ties the matter together with some applications. There is absolutely no reason to faint when we have the person and the power of God to sustain us. There is never a reason to faint when we have the person and the power of God. Isaiah 40:29 says, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

As long as we have the sovereign God of heaven and earth as our person, our power, our strength, and our helper, there is no reason in the world to faint. There is no reason to quit, to give in, give up, or give out.

The second application is this: those who do not faint, who do not give up or give out, are amply rewarded by our Lord. Without turning there, let me quote the Scripture in Revelation 2:3, where our Lord is speaking to the church at Ephesus: “And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”

Notice that they did not quit. They did not faint. They did not cease obeying. We have to develop a holy determination that we are not going to faint, give in, give up, give out, or quit. Our God will sustain us and uphold us.

You remember what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:13? “I can do all things through Christ who strengthened me.” There is nothing we cannot do through Jesus Christ. One thing that we may do in His strength, power, grace, and mercy is not faint. I do not want to faint in the ministry; I want to persevere as long as the Lord enables me to breathe. I do not want to faint in preaching the Word of God; I want to persevere and preach as long as God gives me breath. I do not want to faint when it comes to obedience; I want to be as obedient as I can be by the grace of God as long as He gives me breath. I want to be holy as long as I can breathe.

I want to fulfill my duty, obligation, responsibility, and privileges to Him as long as I live, as long as He gives me grace, mercy, and strength. The thing that gets me is this: I have encountered so many people in my ministry who will quit and throw in the towel for any reason under the sun. I have known people who would not even come to church because their big toe ached. I mean, come on.

I understand the providence of God. You could be on your way to church and have a flat tire, your car could quit, or you could get up sick. I understand that, and I have no problem with it. But when someone tells me, "Well, I just didn't feel like going today," really? You weren't sick; nothing hindered you. You simply gave in to your feelings. Alice can tell you that many times, when I hear someone say that, I will teasingly say, "I ought to call everybody and tell them there won't be any church Sunday because I just don't feel like preaching." That is ridiculous. Even if I didn't feel like preaching, I would preach, because my feelings have nothing to do with it.

People will faint and fall out for the slightest reasons, but God says we have to keep on keeping on. We cannot faint. Consider Hebrews chapter 12, verse 3. I do not understand how anybody could look at this passage and be discouraged or faint.

"For consider him," that is, Jesus Christ, "that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. You are not going through anything like our Lord went through, and you are not suffering anything like He suffered. You have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Until we have resisted unto blood, I do not think we really have an excuse. Therefore, we must not faint. If you consider these three things in 2 Corinthians 4:16–18, you will not faint. You will hold on, hold out, and persevere because of His strength, grace, and mercy.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, Your blessed Holy Spirit, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Give us a holy determination, Lord, not to faint, not to give in, not to give up, and not to give out, but simply to rely upon Thee, trust in Thee, and lean upon Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

The Art Of Preparation

In 1 Chronicles chapter 22 and verse 19, David is speaking to Solomon and all the princes of Israel: “Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Arise therefore and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy vessels of God into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord.”

Introduction: The Problem of Procrastination

I saw a sign recently that said, “The meeting for Procrastinators Anonymous has been postponed until further notice.” The truth of the matter is that everyone is a procrastinator in one sense of the word. We postpone and put off everything that we dislike, everything that creates confrontation, everything that is hard or difficult, or anything that we simply do not think is urgent or absolutely necessary.

In fact, most of the time we live our lives based upon ease and convenience, not necessarily on things that just need to be done and have to be done. Our attitude usually is, If it can wait, it will

wait—especially if it is something that we dislike or something that is going to create confrontation.

The Prudent vs. the Pathetic

On the other hand, there are also times of preparation. We prepare to shop. We prepare to play. We prepare to fish. We prepare to hunt. We prepare to do a lot of things. These activities usually take just a little bit of forethought. We begin to think about what we are going to need to enjoy ourselves or what we are going to need to accomplish the task. Usually, we think about it, lay everything out, and simply get ready to use whatever we need to use.

Unhappily, the preparation for most people does not go beyond those few things. Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 3 is a principle that some have really understood, but most have not. It simply says, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." The prudent man is the man who foresees the evil, and he hides himself from the evil. But the foolish man is the man who simply passes on and is punished.

Some do indeed prepare for emergencies such as storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other disasters. Very few plan ahead and prepare for life, sickness, old age, or death. I recently read that the average American could not come up with 1,000 Federal Reserve notes in an emergency. Many people have said that the average American home is three days away from starvation. By that, they simply mean most people have not prepared. Most people no longer have pantries.

I remember that we had a pantry growing up, and my mother always kept it stocked full of canned goods and all kinds of things like that. Today, most women have no idea how to can or preserve anything. Hence, the truth of the matter is, we are actually dumber than the insects.

Learning from the Ant

How can I say that? The Bible compares us with insects and counsels us to learn from them. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." What does the ant do? "Which having no guide,

overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. 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."

We are told to go to the ants, to the insects, and learn. Why? Those insects do not have rulers, princes, or governors, yet they have sense enough to know that they are to put up and preserve in times of harvest for times of want, especially during winter. The truth of the matter is that some people prepare and others suffer.

Years ago, I preached a message based upon Proverbs 22:3, which I titled "The Prudent and the Pathetic." Each one of us will usually fall into one of those two categories. We are either going to be prudent and prepare, or we are going to be pathetic and end up suffering. Preparation is an absolute necessity. There must be preparation for life, preparation for worship, preparation for necessities, preparation for emergencies, and, of course, preparation for death.

David's Preparation for the Temple

In 1 Chronicles 22:19, David is preparing Solomon to build the temple of the Lord. When you stop and think about the skill, workmanship, materials, and preparations made for its building, it is absolutely mind-boggling. In verses 6 through 13, David charges Solomon to build the temple and obey the Lord's commandments. In fact, he tells Solomon that the only way to prosper is to obey.

In verses 15 and 16, David gives Solomon a personal exhortation and word of encouragement: "Moreover there are workmen with thee in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work. Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number. Arise therefore, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee." We are talking about building the temple, with workmen in abundance and every material needed.

I love the way David speaks to Solomon: "Arise therefore, and be doing." In our modern colloquialisms, David is saying, "Get off your

duff, get up and go to work, get busy boy, don't stand around here doing nothing, arise and build."

In this same chapter, David exhorts the princes and rulers to help him: "David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, Is not the Lord your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the Lord, and before his people. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord."

The building of the temple with David was not some spur-of-the-moment thing. David was not just lying awake one night and saying, "Hey, I think I'll build a temple unto God." Obviously not. There was indeed a lot of planning and a lot of preparation. Moreover, God specifically gave David the pattern for that temple and how it was to be built. In 1 Chronicles 28, verses 10 through 12, David says to Solomon, "Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it."

"Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the Lord, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things." David had received all of this by inspiration of the Holy Spirit as well.

Solomon was being charged to build this temple, and he had been given the pattern that God had given to David. David makes an interesting statement in chapter 22 and verse 14: "Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto."

Notice the words, “Behold, in my trouble I have prepared.” Here we have all of this that was prepared by David, but he says, “Behold, in my trouble I have prepared.” The word trouble is the word affliction. What kind of affliction, what kind of trouble did David have?

Consider all of the wars that were outside the kingdom. He fought with the Edomites. He fought with the Moabites. He fought with the Philistines. He fought with the Syrians. There were wars on every hand. Moreover, there were insurrections and seditions on the inside that he had to deal with. Clearly, then, in all the trouble that he had on the outside of the kingdom and on the inside of the kingdom, he was still preparing and giving all of this in order for the temple to be built.

Where in the world did all this silver and gold come from? I mean, a million talents—and if we just said a million pounds, our pound would be sixteen ounces. I forget the Troy ounce poundage; it is a little different. But still, a million talents, and a talent was far more than a pound. Where did all this money come from?

First Chronicles 26:27 says, "Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the Lord." There were a lot of wars, and an awful lot of booty and an awful lot of spoils. Therefore, a lot of that booty and a lot of that spoil was given to God as an oblation, that is, as an offering. First Chronicles 26:20 says that "of the Levites, Ahijah was over the treasures of the house of God, and over the treasures of the dedicated things."

He was the main man. But verse 26 names some others under him: "Which Shelomith and his brethren were over all the treasures of the dedicated things, which David the king, and the chief fathers, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host, had dedicated." Obviously, an awful lot of money had been raised from the wars with all of these kingdoms that David had fought.

Read First Chronicles 29 when you get home. In light of all that money gained through booty and spoils, David gave an awful lot of his personal wealth, and so did all of the rulers. In First Chronicles 29, beginning with verse 2, David says, "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 verse 3: "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, Even three thousand"

David prepared 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. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? If you read the rest of the chapter, you will find that the princes each gave gold and silver and oxen and everything for the work and for the house of the Lord.

The building of the temple was no easy thing. It involved cost, work, trouble, service, preparation, and blessing. Moreover, it required an awful lot of dedication, consecration, and deliberation. It took seven years for the temple to be built completely.

In 1 Kings chapter 6, look at verse 7. This is absolutely an astounding fact. You are talking about preparation. These people knew what preparation was all about: “And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.”

All the stones were squared, everything was prepared, it was moved to the site, and everything was put in place. No hammer was heard, no axe, no saw, no tool. There was real preparation. You can see that there was an awful lot involved in building the temple.

Now look back at our text in 1 Chronicles chapter 22, verse 19, and see what David said. He tells Solomon, the rulers, and the people: “Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the

ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord."

We must take note that it was not simply materials and physical preparations that were needed for the temple. Spiritual preparations were also necessary. It is imperative that you take note of the order of verse 19: "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." That is number one. Here is number two: "Arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God." In other words, there would not be any building of the sanctuary if the people had not prepared their hearts, if they had not set their hearts. The arising and building came only after setting the heart.

The word set is from the Hebrew word kun, and it is translated in our Bibles as prepare, establish, direct, and order. Literally, he is saying, prepare your heart, direct your heart, establish your heart, order your heart.

There are two very important observations that need to be made. First, I believe the reason most Christians are not really concerned with the work of God, the church of God, dominion, and the advancement of the kingdom of God is revealed in this passage. They have never, ever prepared their hearts. Their hearts are not set; their hearts are not in it. Notice that he said, "you set your heart," and then he said, "arise and build." Most Christians have no idea what heart preparation is or what is involved in preparing their hearts, and therefore they never will arise and build.

The second observation is this: There must be an understanding of the cost involved in any undertaking. Some of the cost involved in building the temple has already been considered, but our Lord spoke of other costs. In Luke 14, beginning with verse 28, He says:

The Cost of Preparation

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether

he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

What is our Lord telling us? Our Lord is telling us there is a cost in preparation. It does not matter what you are doing. He said that if you are going to build a house, you had better consult and see whether or not you have enough money to build the house or to finish it. Alice and I have traveled for many years, and there is one place we went by years and years ago where a fellow started building a castle, or at least it looked like a castle. It had a tower like that, and we went by it for years. It was never finished. Finally, I guess it deteriorated and fell down.

Again, there was another house we used to go by. The man started building it up on a hill. It was a very beautiful location. I do not know whether he died or what happened, but finally the house just deteriorated and fell down. Somebody cleared it out and put a mobile home there. So I am just saying this is what our Lord is saying: We need to count the cost. Just like the man or the king who has ten thousand soldiers and someone is coming against him with twenty thousand, you had better count the cost. You had better see whether or not you can finish the job.

Now, He said, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." In other words, if you want to be a real, true disciple, there is going to be a cost. Then He said, "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?"

The truth of the matter is this: There is a cost in preparation. There is a cost involved in keeping our saltiness. There is a cost involved in being holy, godly, and obedient. There is a cost involved in keeping one's testimony clean before the lives of others.

Here is a truth that we need to see, grasp, and understand. Think about this. I shared with you a lot of the trouble that went into building the temple—the money, the workmen, and seven years. Do you realize that out of all the money, workmanship, skill, trouble, and dedication that went into building the temple, all it was was a picture? It was not reality. I am not saying the temple was not real. Yes, I know the temple was a real building, but what I am trying to tell you is this: The temple was nothing more than a shadow, a pattern, an emblem, and a type.

The Temple as Shadow and the Believer as Reality

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."

Moses pitched the earthly tabernacle, and Solomon pitched the earthly temple, but our Lord says that was not the real one. The true tabernacle, or the true temple, is the one that the Lord has pitched, and not man.

Verses 4 and 5 speak of the Lord Jesus Christ: "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law."

Then verse 5 says, "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."

Everything was a shadow of heavenly things. A shadow is not the real thing. I parked my car in the shadow of that oak tree, but my car is not in the oak tree. The shadow is not reality. An example is not reality.

I could try to explain something to Steve, and he could say, "I don't understand." I might answer, "Well, let me give you an example," and make one up out of the top of my head. But an example is not reality. It is simply something intended to help you see the truth.

A pattern is certainly not reality. My wife has many dress patterns, and she has made many dresses over the years, but I have never seen her wear a pattern. The pattern is not the reality; the dress is the reality. Everything we had in the Old Testament was merely a shadow, a type, or a pattern.

In Hebrews 9:1, he says, "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." So he refers to the ceremonial law and everything therein as a worldly sanctuary. Remember, it was pitched by man. It had to be worldly.

Hebrews 9:8 says, "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." Here is the distinction: "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." So again, we are talking about patterns and figures.

Hebrews 9:22-23 says, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." Everything on the earth was nothing more than a pattern. Hebrews 10:1 says, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."

Over and over in this book, we have seen that the Old Testament tabernacle and temple are nothing more than patterns, types, shadows, and figures. They are not reality. Why emphasize this? The answer is so that I can show you the real temple of God. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, Paul is rebuking the Corinthians because of

their carnality. Their carnality was not what the world calls carnality—not adultery, fornication, or theft. Their carnality was arguing over preachers.

Who was the best preacher? Some liked Apollos, some liked Peter, and some liked the Apostle Paul. Paul is trying to straighten this mess out. He says, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” What were they fighting about? “For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?”

He is talking about ministers, about preachers. “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.” “For we are labourers together with God.” Here is the distinction, the contrast: “Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.” The apostle draws a distinction between the ministers and the people being ministered unto. We are the laborers, the workers; you are God's husbandry, God's building.

Paul said to the Christians, “You are His building.” What building is he talking about? Ephesians chapter 2, beginning with verse 19, answers that question: “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.” So Paul says that you are God’s building. What building is that? It is a holy temple in the Lord, and you are being built as an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Returning to 1 Corinthians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul has said, “We’re God’s laborers, we’re working together with Him. You are God’s husbandry. You are God’s building.” Then, in verses 16 and 17, he says: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God,

him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

We do not understand the impact of these verses until we understand two Greek words. There are two words for temple in the Greek language. The first is hieron. Hieron refers to the outward facade, or the outside, of the temple. It would also include the common area where people went into the temple, the porches, and that kind of thing. When you read in the Greek the word hieron, it is basically talking about a temple's outside, or describing it as an edifice.

The second word is naos. In the Old Testament, once a year, the high priest went into the most holy place, sometimes called the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat. That would be the naos. The naos is the Holy of Holies.

In 1 Corinthians 3:16–17, Paul asks, "Know ye not that ye are the naos, you are the holiest of holies of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" If any man defiles the naos, the holy of holies of God, him shall God destroy. For the naos, the holy of holies of God, is holy, which temple ye are. He is saying that we as Christians are the real, genuine temple of God on this earth.

Now look at 1 Corinthians 6:19–20: "What? know ye not that your body is the naos 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." Our body is the holy of holies of the Holy Ghost, which is in us and which we have of God.

Remember what he said in Ephesians 2: God is building a holy temple for His habitation. Consider these pressing questions. The money, time, work, dedication, and consecration that went into building the physical temple were shown from Scripture. Will you give God any less for the spiritual temple than they gave for the physical temple? Will you be less dedicated to the reality than the Old Testament believers were to the shadow, to the picture?

I have a good friend who had not been married very long. He was asking me about the difference between the Old Testament ordinances and the New Testament, so I asked him, "How long have

you been married?" He said, "Nine months, sir." I asked, "Do you have a picture of your wife in your billfold?" He said, "Yes, I do." I asked to see it, and he showed it to me. Then I said, "When you go home tonight and go to bed with your wife, open your billfold, take out her picture, and kiss her picture goodnight." He answered, "Why would I do that when I had the real thing right beside me?"

In the New Testament, we have reality; they had the picture in the Old Testament. Here is the question: Will you not arise and build based upon the fact that you now know that you are the temple of God? God resides in you; you have Him, and He has you. Will you not prepare your heart to seek the Lord? How do we prepare our hearts?

Preparing the Heart through God's Word

Do you remember what David said in 1 Chronicles 22:19? "Set your heart to seek the Lord." How are you going to set your heart? We read in 2 Chronicles 27:6 concerning Jotham, a king: "So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God." So Jotham became mighty. Why? Because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.

What does it mean to prepare your ways before the Lord your God? It simply means that he directed his way, his counsels, and his actions by the rule of God's law. He was constant. He was consistent in a holy cause. Everything that he did, he examined in light of the Word of God, and he did it as in the sight of God.

Look at verse six again: "So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God." In other words, what Jotham was doing was this: he was living as though he was in the very presence of God. Are we in the presence of God? The answer is yes, because God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere at once in the totality of His being. And so we need to learn, like Jotham, to live in the presence of God.

David said, "Set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord." How do we do that? We prepare our hearts. Jotham prepared his ways. Deuteronomy 32:46 says, "And he said unto them, Set your hearts

unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law." Moses had given them the law, and now he says, "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day." Set your heart to learn and to live by the principles of the Word of God.

Moses said the same thing in a more lengthy discourse in Deuteronomy 6. Understand what he is saying and what he is doing: our lives are to be permeated with the Word of God. "Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." Set your heart according to the words which I have spoken.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not."

When you sit down, you should be talking about the Word of God. When you rise up, you should be talking about the Word of God. You should have it on your walls and in your houses, on your doorposts, and where you can teach your children and your children's children. In other words, your life is to be permeated with the Word of God.

God Himself says basically the same thing to Joshua, giving him a charge after Moses is dead. He says, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel."

Moses is dead; now it is Joshua's turn. He must get up and go. God says, "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. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Note what he said: "For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." When? When the Word of God is his rule, and when the Word of God is in his heart and in his mind.

How then do we center our lives so that the Word of God is central and permeates every area of our lives? I understand that we have to work and make a living. I usually tease that some folks have to work for a living and others get to preach. When I was a boy, I wanted to be a preacher because you only had to work on Wednesday and Sunday, and the rest of the time you could play. I found out it surely did not work out like that. But even at work, when you have a problem, what is to stop you from mentally asking the Lord for wisdom, discernment, direction, and resolution?

Seeking Things Above

What is to stop you from saying, "I wonder if there's a principle in the Word of God that would help me to better reach a solution to this problem"? Even in our work, we can still maintain a centralization of our thoughts on the Word of God.

There is a passage in Colossians chapter 3. Look at the first three verses: "If ye then be risen with Christ." Let me stop right there. That is, in one sense, a colloquialism for saying, if you are saved, if you are a Christian. Romans chapter 6 teaches that we have died in Christ and were raised to newness of life in Christ. So he is saying, "If ye then be risen with Christ," if you are genuinely His, if you are genuinely converted, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

We must learn to seek those things which are above, those heavenly and spiritual things which are true, genuine, and real. We must set our affections—our love, desires, and will—upon those things. They must become our passion. “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Do you realize that the wealthiest man in the world, when he dies, leaves everything? The most beautiful house in the world will eventually rot or fall down. The earth is transitory. Everything we have is transitory.

You may have something today and not have it tomorrow. What he is trying to tell us is that reality is where Jesus Christ is. Jesus Christ is reality. Heavenly things are reality. Spiritual things are reality. All of this earth is going to pass away. We are not to be controlled by man, our lust, the pride of life, the lust of the eyes, or the lust of the flesh. We are to be controlled by Jesus Christ, by His Word, and by His principles. He is to become our all in all.

I like the way David expressed it in Psalm 42, verses 1 and 2: “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.” Then he says, “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” I have lived in areas where deer hunters were allowed to chase deer with dogs. I have seen some of those deer; they have run until their tongues were hanging out. If they escape the dogs and hunters, the first thing they want is water, because they are so dry from running. This is what David is saying: “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.” When we become thirsty for Him, our lives will be centered upon Him.

We have to learn to seek Him and prepare our hearts. The Bible says in Psalm 10 and verse 17, “Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart.” Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 1 says, “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.” When David told Solomon and those men to set their hearts, they would never have built the temple if their hearts had not been set on God and on the things of God.

Applications and Contrasting Kings

Let me make a couple of applications. Think about this: today we have the reality in Jesus Christ. We are His temple; He lives in us. How can we not carefully, purposefully, and deliberately prepare our hearts and lives to render Him holy, obedient service? How can we not make our bodies temples of praise and worship unto Him who loved us and saved us by His grace? How can we give Him less in reality than the Old Testament believers did in the picture, type, emblem, and pattern? If the Word of God and Jesus Christ are central in your life, then, whenever there is a question about anything, you should be more than willing to give Him the benefit of the doubt.

I do not care whether we are talking about finances, health, family, or whatever else. You ought always to be willing to give Him the benefit of the doubt. I am not ashamed to say that when I get money, the first thing I do is tithe it. As I get older, sometimes I think, "Lord, did I tithe that? I do not really remember. Maybe I did, maybe I did not. I will tithe it again. If I did not do it, then here it is. If I did do it, Lord, I cannot outgive You and I cannot outgrace You. I can say with Jacob, I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies. Just thank You, Lord." We need to learn to give God the benefit of the doubt and go the extra mile. Do what we should do.

If our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost, we must understand the reality of what David said in Psalm 66 and verse 18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." How can we expect God to bless us if we regard iniquity? If there is unconfessed sin, lingering hatred, bitterness, or ill will, how can we expect God to bless us? And how can we render unto God a holy

temple if we allow those things in our lives? We need to learn to honor Him, repent, and keep our hearts and lives unto Him.

In closing, look at 2 Chronicles, chapter 27, and verse 6. We have already read this, but consider it again: “So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.” Let that sink in. Jotham became mighty because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.

Now look in 2 Chronicles, chapter 12, and verse 14. Speaking of Rehoboam, who was also a king, the Scripture says, “And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.” Here is the whole crux: your life, your actions, and your attitudes will reveal whether or not your heart is prepared. If your heart is prepared, it is going to be evident. If your heart is unprepared, it is going to be evident. Jotham became mighty because he prepared his heart before the Lord, and Rehoboam did evil because he did not prepare his heart.

If we are the true temple of God, we should make sure our hearts are prepared, set, established, and directed toward God and the things of God. We need to seek Him to prepare our hearts.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your grace and Your mercy. Help us, Lord, to realize, number one, that our bodies are indeed the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. You have told us to grieve not the Holy Spirit and quench not the Spirit. You have told us to walk pleasing in Thy sight. Help us to do that, Lord. You have commanded us to seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. You have commanded us to set our affection on things above. Help us to do that, Lord. Father, help us to seek Thee to prepare our hearts, knowing that the preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord. Give us Your grace and give us Your mercy. Help us to love Thee, live for Thee, and honor Thee in all that we say and do. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 17

Taming the Maniacs

Introduction: The Maniac of Gadara and Modern Maniacs

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

But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him and cried with a loud voice and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not. For he had said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

The message this morning is on the maniac of Gadara. However, I think there are many proper applications that could be made to the

maniacs that we have to deal with in our nation today. We must think of the fact that we do indeed use the word maniac quite frequently. Usually, when we see someone driving furiously, carelessly, and unsafely, we say, “He's driving like a maniac.” That is someone who is crazed, someone who is insane.

If someone is fighting for his life, we would normally say, “He's fighting like a maniac,” in the sense that he is almost displaying supernatural strength because he is putting every ounce of energy of his body into protecting his life. We use that term maniac, and usually it refers to what we would call a raving or violently insane person or a lunatic. That is what the word maniac actually means. If you look up the word lunatic, you will find that lunatic is a term referring to a person who is seen as mentally ill, dangerous, foolish, or crazy, and sometimes we have to understand it is attributed to the word lunacy.

The Origin of 'Lunatic' and Spiritual Roots of Mental Illness

That's why we call them basically a lunatic. The word luna, of course, is from the Latin, which means moon, and atic literally means one of the kind. So a lunatic is one of the kind affected by the moon. A lot of people used to think, and still think, that the phases of the moon sometimes attribute and contribute to someone's mental instability. Hence, they're called a lunatic because it happens at certain times of the month based upon the phase of the moon. The word is very old. In fact, originally, the word loon referred to someone who was a lout, someone who was an idler, a sluggard, or a rogue.

Later on, it was extended to mean a crazy person or a simpleton. Now, the word maniac also may be used to describe a demon-possessed individual because, in our text, the maniac of Gadara was possessed by a legion of demons. I want to submit something for your consideration today: a lot of what you and I would call mental illness, and a lot of what you and I would call maniacal dispositions, stem from spiritual problems. You're going to see this in the text as well, but the point I'm trying to make is this: It is impossible to violate God's law, transgress His commandments, and escape the consequences.

If you'll remember, without us turning there, in 1 Samuel chapter 16, there was an evil spirit that produced the depression and the mental anguish of King Saul. That's why a young man with salt, like David, who could play with his harp, could soothe Saul's mental instability. Clearly, then, here was an evil spirit affecting Saul's attitude, his disposition, and everything about him. When you and I think about evil, unclean spirits, you have to understand that usually they are connected, especially with the occult, spiritualism, rebellion, and wickedness.

I refuse to even read a horoscope. I'm not going to put myself in any position like that. All of these stupid games, occult cards, and that little ball you're supposed to ask questions of—all of that is demonic. It's totally, absolutely demonic. That is usually how evil spirits are around individuals: they are around those things that they stay around.

One does not need to be demon possessed in order to be counted as strange. There are plenty of strange people in our land. Here is a thought: each ethnic group, each race, and even small cliques tend to think that everyone who is different from them happens to be strange. If you and I got around a group of Chinese people, we would think they were strange based upon their language and their conduct, but then they would think that we were strange as well. You do not have to be crazy in order to be thought strange.

There are many who even think that Christians are strange. First Peter 4:4 says, “Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.” Unsaved people think it strange that Christians do not want to be involved in immorality, drunkenness, and rioting, or anything that is wicked and wrong. It is strange to them because we are not like they are.

The story of the maniac of Gadara is evidently important, because God gives us this story three times in the Bible. He gives it to us in Matthew 8, Mark 5, and Luke 8 as well. Since we are in the book of Mark, consider verse 4 again, because the title of the message is “Taming the Maniacs.”

The Bible says, “Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him,

and the fetters broken in pieces, neither could any man tame him." Neither could any man tame him.

The word tame is from the Greek word damazo, and it literally means to tame, to curb, and to restrain. Interestingly enough, this is the same exact Greek word found in James chapter 3 and verse 8: "But the tongue can no man tame, it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." The tongue cannot be bound with chains and ropes either. It is indeed an unruly evil. So the tongue, much like the demonic in Mark chapter 5, cannot be restrained by human nature and human instrumentality.

I will guarantee you that everyone in this room, no matter how young or how old, has often said things that they wish they had never said. So the tongue is unruly evil. Neither can he maintain it. Undoubtedly, this is why David prayed in Psalm 141 in verse 3. And he asked the Lord, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and keep the door of my lips." So the tongue needs taming, just like the maniac of Gadara needed taming as well.

If you look in Luke 8 and verse 29, here is one reason that the maniac of Gadara could not be tamed. The Bible says concerning him, "For he, that is the Lord Jesus, had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man, for oftentimes it had caught him, and he was kept bound with chains and fetters, and he break the bands, look at this now, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness."

Concentrate momentarily on the word driven. He was driven by the devil into the wilderness. The word driven in the Greek is the word elauno, which is used in the Bible to describe a ship that is being driven by the wind. When a ship is being driven by the wind, basically speaking, it is ungovernable and it cannot be controlled when the wind gets behind it. In fact, the Bible says in James chapter 3 verse 4, "Behold, the ships, which though they be so great, are driven of fierce winds." So when you think about a ship, when you think about a sailboat, and a fierce wind gets behind it, it is ungovernable, it is unstoppable, because the wind is driving it. And so the Bible says in Luke chapter 8 and verse 29, this man was being driven by the devil, being driven by the demons. So unclean spirits then drove the maniac of Gadara as easily as a fierce wind drives a ship.

A Life of Death

The Maniac's Life of Death

We are not only looking at what you and I could see as the manifestation of demonic possession, but also its cure. I want you to understand and see this based upon how this man lived. First of all, he lived a life of death.

Look in your Bibles to Mark chapter 5, verses 2 and 3: “And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit who had his dwelling among the tombs, and no man could bind him, no, not with chains.” Verse 2 tells us that there met Him a man out of the tombs. Verse 3 tells us that this man’s dwelling was among the tombs.

When you and I hear the word tombs, we normally think of our modern-day cemeteries. Very few people are willing even to camp out in a cemetery. But in Bible times, a tomb usually was a big cave dug through the limestone into a hill or mountain. Sometimes the caves had doors, and sometimes they did not. Once you went inside, niches were carved out of the cave walls—little places to lay a body. There could be thirty or one hundred bodies in that cave, each lying in a place.

So here is this maniac of Gadara, living in these tombs. If you were a rich man like Joseph of Arimathea, you could have your own individual sepulcher. But common people who could not afford a personal, private sepulcher were laid in these tombs, in little niches in the caves. I would challenge you, when you get home, to go on the Internet and type in, “Give me pictures of tombs during Bible times.” You will see numerous pictures of how you simply go into those tombs.

The maniac was living inside these tombs. If he ate, he ate inside the tomb. If he slept, he slept inside the tomb. He was surrounded by death. This is what I mean when I say he lived a life of death. In fact, he was dead to his own life, dead to his own family, and dead to his own community, because no one could help him and no one could tame him. The picture presented to us is that this maniac lived

among the dead. Listen, there are people who are preoccupied with death.

There is a man in Fitzgerald who dresses totally in black. When you see his car, he has a big old human skull on the dashboard. He lives with death. We normally think of anyone totally preoccupied with death, who would dress and live like that, as someone who is crazy, insane, or an absolute lunatic. But the picture given to us here is simply this: it is a picture of natural man, an unsaved man without Jesus Christ. All unsaved men and women live in death, live with death, and live among the dead. They think they have life, but they are dead.

Let me show you. In Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1, we read, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." We were dead. Every man by nature is a dead man. But that does not mean that we were physically incapacitated. Ephesians continues: "Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation, our conduct, in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others."

Although we were dead in trespasses and sins, we were alive to the flesh, alive to wickedness, and alive to sin, yet dead to life. So, like the maniac of Gadara, we live in, with, and among the dead, because the works of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the heart, and the pride of life all work death. They may promise pleasure; they may promise life, but they are death.

Twice in the book of Proverbs, we are given this truth. The first time is Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The second time is Proverbs 16:25: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

God is telling us that there are people who are alive physically, but dead spiritually. They are dead to Him; they are dead to real, genuine life.

In 1 Timothy 5:6, the Bible talks about an immoral woman, and God says that the woman who lives for pleasure "is dead while she liveth." Moreover, remember what our Lord said in Proverbs 8:35–36: "For whosoever findeth me findeth life, and obtaineth favor of the Lord." Whoever finds Jesus Christ finds life and obtains favor of the Lord. But verse 36 says, "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death."

Here is a maniac, a demon-possessed man who loved death. Everything about him was dead. Here is the second thing: he not only lived the life of death, he also lived the life of darkness. Go back to Mark 5:2–3: "And when he was come out of the ship immediately there met him a man out of the tombs," "who had his dwelling among the tombs." The maniac's life was not only filled with death; it was also filled with darkness.

The Maniac's Life of Darkness

There is not much light that you can get inside a tomb. About the only light that could come in would be through the entrance or doorway, if there was a door. What little light could penetrate the entrance would be all he had; the rest would be darkness.

Most of us have seen dark nights, when the moon was not bright at all and it was totally dark outside. But that is really not darkness. It is, but it isn't. Years ago, Alice and I were in Utah with some of our grandchildren, and we visited Timpanogos National Cave. We had to walk a mile, curving up the mountain, to reach the cave. It was an interesting walk; they even had little chairs where we could sit and rest on the way up. When we entered the cave, we had to have a guide, and we went through this cave.

If you are claustrophobic, there were passageways in the cavern through which you had to squeeze. We eventually returned to a huge cavern, and everything was well lit. Then the guide said, "You must stand absolutely still. Hold hands. Do not move, because I am going to turn out the lights." We were a good quarter to a half mile back in there. When he turned out the lights, you could not see your hand before your face. You could see nothing. It was totally, absolutely, completely dark—black.

Here is an interesting thing: the darkness was in that which the maniac lived. Unsaved men not only live in death; they live in darkness. Paul writes to the Ephesian Christians, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Do you want to know why ungodly people are so ungodly, wicked, and wrong? Because they live in darkness. They have no idea who God is, no idea of Biblical principles, and no idea of that which is right and holy. Maniacs love darkness; they love death. Without Jesus Christ, all is darkness.

In John chapter 3, our Lord said, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest." Men love darkness rather than light, and that is why Jude speaks of this in the judgment of the ungodly.

Jude 13 says that they were "raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame, wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." The blackness of darkness. If you think it was dark in Timpanogos National Cave, you have not seen the darkness that God can create. They will wander in the blackness of darkness forever.

Our Lord has delivered us from the kingdom of darkness. He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is not in the dark, but in the light. The Bible tells us in Colossians 1:13, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. Then 1 Thessalonians 5:5 says, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day." We are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Maniacs love death and darkness because their deeds are evil and wicked. Not only did he live in death and darkness; he lived in defilement. Look again at Mark 5:2–3. He was not only coming out of the tombs; his dwelling was among the tombs. He was constantly defiled by the dead, living with putrefying bodies, deadly gases, maggots, bugs, rotting flesh, and everything that attends death. People had been put in those tombs at different stages of deterioration. He was defiled.

The Maniac's Life of Defilement

Our Lord said it like this in Matthew 23:27: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.” Think about your life. Do you realize that the opposite of a defiled life is a pure life? Those of us who are in the light are to live a pure life. Those living among the dead in darkness live a defiled life.

Ever stop to think about 1 Timothy 1:10? Paul is speaking about the law of God and its proper use, and says that the law was made for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other

There is a defilement. You cannot sin and not be defiled. Jude 1:8 says, "Likewise, also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion and speak evil of dignities." They defile the flesh. So here's this maniac. He lived with death, he lived with darkness, and he lived with defilement.

The Maniac's Life of Delusion

He was basically an unclean person all the way around. Here's the fourth thing: he lived a life of delusion. Look, if you would please, at Mark 5, verse 5: "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs crying and cutting himself with stones."

The word crying does not necessarily mean to shed tears. It means screaming. He was a banshee; he was hollering and screaming. We were laughing about a little incident this week because one of the

men saw a panther on our property. Very quickly, it ran across the road, and it brought back a memory I had not thought of in years. When I was twelve years old, my bedroom was closest to the branch, about one hundred yards away.

It was summertime, so we kept the windows open. I woke up at midnight with a woman screaming—not saying help, but just a woman screaming. I jumped up, put on my blue jeans, barefooted and without a shirt, grabbed my single-shot .22 rifle, and headed out the door. My dad stopped me and said, "Boy, where are you going?" I said, "Daddy, there's a woman down there screaming. She's in trouble. I'm going to help her." He said, "Son, that's not a woman. That's a panther. And if you go down there, you're not coming back. That's all there is to it."

He was right. It was a panther, but it sounded just like a woman screaming. So here's this maniac, not only screaming but cutting himself with stones. Why was he out in the middle of the night screaming and cutting himself? Because he was delusional. He did not understand reality. Did he think that by cutting and hurting himself, he was hurting the demons? Did he think that somehow cutting himself would bring relief?

I've read of people who purposely and premeditatedly hurt themselves. They cut themselves, oftentimes with knives. They're delusional. People who mutilate, hurt, and harm their bodies are delusional. We see the same practice today among the transgenders. I don't know if you heard, but Mark Robinson, a black man and Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina, was speaking in the church, and here's what he said.

I'm going to quote him. He said, and I quote, "Ain't but two genders, male and female, two. There are two genders, male and female." Of course, he received a standing ovation. Listen carefully to what he said: "I don't care how much you cut yourself up, drug yourself up, and dress yourself up, you're still either one of the two things. You're either a man or a woman. You might be a cut up, dressed up, drugged up, ugly man or woman, but you're still a man or woman, and I don't care who doesn't like it." Isn't that true? Do you realize this man has been attacked on every hand simply because he said something biblical and true?

Australia now has a law that, if you say a man cannot breastfeed a baby, it is against the law. You are talking about delusion. When you begin to think and try to say that a man can become a woman or a woman can become a man, you are indeed delusional. I don't care who you are or what kind of degrees you have. Moreover, you are flying in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He said in Matthew 19:4, "And he answered them and said, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?" And that's it. One sentence I read said, "God only created two genders; the Democrats created the rest." That's about the truth. There are only two genders, male and female. Anyone who thinks self-mutilation is healthy, aesthetic, or desirable is delusional.

Think about the monks who would often beat and cut themselves to drive sin out of their bodies. They thought their body was sinful in and of itself. When sin was in their mind, it was in their heart, yet they would mutilate themselves, thinking they were going to be more spiritual. That's a delusion. I saw a picture of one man with such large holes in his earlobes for earrings that he was wearing beer cans, one stuck in each side. That's delusion, folks. That is not only delusion; that is stupidity. Look at people with tattoos all over their heads, faces, eyeballs, and tongues. That's pure delusion. Here is this man living in death, darkness, defilement, and delusion.

With the political, social, economic, and religious situation as it is today, I can assure you that shortly, pretty soon, there will be a separation of the chaff from the wheat. We are going to find out who is real and who is not real, who is a true believer and who is not a true believer. There will be a culling, I can assure you. If you are delusional and think that somehow you are going to live and prosper without the Lord Jesus Christ, you are insane. You are a lunatic.

The Maniac's Life of Defeat

He lived a life of defeat. Mark 5:4 says, “Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces, neither could any man tame him.” He could not help himself, and neither could others help him.

He evidently had what you and I would call supernatural strength. Most men cannot break a chain or ropes that bind them, and yet this man could burst the bonds. He could break the chains. He was exceedingly strong, but he could not help himself. Isn't that amazing? With all the strength, he could not help himself. Do you understand that self-reformation is useless?

Look at what our Lord says in Luke 11:24: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, that is, the man has self-reformed. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places seeking rest, and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out." "And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And they enter in and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Here is the man who reforms himself: "I used to be a drunkard, but I don't drink anymore. I did this and I did that." He is not filled with pride? No, he is filled with arrogance. He used to be a drunkard, but he reformed himself, and now he is a proud, haughty, arrogant individual. He is worse off now than he was before.

Let me tell you something, folks: Satan cannot cast out Satan. He will not cast out himself, and he will not and cannot cast out flesh. Man is totally depraved, which means man is totally helpless. Man is totally depraved, which means he has inability. He has no ability in and of himself. He cannot help himself.

When our Lord asked this man in Mark 5:9 what his name was, he answered, "My name is Legion, for we are many." A Roman legion had 6,826 men in it. So evidently there were around 6,000 demons in this man.

"My name is Legion." No wonder he could not help himself. No wonder he had such strength to destroy. No wonder he wanted to live in death. No wonder he wanted to live in darkness. No wonder he wanted to live in defilement. No wonder he wanted to live in defeat. He could not help himself because he was bound with the Legion of Unclean Spirits. What is the only answer? What is the help?

Deliverance Through Jesus Christ

For a maniac, how can a maniac like this ever be tamed? The answer is that he lived a life of deliverance after he met the Lord Jesus Christ. In Mark 5:6, "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus?"

"Thou Son of the Most High God, I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." Understand this: Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is the Deliverer. He has already defeated Satan and his host. He is the sovereign, and He commands with absolute authority; no one may resist Him when He commands. That is why, when this man saw Jesus Christ, he ran and worshipped Him and cried with a loud voice, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not."

Do you realize what is happening here? Satan is compelled to acknowledge the sovereignty, supremacy, and absolute authority of Jesus Christ. The demonic maniac ran straight to Jesus Christ and worshiped Him. Satan was compelled to worship Jesus Christ. The Greek word for worship is proskuneo, one of the main words used in the Bible for worship. Pros is a preposition meaning to or toward. Kuneo is the verb, kuon is the noun, and kuon means dog. Kuneo means to act like a dog, to kiss the hand, to lick the hand. Satan and his host were forced to run to Jesus Christ, kneel, acknowledge Him as the absolute sovereign and superior, and lick His hand like a dog.

It is Jesus Christ alone who can deliver the maniac—those who are darkened, defiled, delusional, and defeated. Only Jesus Christ can tame the untameable. Only Jesus Christ can tame a maniac.

The Bible says in verse six, "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him." He ran to Him, and then in verse seven cried, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." Do you understand something? Satan and his minions know their end. They have no relationship with Jesus Christ in the sense of the word.

He is not their Savior. He did not provide salvation for any of the fallen angels, not one. But the relation He has to them is that He is their Judge and their Executioner, and that is why the demon said,

“Torment me not.” Other times in Scripture they would ask, “Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” They know they are going to be tormented and judged, but here this one is forced to acknowledge it.

You will find that in Matthew 8:29: “And behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” They know their end. Salvation is far more than an intellectual knowledge. In Mark 5:15, “And they come to Jesus and see him that was possessed with the devil and had the legion sitting and clothed and in his right mind and they were afraid.”

Do you understand that when a man is right with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, his illusions are ended, his nakedness is covered, and he learns to sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ in his right mind? The phrase “right mind” is translated from one Greek word, meaning to be of a sound mind, one able to exercise self-control and curb one's passions. I like this thought: he was in his right mind. The only ones who are saved by Jesus Christ are in their right minds. That is true, because all the other minds are darkened and alienated from God through the ignorance that is in them. Once you have your right mind, look in verse 18.

"And when he was coming to the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but said unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him, and all men did marvel." Anyone in his right mind will find himself sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, wanting to be with Him and willing to tell others what great things He has done. I have a great fear and concern for professing Christians who never want to read their Bible, study, pray unless they are in trouble, or hear the Word of God preached and taught.

When this man was delivered, he was sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. He wanted to be with Him, and he was willing to serve Him. Only Jesus Christ can tame the maniacs.

Applications: Seeing Jesus and Genuine Salvation

Like the maniac of Gadara, if we wish to be delivered, we must see Jesus. What did the Bible say? "But when he saw him afar off, he ran to him." Everyone is really going to see Jesus Christ. We will either see Him in salvation or condemnation, but we are going to see Him. He is King of kings, Lord of lords, God of gods, and the Judge of all.

The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 9, "But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." To see Jesus Christ does not mean to see Him physically. It means to see Him by faith—to see His work, His person, what He has accomplished, and His so great salvation.

When Jesus Christ was asked by His enemies in Mark 14 and verse 62 whether He was the Son of God, He said, "And Jesus said, I am. And you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power coming in clouds of glory." You want to know whether or not I am the Son of God? I am. And you are going to see Me, coming on the right hand of power and in the clouds of glory.

What does that mean? It means they are going to see Him in judgment. Listen to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 7 through 10: “And you are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” “Because our testimony among you was believed in that day.” He is going to come back, and everybody is going to see Him, either in salvation or condemnation. It would be wise to seek to see Him in salvation.

Do not content yourself with an intellectual knowledge, no matter how smart or intellectual you are, how brave you are, or how much you think you know the Bible. Unless you have been delivered from sin and trusted savingly in Jesus Christ, you are not saved.

It is true that we are sinners and that we are not perfect, but thank God we are not what we used to be. We want to be holy and godly. We are different, and it is the grace of God that has made us different. In fact, that is the question asked in 1 Corinthians 4:7: “For who maketh thee to differ one from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? If thou didst receive it, why dost thou boast as though thou hadst not received it?”

If you are a child of God, you are different. The world may count you as strange. You are not strange; you are just different, because you have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Remember this: the demons also believe and tremble. James 2:19 says, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” They only believe; they know, but they are not saved. So many people profess to know God, but they never tremble at His holiness, His justice, His mercy, or His grace.

Unhappily, a lot of professing Christians are not as good as the devil, because at least he believes and trembles. An intellectual knowledge will not save us. It has to be a real, genuine salvation, trusting only in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the center of all things. He is the only one who can tame a maniac, get us out of death, darkness, defilement, deceit, and delusion, and give us real, genuine life.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you, Father, that you are able to tame the untameable and bring sinners to thyself in repentance and faith. You are able to save from the uttermost, from the guttermost to the uttermost. Thank you, Father, for your so great salvation. The demoniacs, maniacs, and lunatics of our time need thee and need to see thee as God incarnate, salvation alone.

And we pray for your mercy and grace in their lives. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 18

Are You A Despicable Person?

Introduction: The Question of Being Despicable

Proverbs 13:13 says, “Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.” The title of the message is, “Are you a despicable person?” Let me begin by asking some questions. Number one, are you despicable? Number two, will you become despicable? Number three, is it possible for a Christian to be despicable? The truth of the matter is, I believe that many people are despicable and never even realize it. The truth is, we love and we hate, we dislike and we detest, we loathe and despise, and fallen man has been doing that ever since the fall.

Of course, that was evident when Cain murdered Abel, his brother. The word despise actually means to regard with contempt, distaste, disgust, or disdain; to scorn and to loathe. The word despicable simply means that someone deserves to be despised or deserves to be regarded with distaste, disgust, disdain, and contempt. So is it possible that some people really deserve to be despised? Here is another question: Is it possible that some people

will be despised eternally? Wow. I find it interesting that it is not only individuals who despise and are despised, but races and nations as well.

Despising Among Individuals, Tribes, and Nations

When you think of Africa, you need to consider all of the tribal warfare, all of the invasions, and all of the captures. It is always tribe against tribe because they are different, and consequently there are constant wars and invasions. While I am on it, may I point out the fact that the slaves who came from Africa were Africans selling Africans into slavery? Those slave traders, the white men, never ventured into the heart of Africa; they would have been killed.

What they did was anchor off the coast, and African chiefs who had captured their tribal neighbors in warfare sold them as slaves for rum, trinkets, and whatever else they wanted. Obviously, tribes, nations, ethnicities, and everyone else can hate and despise. Likewise, it is also true with the Orientals. I found this out a long time ago because I was at the university with a Japanese student whose name was Jung Ho Lee. You never want to call a Japanese a Chinese, nor do you want to call a Chinese a Japanese, because they dislike each other and disdain each other greatly.

All down through history, different cultures and different peoples have hated and despised one another, and certainly that is the way it is even today. But the same thing is true, actually, between the righteous and the wicked.

Biblical Basis for Righteous Hatred

In Psalm 139, David is speaking against those who rise up against God. He says, “For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain.” Those are the wicked, those who speak against God and take His name in vain. Now remember that David was a man after God’s own heart. Yet he said, “Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies.”

Then David prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” David in this passage was certainly praying against those who rise up against God. The word hate here is a very strong word. It means to hate, but it also means to count as an enemy. That is why he said, “I hate them and I count them as my enemy.”

There is another interesting word in the expression “I hate them with perfect hatred.” The Hebrew word refers to that which is perfection, completeness, and consummation. In other words, when David says, “I hate them with perfect hatred,” he is saying, “I hate them 100%.” There is no percentage of him that does not hate them. His hatred is perfect. There is no neutrality and no compromise.

One may wonder whether such an attitude is biblical. Obviously it is, because David was a man after God’s own heart. Some would question whether such an attitude is applicable for us today, but the Bible answers that as well. In Psalm 15, David describes the righteous man, telling us who exactly will abide in God’s tabernacle and who will abide in God’s holy hill.

Look in Psalm 15, verse 1. He asked this question: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" Now here is the answer: "He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor, in whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoreth them that fear the Lord, he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Notice in verse 4: "in whose eyes a vile person is contemned." I want you to remember this.

The Hebrew word is the word basal. It literally means to despise, to hold in contempt, and to be despicable. So he says in verse 4 that the righteous man is a man in whose eyes a vile person is despised. He is one who is held in absolute contempt.

Now look at Proverbs 29, verse 27. Here the Word of God makes this statement: "An unjust man is an abomination to the just. And he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked."

Remember that the word abomination means a stench in one's nostrils. In other words, it is someone who is so disgusting, someone who is so dislikable, that you just do not even want to be around him. The unjust man is an abomination to the just, but on the other hand he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked. This actually works both ways; that is what it amounts to.

Our Lord taught this same thing in Luke 10:16. He told his disciples, "He that heareth you heareth me, he that despiseth you despises me. He that despises me despises the Father who has sent me." So very clearly, there is a despising being taught in the Word of God.

Consider these three verses. Psalm 34:21 says, "Evil shall slay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate." Proverbs 29:10 says, "The bloodthirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul." And in John 15:18 our Lord said, "If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you."

The truth of the matter is that, when we talk about despisement, we are despised and we despise, regardless of who you are, where you are, or what you are. Individuals, groups, tribes, ethnicities, cliques, and even nations despise and are despised.

Self-Despising and the Failure of Self-Reformation

It is also possible for people to despise themselves. I have talked with and counseled many people in fifty-eight years of preaching, and I have had people actually say, “I despise my life. I despise myself.” Then they would add, “But I’m helpless to change.” In one sense, that is absolute truth, because our Lord spoke against what you and I would call self-reformation or self-transformation.

You cannot transform yourself from an evil person to a godly person. You cannot reform yourself by saying, “I’ll quit smoking. I’ll quit drinking. I’ll quit cussing. I’ll quit running around.” You cannot quit your way into righteousness. Our Lord said it like this in Matthew chapter 12, verses 43 through 45: “When the unclean spirit goeth out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none.”

Then He said, “I will return to my house from whence I came out.” When he comes, he finds it “empty, swept and garnished.” He goes in and takes with him seven more spirits more wicked than himself. “So the last end of that man,” our Lord said, “is worse than the beginning.” Self-reformation does not work.

That is why, in John chapter 8 and verse 36, the Bible says, “If the Son therefore shall set you free, you shall be free indeed.” The only way people can be freed from sin, from the bondage of sin, and from despisement of themselves is through the grace, mercy, and blood of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The book of Proverbs is not only a book of instruction, but also a book of wisdom. In it, God tells us exactly how we should live and how His Word should affect our lives in every area and sphere. It tells us why we are despicable, the source of being despicable, and how we become despicable. With that in mind, look again at Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 13.

Despising the Word Leads to Destruction

"Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded." Now, when the Bible says in verse 13, "whosoever despiseth the word," the word, of course, refers to the word of God. It also refers to what you and I would call His revealed word, the Bible. The Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible, and indestructible word of God. So men that refuse to read, men that refuse to study, men that refuse to obey the word of God are despising the word of God. That's what he said: "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed."

So think about this question. Do you read the word of God? Do you study the word of God? Do you esteem the word of God very highly? Do you obey the word of God? If the answer to those questions is a resounding no, then the truth of the matter is you despise the word of God. You actually despise the Word of God. Now, I want you to consider with me what he says in verse 13: "whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed." The word for destroyed there can also be translated, not just destroyed, but it indicates destruction, ruin, enslavement, and it means also to be broken and also to be spoiled.

So let me lay this before you. There are principles and there are precepts in the word of God that God has given us to direct our lives and to order our steps and to preserve us and keep us from destruction, disaster.

Now that means that this word is applicable to every area of life, every sphere of life. So let me give you an illustration since we're in Proverbs. If you look in your Bibles, in the book of Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 7, here the Word of God makes a very clear and concise statement: "The rich ruleth over the poor and the borrower is servant to the lender." The borrower is servant to the lender. Now the word servant is a very interesting word. It is the word from which we get the word slave. Actually, he's saying the borrower is a slave to the lender. So if I borrowed $20,000 from Steve, that means basically I am his servant, I am his slave until I work it out and pay it back, because I'm no longer really working for myself; I'm working for Steve and to pay back that which I owe. So the borrower becomes servant, or slave, to the lender.

If we are imprudent, if we refuse to be frugal, and if we refuse to plan, save, and prepare, then we are headed for destruction. Proverbs 22:3 says, “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.” Here is prudence, even in regard to what we would call our financial situation. If we refuse and despise the word of God concerning finances, then we are going to be destroyed financially. This destruction can be very broad. It applies in many areas and to many things.

Now go back to Proverbs 13:13. Before going further, I want to emphasize another truth that should be very clear. “Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.” As destruction takes various forms, rewards can take various forms as well. When the Bible says, “Whoso despiseth the word of God shall be destroyed,” here is a truth I have emphasized for many years: You cannot separate God from His word. If you despise the word of God—and I am going to show you how that is done—then you are also despising God Himself. You cannot despise the word without despising Him who gave the word.

The Bible says in Psalm 119:89, “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”

Despising the Word Is Despising God

Psalm 138, verse 2, teaches us that God has magnified His word above His name. David said, “I will worship toward thy holy temple and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and thy truth, for thou hast magnified thy word above thy name.” If the word of God ever fails, it means that God is not God. You cannot despise the word of God without despising God.

Turn back in your Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 12. You are familiar with the background. David has committed adultery with Bathsheba. He has murdered her husband Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. He has been confronted by Nathan the prophet, and God is now dealing with David. Look what God says to David in verse 9: “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with a sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.”

Now look at what he said in verse 9: “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord?” What commandment? Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not covet, thou shalt have no other gods before me, honor thy father and thy mother. In other words, David actually broke all of them. But notice what God said: “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord?”

Now skip down to verse 10. He says, “Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.” And the Lord God said, “You didn't just despise my word. You didn't just despise my commandment. You despised me.” Whenever we despise the word of God, we are actually despising God Himself.

How do we despise the Word of God? Look in your Bibles to the book of Leviticus, chapter 26. Leviticus 26, beginning with verse 15. Look at what God says: “And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your

soul abhor my judgments," and the word abhor is a very strong word for hate. So he said, "if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but ye shall break my covenant, I will also do this unto you." So how do we despise God's statutes? How do we abhor His judgments? And the answer is by refusing to obey Him. God says in verse 16 if we despise His word, we're despising Him and therefore God says in verse 16, "I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, the burning ague that shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart, and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemy shall eat it." You can read the rest of it of what God is going to do because they've despised God's Word and consequently despised God. Now if you would turn right over to the book of Jeremiah chapter 23. Jeremiah 23, look if you would please at verse 17. Jeremiah 23 verse 17. Jeremiah 23 verse 17. God is rebuking these people and he says, "They say still unto them that despise me," here are

his own people who despise him. Here the false prophets are saying, "The Lord has said, ye shall have peace." And they say unto everyone that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, "No evil shall come upon you." God says when you are talking contrary to my word and you're giving counsel contrary to my word, you are despising me. Wow. "They say unto them that despise me." So we can despise God by refusing to obey His Word.

Now, turn back, if you would, to Psalm 107. Psalm 107. And I want you to look, if you would please, at verse 11. Psalm 107 and verse 11. Here it is. Look what God says.

Now, we're talking about supposedly His people here. He said, "Because they rebelled against the words of God and contemned the counsel of the Most High." Now, the word contemned means to despise, to scorn, to abhor. Now, look at it. "Because they rebelled against the words of God and contemned the counsel of the Most High." Why did they rebel? Because they despised the Word of God. The very act of rebelling demonstrates the fact that they despised God. For had they not despised Him, had they not despised His words, they would have obeyed. But they disobeyed.

How do you know whether or not you despise God? How do you know whether or not you despise His Word? Someone says, “Well, I read my Bible as much as I can. I study every now and then, and I try to do what is right, or what I think best.” Really? Your best may be despising God. How do you know? How can you tell whether or not you are really and truly despising the Word of God or despising God?

The Evidence of Despising: Perverse Ways

The answer is given to us in Scripture. Look in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 14, verse 2: “He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord, but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.” He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord. In other words, the man who fears the Lord God is the man who does not simply talk the talk, but also walks the walk. That is why Scripture says, “He that walketh in his uprightness”: he obeys, and he is righteous in obedience. That man fears the Lord.

But here is the opposite: “He that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.” The evidence that one fears the Lord is the fact that he obeys. The evidence that one does not fear the Lord is that he is perverse in all of his ways. The word perverse is the Hebrew word loose. It means to depart, to turn aside, to go crooked, to be devious, and to be perverse. The man who is perverse deviates from the Word of God. He turns aside from the Word of God, and therefore follows his own inclinations—the desires of the flesh, of the mind, the pride of life, whatever he chooses. It is a presumptuous sin because he is deliberately and willingly turning aside. So Scripture says clearly, “He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord, but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.” Our Lord Himself said, “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

Now, I want you to look at this. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Numbers chapter 15. Numbers chapter 15, and look at verses 30 and 31. I just mentioned presumptuous sins. A presumptuous sin is something that you do willingly, deliberately, premeditatedly. So let me put it to you like this. Let's suppose that Gary had a wonderful hunting rifle that I really liked and that I really wanted. So I offered to buy it and Gary says, "No, I don't think I want to sell it." But I said, "But now, Gary, you don't understand. I really want that rifle. If you

don't want to sell it, I will accept it as a gift." And Gary says, "No, I'm not going to give it to you. I'm not going to sell it. It's my rifle. I'm going to keep it." Well, that's fine.

But then I get to thinking, you know, he can't stay awake 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and neither can he stay home 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So I watch and wait till he leaves. And I break into his house and I steal that rifle. That is a presumptuous sin. That is a perverse act. I have deviated from the word of God, which says, "Thou shalt not covet, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not have any other gods before me." So this is exactly what God is saying. Now watch, if you would, Numbers chapter 15, look at verse 30, "But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord," that is, despises the Lord, "and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off.

His iniquity shall be upon him." So the perverse man is the man that disobeys. The perverse man is the man that lives according to his own rules and not according to the law of God.

Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Isaiah and look, if you would please, at chapter 33. Isaiah 33. Follow with me now. Isaiah 33. And look, if you would please, beginning there with verse 15. So I'm trying to show you, once again, what it means to be despicable and how we despise God many times and His Word. He says in Isaiah 33, beginning there with verse 15, "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppression." Now I want you to watch. "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly."

That is the man who obeys, and as he obeys God, there are things he does not do. He despises the gain of oppression; that is, he does not oppress. He shakes his hands from holding bribes and will not take a bribe. He stops his ears from hearing of blood; in other words, he will not be involved in murder or anything about it. He shuts his eyes from seeing evil and will not join evil.

What will happen to the man like this who walks righteously, speaks uprightly, and obeys? He says in verse 16, “He shall dwell on

high. His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks. Bread shall be given him. His water shall be sure." Then he says, "Thine eye shall see the king in his beauty. They shall behold the land that is very far off."

He is talking about the man who walks righteously and speaks uprightly. The righteous man despises any and everything contrary to God and His law. He holds such things to be despicable and treats them with scorn and contempt. Proverbs chapter 19, verse 16, sums up what has been said: "He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul. But he that despiseth his ways," that is, God's ways, "shall die." If you keep the commandment, you are loving God's way. If you fail to obey, you are despising God's ways.

Despising in Various Life Spheres

The truth of what I am talking about is seen in every area and in every sphere of our lives. It is seen in our relationships with our neighbors, our families, education, and our spouses. Keep in mind that he that despiseth the word of God shall be destroyed. As I have already told you, that destruction can take many different forms. But he that keepeth the commandment shall be rewarded, and that reward can take many different forms as well.

I want to take you very quickly through the book of Proverbs and show you what the Word of God is talking about when we are talking about despising. Every one of these passages except one is in the book of Proverbs. It is astounding to me how many times the word despise or despiseth is used in the Bible. Consider Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." A fool is not going to listen, hear, or heed. He is not going to be taught.

Proverbs 1:30 says, "They would have none of my counsel. They despised all of my reproof." Fools despise wisdom and instruction. If you are working around a huge piece of machinery for the first time, do not know how to run that machine, and refuse to be instructed or read the instructions, inevitably you are going to end up getting hurt or destroying the machine. It is just that simple, but fools refuse instruction.

Proverbs 5:12 says, “And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?” It does not matter whether we are talking about neighbors, families, education, or anything else. Proverbs 11:12 says, “He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbor, but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.” A man void of wisdom just despises for the sake of despising. Again, he is talking about the neighbor.

That is not all. Proverbs 14:21 says, “He that despiseth his neighbor sinneth, but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.”

It is astounding to me what goes on in a lot of these cities between neighbors. I read some time ago where one neighbor shot and killed his neighbor because his neighbor did not keep his dog from pooping on the other man's lawn. He went over, shot him, and killed him.

Look in Proverbs 15, verse 5: "A fool despiseth his father's instruction, but he that regardeth reproof is prudent." A fool despises his father's instruction. Look in verse 20, the same chapter: "A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish man despiseth his mother." In other words, he is not going to listen. Look in Proverbs 15, verse 32: "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul, but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding."

The Bible says, "He that despiseth the word shall be destroyed." Proverbs chapter 30, verse 17, says, "The eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagle shall eat it." What does that mean? The young man's dead. He that despises the word of God shall be destroyed. These passages show that despising instruction is not merely refusing advice; it is despising one's own soul and ultimately bringing destruction upon oneself.

Now, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 gives us a great understanding of being despicable. This is a wonderful passage, and it is against fornication. Fornication, porneia, is a very broad word. It would include adultery, incest, bestiality, and anything and everything that is immoral, wicked, and wrong. In this passage the Apostle Paul tells us that we are to avoid fornication. He says, "For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus Christ." These are the commandments given by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then he says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." His vessel is your body. Thus, in verses 3 and 4, the principle is laid out: we are to avoid and abstain from fornication, and our bodies are to be held in sanctification and honour.

He now gives us a negative: “that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor.” Here is the negative: “not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.” It is still the negative: “that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter,” specifically the matter of fornication, “because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we've also forewarned you and testified.” Verse seven repeats the principle in verses three and four: “For God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

“He therefore that despiseth”—that is, he will not obey this—“he therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who has also given us his Holy Spirit.” All uncleanness and immorality are indeed despising God. So we have to ask ourselves again: Are we despicable? Are we becoming despicable? How do we walk? How do we live? What is the expression of our lives?

One of the problems we face today is that exceedingly wicked and vile people oftentimes prosper, and seemingly nothing ever happens to them. You and I can sit right here and name a dozen people who are so wicked and vile, yet are multi-billionaires, that it seems they will never face justice for their crimes.

The Prosperity of the Wicked and God's Awakening

In Psalm 73, Asaph had a certain problem. He was suffering and doing without, and he looked at the prosperity of the wicked, while nothing ever happened to them. He begins: “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.”

But then: “My feet were almost gone. My steps had well nigh slipped.” He said, “I almost lost it.” Why? “For I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” Consider their prosperity: “For there are no bands in their death, but their strength

is firm. They're not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men."

I don't have our problems. "Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain, violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish." Here they are: they are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. They have cursed God and man; it does not matter to them. Verse 10 continues, "Therefore his people return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say"—this is the wicked speaking—"How doth God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?"

Then he says, "Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." Now look at it; here it is. Asaph states his problem: "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long I have been plagued and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of my children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me."

Asaph is saying, "I am wanting to do right. I want to live holy. I want to be godly, and here I am suffering and doing without, while these wicked people are prospering. Nothing ever happens to them."

Hold Psalm 73, and turn to 1 Samuel chapter 2 and verse 30. Here is a principle. In this passage, God is actually speaking to Eli as He judges Eli and his house. God says to Eli, "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel said, I said indeed that thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me forever."

But now the Lord said, "Be it far from me"; in other words, you have sinned against me, and your sons have sinned against me. "For them that honour me will I honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." The Hebrew for "lightly esteemed" literally means to be made despicable. Those who despise God shall be despised by God.

Here is the principle: "Those that honour me I will honour," said the Lord; "those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," or

despised. Look back now at Psalm 73 and verse 16: “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” Now watch: “Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.” Are you listening? Are you looking? “As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.”

Spurgeon commented on this passage: “They,” speaking of these rich wicked people, “owe their existence and prosperity to the forbearance of God, which the psalmist compares to a sleep. But as a dream vanishes as soon as a man awakes, so the instant the Lord begins to exercise his justice and call men before him, the pomp and prosperity of the proud transgressors shall melt away. When God awakes to judgment, they who despise him shall be despised. They are already such stuff as dreams are made of. But then the baseless fabric shall not leave a wreck behind. Let them flaunt the little hour. Poor unsubstantial sons of dreams, they will soon be gone. When the day breaketh and the Lord awakes as a mighty man out of his sleep, they will vanish away. Who cares for the wealth of dreamland? Who indeed but fools. Lord, leave us not to the madness which covets unsubstantial wealth, but ever teach us thine own true wisdom.”

Eternal Despisement and Application

In Psalm 73, I just read that when God awakes, God will despise their image. It is not merely that God will despise their image; God will eternally despise their image. Daniel speaks of the resurrection: “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” The word contempt means to be abhorred, to be treated contemptibly, and to be an abhorrence. It is another word for despisement. Thus, some shall awake “to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting despisement.” I want you to think with me just for a moment. I want you to consider this and even think about it this afternoon.

We may despise certain people, but our despisement is always temporary, nor is it perfect. Let us suppose for one instant that there

is no hell. Just suppose there is no lake of fire and brimstone. Just suppose there is no eternal torture. Here you have a sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, almighty God. If all He did was despise you eternally, with His personal, perfect, and perpetual despisement, and throughout eternity you received a fresh baptism of a holy God's righteous scorn, contempt, and despisement every moment of every second, I think that would be sufficient to be hell in itself.

When God despises, there are no blessings, no mercies, no rest, no release, and no return, because it is an eternal despisement. As Asaph said in Psalm 73:20, “As a dream when one awakeneth, so, O Lord, when thou awakenest, thou shalt despise their image.”

Let me make some applications. The first one is this: despicableness is revealed in many ways. Our Lord Himself made it clear that we are either going to love Him or despise Him. He said in Matthew 6:24, “No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” Mammon oftentimes refers to money, because it could also refer to the world system which produces that money, the lusts that want and desire that money, and perhaps the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life, since those are part of the world system as well.

But I hope you've seen from Scripture that when we disobey Him, we're not only despising His Word, we are despising Him. So this should answer the question: Is it possible for a Christian to be despicable? And the answer is yes. The answer is yes. So once again, if I wanted that rifle that Gary had, and I planned on stealing it because he will not sell it and he will not give it to me, I'm despising the Word of God and I'm despising God Himself who gave that Word.

The second one is this: Our continuous despisement of the Word of God always leads to destruction. And not just to a temporary interference or a light judgment, but an utterly complete judgment. For instance, if you look back in your Bibles very quickly to 2 Chronicles, chapter 36, and look, if you would please, at verse 16. The Bible says this. They were talking about His people; we're talking about Israel—in fact, Judah, all of it. But look in verse 16:

"But they," that is, the people, "mocked the messengers of God," and messengers is plural. "But they mocked the messengers of the prophets of God, and despised his words," that is singular, God's words, because they are preaching God's words, "and misused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew the young men with their sword in the house of their sanctuary, had

There was no compassion upon young men or maiden or old man or him that stooped for age. He gave them all into his hand, until there was no remedy.

You remember that passage in Malachi chapter 1 and verse 6, where God said, “A son honoreth his father and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is my honor? If I am a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord unto you, O priest, which despise my name.” How did God’s priest despise His name? They despised His word, His worship, and His service. They refused to put a difference between the clean and the unclean, the profane and the holy.

This is where we are today. I want to emphasize the reality of our sins and disobedience. There is one more passage in Isaiah 53, particularly verse 3. I could quote it, and many of you could quote it, but you must see it. Everyone knows that Isaiah 53 concerns the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ: “He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not.”

Esteemed him not. The word esteemed is the Hebrew word chashab, which literally means to esteem, to value, to count, to think, and to reckon.

As this passage deals with our Lord’s suffering and everything that He went through, when we sin against Him and do what is contrary to His word and law, we are saying, “I don’t give a flip about Jesus Christ. I don’t care what He suffered or what He went through. I want what I want. I’ll do what I will, and I’ll do it right now.” We do not even think that He is worth thinking about. We do not think His sufferings are worth counting or reckoning with. We esteemed Him not. He is not worth a moment of my mind.

Next time we are tempted to sin, we need to stop and think about the fact that our sins were imputed to the Lord Jesus Christ. He suffered in our stead. His sufferings are worth thinking about. Is it possible for a Christian to be despicable? Yes. All we have to do is disobey, because we are despising God's Word and God.

Remember this truth: you cannot separate God from His Word. In John 12 and verse 48, our Lord said, "Whosoever rejecteth me, and receiveth not my word, hath one that judgeth him the last day, even the word which I have spoken." If we despise His Word, we despise the Lord Jesus Christ; if we despise the Lord Jesus Christ, we despise the Father who sent Him. So we cannot and must not be despicable in our lives. It is one thing to despise the enemies of God; it is quite another to despise God and His Word.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank Thee, Lord, for Thy Word's truth. We acknowledge that often we have despised Thee by despising Thy Word. We have done what we wanted rather than what Thou commanded. We have grieved Thee, broken Thy heart, hurt Thee, and sinned against Thee. We need our hearts turned, minds enlightened, and wills freed, that we might obey Thee and bring our lives into conformity to Thy Word. Give us grace, Lord, that we may serve Thee in truth and righteousness and walk pleasing in Thy sight. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 19

The Afflictions Of The Gospel

Introduction: The Afflictions of the Gospel

Let us go today to 2 Timothy chapter 1, verses 7 through 9. You need to stay with me because I think this might be needed and necessary for the time to come.

The Word of God says, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

The truth of the matter is that we have been impressed with and rejoice in the glories of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, to come up with the title “The Afflictions of the Gospel” should make us think. Although I titled this exactly what the Scripture says, I must make it clear that the gospel is not afflicted in any way whatsoever. The truth is, the gospel does indeed bring afflictions with it.

Biblical Promises and Purposes of Affliction

All you have to do is recall what went on in the first century—all the persecutions of the apostles and the early Christians. If you are unfamiliar with that, then you need to read Fox's Book of Martyrs and find out how many gave their lives for the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of God has a lot to say about afflictions. We understand that we must not only face them, but also bear them. There are numerous promises in the Bible concerning afflictions. The very first one is interesting because it is found in Psalm 34 and verse 19: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Now stop and think about that. Truly God does indeed deliver us out of our afflictions, but the way we get delivered out of every affliction and all the afflictions is through death and eternity as well. The Bible does say that God does indeed deliver us, and that led David in Psalm 132 and verse 1 to say, "O Lord, remember David in all of his afflictions." So it is proper and right and lawful to pray and ask

We may ask God to remember us in our afflictions and, if He so pleased, deliver us from our afflictions as well. God may graciously deliver us, or He may graciously enable us to endure those afflictions. You remember that the Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12, said that, unless he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations that were given unto him, he was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. He went on to say that he besought the Lord thrice, three times, that this would be removed. God said to him, "Know that my grace is sufficient for you." Therefore, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The truth is, the Lord may deliver us, or He may just give us grace to bear them.

That is for sure. The gospel does indeed bring afflictions with it, and unhappily there are many Christians, I think, who fall because they are ignorant of this fact. Many times the gospel is portrayed as a bed of roses without thorns. The Bible makes this exceedingly clear in Acts chapter 14 and verse 22. When Saul went away to confirm the souls, Paul, the Apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle

Paul, said, "Confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God."

The word "tribulation" is the same Greek word as "affliction," so he could say, "through much affliction we must enter into the kingdom of God," or "tribulation" or "suffering." The word "tribulation" and the word "affliction" are one and the same.

There is another passage in 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 3. The Word of God says, "That no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." Stop and think about that. The Apostle Paul says we are appointed unto afflictions. Why in the world should we be appointed unto afflictions? There are six reasons—actually, I will end up giving you seven. The very first reason we are appointed to afflictions is affliction happens to be a

Affliction is a means of sanctification. When you are afflicted, you are drawn away from the world and from the flesh. Afflictions may be physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, or financial. Whenever you are suffering some type of affliction, you are not really concerned about enjoying yourself in the world or providing for your flesh.

I was thinking this morning, and I had not thought about it in years, but when I was in college, I had mononucleosis, known as the kissing disease, or the teenager's disease, because they usually get it from kissing. The only one I had kissed was Alice, and she was not sick, but I did get sick. I was not a teenager by any stretch of the imagination, but with a temperature of 104, chills, fever, and vomiting, I do not think you are going to want to go out and do anything except stay close to the bedroom and the bathroom.

The point is that afflictions are oftentimes used to sanctify us. We learn to be weaned from the world and from the flesh. The Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 4, said, “But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses.” We may approve ourselves through suffering these afflictions. Isaiah chapter 48 and verse 10 says, “Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen

thee in the furnace of affliction." God oftentimes refines us through affliction.

Secondly, affliction is a means of separating the wheat from the chaff. Many times in the church there are false professors and hypocrites. When God sends afflictions, persecutions, tribulations, and trials, those people oftentimes simply disappear. Their attitude is, "Well, if this is what it takes being a Christian, I don't want any part of it." In Mark chapter 4 and verse 17, God speaks about these.

He said, "They have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended." Affliction is often necessary simply to sort out the wheat from the chaff.

Thirdly, afflictions give us the opportunity to minister to others. The Bible says in James chapter 1, verse 27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." How many times have we visited folks in their affliction? It is indeed an opportunity to minister.

Fourthly, enduring afflictions graciously is a means of encouraging others in the faith. Everyone has gone through some afflictions and personal experiences that have not been good. Yet, as much as we may have suffered, we have not suffered anything like the apostles and some of the Bible patriarchs. That is why the Bible says in James chapter 5, "Take, my brethren, the prophets for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." Then he said, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

When you think about Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, or Hosea, none of us have ever been through anything like that. Certainly, afflictions will encourage others who are suffering when we can say, "I know exactly what you are going through. I went through this five years ago." We can encourage others, and it encourages us as well; we know that we are not alone.

Fifthly, enduring afflictions for the Lord Jesus Christ and His glory is counted as light and unworthy to be compared with eternity.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 17 and 18, the Apostle Paul said, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” He continued, “For we look not at those things which are seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but we look at the things which are unseen, which are eternal.”

Sixthly, afflictions give the unsaved the opportunity to see what God's people can endure by His grace and by His mercy. Christians enduring afflictions give the unsaved an opportunity to see what we can endure by the grace of God. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 32, says, "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." Now watch: "a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock"—that is, people were watching you, looking at you as you endured these things—"and partly while ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used." In other words, they suffered it, and you were with others who suffered it as well. You were a gazingstock by the world and by the unsaved as well.

Seventh, it is our afflictions that give us the opportunity to see the mercy and the grace and the graciousness of God. Acts chapter 7, verse 34, records Stephen speaking and quoting what God said to Moses: "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them." Then He told Moses, "I am come down to send thee to Egypt." God said, "I've seen the afflictions and I've heard the groaning, I've come down to deliver." So, obviously and clearly, in our afflictions, we are giving God the opportunity to deliver us graciously and kindly as well.

There are three main Greek words used in our Bibles that are translated as afflictions, persecutions, and tribulations. The first word is the word "thlipsis,"

Greek Words for Affliction and the Call to Partake

That is pronounced correctly, “thlipsis,” and it literally means tribulation, affliction, trouble, anguish, persecution, and being burdened. The second word is “pathema,” and we actually probably

get our English word “pathetic” from that word. It is also translated as suffering and affliction. There is another word that is close to that and has another Greek word attached to it. It is “kakopathema,” from “kakos,” which is a word for bad or evil, and “pathema,” for suffering. So, actually, it means to suffer that which is evil, or to suffer that which is bad.

The third word is “sugkakopatheo,” and it is a combination of these words that I have just mentioned. This is the word that I am going to be showing you, and it means to suffer hardship or to be a partaker of afflictions together.

Now I want you to go back in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 1, because I want you to see that, in the context of what I am going to be talking about, there is a verse in this passage that we often quote and never really consider in its context. First of all, Paul is writing to Timothy in this passage, and Timothy is his son in the faith. Timothy is the man that he trained in the ministry. If you will look in verse 5, he tells Timothy, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice; I am also persuaded that in thee also.” Paul is saying that, yes, Timothy, he does believe that Timothy is a real, genuine Christian. His grandmother was, and his mother was, so evidently Paul knew the family quite well.

But notice what he says in verse 6: “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.” In other words, Timothy had been set apart for the ministry. He had been ordained by the Apostle Paul, and Paul tells Timothy now to stir up the gift of God that is in him. I want to tell you what this actually is saying when he tells him to stir up.

Here’s a Greek word, “Anazopureo.” “Ana” is a preposition meaning “in the midst of,” “zoe” is related to “zoe,” which is life, and “pur” is the word for fire or fiery. So literally, look what he said in verse 6: “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the flame, rekindle the fire, make everything glow. Stir the ashes. Revive the sparks.” Bring out the burning coal. That’s exactly what it’s telling him.

Opposition to the Gospel

It is the same truth that the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:19: “Quench not the Spirit.” In other words, don’t put the fire out; don’t pour water on the Holy Spirit. Keep that which is in you alive and hot. There is the possibility that Timothy, like so many of us, had become remiss and neglectful, even lackadaisical, in his faith and ministry. Thus the Apostle Paul admonished him to stir up and rekindle that flame, build that fire, and get hot in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Active service, active witnessing, and active ministry always bring with them certain afflictions of the gospel. There are many who are opposed to the gospel and to its preaching. Many are not excited at all about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I remember when God saved me and called me to preach. I was so excited. I thought everyone would be eager to hear what I had to say, but I discovered they weren’t. In fact, some became very upset, especially when I implied that they were sinners. They did not like that at all. There are plenty of people who simply do not want the gospel preached.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:14, the Apostle Paul said, "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus." He continued, "For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen in Thessalonica, your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

These people did not want the Word of God preached. They did not want the Word of God taught. Paul said, "You've received the same persecution that we have in Judaea." It is just that simple. In Acts 18, Silas and Timotheus had come from Macedonia, and Paul was preaching. "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment and said unto them, Your blood

be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

They were not interested or eager in hearing the truth. So not everyone is interested in hearing the gospel. Tyrants oppose the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at what we call the third world countries. Practically every one of them is run by a tyrant. Almost like America. But look at these third world countries: they really do not have the gospel. Why? A tyrant despises the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ because the gospel teaches that Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Moreover, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ sets men free. Moreover, it binds men together in one accord, and it is that which condemns sin and wickedness.

Our Lord said it very plainly in John chapter 3: “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 every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his deeds be reproved. But he that loveth the light cometh to the light, that his deeds may be revealed.” In other words, our Lord said men hate the light because their deeds are evil.

Now let me state this another way. You cannot move without producing friction. For every action there is a reaction. Here is what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16 and verse 9: “For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.” Stop and think about that: “A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.”

So let us put it like this: The door of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition. Anytime you have an opportunity, there is going to be opposition. Whenever you are over the target, that is when you are going to be taking flack. That is the truth.

Fear vs. Power, Love, and a Sound Mind

The Apostle Paul had been telling Timothy that he needed to stir up the gift that was in him, and then he makes this astounding statement in verse 7: “And God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” For God has not given us a spirit of fear. I believe that Christians have been so affected by

propaganda, worldliness, toleration, and effeminacy that they have become literal cowards in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not wish to be looked down upon. We do not wish to be hated or disliked. We do not wish to be frowned at, thought different, or mocked, and we certainly do not wish to suffer. We are unwilling today to suffer loss of respect or goods. Our Lord enunciates the truth in Matthew chapter 5, beginning with verse 10.

Our Lord says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Go back to verse 10: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Not because you are a sinner or wicked, but because you do that which is righteous. Now look at verse 11: "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you." Look at the next word: "falsely." You are not meriting that evil, wickedness, or slander. No, you are living a holy, godly life; they are simply speaking evil against you. Then our Lord tells you in verse 12 to rejoice, for so persecuted they the prophets.

All I am trying to show you is this: we have developed an attitude totally and completely contrary to Scripture. When you look around at what is happening in our day and time, it is not nearly as bad as what happened in the first century. But I can assure you that persecution is coming down the pike a whole lot quicker than you and I could ever think about it. We need to have our thinking caps on and learn to think scripturally and biblically.

Go back to verse 7 in 2 Timothy chapter 1: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Here is a good question: If God has not given us a spirit of fear, where does fear come from? How do we become fearful if God does not give us a spirit of fear?

I can certainly give you one answer. The word "fear" is the word "deilia" in the Greek. It literally means fear, fearfulness, timidity,

cowardness. God has not given us a spirit of timidity. He has not given us a timid spirit or a cowardly spirit. That is what He is saying. So where does fear come from? The Bible tells you in Proverbs 29, verse 25: "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." When you and I become fearful of men, we are not properly fearing God. Let me make a statement.

Fear of man repudiates the fear of God, and fear of God repudiates the fear of man. Our Lord said plainly, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

“Fear not them which kill the body.” Do you realize the only thing that a man can do is confiscate your goods? He could hurt you, but the most he could do is kill you, and he cannot destroy your soul. He cannot destroy your life in Jesus Christ. Our Lord said, “I’ll tell you whom you are to fear. You’re to fear the one sovereign God who’s able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

The truth of the matter is this: if we fear man, we are not fearing God, and if we fear God, we are not going to be fearing man. The only thing man can do is confiscate our goods and take our lives. Man is limited. Man is finite. God is infinite. God is unlimited.

Here is what Paul is telling Timothy: “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” Why did Paul say that to Timothy? We quote verse 7 all the time, but note the context. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” And then he says: “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.”

Shame and Suffering for the Body of Christ

Here are several good questions: Are you ashamed of the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you ashamed of the Word of God? Are you ashamed of the Apostle Paul, who was thrown into prison for the faith's sake and for his obedience to Jesus Christ? Are you ashamed of those Christians today who are being persecuted, prosecuted, and imprisoned for obedience? Are you ashamed of, and embarrassed by,

those Christians who will stand for that which is right, holy, and godly, and reveal and expose wickedness, sin, and corruption?

This is what Paul said to Timothy: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Richard Wurmbrand wrote the book Tortured for His Faith. Wurmbrand was in, I think, a Romanian prison for fourteen years. I was not there, but a number of other preachers were. Wurmbrand came to the United States and spoke. Afterwards, they all went to a restaurant and ordered food. When the waitresses brought all that food on trays, Wurmbrand saw it, hit the floor on his knees, and began loudly to praise and thank God for all of it. One of the preachers said, "I was so embarrassed." Then he said, "I got embarrassed that I was embarrassed."

Wurmbrand said, "If I'd eaten rats for fourteen years, I might learn to be thankful as well." We often are ashamed of things we should never be ashamed of. If we are ashamed of truth, of suffering for Jesus Christ, and of those who suffer for Jesus Christ, then I have a real surprise for you. In Mark chapter 8 and verse 38, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "But whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of the Father with all of his holy angels with him." If we are ashamed of Him, He is going to be ashamed of us.

Paul tells Timothy in verse 7, “For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Then, in verse 8: “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.”

Do you recall that I told you I was going to mention this one Greek word again? “Sugkakopatheo” literally means to be a partaker with, to be a partaker together, to be afflicted together with. That is exactly what he is saying: “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou a partaker, be a party of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.”

Who wants to suffer just to be suffering? No one. Who wants to be afflicted just to be afflicted? No one. Why would Paul encourage Timothy to be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel? If we are

afflicted, if we are suffering, for whom are we suffering? Look back in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 1, verse 24: “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you.” Paul is writing these Colossian Christians, and he says that he is rejoicing in his sufferings for them.

Paul said that he filled up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh for His body's sake, which is the church. Everything the Apostle Paul suffered and went through was not only for the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; it was for His body, the church. We are suffering, and would be suffering, for the church of God. This is what Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:10: “Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they might also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” He said we are suffering for the body.

If you go back to 2 Timothy chapter 1, Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor of him as a prisoner. He said in verses 11 and 12, “Wherefore I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things.” Paul went a night and a day in the deep; he was beaten with rods, stoned, and left for dead. Yet he said, “For the which cause I also suffer these things”—everything that he suffered—“nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Paul was not ashamed of everything he had suffered.

The truth of the matter is that many Christians are ashamed to suffer. They are ashamed to be identified with Jesus Christ, and certainly ashamed of His Word. Then, in 2 Timothy 1:15, Paul said, “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” But concerning Onesiphorus, he said, “The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.” When Onesiphorus was in Rome, he sought Paul out very diligently and found him. Paul prayed that he might find mercy of the Lord in that day, recalling how he had ministered to him in Ephesus. Onesiphorus was not ashamed of him; he sought him diligently.

Where was Paul? Paul was in prison. Onesiphorus made it a point to find the Apostle Paul and minister to him. Everyone else had forsaken him, but Onesiphorus was not ashamed of his chain, the Apostle Paul said.

Alice and I know a godly Christian couple whom we have known for years, and whose family we know, who were not only persecuted by the state in which they lived, but prosecuted as well. Both the husband and the wife were thrown into prison for two years, three years, something like that. They had done absolutely nothing wrong. I knew this couple because we had been in so many meetings together all across this country.

While they were in prison, I could not visit them since they were so far away, but I wrote them letters weekly. When I could call and when they could call me, we talked on the phone. After they were out, back at home, and back in ministry, they called me and told me that I was the only pastor who communicated with them the entire time they were in prison. A multitude of preachers knew these people and knew them well.

I am simply pointing out the fact that we have not understood that God has not given us a spirit of fear, timidity, or cowardness. We have understood that we would not be ashamed of the gospel, ashamed of suffering, or ashamed of those who are suffering. Onesiphorus was not ashamed to visit the Apostle Paul. I have news for you: most professing Christians today would be ashamed to visit the Apostle Paul. Most professing Christians today would not even visit Jesus Christ in prison.

How in the world can you say that? Look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 25, beginning with verse 41. Our Lord is talking about the sheep and the goats. He has already talked about the sheep, and now He is getting to the goats: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Now look what our Lord says: "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him,

saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?"

"Lord, if we had seen you, surely we would have done this to you." Then shall he answer them, saying, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Nobody said, "Inasmuch as you've done it not to the least of these, you have not done it unto me." That's why I said most people would not even visit Jesus Christ in prison. We won't visit those who are there for righteousness' sake.

In 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 14, we see how the Apostle Paul suffered: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his deeds, or his works: of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words." Then he says, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me."

"I pray God that it be not laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Christ's Affliction with His People

Yes, there are afflictions with the gospel, but the gospel is not afflicted. The Lord Jesus Christ is not afflicted. However, there is one sense of the word in which He is afflicted. He is the head, and we're the body. Isaiah 63:9 says, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: and in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." Note, "In all their affliction he was afflicted." Do you realize that? Whatever touches the body touches the head. Our Lord said, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of my eye." You cannot poke your finger in God's eye without there being a response. The truth of the matter is this: He is afflicted when we're afflicted, that is for sure. But look now at 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 3, and see what else he tells us.

Enduring Hardness as a Good Soldier

In 2 Timothy 2:3, he says, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The word "hardness" and the word "afflictions" are one and the same. So he literally says, "Thou therefore endure afflictions, or hardness, or troubles, or persecutions, or burdens, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Soldiers are known to be burdened and afflicted and have to do without many times. The truth of the matter is this: He tells us that we must endure all of these afflictions as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In light of the context of verses 7 and 8, we are being called upon not to be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, not to be ashamed of His truth, not to be ashamed of Him, those who work with Him, or those who were saved by Him. We are to identify with them and also partake of the afflictions and sufferings through the power of God, because God has not given us a spirit of fear.

Examples of Moses and the Thessalonian Christians

It is like Stonewall Jackson. He had a guest in his house right before the war broke out, and they discussed the imminency of war and what was going to be entailed. They both went to bed that night, but the man tossed and turned and could hardly sleep. The next morning, Jackson came down smiling and happy as ever. The man asked him, "How in the world can you be so happy in light of our discussion last night?" Jackson looked at him and said, "Why?"

Why should the peace of a Christian be upset by what man can do? Has not God ordained that all things will work together for our good? So this is what he is saying: "I'm not going to fear whether it's war or whether it's not war. I'm just going to do what God has called me to do. I'm not going to be ashamed." That is why the Apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 6 said that we are to stand, and having done all, to stand.

Now I want to make just a couple of applications. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, because I want you to see what our attitude should be. Our attitude should be that of Moses. This is an astounding passage. Look, if you would, in Hebrews chapter 11, beginning there at verse 24: "By faith Moses, when he

was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." That means Moses would have been in line to be a Pharaoh. He would have been the ruler of all Egypt and all other countries that Egypt conquered. So, by faith, when he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And what did he choose? "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." That is Pharaoh. He could have done whatever he pleased, had whatever he wanted, whatever he desired. But he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. How did he make this choice? Look at it in verse 26.

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Do you realize Moses considered the reproach of Jesus Christ, suffering with Him and being afflicted with Him, greater than all the treasures of Egypt? Look at the men who sell their souls for millions of dollars—that's worthless paper. Moses could have had more money than any man has ever dreamed, yet he counted it worthless, like Paul. Wouldn't Paul say, "I count all things but dung that I may win Christ"? Moses said, "I'd rather have the reproaches of Jesus Christ than anything else."

Consider another example. We are talking about afflictions, and the truth is that when you talk about afflictions, no one wants to be afflicted. No one wants to suffer. I don't want to suffer just for suffering's sake, and I don't want to be afflicted for affliction's sake. There is a difference between someone who has an innate and stupid desire to suffer and someone who is willing to suffer for righteousness' sake and for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul, writing to these Thessalonian Christians, said in verse 6—look at it:

"And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." That seems contradictory. You are afflicted, but you have joy. You are afflicted, but you have joy.

Application: Stir Up the Gift and Stand Boldly

I can think back to my childhood. We were in church every Sunday morning, every Sunday night, every Wednesday night, and any night

there was a special meeting. Most of us were poor as church mice. I remember being barefooted and wearing nothing but a pair of jeans as a boy. We had all kinds of cottage prayer meetings and other gatherings. The only time we ever went to town was Saturday afternoon, just to buy groceries and come back home, because we had to work all the time.

I am sure that we were afflicted and suffered, but I do not remember all that suffering. All I remember is that we had fun. There is joy in suffering when you suffer for righteousness' sake and for the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want you to think about this. Not only is there joy in affliction, but I believe we are at the point in history where every true Christian needs to take personally the command the Apostle Paul gave Timothy: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God."

It is like having a fire in the fireplace that is about to go out. You take the poker and stir the coals until the ashes are moved away, the coals rise to the top and begin glowing, and then you throw more wood on the fire. That is exactly what Paul is saying: Stir yourself up. Get hot. Get zealous. To be zealous means to be eaten up with zeal. Stir yourself up, and remember that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.

There is no reason to be timid or cowardly. If we suffer for righteousness' sake, count it all joy.

Now is the time to stand. Now is the time to speak out. Now is the time to proclaim Jesus Christ is Lord.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your truth. Father, You have not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Lord, enable us to stir up the gift that is within us. Lord, may we glow hot for Thee. May we not be ashamed of Your Word. Speak to our hearts. Grant us, Lord, that we may walk and talk boldly through Thy grace and through Thy mercy. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask it. Amen.

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