WEAVER BOOKS

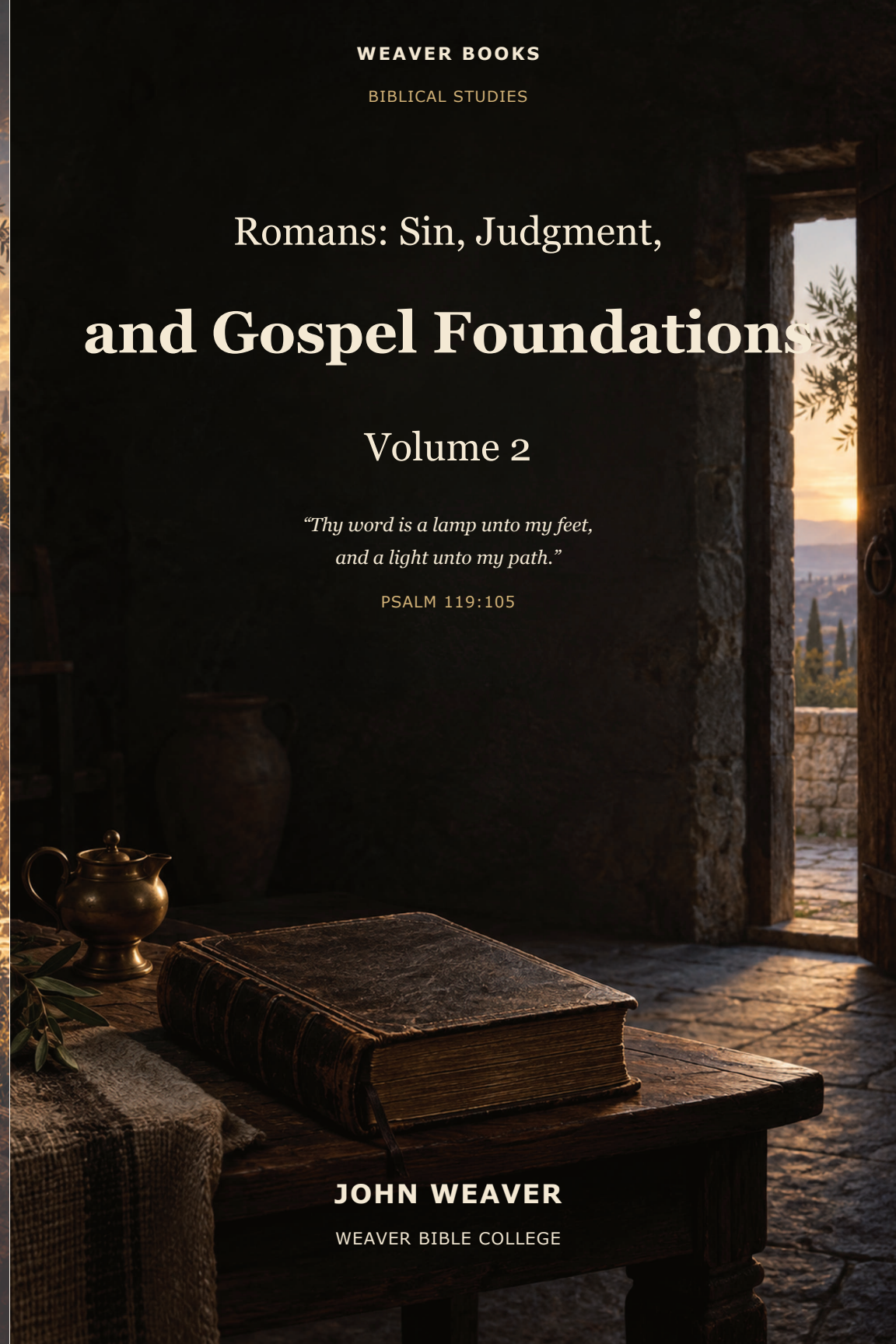
BIBLICAL STUDIES

Romans: Sin, Judgment, and Gospel Foundations

Volume 2

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

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

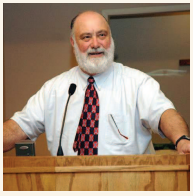
For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

ROMANS 1:16, EXCERPT

These sermons draw on Romans and related texts to consider sin, judgment, salvation, and faith in Christ. John Weaver examines the gospel's claims and their implications for Christian conviction, conduct, and the church. Volume 2 is one of two volumes; the complete chapter sequence is preserved across the set. This volume contains corrected chapters 22-41.

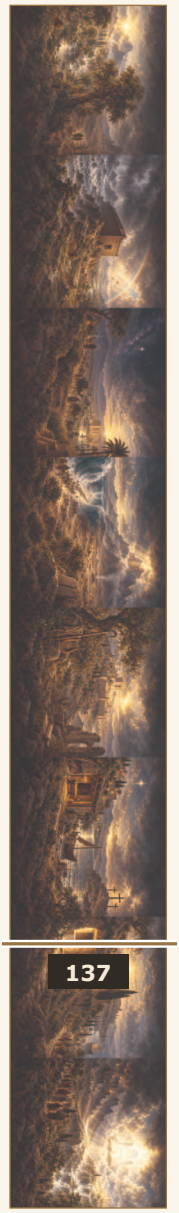
“The news or knowledge of our death should not move us or shake us from our faith or our duty.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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



137

BOOK 137

WEAVER BOOKS

Romans: Sin, Judgment, and Gospel Foundations

Volume 2

Corrected chapters 22-41

John Weaver

Weaver Bible College

LIBRARY BOOK 137

Romans: Sin, Judgment, and Gospel Foundations

Volume 2

John Weaver

Weaver Books
Weaver Bible College

Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Corrected review edition - October 4, 2026. Repeated full sermons have been consolidated; chapter numbers, contents, indexes, and study-guide reading ranges follow this corrected edition. Original transcript variants remain preserved in the editorial archive. Final editorial and publisher approval is still required. This is Volume 2 of two, covering corrected chapters 22-41. Both volumes use one matching study guide.

Contents

Chapter 22: The Sin Every Christian Commits 11

Introduction and Prayer Requests 11

The Sin Defined: Refusing to Hear God's Word 12

Two Types of Hearing 12

Obedience as the Proof of True Hearing 13

Historical Pattern of Refusing to Hear 15

God's Attempts to Gain Attention (Amos 4) 16

The Rechabites' Obedience vs. Judah's Disobedience 17

God's Attitude Toward Those Who Refuse to Hear 21

Applications: Walking After Imagination and Pride 22

Conclusion and Call to Obey 23

Chapter 23: Do You Have a Reservation? 25

Introduction: The Importance of Reservations 25

The Reservation with Death 26

God's Appointed Day of Judgment 27

God Reserves Wrath for His Enemies 29

The Fantasies of the Wicked 31

The Prosperity of the Wicked as Fattening for Slaughter 32

Examples of Cursed Reservations 35

The Overwhelming Flood of Judgment 36

A Reservation for the Righteous 38

The Reservation for the Righteous 38

The Resurrection Guarantees Both Reservations 40

Application: Where Is Your Reservation? 41

Chapter 24: Left Behind 43

Introduction: The Meaning of 'Left Behind' 45

Samson's Unique Calling as a Nazirite 45

Samson's Violations of His Vow 46

The Source of Samson's Strength 47
Biblical Warnings of God's Departure 48
Step One: Conforming to the Wicked 48
Step Two: Consorting with the Wicked 52
Step Three: Confiding in the Wicked 53
The Consequences of God's Departure 54
Applications and Call to Repentance 55
Chapter 25: The Other Side of Witnessing 59
Introduction: The Two Sides of Witnessing 59
Biblical Witnesses to Christ 60
The Command to Be a Witness 62
Motives for Witnessing: God's Glory vs. Results 63
God Gives the Increase 64
The Other Side of Witnessing 65
Inseparable Truths: Reconciliation and Condemnation 66
God's Word Always Accomplishes Its Purpose 67
A Savor of Life and Death 68
Biblical Examples of Condemnation Ministries 69
Testimony Against the Unbelieving 73
Applications: Faithfulness in Our Witness 76
Chapter 26: God’s Justice As Congregational Necessity 79
Biblical Justice as a Congregational Necessity 79
Introduction: Justice Beyond Civil and Personal Spheres 79
God's Nature and Commands Demand Righteousness 80
The Consequences of Neglecting Justice 80
The Church as One Body with One Mind, Mouth, Motive, and Mission 81
Judgment Begins at the House of God 85
The Church's Responsibility to Uphold God's Judgment 87
The Church's Duty to Proclaim and Execute Justice 87
Church Discipline: A Case Study from 1 Corinthians 5 89

Church Discipline for the Good of Others 90
The Outcome of Biblical Justice: Restoration and Forgiveness 93
Corporate Accountability and the Threat of Ichabod 94
Conclusion: Pursue Unity and Obedience 95
Chapter 27: We Must Be Turned 97
We Must Be Turned 98
Introduction: The Stubbornness of Man 98
Man's Inability to Turn Himself 99
The Deception of Self-Repentance 101
Responsibility vs. Ability 103
The Directed Favor: Appeal to God 105
The Need for Personal, Not Just Circumstantial, Change 106
The Repeated Need for Turning 107
The Desire of Faith: God's Shining Face 109
The Declaration of Fact: Salvation Belongs to the Lord 111
Conclusion: Praying for Turning Grace 113
Chapter 28: Second Opportunities 115
Introduction: God of Second Opportunities 115
Jonah Counted Faithful by God 116
The Meaning of 'Counted' (Hegeomai) 117
God Restores and Re-commissions Jonah 119
The Believer's Duty to Restore the Fallen 119
The Necessity of Preaching God's Word 121
Nineveh's Repentance and God's Response 127
Explaining 'God Repented' as Anthropomorphism 130
Applications: Restoring Saints and Heeding Warnings 132
Chapter 29: Four Fearful Words 135
Introduction: Four Fearful Words 135
The World's Hatred vs. God's Opposition 136
God Targets the Wicked 138

Seven Nations God Spoke Against 140
Application to America 145
Destruction of Military Power 145
Applications and Conclusion 148
Chapter 30: The Martyrdom of Thomas Hawks 151
Introduction and Scripture Reading 151
The Meaning of Martyrdom 152
Historical Context: The Marian Persecutions 154
Thomas Hawkes's Arrest and Trial 157
Hawkes's Imprisonment and Condemnation 159
The Martyrdom and the Signal 160
Applications: Fearlessness in Death 161
Conclusion and Prayer 163
Chapter 31: You Must Die 165
Introduction: The Certainty of Death 165
Biblical Examples of God Declaring Death 166
Reason 1: God's Sovereignty Ordains Death 168
Reason 2: Death Results from Sin 173
A New Glorified Body 175
Reason 3: Death Prepares for the Eternal State 175
The Sting of Death Removed for Believers 178
Application 1: Prepare for Death 179
The Second Application 180
Application 2: Do Not Delay Your Duty 180
Application 3: Remain Faithful Despite Death 181
Conclusion: Death Without Fear 182
Chapter 32: Condemning Or Damning Christ 183
Introduction and Scripture Reading 183
The Meaning of Condemnation 184
The Old Covenant as a Ministry of Condemnation 185

The Word 'Damnation' in Scripture 186
The Unjust Condemnation of Jesus 186
Illegalities and Predetermined Verdict 187
False Witnesses and Jesus' Silence 192
Jesus' Confession and the Charge of Blasphemy 193
The Changed Charges Before Pilate 195
Application: Agreeing with the Sanhedrin or with Christ 195
Chapter 33: Committing The Sins Of The Jews 197
Introduction: The Jews Crucified Christ 197
Jesus as the Messiah: Prophet, Priest, and King 200
The Exaltation of Christ Proves His Kingship 202
Rejecting the Kingship of God Is Rejecting His Person 206
The Jews' Declaration: 'We Have No King but Caesar' 207
Four Implications of Rejecting Christ's Kingship 207
Modern Application: Committing the Same Sin 212
Conclusion: Christ Is King Now 213
Chapter 34: Have You Been Under A Fig Tree Lately? 215
Introduction and Scripture Reading 215
The Significance of Figs in the Bible 216
The Calling of the First Disciples 219
Nathanael's Skepticism and the Prophecy of Nazareth 220
Jesus' Testimony of Nathanael 222
The Fig Tree and Divine Knowledge 223
The Ladder of Genesis 28 and Greater Things 226
Application: Have You Been Under a Fig Tree Lately? 227
Chapter 35: How Much Do You Value Death? 231
How Much Do You Value Death? 232
Introduction: The Strange Question of Valuing Death 232
Biblical Principle: The Day of Death is Better than Birth 233
Paul's Perspective: To Die is Gain 234

Reasons We Devalue Death 236
Paul's Readiness and Reward 237
The Furtherance of the Gospel Through Suffering 237
Paul's Dilemma: To Depart or to Remain 240
Death as Transformation and Conformation 241
Quotes from Puritans and Others on the Value of Death 244
Application: Do You Value Death? 245
Chapter 36: Two Reasons Why You Don't Love The Lord As You Should 249
Two Reasons As To Why You Do Not Love The Lord Jesus As You Should . 249
Introduction and Scripture Reading 249
The Problem of Small Love for God 250
The Pharisee and the Sinful Woman Contrasted 251
The Parable of the Two Debtors 256
First Reason: Not Perceiving the Greatness of Our Sin 257
Second Reason: Not Perceiving the Graciousness of Our Savior 264
Applications and Conclusion 265
Chapter 37: Faith, Little Faith, Great Faith 269
Faith, Little Faith, and Great Faith 269
Introduction: Faith as God's Gift 269
Degrees of Faith 270
The Power of Small Faith 271
Faith Illustrated: Touching the Machine 274
Little Faith in Scripture 275
Characteristics of Little Faith 276
Great Faith: The Centurion's Example 280
How to Increase Faith 283
Exercising the Faith God Has Given 284
Conclusion: Give God the Glory 285
Chapter 38: The Scars of Sin 287
Introduction: The Question of Marking Iniquities 287

The Physical, Mental, and Emotional Consequences of Sin 287
Definition and Biblical Terms for Scars 288
Paul's Physical Marks for Christ 288
Stigma as Reproach and the Physical Effects of Sin 289
The Law of Sowing and Reaping 291
Divine Forgiveness Through Christ 291
The Extent of God's Forgiveness 292
Forgiveness Does Not Remove All Consequences 293
God's 'Not Remembering' Explained 294
Forgiving Others as God Forgives 294
Dealing with Sinful Memories and the Flesh 295
Chapter 39: The Displeased Prophet - Jonah Series - Part Four of Four 305
The Displeased Prophet 305
Introduction: The Displeased Prophet 305
The Danger of Bitterness and Anger Toward God 306
God's Sovereignty and Our Response 308
Why Jonah Was Angry 309
The Necessity of Preaching 312
God's Compassion and Judgment Through Preachers 314
The Gourd and the Worm: A Lesson in Priorities 316
Ministries of Reconciliation and Condemnation 320
God's Care for All Creation 322
Seven Lessons from Jonah 324
Chapter 40: The Feeling Is Mutual 327
Introduction: The Mutual Feeling 327
The Root of Enmity in Genesis 3:15 328
Biblical Hatred in the Old and New Testaments 329
No Fellowship Between Righteous and Wicked 330
Misconception 1: Desire for the Wicked's Salvation 331
Misconception 2: Separating the Sinner from His Sin 334

Acceptance Only in Christ 337
Loving Enemies vs. Hating God's Enemies 340
Applications: Mutual Feelings and Eternal Consequences 344
Chapter 41: Why Good Things Happen to Bad People 347
Introduction and Text 347
The Problem of Wicked Prosperity 347
Defining Good and Evil 349
God's Goodness to All Creatures 352
First Reason: Goodness Leaves the Wicked Without Excuse 354
The Goodness of God Increases the Condemnation of the Wicked 358
Second Reason: Goodness Increases Condemnation 358
The Believer's Struggle and Resolution in Psalm 73 359
Applications: Avoid Envy and Cultivate Thankfulness 363
Topical Index 369
Scripture Index 377
Study Guide Link 393

CHAPTER 22

The Sin Every Christian Commits

December 9, 2018

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 13:1–11 (KJV)

Introduction and Prayer Requests

Jeremiah 13 begins: "Thus saith the Lord unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water. So I got a girdle, according to the word of the Lord, and put it on my loins. And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon my loins, and arise, and go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock. So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me. And it came to pass, after many days, that the Lord said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there. Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it. And, behold, the girdle was marred." It was profitable for nothing. Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, After this

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

The Sin Defined: Refusing to Hear God's Word

We could name many sins: lust, covetousness, prayerlessness, sins of omission, and sins of commission. Yet there is a basic sin covering all these and a multitude more. Christians commit this horrendous sin every day, especially on Sunday, the Lord's day: refusing to hear the word of God. It is a historical sin, committed through the ages. In our text, Judah and Jerusalem sin against God. They were supposedly God's people after the Northern Kingdom apostatized and went into idolatry. For a while the Southern Kingdom remained faithful, glorying in being a covenant people, the people of God.

They had many advantages. Paul asks in Romans 3:1–2, "What advantage then hath the Jew or the Judahite? Or what profit is there in circumcision?" He answers, "There is much in every way but chiefly that unto them were committed the oracles of God." In other words, they had the word of God. In Romans 9:4–5, Paul says, "Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." You may object that you hear the Word of God: "But I'm hearing the word of God. And I come to church on Sunday and I come to church any other time we have a conference or a meeting and I sit there and I listen and I hear the word of God."

Two Types of Hearing

According to the Bible there are two types of hearing. There is external, auditory hearing, available to everyone with the ability to

hear. There is also internal, spiritual hearing, which very few really have. Probably 90 percent of professing Christians come, sit, listen, and leave, their lives never affected.

How can we attend church so much, hear God's word so often, and know so little? Why do Christians have some of the same problems as non-Christians? Why do we hear but never know how to apply? Some Christians have the same problem over and over without working it out. Years ago a friend and his wife were having trouble. They came for counseling several times, and I gave the same counsel each time. One day he returned whining, complaining, and bellyaching over the same things. And I looked at him and I said, "Brother, may I tell you what I'd really like to do to you?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Here's what I'd like to do. I'd like to take you by the shirt and catch you and hold you up against the wall and just slap you silly." His mouth fell open. I said, "And if I thought it would help, I would do it." I said, "Let me explain something to you. I can tell you what the word of God says, and I can tell you what you must do to be obedient, but I can't make you do it. And unless you apply the word of God to your life, you're going to continue to have this same problem. Do you understand?" He looked at me and said, "Yes, sir. I understand now." From that day they have never had that problem again, and they have been married over 50 years. The problem is that we do not really hear. Augustine said he heard the gospel all his life, and then one day he heard it.

Obedience as the Proof of True Hearing

In 1 Samuel 15, Saul was to slay all the Amalekites. Yet he spared King Agag, the best oxen, and the fat ones. He spared the best and killed everything else. As Samuel approached, Saul said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord. I performed all the word of the Lord."

About then, something went bad. Samuel said, "If you obeyed God, what means the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen in my ear? If you'd obeyed God, everything would be dead." Saul blamed the people, saying they spared the best for sacrifice. In 1 Samuel 15:22, Samuel asked:

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 15:22–23 (KJV)

> "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken is better than the fat of rams." The fat of rams was the chiefest part of the sacrifice, always given to God. You do not really hear until you obey, take heed, and apply the Word of God.

Our Lord says the same in Luke 6:46: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" the word Lord is kurios, which means boss, owner, master, sovereign, supreme one. Our Lord says, "Why are you calling me sovereign? Why are you calling me master if you're not going to obey me?" He continues in verse 47:

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 6:47–49 (KJV)

> "Whoso cometh to me and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you whom he is like. He is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock, and when the flood arose the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth, against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

Our Lord speaks of the man who hears and does, and the man who hears but does not. The one who truly hears obeys. Absence of obedience demonstrates no real hearing. If you hear His words, you will obey. In John 10:27 He distinguishes His sheep from goats: "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me." The sheep's distinguishing characteristic is hearing His voice and following Him. With that in mind, consider Jeremiah 13:10.

Concerning Judah and Jerusalem, supposedly His covenant people, Jeremiah 13:10 says, "This evil people which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk

after other gods to serve them and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing." Verse 11 says, "For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord, that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory, but they would not hear." So God said, I wanted them to be for my name, I wanted them to be for my praise, I wanted them to be for my glory, but they would not hear.

Historical Pattern of Refusing to Hear

This historical sin occurs throughout the Bible. In 2 Chronicles 36:15, we read: "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers rising up many times and sending, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place." When God has compassion on a people, He sends His preachers and His Word. When He will judge a people, He either removes His preachers or shuts their mouths.

When Elijah was removed from the land and there was a drought for three and a half years, the drought pictured a spiritual reality: the preacher was out of the land; there was no word from God. God left Jeremiah in the land but shut his mouth: "Pray not for this people." Jeremiah kept wanting to pray. Finally, in Jeremiah 14, God said, "All right, Jeremiah 14, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'm going to let you pray. But you pray that I'm going to destroy them because that's exactly what I'm going to do." With Elijah He removed the preacher; with Jeremiah He shut his mouth.

Verse 15 says, "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up every time and sending, why? Because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place." But what was their response? "But they mocked the messengers of God and despised his words and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

"Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with a sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age, he gave them all into his hand." God sent, but they would not listen. Jeremiah 7:25–26 says the same:

"Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets daily, rising up early and sending them. Yet they hearken not unto me, nor incline their ear, but harden their neck, and did worse than their fathers." Jeremiah 11:7 says, "For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even in this day rising early, and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart." "Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did them not." This historical sin appears again in Jeremiah 25:3–4: "From the 13th year of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, that is the 3 and 20th year, the word of the Lord had come unto me and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not hearkened. And the Lord has sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear." Jeremiah 26:4–5 says: "And thou shalt say to them, Thus saith the Lord, If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened unto me." Jeremiah 29, 32, 35, and 44 show the same thing: they would not listen. Throughout Scripture God commands, begs, pleads, threatens, admonishes, and exhorts His people to hear His words and commandments. Repeatedly they refuse and rebel, stiffening their necks and hardening their hearts. God judges, chastises, and whips them, yet they still will not hear.

God's Attempts to Gain Attention (Amos 4)

Amos 4 shows what God did to gain His people's attention. Verse 6 says: "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in your cities, and want of bread in all your places." "Yet you have not returned unto me, saith the Lord. And I've also withholden the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest. I caused it to rain upon one city and caused it not to rain upon another city. One piece was rained upon and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered into one city to drink water, but they were

not satisfied. Yet you've not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I've smitten you with blasting and mildew, when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them, yet have you not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I've sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt." "Your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses, and I've made the stink of your camps to come up in your nostrils. Yet you have not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning. Yet you have not returned unto me, saith the Lord." Verse 12 says, "Therefore will I do unto you, O Israel, and because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God." In other words, God sent all of these plagues and all of these acts to gain their attention.

They would not hear or listen. Is it not unnatural for a child to refuse to listen to his father, or for God's professing people to refuse their Creator, God, and Redeemer? Isaiah 1:3 says, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. But Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

I have cattle. When I walk outside and they see me, they start lowing and running toward me. Several Santa Gertrudis bulls weigh 3,000 pounds; they are nothing but big pets, black little dogs, folly everywhere. All they want is attention, food, and loving. God is saying these supposedly dumb animals are sometimes smarter than people. They know who feeds them and where their stall is. But His people do not know.

The Rechabites' Obedience vs. Judah's Disobedience

Jeremiah 35 illustrates how some hear and obey instructions, even when they are not necessarily logical, practical, or right: "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, Go into the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. Then I took Jeazaniah, the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazaniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites. And I brought them into the house of the Lord, that is,

into the temple, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah, the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door."

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 35:5–19 (KJV)

"And I sat before the sons of the house of the Rechabites, pots full of wine and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine. For Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, You shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons, for ever. Neither shall you build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any."

"But all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all of our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters, nor to build houses for us to dwell in, neither have we vineyards, nor field, nor seed. But we have dwelt in tents, and obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem, for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians. So we dwell at Jerusalem." Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Go and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction to hearken to my word, saith the Lord?"

"The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed. For unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment. Notwithstanding, I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but ye hearken not unto me. And I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early, and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them."

> "And ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and your fathers. But ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearken unto me. Because the sons of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them. But this people hath not hearken unto me? Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard, and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he had commanded you. Therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 35:13 (KJV)

> The key is verse 13: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Go and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction to hearken to my words, saith the Lord?"

God tells Jeremiah to bring the Rechabites into the temple and give them wine. Alcohol is not sinful in itself; otherwise God would here be the author of sin. James 1:13–14 says, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. For God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." Sin is not in anything material. Alcohol does not make a drunkard any more than money makes a thief. I do not drink.

I have never had a beer and do not plan to start. Yet God said to give these men wine. Greek dualism tries to put sin in material things. First John 1 is particularly against the Docetic Gnostics. Dokeo means "I appear." Because they believed sin was material, the Docetic Gnostics denied that Jesus Christ had a real body.

They said he was an apparition. That is why John wrote in 1 John 1, "our eyes have seen him, our hands have handled of the word of

life." In other words, he's real, he's genuine. And so wine is offered to these Rechabites. And they said, "No, we're not going to do this." Why? "Well, Jonadab, our father, commanded us that we were to never, ever drink any wine."

They were not to live in houses, have vineyards or trees, but dwell in tents as lifelong nomads. How practical is that? Imagine never living in a house or having a garden, pear tree, fig tree, or grapevine. Jonadab commanded his sons and daughters never to have these things, and they obeyed.

His commands were impractical and, in one sense, unrealistic, especially in our day. Yet the Rechabites honored their father's instructions and kept his commandments. Their difficulty, impracticality, and mere human origin did not deter his sons and daughters.

On the other hand, the sovereign God of the universe gives His divine word, His life-giving, good, right, honorable, and holy commands, and Judah and Jerusalem will not obey. These people obeyed their father in difficult, impractical things, while those who supposedly loved the Lord refused Him.

Jeremiah 35:14 says: "The words of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine are performed. For unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment notwithstanding. I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking, but you hearken not. And I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending, and saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them." "And you shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and your fathers. But you have not inclined your ear, nor hearken unto me, because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them. But this people have not hearkened unto me." Jeremiah 36 gives another illustration:

Jeremiah 36 shows men refusing and despising God's word. Jeremiah was shut in prison and could not preach. He called Baruch: "You write down everything that I'm going to tell you." Baruch did.

Jeremiah then said, "You take what you have written and you go to the temple and you read it to all the people." He did.

Well, several of the princes heard. And they said, "How did you do this?" "Well, he spoke and I wrote." And they said, "Well, you need to put this up because we need to let the king know this." Jeremiah 36:20 says: "And they went unto the king unto the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll, and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king." "Now the king was in the winter house in the ninth month, and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with a penknife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king nor any of his servants that heard all these words."

What is the Lord's attitude toward those who refuse His word, especially His professing people? Think of all the churches in this town. Some people will hear; most will not.

God's Attitude Toward Those Who Refuse to Hear

We have reduced Christianity to church entity. People come to church on Sunday, act pious, listen to a sermon, leave, and spend the week doing and living as they please, ignoring God and His Word. What is God's mind toward such people?

In Jeremiah 13:7, Jeremiah had worn a new girdle without washing it, then hidden it by the Euphrates. God said, "Now you go back after it." It was horrible: "Then I went to Euphrates and digged and took the girdle from the place where I hid it. And behold, the girdle was marred." It was profitable for nothing. Verse 8 explains this exercise: "Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord after this manner will I mar the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem." Verse 10 says: "This evil people who refuse to hear my words, who walk in the imagination of their heart and walk after other gods to serve them and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing." These people

are good for nothing, like the girdle. Is it appropriate to speak of good for nothing Christians? There were good for nothing Judahites and Israelites. Those who will not hear are positively evil; God will mar them as the girdle was marred.

John Gill says on this verse, "as they were corrupt in their practices and were become useless and unserviceable to God, so they would be carried captive into a foreign country where they would be inglorious and unprofitable, uncomfortable in themselves and of no use to one another." Matthew Poole goes further: "God expounds himself what he meant to teach the Judahites by this, that he did intend that they should be consumed by the people beyond the river Euphrates, as that girdle was marred, and he also shows them that their own sins in disobeying his word and following the imagination of their own hearts, particularly their idolatry, was that which brought this sore judgment upon them." God's attitude is that those who refuse His word are evil, good for nothing. He will mar them as the girdle was marred.

Applications: Walking After Imagination and Pride

Jeremiah 13:11 gives us an application: "For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord, that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory, but they would not hear." Remember the curious girdle on the ephod of the high priest. It was a thing of beauty and glory. So God said, I intended you to be a thing of beauty and to be a thing of glory. But you have refused to hear my words. They stiffened their necks, hardened their hearts, and rebelled. Instead of praise and honor, they would be marred and dishonored. A second application is that when we fail to obey God's word, we walk after our imagination: "this evil people who walk after their own imagination." Many I have counselled answer that way after hearing what God's word says.

One preacher told me plainly, "I know you're right. And I know the Bible's right. But I just got to do what I think is best. I've got to handle this my own way." He lost his entire family. Refusing to hear and apply God's Word leads to our own imagination, what we think

right and best, doing our will instead of His Word. A third application is that there is really no good for nothing Christian: he is good for something—chastisement and judgment. God points to him and says, "Don't be like this. Don't do like this."

All this follows from refusal to hear God's word. God said, "I'm going to mar. I'm going to mar the pride of Judah. And the great pride of Jerusalem." God notices distinctions in pride: there is pride, and great pride. He says, "I'm going to mar it."

It is God's honor and glory to bring down the proud, arrogant, and haughty. Pride goes before destruction; a haughty spirit before a fall. Our safest course is to hear God's Word, taking it and making it our own through personal, daily application and obedience.

Conclusion and Call to Obey

James 4:17 says, "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Years ago my wife and I called a family Mama and Papa Morris. We were not related, but they adopted us, and their boys were like my brothers. Returning from a meeting, I attended their family reunion. One daughter-in-law asked question after question. Finally, Papa Morris looked at her and said, "Francis, why don't you shut up and leave him alone?" "Can't you see he's tired?" She said, "Because, Papa, I don't know the answers to these questions, and it bothers me." I never forgot his answer: "It's not what I don't know that bothers me, it's what I do know. To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Jeremiah 16:12 tells the people:

"And you have done worse than your fathers. For behold, you walk everyone after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me." Doing what you think best and following your heart's imagination keeps you from hearing and obeying God. Our most frequent sin is hearing without doing. We fail to apply the Word and make it our own. Apply it, change your life, and bring it into conformity to the Word; then you will not walk after your own heart's imagination.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. We ask, Lord, that

You would indeed teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, help us to hear and to obey. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 23

Do You Have a Reservation?

February 15, 2012

Introduction: The Importance of Reservations

Open your Bibles to the book of Nahum, chapter 1. Nahum is one of the minor prophets, right after Micah and right before Habakkuk: Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk. We will read the first three verses, and you will see why I am dealing with these verses today and showing you many other verses along the same line.

The title of the message is "Do You Have a Reservation?" I could also title it, "Where Is Your Reservation?" You will understand that question a little later. Look at Nahum 1:1–3: "The burden of Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet."

Most of us, upon entering a hotel lobby, have been asked, "Do you have a reservation?" Often, if we say no, we can still get a room.

However, I have been in motels and hotels where it was absolutely necessary to have a reservation. When asked that question, I very happily answered, “Yes, I do.” I received the room I had reserved, while others were turned away because the motel was completely booked.

If you do not believe that sometimes a reservation is necessary, try getting a room in Augusta, Georgia, during the Masters Tournament, or in Athens, Georgia, during the University of Georgia graduation. You will find no room available anywhere. There are times when you really do need a reservation. Sometimes Alice and I, thankfully not often, have driven all night getting home simply because we could not find a room anywhere we stopped.

Everything was booked solid. The same thing is true of many restaurants. You have to have a reservation to eat there. Some are very high class and very expensive. If you do not have a reservation, the obvious truth is that you certainly will not dine there that night. Some are booked weeks and months in advance. I am telling you this because I want you to understand that reservations are important.

Each of us has undoubtedly made reservations in our lives and then canceled them, simply because our plans changed. I have found it necessary to do that a number of times. However, according to the Word of God, there are some reservations that you and I cannot cancel, will not cancel, and will keep whether we want to or not. It is absolutely imperative that we keep those reservations. What are some of them?

Just by way of introduction, first of all, each one of us has a reservation with death. The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Very obviously, you and I know that we are going to die. No one is going to deny that truth. The Bible says in Job 7:1 and asks this question: “Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?”

The Reservation with Death

Obviously, there is an appointed time for man upon the earth. God determined the day of our birth, and God determines the day of our

death. In Job 14:5, the Bible says concerning man, “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.” God has decreed for our lives just as He did for the sea, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.” So we have a reservation with death.

In fact, if you will hold Nahum, look in your Bibles to Psalm 49, and note how imperative it is that we are going to keep this reservation. In Psalm 49, beginning with verse 6, the Bible says: “They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him.”

“For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever. Watch that he should still live forever and not see corruption.” The richest man in the world is going to die, and all of his money, all of his wealth, all of his power, and all of his prestige will avail him absolutely nothing.

So, humanly speaking and theologically speaking, it is impossible to cancel our reservations with death and judgment. They will stand. Those reservations shall be there, and we will keep them whether we want to or not, and whether we are ready or not. It has probably never occurred to most people that there are some reservations that have been made for them, and they are going to keep them whether they want to or not, because those reservations have been made by the sovereign God of heaven and earth. It is impossible to change them.

God's Appointed Day of Judgment

Acts 17:30-31 says, “At the times of this ignorance, God winked at. But now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” The command is universal: all men, everywhere, are commanded to repent. Why does God command all men everywhere to repent? The answer is in verse 31: “Because he, God, hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man, that is Christ, whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, and that he hath raised him from the dead.” The judgment is universal: God will judge the world in righteousness. The appointed judge is not an unnamed authority, but that man, Christ, whom God

ordained. The resurrection is the assurance God has given unto all men.

This passage teaches us that there is a specific day, a specific act, a specific judge, a specific ordination, and a specific assurance.

God says that, just as surely as He has raised Jesus Christ from the dead, there is going to be a judgment. Acts 10:42 says, “And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.” God commanded the apostles to preach unto the people and to testify concerning Jesus Christ, who was ordained of God to be the Judge. The word quick means the living. Jesus Christ is going to be the judge of the living and the dead.

That is why John 5:22–23 says, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. So our Lord Jesus Christ is going to be the sovereign Judge. All judgment has been committed to the Son, and all men are to honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

Acts 17 tells us that God has given assurance unto all men, in that He raised Christ from the dead. Romans 1:3–4 says concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, “Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” The resurrection of the dead pointed out and singled out Jesus Christ as the Son of God. God has given assurance in that He raised Him from the dead. The resurrection is the assurance God has given concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is going to be a judgment. There is going to be a time. There is going to be a specific act. In other words, reservations have been made. It is going to happen. You must remember that there are only two kinds of people in the world: saved and lost, or covenant keepers and covenant breakers. It is that simple. There are two different sets of reservations.

Look back in the book of Nahum, chapter 1, verses 2 and 3. Consider that which has been reserved for the wicked. I want you to consider that which has been reserved for the wicked. Look in verse 2.

God Reserves Wrath for His Enemies

The Bible says God is jealous and the Lord revengeth. The Lord revengeth and is furious. Watch. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. Now go back to verse 2, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

Two truths are very obvious in this text. First, God does have enemies. That is a horrific thought in one sense of the word. Can you imagine that the sovereign, holy, righteous, majestic, pure, gracious, loving, kind, God of all the earth has enemies? And he does. He not only has enemies, he has plenty of enemies. He has powerful enemies. He has enemies who hate and despise Him. Some do so secretly, some openly. Yet the amazing thing is God knows exactly who they are. One of my favorite passages is found in 2 Timothy 2, verse 19.

Listen carefully to what I'm about to quote. The Bible says there, listen carefully, Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. and let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Now listen, the opposite is also true. Not only does the Lord knows those who are His, He also knows those who are not His. So He does have enemies. And you remember our Lord said it very plainly in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30, He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not scattereth abroad. I want you to hold the book of Nahum, but turn in your Bibles, if you would, to Psalm 21 very quickly.

In fact, we'll look at a couple passages. Just showing you God's enemies. God does have enemies. Look in Psalm 21, if you would, in verse 8. In fact, some time ago, I preached, I think, a two-part message on this passage. But notice what the Bible says very clearly,

very distinctly. Psalm 21, verse 8. Look what the Bible says concerning God. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies. Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Wow! Not only is God going to discover all of His enemies, He's going to discover those who hate Him. And if you would turn right over to Psalm 68 and look at verse 1. Psalm 68 in verse 1. This is another wonderful passage. In fact, we can read several verses. But notice he says in Psalm 68 verse 1, let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, let them also that hate Him flee before Him.

As the smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melted before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. Note, let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let them also that hate Him flee before Him. So the very first verse, or the very first truth, that we learn from Nahum 1 and verse 2 is that God does have enemies. The second truth we learn from Nahum 1 and verse 2 is this: God reserveth wrath for His enemies.

The Bible says in Exodus 34 and verse 7, “Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting upon the iniquity of the fathers, upon the children, upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation.” But notice the Bible says that God will by no means clear the guilty.

In the book of Psalms, these verses show us something about this reserved wrath and how God is going to discover His enemies. In Psalm 37 and verse 20, “But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.” Now, I want you to keep this verse in mind: the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs. Do you remember what I told you about the fat of lambs?

It was always the cheapest part of the sacrifice. It was always given to God. So He says they shall perish. They shall be consumed as the fat of lambs. In Psalm 68 and verse 21, we are still talking about how God reserves wrath for His enemies. The Bible says, “But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.” God shall wound the head of His enemies. A head wound is a fatal wound. God says if you still persist in your transgressions and in your rebellion, you shall die.

But when the nobleman returns, who, of course, is a picture of Jesus Christ, he says, "But those mine enemies, which not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

Now I want to point out what the word reserved means. The Bible says, "The Lord reserveth wrath for his enemies." That is the point I want to develop. Reserved means to keep, to reserve, to maintain, and to guard. God guards His wrath; He reserves it, maintains it, and keeps it for His enemies. In Job 21:30, it says, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, and they shall be brought forth in the day of wrath." What did he say? The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction.

Now, let me tell you what at least two of the greatest fantasies of the wicked are. Turn to Psalm 10, and I will show them to you from Scripture. These are fantasies, not truth and not reality. In Psalm 10:11, here is the first fantasy: "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it."

The Fantasies of the Wicked

The first fantasy is that God forgets our sin, or that somehow God does not see our sin and rebellion. According to the wicked, God is just a blind old man up in heaven somewhere. "God doesn't see this." That is why most sins are committed at night. They think night somehow shields them from the eyes of the sovereign God of heaven and earth. The first fantasy, then, is that God does not see it.

Skip down to verse 13: "Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it." In other words, here is the second fantasy: even if God sees it, He is not going to do anything. He is not going to bring me to judgment or really throw me into hell fire. "God's not going to judge me. He might judge somebody else, but somehow I'm going to escape. I'm going to get by."

But look at verse 14. Scripture answers concerning God: "God, thou hast seen it: for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand."

"The poor committed himself unto thee, thou art the helper of the fatherless." What is God going to do? He is going to requite it with

His hand. Skip down to verse 15: “Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man. Seek out his wickedness till thou find none.” Very obviously, God does see, God does know, and God is going to judge.

Let us think about something. Not only does God have enemies; He has great and powerful enemies. Think about the elite, so-called, who believe they own and run the world and everything and everybody in it. They decree that there are too many people in the world, so there must be a population reduction. They will poison the water and the food, do this and that, and kill off ten, twenty, thirty, or forty million.

What could possess someone with such power and authority to believe that somehow he will be safe and secure with his money, power, and authority? Psalm 73 pretty well explains the attitude of the wicked elite. Asaph, a godly man, was suffering and doing without, and he looked around at the wicked prospering beyond imagination. He said, “But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped. Why? For I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

The Prosperity of the Wicked as Fattening for Slaughter

He then describes them: “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. Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain. Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than their heart could wish.”

“They are corrupt and speak wickedly. Concerning oppression, they speak loftily.” Watch how brazen they are: “They set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue walking through the earth. Therefore, as people return hither and waters of the full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, how does God know? And is there knowledge in the most high? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world. They increase in riches.”

Stop and think momentarily about the families in this world that have billions. Seemingly, they do not go through what we go through or suffer what we suffer. What does he say? “Pride compassed them

as a chain. Violence covered them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish." They do not mind killing folks.

The Puritans had a favorite saying several hundred years ago that we have forgotten: God oftentimes curses his enemies with riches. How can that be a curse? Because they trust in their riches instead of the God who gave them. There are many Scriptures about trusting in riches. Proverbs 11:28 says, "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch." Proverbs 11:4 says, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." If riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivereth from death, had you rather be rich or righteous? I do not know about you, but I will take righteous any day.

Psalm 52:7, speaking of Doeg the Edomite, says, "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches." In 1 Timothy 6:17, the Apostle Paul says, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." The rich must not be arrogant or proud, nor trust in uncertain riches, but learn to trust in the living God.

Here is what the wicked do not understand: their preservation in time is but a reservation for the wrath to come. In Psalm 73, Asaph says, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." Then he says, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." In other words, he is suffering. "If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children."

The psalmist said, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." He could not stand it. Here he was trying to be holy and right, suffering and doing without, while the wicked reprobates had plenty. Their eyes stood out with fatness; they had more than their heart could wish. He could not understand it. At first, this was beyond his understanding. He was looking at the contrast between his own attempt to be holy and right, his suffering and doing without, and the wicked reprobates who had plenty. Their prosperity

troubled him until God showed him not merely their present condition, but their end.

Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou casteth them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakens, so, Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Their preservation for a time is just a reservation under wrath.

Do you realize that the preservation of the wicked for a time is nothing more than a fattening of them into the slaughter? Psalm 37:20 says, "But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; in the smoke shall they consume away." What do you do? You fatten the lamb; you fatten the calf for the slaughter.

Isaiah 65:12 cannot be spoken any more plainly: "Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter." Why? "Because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not." What did God say? "I'll number you to the sword; you shall all bow down to the slaughter." Their preservation in time is nothing more than a reservation to God's wrath.

In Zechariah 11:4, the Word of God says, "Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter." Fatten them up.

There will be a sacrifice. If you will turn in your Bibles to James 5 and look in verse 5, you will see the same basic truth. In fact, let us begin reading with verse 1. Here is this whole concept: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you." Notice that he is talking about the rich, the corrupted rich: "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and ye shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is you kept back

by a fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

"You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton. Ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter." What? You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter? What does that mean? You have fattened yourself up for the killing time. That is what you have done. That is exactly what he is saying. There is a reservation for the wicked.

By the way, God has given us example after example in the Bible of what I would call cursed reservations. God's cursed reservations are far more horrifying than the Bates Motel, I can assure you. I do not know anything about horror movies. I do not watch them, but I remember the Bates Motel was some kind of horror movie.

Examples of Cursed Reservations

Look in your Bibles. I want you to turn to 2 Peter. You are right close to it. Look in 2 Peter 2 and verse 4. I am just trying to show you some examples of some cursed reservations. Look what God says: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." To be reserved unto judgment. There is a reservation. Look in 2 Peter 2, verse 17.

He's talking about the wicked now. He says, "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever." That's a reservation. Turn to the book of Jude, right before Revelation. Look in Jude 1 and verse 6. We are talking about examples of cursed reservations: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." Look in verse 13: "Raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame, wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

It is impossible to teach, explain, express, or comprehend all that God has in store for the wicked. But I can assure you of one thing: I do not desire to be reserved unto darkness, reserved unto everlasting chains of judgment, or reserved unto wrath. The wicked will discover

the truth of Hebrews 10 and verse 31: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

If you go back to the little book of Nahum, note verse 8: "But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies." With an overrunning flood—here is a picture of how God is going to fall upon the wicked. Can you imagine, just for a moment, the Hoover Dam breaking? Do you remember reading about the Johnstown flood in Johnstown, Pennsylvania?

The Overwhelming Flood of Judgment

How the people went to bed safe and sound and sleeping, and when that dam broke, I don't know how many people were drowned. It washed away practically the whole town. Have you ever tried to outrun a flood of water? It's impossible. It's like trying to outrun an avalanche. It's like trying to outrun the debris and ash from a volcano. It's impossible. It's like trying to outrun the tsunami that comes at 600 miles an hour. And God says, “With an overflowing flood, am I going to come and sweep you away into judgment?”

In Jude chapter 1, verse 7, look at it. Turn there; I can quote it, but I want you to see it. Here is another example, in the little book of Jude, right before Revelation: “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Now watch, Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. My question is this: how many of those people in Sodom and Gomorrah and how many of those villages, Zeboiim and Admah, how many of those people escaped? Not one. Not one. Lot and his two daughters got out, but that was before God set the fire and brimstone. They were consumed. It was instantaneous. It was like an overflowing flood. That was it. And God says, “What I've done is this. I've preserved the wicked for the day of slaughter.”

There's a reservation. You say, “Come on, God's not like that.” Yes, He is. God is absolutely holy. The Bible tells you this very plainly. It is true that God is loving and kind, but it is also equally

true that God is just. Look in Proverbs 16, verse 4: “The Lord hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked, for the day of evil.” Have you ever stopped to think that, just as the righteous will praise the grace and the mercy of God, the unrighteous in their judgment and destruction will praise the holiness and the justice of God?

Now go back to Nahum chapter 1 and look at verse 6. What did God say? With an overflowing flood, He's going to fall upon them. Look at the questions asked in Nahum 1:6: “Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.”

It should be a very serious and sober thought for the wicked to entertain and realize: they have a reservation unto God's eternal wrath and judgment. Their preservation in time and history is only a reservation unto His wrath. The thought alone should be enough to make men fall upon their knees and beg for mercy. What did Isaiah say in Isaiah 55? “Seek the Lord while he may be found. Turn you from your wicked ways. Repent.” Very obviously, Isaiah is saying, You had better cry out for mercy while you can, because when the wrath of God falls upon you like an overflowing flood, and like the fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, it is over. There is no escaping.

Jonathan Edwards said in his sermon on sinners in the hands of an angry God:

“There is no want or lack of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men's hands cannot be strong when God rises up. The strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands. He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do it.

“Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty to subdue a rebel who has found means to fortify himself and has made himself strong by numbers of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defense from the power of God. Though hand join in hand and vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they're easily broken

into pieces. There is great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames.

"We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth, so it is easy for us to cut out or singe a slender thread that anything hangs by. Thus is it easy for God, when He pleases, to cast His enemies down into hell. What are we that we should think to stand before Him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?" So he asked, Who can stand before His indignation? Who can abide the fierceness of His wrath? No one—not the richest, not the most powerful, not the most wicked. None can.

That is why the Bible says in 2 Peter 2 and verse 9, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." There is a reservation for the wicked.

A Reservation for the Righteous

The Reservation for the Righteous

Look back to Nahum chapter 1. Not only is there a reservation for the wicked; there is also a reservation for the righteous. Consider that which is reserved for the righteous. In verse 7, in the midst of God speaking about everything reserved for the wicked, He says, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him." Those who trust in the Lord, who have repented of their sins, kneeled and submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ, and whose lives have been brought into obedience to His Word also have a reservation.

In fact, let me go further. In the very broadest sense of the word, yea, we are a reservation. Thankfully, there is indeed a remnant according to the election of grace. Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 11 and notice what the Apostle Paul says in verse 5. Look back to verse 2 for a moment: "God had not cast away his people which he foreknew. What or know you not what the scripture said of Elias, or Elijah? I make an intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, They've killed thy prophets, and dig down thine altars, and I am left alone. They seek my life." Now watch verse 5: "Even so then

at this present time also there's a remnant according to the election of grace."

Now, let me give you the history. During the time of Elijah, as recorded in 1 Kings, especially chapters 18 and 19, Ahab and Jezebel were on the throne—two of the most wicked people that ever lived. They persecuted the people of God and murdered the prophets of God. Obadiah hid a hundred of them in caves and fed them with bread and water. Elijah went to Mount Carmel and slew the prophets of Baal. Then Jezebel sent him word: "The gods do so to me, and more so, if your life is not like the life of those prophets by this time tomorrow." What did she say? "I'm going to kill you just like you killed my prophets."

So Elijah went and sat under a juniper tree and said, "Lord, it's enough. Take my life. Lord, they've killed all Your prophets. They've killed all Your people. Just go ahead and kill me. Take my life. I might as well get it over with and get out of here." Here is what Elijah said: "Lord, they have kill thy prophets, and dig down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life." Lord, You know—just go ahead and take me.

But what saith the answer of God unto him? "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." God said, "I have a reservation. I have reserved some people." You might think everybody is bowing down to the image of Baal and kissing his foot or kissing his ring, but they have not. "I have an election. I have a remnant according to the election of grace."

In fact, if you look in Romans 9 and verse 29, you may fuss and fume about this truth all you please, but it is still truth; and I might add, it is God's truth. If God had not reserved to Himself a people, He would not have a people. The Apostle Paul says very clearly, "And as Isaiah said before, except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been a Sodom and been made like to Gomorrah." In other words, if God had not reserved to Himself a people, we would all have been destroyed.

We are a reserved people. We are a reservation in and of ourselves. We have been reserved only by the grace of God. And this

reservation includes pardon and forgiveness. “In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.” What? “I will pardon them whom I reserve.” He will pardon those whom He reserves. What is really and truly involved in the forgiveness of sins when our Lord redeems us is a subject to be considered, but He says He will pardon those whom He reserves.

If you want to know what the saints are indeed reserved unto, and whether or not we have a reservation, we do have a reservation, although we are a reservation in ourselves. Turn to 1 Peter chapter 1, beginning with verse 3:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

Our inheritance, according to 1 Peter chapter 1, is reserved. It is incorruptible and undefiled. It is certainly unfading. It will not fade, rust, wither, or disappear. But did you get what I tried to emphasize? Look at verse 3 again: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

The Resurrection Guarantees Both Reservations

Let me remind you of the passage I told you earlier to think on, Acts 17, verses 30 and 31: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

The resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees the judgment of the wicked. But notice that, in verse 3, the resurrection of Jesus Christ also guarantees the inheritance of the saints. Just as surely as God

raised Christ from the dead, God will judge the wicked. And just as surely as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, there is an inheritance reserved in heaven for us that fadeth not away. It is impossible to do away with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Why? The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an objective historical fact.

It is something outside of us. It is something over which we had no control. It is something that God the Father did. So unless you can overthrow the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you cannot overthrow the day of judgment. And unless you can overthrow the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you cannot overthrow the inheritance that is reserved in heaven for the saints of God. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that absolutely guarantees the judgment of the wicked and the inheritance of the righteous.

That is what the Bible says through the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 9: "But as it is written, I have not seen, nor ear heard, neither entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared" for those that love Him. Just as we cannot imagine the horrors of the wrath of God upon the wicked, we cannot imagine the blessings, mercies, joys, and greatness of the inheritance of the saints of God. Our minds cannot understand either one of those.

Application: Where Is Your Reservation?

The truth is that sinners and saints equally have reservations. They are simply seated in different places, in different rooms, and at different tables. The saints are seated at the table of their heavenly Father at the marriage supper of the Lamb, while sinners are seated at the table of justice in the courtroom where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Judge of all the earth, will judge them. I do not know about you, but I had rather be sitting at a table feasting than sitting in a courtroom waiting to be judged. These are reservations that have been made, and they cannot be cancelled. The wicked cannot overthrow the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the righteous do not want to.

Look in 1 Peter 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us

again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Matthew Henry said concerning this verse, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the ground or foundation of the Christian's hope. The resurrection of Christ is the act of the Father as a judge, of the Son as a conqueror. His resurrection demonstrates that the Father accepts His death in full discharge of our ransom, that He is victorious over death and the grave and all our spiritual enemies. And it is also an assurance of our own resurrection. There being an inseparable union between Christ and His flock, they rise by virtue of His resurrection as a head, rather than by virtue of His power as a judge. We have risen with Christ." From all this taken together, Christians have two firm and solid foundations on which to build their hope of eternal life.

We rise from the dead by virtue of His resurrection as our head. He is our head; we are the body. We rise in Christ to His blessing. But the wicked rise by the power of Christ as a judge, and they rise to condemnation. So perhaps the question is really not, "Do you have a reservation?" For you do. The correct question is, "Where will you be seated? Where is your reservation, at the marriage supper of the Lamb, or in the courtroom of the Judge?" Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee.

We thank You for Your grace and mercy, Lord. We are thankful that You have seen fit, by Your mercy and grace, that there should be an election according to the remnant of grace, and that You have reserved a people for Yourself. We are thankful to be in that reservation. Help us, Lord, to be faithful in witnessing and testifying to others about the truth of the reservations made by the sovereign God of heaven and earth, that everyone shall appear, with no cancellations. Give us grace, Lord, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 24

Left Behind

February 17, 2012

SCRIPTURE READING - Judges 16 (KJV)

Judges 16:1–21 begins: "Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there a harlot, and went in unto her. And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson has come hither. And they compassed him, laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all night, saying, in the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the hill that is before Hebron."

"And it came to pass afterwards that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said unto her, Entice him and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him, and we will give thee, every one of us, eleven hundred pieces of silver. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee? And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with

seven green withs that were never dried, then I shall be weak and be as another man. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him therewith."

"And now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire, so his strength was not known. And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me and told me lies. Now tell me, I pray thee, wherein thou mightest be bound."

"And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak and be as another man. Delilah therefore took new ropes and bound him therewith and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread. And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me and told me lies. Tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web, and she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep and went away with the pin of the beam and with the web. And she said unto him, How canst thou say I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth."

"And it came to pass when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head, for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb. If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he has showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees and called for a

man. And she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head. And she began to afflict him and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times before and shake myself."

Introduction: The Meaning of 'Left Behind'

"And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him and put out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with fetters of brass and he did grind in the prison house." Left Behind has nothing to do with the movie of that title, eschatology, or the rapture. Often individuals, families, churches, and nations are left behind by God. They forsake Him; He justly and righteously forsakes them, deserts them, departs, and withdraws Himself. They are left alone. When God leaves them, they suddenly discover their impotence, their helplessness, their danger, and their destruction. Samson's life shows this in verse 20: "And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he woke out of his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times before and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." Samson was unique in many ways.

Samson's Unique Calling as a Nazirite

Samson was a Nazirite from birth, not a Nazarene. Our Lord was a Nazarene, from Nazareth, rather than a Nazirite. Numbers 6 gives the law of the Nazarite and shows clearly why our Lord was not one, while Samson was. Verses 1–2 say: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say to them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord."

"He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall

be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. And all the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord. And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration; then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing."

"On the seventh day he shall shave it. And on the eighth day he shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons, to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, and make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead, and shall hallow his head that same day. And he shall consecrate unto the Lord the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering: but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled. And this is the law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: And he shall offer his offering unto the Lord, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings, and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offering, and their drink offering. And the priest shall bring them before the Lord, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering." The law of the Nazarite prohibited touching a dead body and eating or drinking anything made from grapes.

He could not shave his hair. God spelled out everything required.

Samson's Violations of His Vow

When Samson's mother had conceived, Manoah and his wife asked the angel of the Lord, "How shall we order the child?" He said, "Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child," speaking of Samson, "shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to

the day of his death." Samson was unique as a Nazarite from birth; they were not to cut his hair. He was not to touch a dead body, eat anything of grapes, or drink wine or liquor. Secondly, he was unique in violating this vow repeatedly. He touched the dead lion he killed and many dead Philistines. Judges 16 also shows his immorality. He associated with harlots. Thirdly, Samson was a normal man. He was not a muscle-bound bodybuilder scarcely able to walk with bulging muscles. Looking at this ordinary man, you could not tell the greatness of his strength.

The Source of Samson's Strength

Judges 16:5 demonstrates this: "And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver." Verse 6 says, "And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee?" Verse 15 says, "And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth." Looking at Samson, you would think he was an ordinary man.

He was not necessarily a 90-pound weakling, but he did not look exceptionally powerful. If muscle-bound, his enemies would have associated his strength with his muscles. His strength and power came from the Lord. In Judges 16:28, Samson finally realized its source and called on God one last time: "And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." Especially at the end, he knew his strength came from the Lord.

Why did God depart from Samson and leave him behind? What caused the breach? God does not needlessly, carelessly, or causelessly leave us. There is always a reason. He has warned us, individually and nationally, that He would depart if we sinned against Him.

Biblical Warnings of God's Departure

In 2 Chronicles 15, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon the prophet Azariah, son of Oded, who goes to meet King Asa. Verse 2 says: "And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him." "And if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." This is because of the covenant: "If ye forsake him, he will forsake you." If you violate it, God is not obligated to uphold His part. He said, "You sin against God, God will forsake you."

What is true of individuals, families, and churches is true of nations. Deuteronomy 31:17 warns, "Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them," followed by the result, "and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?" God said when they do evil and sin against me, my wrath, my anger, is going to be kindled and I'll forsake them and I'll hide my face and the result is all of these evils are going to come upon them.

Step One: Conforming to the Wicked

Apply Samson's life personally, to your family and church, and also to our state and nation. God's warning is that if we forsake Him, He will forsake us. Has God departed from Christendom as a whole, or from most churches? The Holy Spirit is God and omnipresent; nevertheless, if He were taken out of the world tomorrow, most churches would carry on their programs and entertainment as usual. They have no dependence upon the Lord. Consider three things. First, Samson conformed to the wicked. Judges 14:1 says: "And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines." "Now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she

pleaseth me well. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel." Samson saw a Philistine woman in Timnath and wanted a forbidden marriage. He told his parents, "I want you to get her to me to wife." And the father objects and says, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. Is there never a woman so beautiful among all of your people? Why do you have to go down to the uncircumcised Philistines?"

"Choose one of these good Israelitish women. Get one of your own tribe or get one of the other tribes. You don't have to go to the Philistines." And Samson's attitude was this: "Get her for me for she pleases me." Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Now you say, "Brother Weaver, the only problem with quoting Romans 12 and verse 2 at this point is that Romans 12 and verse 2 was not written when Samson did this." Romans 12:2 had not been written, but its truth had already been stated repeatedly elsewhere in Scripture. Samson knew he opposed God's law.

He knew he opposed his parents' wishes and God's taught principles. He was not in the dark. Exodus 34:11 says: He said, "Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee." God tells them to take heed.

You're not to conform to them. You're not to intermarry with them. You're not to make a covenant with them. Deuteronomy 7:1 says it even more plainly: "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;" the Philistines would be under the Canaanites. "And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor

shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods." "so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people." God plainly says you're not to intermarry with them, you're not to make covenants with them, you're not to have anything to do with them.

You cannot conform to their way of life and conduct. Association with the wicked soon leads to conformity. People say, "The reason I'm associating with them is very simple. I want to lift them up." It never works that way. We do not lift them up; they pull us down. First Corinthians 15:33 says, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." The righteous, rather than the wicked, are corrupted.

Apart from Christ, Solomon was one of the wisest men who ever lived. If Solomon could not conform to the wicked and get away with it, what makes you think you can? First Kings 11:4 says, "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father." So the wisest man who ever lived outside of Christ tried to conform in marrying the wicked, associating with the wicked, and they ended up turning away his heart after other gods. Solomon sinned because he refused even his own father's counsel. Psalm 1:1 says:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Consider the words: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel." Use the word advice: "Blessed

is the man that walketh not in the advice of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners." Standing around people means association. So he says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the advice of the ungodly, nor associates with the ungodly, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Sitting down means agreement. Listen to the wicked's advice, and you will associate with them; soon you will agree with them. The blessed man meditates in God's law day and night.

God chose us to be different. Throughout the Old and New Testaments we are called a peculiar people. Psalm 4:3 says, "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." We must not follow the wicked, associate with them, take their advice, and agree until we conform. Yet the average professing Christian does not want to be identified as Christian, peculiar, or different.

We want to conform, as Samson did by marrying into a wicked family. Marry a pagan, and soon that person will want you to join pagan practices and worship. We should think and act differently.

Ezekiel 20:32 says, "And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone." God said, that should never come into your mind that we're going to be like them. Samson's downfall began with willingness to associate with the wicked and marry into their families. God warned against that; we should be different.

You may object to this forbidden marriage from Judges 14: "Look, Brother Weaver, I know that's wicked and wrong, but read verse 4." Verse 4 says: "But his father and his mother knew not that it," that is the whole situation, "was of the Lord, that he," the Lord, "sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel." You say, "Ah, don't you see the hand of the sovereign God in all of this? He was working all of this out to bring an occasion against the Philistines for Samson to kill the enemies of God."

God is absolutely sovereign and controls even sinful disobedience. As with Samson, He may use our disobedience for His greater glory.

That does not erase our sin or disobedience, nor prevent our suffering for it.

Samson lost his wife and prospects of a family, as the rest of Judges 14 shows. God's using our sin for greater glory neither erases nor excuses disobedience. Scripture teaches that he who sins shall suffer. Samson conformed to the world and suffered.

Step Two: Consorting with the Wicked

Secondly, he consorted with the wicked. After the attempted Philistine marriage, Judges 16:1 says: "Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there a harlot, and went in unto her." Verse 4 says: "And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah," who also was a harlot. When his marriage fell through and he lost everything, he still did not learn. Most people seem gluttons for punishment. He not only conformed to the wicked; he consorted with them. I use consorted deliberately. Judges 16 mentions two harlots with whom he associated. There were probably others; I do not know. These women were enemies of God's people and God's enemies. We're warned in Scripture that a whore is a deep ditch and he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein. Read Proverbs 5, 6, and 7, which warn against harlotry and whoredom.

I chose consorted because of its biblical use. Years ago I repeatedly witnessed to a young man who wanted neither to hear me nor to be around me or my family. Seeing me coming down the street, he would cross to the other side to avoid speaking to me or hearing anything from me. After a few months God saved him. Instead of running away, he ran to me. He came to the house to be taught. At midnight I would say, "Gary, get up and go home. Let me go to bed." He answered, "I just want to be around you. I just want to hear this." That is consorting, as Acts 17:4 illustrates.

Paul preached in Thessalonica. Acts 17:4 says, "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." They consorted with Paul and Silas. The Greek word for consorted is prosklero. It means to consort with, to allot, to assign by lot, to cast your lot in with, and to choose for an inheritance. Converted people

in Acts 17 cast their lot in with Paul, Silas, other believers, and the Lord Jesus Christ. They chose Christ and His people as their inheritance. Why did Samson consort with the wicked? He chose them over God's people, casting his lot in with them by frequent association, living and sinning with them. His actions rejected his own people and preferred the wicked's company, an insult and blasphemy to God, his family, and his people. He conformed, then consorted, choosing them as his lot.

Step Three: Confiding in the Wicked

Thirdly, he confided in the wicked. How could Samson be so stupid as to tell Delilah his strength's secret? Why could he not see what was happening? Judges 16:6 says: "And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee? And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man." She She got seven green withs and bound him. And then she said, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson." He got up, and of course his secret was not known. "Oh, you've lied to me. How can you tell me you love me? Come on, Samson." "Well, you've got to put new ropes on me. No man's ever been in them." And she does that. And then she says, "Philistines be upon thee, Samson." And he breaks the ropes like they're nothing. "Oh, come on, Samson. You don't love me. You don't love me. Tell me." "Alright, you've got to weave my hair." She wove his hair: "Wake up, Samson! The Philistines be upon you!" He went off with the pin, beam, and whatever else was there. Could he not see that she used every disclosure to destroy him? Sin blinds eyes and is deceitful, but if I wake three mornings running with Alice pointing a pistol at my temple, I know something is wrong.

His desire to conform and consort is shown in Judges 16:6: "And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee?" How often? Verse 16 says: "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death." She pressed daily; he was living with her. Day by day she said, "I want to know where your great strength is."

She cared nothing for Samson, only for his heart's secret, to destroy him and get the silver.

She intended to betray him to the Philistines. Psalm 25:14 says, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." There are things you do not tell. God gives His secrets only to His people. Someone asked a woman whether she could keep a secret. She said, "Of course I can. It's just the people I tell that can't keep them." Christians have secrets. Samson could not reveal his without betraying the people God gave him to protect, his family, and his Lord. This resembles Hezekiah showing the Babylonians his entire kingdom, the temple, and its treasures. God said, "Everything that you showed the Babylonians, you're going to lose." They destroyed Judah, Jerusalem, and the temple, stealing its vessels and everything else. Hezekiah revealed what he should never have revealed.

The Consequences of God's Departure

Samson likewise revealed what he should have kept secret. After she had his hair shaved, verse 20 says, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself." He thought shaking himself was all he needed. "And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." Samson assumed the Lord and His power remained upon him, unaware of God's departure. He thought all would be well if he shook himself as before. It was not. How often do we assume continued blessing despite sin and disobedience? How often do we presume God's power when we have only our own strength? How often do we trade His blessings and power for temporal pleasure, programs, and entertainment?

The average church may jump, shout, and enjoy itself, thinking its rejoicing spiritual and powerful, while having only flesh. The evidence of God's departure is that our enemies still stand. When Samson had God's power, no enemy could stand before him. When he lost that power, his enemies stood. Our enemies stand today.

They laugh at our salvation, Savior, and Sovereign. There are exceptions, but as a whole we have been left behind like Samson. The Lord has departed; we do not know or miss it. The evidence is our

standing enemies. Song of Solomon 6:10 describes the church: "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" The church is an army with banners, but most Christians have gone AWOL. We've thrown our banners down. And Ichabod has been written over most churches, the glory has departed. And the glory always departs when God departs. And we're left hopeless and helpless in the hands of our enemies. The bride says in Song of Solomon 5:6, "I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone." "I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." In context, the bride's beloved, the Lord knocks. And the bride is so concerned with her perfume and the fact that she's already in bed, she doesn't want to get up and open to her bridegroom. When she finally decides to do so, she finds that he had withdrawn himself. He was gone. She sought but could not find Him; she called without answer. Hosea 5 gives the same warning.

Hosea 5:5 says, "And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them. They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them." There is a time when God leaves us behind.

If we forsake Him, He will forsake us. It may be temporary. but he'll still withdraw himself. Matthew Henry says, "Many have lost the favorable presence of God and are not aware of it. They have provoked God to withdraw from them, but are not sensible of their loss, nor ever complain of it. Their souls languish and grow weak. Their gifts wither. Everything goes cross with them, and yet they impute not this to the right cause. They are not aware that God has departed from them, nor are they in any care to reconcile themselves to Him or to recover His favor."

Applications and Call to Repentance

First, God's power departs when God departs, and we are helpless in ourselves. If Samson thought his mighty power was his own, he instantly learned otherwise when shaved. John 15:5 says, "without me ye can do nothing." We cannot pray, study, or live wholly without

Him. Zechariah 4:6 says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." Without God's power we are helpless and hopeless. The greatest protection for an individual, family, church, or nation is His blessing, presence, and power.

Secondly, the world—Delilah—cares nothing for Christians and quickly sells us to the highest bidder. Delilah pretended love until she got what she wanted, then betrayed Samson. Politicians likewise pretend to love and like us until they get our votes, then betray us. Delilah led Samson like a sheep to slaughter. Many, like Demas, have been rocked to sleep on her knees and shipwrecked their faith. The world cares nothing for Christ or Christianity, only for itself and what it can get.

Thirdly, when God departs, our enemies rejoice, take, abuse, and make sport of us as they did Samson. They quickly exploit every situation. Matthew Henry puts together what happened to Samson and the opposite: "The Philistines took him when God had departed from him. Those that have thrown themselves out of God's protection becomes an easy prey to their enemies. If we sleep in the lap of our lusts, we shall certainly wake in the hands of the Philistines."

"It is probable that they had promised Delilah not to kill him. But they took an effectual course to disable him. The first thing they did when they had him in their hands and found that they could manage him was to put out his eyes by applying fire to them so says the Arabic version they considered that his eyes would never come again as perhaps his hair might and that the strongest arms could do little without eyes to guide them therefore they blind him and they therefore ever bind him his eyes were the inlets of his sin he saw the harlot at Gaza and went in unto her. And now his punishment began there."

"Now that the Philistines had blinded him, he had time to remember how his own lust had blinded him. The best preservation of the eyes is to turn them away from beholding vanity. They brought him down to Gaza, that there he might appear in weakness, where he had lately given such proofs of his strength, and to be a jest to those to whom he had been a terror. They bound him with fetters of brass who had before been bound in the cords of his own iniquity."

"And he did grind in the prison, either for their profit or their punishment, or for his punishment, or for both. The devil does thus so by sinners, blinds the minds of those that believe not, and so enslaves them and secures them in his interest. Poor Samson, how hast thou fallen? How has thine honor laid in the dust? How has the glory and defense of Israel become the drudge and triumph of the Philistines? The crown has fallen from his head."

"Woe unto him, for he has sinned, that all take warning by his fall, carefully to preserve the purity and to watch against all temptation and all wickedness and all perversity and all fleshly lust. Our glory has come and gone. Our defense departed from us when we covenant, when the covenant of our separation to God as spiritual Nazarites is profaned." Finally, like Samson, we may be battered and we may be bruised and we may be abused. But like Samson, we must come back to our vows and our faith and call one more time upon our Heavenly Father to strengthen us. Just one last time, to give us grace and power to stand against His enemies and our enemies. And as blind as Samson was, he told that little boy, "Please, just lead me to the two pillars whereunto the house stands." And he prayed, "O God, one last time, strengthen me that I may be avenged of mine enemies." And he pulled, and the pillars gave way, and the house came down, and three thousand lords of the Philistines were killed. And the Scripture says that Samson killed more of the Lord's enemies in his death than in his life. If we want the power of God back, we must come back to God in the totality of our lives. If we want to see our enemies fall, it has to be with the power and the blessings of God.

And they'll never fall until we humble ourselves and repent and believe and obey. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your love. Thank You for Your grace. Thank You for Your mercy. And we do pray, Lord, that You would indeed restore our dominion. Restore us, Lord, in repentance and faith and obedience. And Lord, we do not want to be left behind. And if we have been, Lord, give us grace to catch up with Thee and stay with Thee. For Thou, Lord, art our sovereign Lord, our protection, our provision, our power. And without Thee, Lord, we are nothing and can do nothing. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 25

The Other Side of Witnessing

March 15, 2012

Introduction: The Two Sides of Witnessing

Our Lord told His disciples, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils. And they will scourge you in the synagogues, and you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for testimony against them and the Gentiles.”

The other side of witnessing is intimately connected with reconciliation. We may ask a simple and obvious question: What is considered to be the most common aim and point in witnessing? The answer is to reconcile the sinner through repentance and faith to Jesus Christ.

There are real considerations that must be understood, not only as to why we witness, but also as to how we witness. Often, many truths are overlooked in the Scriptures, especially as those truths relate to the witness to God and His grace.

Biblical Witnesses to Christ

As you read through the Old Testament, you encounter the tabernacle and the temple. Have you ever noticed that the tabernacle is referred to as the tabernacle of witness? In Numbers 17:7–8 we read: “And Moses laid up the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness. And it came to pass that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness. And behold, the rod of Aaron in the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.” In each passage it is referred to as the tabernacle of witness.

In Acts 7:44, when Stephen was giving his testimony before he was to be stoned to death, he said: “Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.” Even in the New Testament, Stephen refers to it as the tabernacle of witness. Thus everything in the tabernacle was a witness, just as everything in the temple was a witness.

The tabernacle and the temple were witnesses to the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. According to John 2:19, Jesus Christ is the true temple, or the true tabernacle. According to Hebrews 3:5 and Hebrews 13:5, He is the true altar. According to Hebrews 4:14-15, He is the true high priest. According to 1 Corinthians 5:7, He is the true sacrifice: “For the Bible says that Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.” Second Corinthians 2:14-15 teaches us that He is the true incense. Everything in the tabernacle, plus the tabernacle itself, and everything in the temple, plus the temple itself, were nothing more than witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ. So you have the tabernacle and the temple as a witness to Christ.

The interesting thing is that the providence of God was and still is a witness to the goodness, mercy, and lovingkindness of God. In fact, if you will look in Acts 14:17, notice what the Scripture says. The Apostle Paul says this concerning God: “Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” Have you ever stopped to think that the things you and I daily enjoy, yet assume and presume are ours by right, are nothing more than a witness to God's grace and mercy? It is God who allows

us to breathe. It is God who gives us sunshine, rain, and food. Thus, the providence and goodness of God are a witness to God as well.

Do you realize that the whole life and ministry of John the Baptist was that of witness? John 1:7-8 says, “The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not the light, but he was sent to bear witness of that light.”

You have the tabernacle as a witness, the temple as a witness, the providence of God as a witness, and the whole ministry of John as a witness. But the gospel itself is a witness. In Acts 10:43, talking about Jesus Christ and His Word, the Bible says, “To Him, that is to Jesus Christ, give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” The gospel itself is a witness. In Matthew 24:14 we read, “And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached unto all the world for a witness to all the nations.” So the gospel is a witness.

Romans 1:1–4 shows that even the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a witness: “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated in the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scripture, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.” Then, “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead.” What did the resurrection of the dead do? What was the implication of our Lord’s bodily resurrection? He was and is indeed the very Son of God Himself. That is what the Bible says in verse 4: “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

Everything we find about Christ, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, deals with a witness. Have you ever asked yourself, “Am I to be a witness?” Or, “What exactly is a witness?” Or, “Why should you be a witness?” There are many things I cannot cover today in that light. But without an understanding of what a true witness is, most people fall into the trap of thinking that a witness is simply someone who shares a few verses from the Bible with someone else.

You say, "Well, I witnessed to him. I gave him several verses out of the Bible." We should always be ready and willing to declare the Word of God. But you have to understand this: our lives must back up our words. We are not merely to be witnessing; we are to be a witness in our lives. Without a godly, holy, obedient life that backs up our words, our words are worthless and useless.

How many of you would attend a seminar or lecture hosted by a drunk on sobriety? How many would listen to a harlot lecture on purity? You see what I'm saying? If our lives do not back up our words, then our words are basically useless.

The Command to Be a Witness

Well, why should we be a witness? The very first reason is simple: we've been commanded by our Lord to be a witness. It does not matter whether you look in the Old Testament or the New Testament. God declares, "You are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me."

Note that He says plainly, "You are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me and understand that I am he." In verse 12 He says, "I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God."

He says it again in Isaiah 44: "Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any."

If we were to turn to Luke 24:48, we would see our Lord saying this to His disciples: "And ye are witnesses of these things."

Most of you probably can quote Acts 1 and verse 8. Our Lord looked at His disciples and said, "But you shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth." When you get to Acts 10 and verse 39,

the disciple said, "And we are witnesses of all the things which he did in the land of the Jews in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree. We are witnesses to these things."

Now, why should we witness? There are a multitude of other reasons, I believe, to be a witness for Christ and His Word, but the truth is, the one that genuinely matters is that He has commanded us to be a witness. You say, "But I have a concern for other people." I am not denigrating that concern. I have a concern for my family and my friends, and you should have a concern for yours as well. But that should be overshadowed by our greater concern of obedience to Christ and His honor and His glory. His honor, His glory, and obedience to Him should overshadow everything else. Let me try to demonstrate what I am talking about.

Motives for Witnessing: God's Glory vs. Results

I have heard a multitude of preachers and Christians make a statement like this: "I want to see souls saved, and I want to see people get right with the Lord." My response would be, what preacher, pastor, or Christian who is genuinely right with the Lord would not want those things? Wouldn't you like to see people genuinely converted? Wouldn't you like to see people genuinely right with the Lord?

And the answer is yes. But are you listening? That is not to be my controlling motive in the ministry or the driving force of my ministry. Yes, I want those things. But more than that, I want God honored and glorified through the Lord Jesus Christ in every area of life and ministry.

Here is the problem. If one is witnessing only to see people saved or to see people get right with the Lord, when that fails to happen, when those expectations are not met in witnessing, what will be the result? Disappointment, discouragement, and downheartedness—and possibly even doubting. When your expectations are not met, you will be tempted to doubt the power of God's Word and the power of God's Spirit. You may say, "I expect to see people saved, and I expect to see people get right with God, and it is not happening. Therefore, if I am doing it right, there must be

something wrong with God, or the Gospel, or the power of the Holy Spirit."

The driving force of our life should be to honor and glorify God. In fact, the Bible says, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all to the honor and glory of God." He told us, whether we eat or whether we drink, to do all to the honor and glory of God.

So let me ask this question again: Why in the world should you be a witness? Not just so that you could witness to people, but why should your life be a witness? You could answer, "So that people would get saved or get right with the Lord." That is certainly one answer.

But let me tell you something: You should be a witness whether people get saved or not, and whether people get right with God or not. You should be a witness simply because God has commanded you to be a witness. Are you listening? The results are not up to you. You are not to be concerned about how many decisions you get or how many people genuinely get saved. You should be concerned about being a faithful witness, because that is what God has commanded you to do. Your concern should be that you be counted faithful and obey the Lord.

Let me show you something in Acts chapter 2, because someone may challenge me: “What do you mean, Brother Weaver? You should not be concerned with decisions. Do you not want people to be genuinely saved?” Sure, but anybody can decide a lot of things. I usually tease people when they ask, “How many decisions did you have?” I say, “I had thousands.” “Really?” “Yeah. Thousands decided not to come to church.” That is a decision, is it not? Thousands decided not to repent and not to believe.

Look at what the Bible says in Acts 2:47: “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Who added to the church? The Lord. He added such as should be saved.

God Gives the Increase

Now I want to show you something about the ministry. This is not just about my ministry or our ministry; it also involves your

ministry. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, Paul addressed a schism in the Corinthian church. There were several parties. Some favored the preaching and teaching of Paul, some Peter, and some Apollos. Others tried to be more spiritual and said, "We only like the preaching of Jesus."

Paul asked, "Who then is Paul? And who is Apollos? But ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man." He continued: "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."

He began by saying, "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Then he asked, "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" Paul and Apollos were ministers through whom they believed. The planter and the waterer are one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

The Other Side of Witnessing

Is it not easy to see in this passage that the Apostle Paul says there are some who plant, some who water, and some who harvest? Then he tells us that it is God who gives to every man that particular ministry. Not everyone has a ministry of harvesting. Some have a ministry of planting, and some have a ministry of watering.

I had the blessing of being raised on a farm, and I can tell you that harvest season is one of the most enjoyable seasons of all. But it is over very quickly. There is far more work in planting, watering, hoeing, and plowing than there is in harvesting. You look around and find men through history, like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, who had ministries of harvesting. They harvested, but they harvested where other men had planted, watered, and worked. Planting, watering, hoeing, and plowing are hard, time-consuming work. Harvesting is usually easy work, and it is over very quickly. So, as a general rule, the harvest does not last long.

What does the Bible say? It says that God determines the ministry that we have. There is another reason that you and I should be

faithful, regardless as to whether or not we see fruit in our lives from our witnessing. That reason is what I am going to call the other side of witnessing. All of us are familiar with witnessing, but we have not really considered the other side of witnessing.

If I were to take a coin out of my pocket, everyone in this room knows that a coin has two sides, heads and tails. Do you realize that you cannot separate the two sides of that coin without destroying the coin? There are certain truths in the Bible that you cannot separate without destroying those truths. They go together just like the two sides of one coin.

Inseparable Truths: Reconciliation and Condemnation

Here is repentance and faith. Repentance and faith are the two sides of a genuine conversion. Repentance is a turning from sin, while faith is turning to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. If you try to separate those two things, you will either end up with decisional regeneration, easy believism, or what is commonly referred to today as the carnal Christian theory. That means you can be a believer in Christ, live like the devil, and live in the flesh, which is totally, completely unscriptural and ungodly. When you separate repentance and faith, you are destroying the truth.

If one genuinely repents—truly, scripturally repents—at the same time he believes, he has real biblical faith. If one has real, genuine biblical faith at the same time he repents, you cannot separate those two things without destroying the truth of real, genuine conversion.

Here is another pair: perseverance and preservation. These two truths go together. It is true that we are preserved in Christ Jesus. But those who are preserved also persevere in repentance and faith. If you destroy these twin truths, if you try to separate them, what you end up with is a works salvation: you have to work your way in; you have to persevere. Or you end up saying, “Well, I’m preserved, so it doesn’t matter how I live,” and then you live like the devil. No. These two things go together. God preserves His own, but His preservation comes to light in the fact that He enables us to persevere in repentance and faith. You cannot separate those two things.

Neither can you separate reconciliation and condemnation. They are the two sides of one coin. He that is reconciled is not condemned; he that is condemned is not reconciled. In John 3:18, our Lord says, “He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” He that believeth on Him is not condemned. He could have said it like this: He that believeth on Him is reconciled. But he that believeth not is condemned. So you have reconciliation and condemnation.

John 3:36 tells you the same exact truth: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Why does the wrath of God abide on him? Because he is condemned. Why does the one have everlasting life? Because he has been reconciled. Here are the two sides of one coin.

Why does the wrath of God abide upon unbelievers? The answer is, because they are condemned already. When one hears the Gospel and fails to repent and believe the Gospel, that testimony which was intended to him and for him for good now turns around to be against him for condemnation.

I have heard preachers and Christians state that if one goes for a number of months and does not have a conversion or a convert, something is wrong. I have heard preachers say, “If you go a year without baptizing 300 people, you’re wrong, something’s wrong with you.” I do not know where that chapter and verse is in the Bible. But if you are looking for results, you would most definitely conclude that something is wrong. Yet, if you believe the Bible, everything could be right; it is just that your doctrine could be wrong. Therefore, your conclusions and your applications are wrong.

God's Word Always Accomplishes Its Purpose

God says, “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth in bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereinto I sent it.”

What is God telling us? God is telling us that He has a design and a purpose in giving and sending His Word. It is a distinct intention in sending that Word, just as He had a distinct intention in sending the rain and snow upon the earth. Most of the time, rain and snow are beneficial and a blessing. But rain can come down in torrents and be torrential and destructive. Snow can melt and cause floods or avalanches.

One of the strangest things is when you are out in the desert and go through these little gullies, where there is a sign saying, “Watch out for flash floods.” It may not have rained in months, but that does not stop the snow from melting in the mountains. Innumerable people have been drowned or killed when the water came down from the mountains miles away, washing away their cars and washing them away with their cars.

Now here's what God says: "I am sending my word purposefully, deliberately, intentionally. It shall not return to me void. It shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." The gospel, then, may not always produce the good results that you and I want, or that we think it should. Yet it is always successful in accomplishing that which God desires, and it always prospers in that whereunto God sends it. The Word of God is sent on different errands.

It could be an errand of reconciliation, or it could be an errand of condemnation. But it is never, ever going to fail. It will either quicken or revive sinners, or it will harden them and further condemn them.

A Savor of Life and Death

The Apostle Paul says, "Now thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ, and make manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place." Notice the word always. It never fails. He always causes us to triumph in Christ. He always makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place. The Scripture says, "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish."

The sweet savor, the sweet smell that came from the tabernacle and the temple, came not only from the sacrifices, but also from the incense. It is like stepping out of your house and smelling a neighbor grilling steaks a couple of houses away; the scent makes you want one. But understand this sweet savor. Scripture says, "For we are to God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. For to the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life."

"Who is sufficient for these things?" I have used this illustration before, but I want to remind you of it. Here I am preaching to a room full of unconverted sinners, preaching Christ as plainly and as powerfully as I can. Let us say every sinner repents, believes in Christ, and is genuinely converted. You know what God does? God says, "My Son is preached and I'm pleased."

On the other hand, if I preach Christ as plainly and as powerfully as I can, and every sinner shakes his fist and says, "We will not have that one to reign over us; we hate him," and they storm out, you know what God says? "My Son is preached and I'm pleased." That's what He said.

We are a savor of life unto life to those that believe, and a savor of death unto death to those who do not believe. We must remember that the same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay.

Biblical Examples of Condemnation Ministries

Have you ever wondered how long Noah preached without one convert? The answer, of course, is 120 years. Was there something wrong with Noah or with his message? Perhaps he simply was not doing it right. Maybe some modern-day evangelicals could have straightened him out and gotten some decisions if he had done things differently. He could have put a bumper sticker on the ark saying, "Smile, God Loves You," while they were drowning. But the Bible says in Genesis 6:3, "And the LORD God said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh, yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." Do you realize that Noah preached a hundred and twenty years?

In 1 Peter 3 and verse 20, let me just read it: "Which sometimes were disobedient when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls that were saved by water." Then in 2 Peter 2 and verse 5: "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness." So for a hundred and twenty years, Noah preached and never had one convert.

I don't think anything was wrong with his preaching or with his message. God simply gave Noah a ministry of condemnation. God certainly thought enough about Noah to put him in Hebrews 11 as a hero of faith. He was a faithful witness for 120 years and never had one convert.

What about Jeremiah? Would you consider Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, a failure? He preached his entire life and ministry to a stiff-necked, rebellious people who refused to hear and repent. God told Jeremiah at the outset what kind of ministry he would have. Jeremiah 1:7 says, "But the LORD said unto me, Say not I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee. And whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak."

Then God tells him in verse 8, "Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD." Then the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth." Verse 10 says, "See now, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, to pull down, and to destroy and to throw down, and to build, and to plant."

Note that Jeremiah had three times as much pulling down, destroying, and throwing down as he did building and planting. God had already told him not to be afraid. In verse 14, the LORD said, "Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land."

Do you not remember the northern armies? Out of the north they are coming: "And they shall come and they shall set everyone his throne at the entering into the gates of Jerusalem against all the walls there round about and against all the cities of Judah." Judah and Jerusalem will be destroyed. That is what he is saying. Verse 16:

"And I will utter my judgments against them, touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me and have burned incense unto other gods, and worship the works of their own hands."

"Thou therefore gird up thy loins and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee. Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For behold, I have made thee this day a defense city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people thereof. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee."

Isn't that amazing? God said, "Jeremiah, I'm sending you to this people. Guess what? They're not going to listen to you. They will be such rebellious, wicked people that I will send nations against them to occupy, destroy, and enslave them. Therefore, gird up your loins. Arise. Say what I tell you to say. They will fight against you, hate you, and despise you."

If you read the book of Jeremiah, they threw him in dungeons and tried to kill him. They did all kinds of things to him. How did Jeremiah's ministry end? He watched Jerusalem destroyed. He saw his own people slaughtered, captured, and enslaved; his own city set on fire; and his own temple destroyed. Jeremiah hardly had a successful ministry in terms of success as it is interpreted today.

Yet God used him to write two books in the Bible. Undoubtedly, he is one of those others listed in Hebrews 11:36–38.

What about Isaiah? Isaiah also was given a ministry of condemnation. He was a court prophet. He preached and taught, but he was largely ignored, not only by the people, but by the rulers as well. Look in Isaiah chapter 6, beginning with verse 8. I wonder how many of us would have entered the ministry if we had received a call like this. Isaiah writes, “Also I heard the voice of the LORD saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.” Isaiah volunteered to be God’s man. Look what God told him: “Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with

their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

Notice what God says: "Isaiah, I'm sending you to this people, and they're not going to listen to you. They're not going to hear. They're not going to see. They're not going to be converted." Then notice what Isaiah asked in verse 11: "Lord, how long?" I volunteered, Lord, but how long do You want me to do this? "And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land."

Notice what God told him: "You're going to be a failure. The people are not going to listen. I'm going to judge them and destroy them and move them far away. It will be a desolate land; it will be a desolate time." Was Isaiah a failure? The answer is no.

Was his message not right? The answer is no. Isaiah did not have a great number attending his preaching. He probably did not have a building program or an auditorium that seated thousands. Yet he was faithful, and he was counted successful in God's sight, because God is faithful. History states that Isaiah was murdered by being sawn in half while in the trunk of a tree. In all probability, Isaiah is referred to in Hebrews 11:37, where we read, "And others were sawn asunder." Was Isaiah faithful? Yes, he was. But Isaiah had a ministry of condemnation.

Another major prophet who had a ministry of condemnation was Ezekiel. Ezekiel was a priest whom God called to be a prophet. He certainly did not fare much better when it came to reaching the multitudes. Ezekiel was a prophet in the land of Babylon, speaking to the people Nebuchadnezzar had carried away into captivity. Although Ezekiel had an audience, it was a pretended, hypocritical audience that cared very little about what was being preached.

God told Ezekiel, "Also thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, everyone to his brother, saying, Watch. Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD." In other words, they said, "Oh, come

on, let's go hear this man. We want to hear the word that comes from the LORD. Let's go in mass."

God continued, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words," but "they will not do them, for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song, of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument. For they hear thy words, but they do them not."

Ezekiel was nothing more than entertainment for people who had no real interest in the gospel and no intent to hear, obey, or apply the Word of God. Do you realize that most modern-day preachers and churches end up being nothing more than entertainment and social clubs? The people have no real interest in the Word of God or in applying that Word to their lives.

Here is what I am trying to show you. Here is the other side of witnessing. We fail to comprehend this simple fact: when we bear the good news of the gospel and the good news of the Word of God, bearing that good news with the intent of blessing a person or a people, helping them, and wanting them to know the greatness of the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, if they fail to repent and if they fail to believe, our testimony becomes a witness against them.

Testimony Against the Unbelieving

Do you remember the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram and Korah in Numbers chapter 16? They all wanted the priesthood, and God settled the issue for them. But look at Numbers chapter 17, where it was settled. The rebellion took place in Numbers 16, but look in Numbers 17 at what was said as God settled the issue. All of them got these rods, but only Aaron's rod budded and blossomed and produced almonds.

Numbers 17:8 says, "And it came to pass that on the morrow, Moses went into the tabernacle of witness. And behold, the rod of Aaron from the house of Levi was budded and brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds." Moses brought all the rods from before the LORD unto the children of Israel. They looked

and took every man his rod. Then the LORD said unto Moses, “Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels.”

“Thou shalt quite take away their murmuring from me, that they die not.” Of course, you know what happened to the rebels: God killed them. But note what He said concerning Aaron's rod that blossomed and budded and produced almonds: “Take it and keep it for a token against the rebels.”

In other words, here is the Aaronic priesthood in the Old Testament, which should have been a blessing to these people, but it has now turned to be a curse and a condemnation to them. It is now kept as a witness against them. The very priesthood that was meant to be a blessing now becomes a condemnation. When things are abused and refused, they become a condemnation.

Matthew 10:18 says, “And you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.” God tells His people that they will be brought before governors and kings for His sake, for a testimony. Note those words: What is the next word? “Against them.”

Not to them, not for them, but against them. Why? They refuse to heed it. They will not listen. This is the other side of witnessing, the side that we do not think of frequently. In Mark 6:11, our Lord tells His disciples, “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when you depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.”

“Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on that day of judgment than for that city.” Notice again: “Shake the dust under your feet for a testimony” where? “Against them.” The testimony is not merely offered to them or intended for their benefit; when they refuse to receive or hear it, it stands against them.

Look again in Mark 13:9: “But take heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues you shall be beaten, and you shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them.” Turn to Luke chapter 7 and look at verse 30.

Luke 7:30 says, "But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized of Him." That is John the Baptist. John witnessed, preached, and told the truth. But the Pharisees refused to believe him and refused to repent. So his witness to them and for them became a witness against them.

Our Lord again tells His disciples, "And whosoever will not receive you when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them." The very dust will testify against them. Paul and Barnabas did exactly what God told them to do: "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they, Paul and Barnabas, shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came to Iconium."

Our Lord said, "And you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them." When God's people testify, not only to common everyday people, but to kings, rulers, and judges, and they fail to hear, heed, and repent, it becomes a witness against them. Paul was brought before Agrippa and Nero. Peter was brought before Nero. John was brought before Domitian. Luther stood before Charles V. John Hus stood before Emperor Sigismund, and Lambert before Henry VIII.

There have been a multitude of Christians down through the ages who have testified before kings, governors, rulers, and all kinds of authorities. Although that testimony was unheeded, it did not go unproductive, because it accomplished condemnation. I attended the trial of one of my dearest friends, who was on trial because he did not want to support abortion financially. When the judge gave him the opportunity to speak, he spoke for a solid hour, quoting Scripture after Scripture. I know for a fact that man could not have quoted all of those Scriptures any other time. The power of God was so present in that courtroom, it was almost as if I could reach out and just grab him. I looked over at the prosecuting attorney and the government agents, and tears were streaming down their cheeks while this man testified.

Yet in the end, they found him guilty. One woman on the jury had to condemn this innocent man or condemn her son, because her son

was a doctor and he performed abortion. He said, "But nobody got converted." No one may have gotten converted, but a lot of people got condemned. God's Word does not return void. It always accomplishes that whereunto He sends it. It always prospers in that which He sends. And God does not always send His Word for reconciliation. Sometimes He sends it for condemnation. And you've got to remember what the Bible says: His Word.

When we preach Christ, it's a savor of life unto life to them that believe, and of death unto death to those who refuse to believe.

Applications: Faithfulness in Our Witness

Now let me make just a couple of applications. The first one is this: We're really a witness whether we want to be or not. Our words and our lives reflect the truth of the Gospel, or the lack of its influence upon our lives. So we're really a witness one way or the other. We're either for Christ or we're against Christ. It's kind of like Christ said in Luke 11 in verse 23, "He that is not with me is against me and he that gathereth not scattereth abroad." So really we are all witnesses. We're either for Christ as a witness or we are against Christ as a witness.

As we try to witness to our family, friends, and neighbors, the correct question to ask them would be this: "Will you be reconciled or condemned?" Those are the only two results of the gospel. The other side of witnessing is condemnation. Those who refuse the truth of God, who refuse to repent and believe when they hear the Word of God, are not reconciled, but they are condemned.

I want you to look at one last passage. Turn to John chapter 5, and let me show you how plainly this is enunciated in the Scripture. You remember how in our Lord's time, those Jews always claimed to Moses? And still today, we have Moses and the prophets. Oh yes. Well, look what our Lord said in John chapter 5.

Our Lord said, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” He continued, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye

believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

Those who reject Him, even while trusting in the Old Testament and saying, "We are Moses' disciples," will find that Moses himself is a witness against them. Our Lord said, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me."

God does call us into the ministry, and every one of us is in the ministry whether we know it or not. He gives us a ministry as He sees fit. Sometimes it is a ministry of planting, of watering, or of harvesting. It is a ministry of reconciliation, but often He also gives us a ministry of condemnation. We may not all be a Noah, a Paul, an Elijah, or a Jeremiah, but whatever ministry God gives us, there is one thing He requires: that we be faithful. Moreover, it is required in a steward that a man be found faithful. If God gives us a ministry of reconciliation, wonderful. If He gives us a ministry of condemnation, wonderful. Just be faithful in whatever area God has placed you.

There is another side to witnessing. That which is intended for someone's good, benefit, and blessing, if refused, becomes an instrument of their condemnation. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us, bless us, teach us, and use us, Lord. May we bring honor and glory unto Your name, either as a ministry of reconciliation or a ministry of condemnation. We give Thee praise in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 26

God's Justice As Congregational Necessity

August 11, 2023

Biblical Justice as a Congregational Necessity

Introduction: Justice Beyond Civil and Personal Spheres

Micah 6:8 is the theme before us tonight, and Isaiah 45 is the passage we will consider next.

The Word of God says very plainly, clearly, "He has showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." So tonight, I am dealing with this subject: biblical justice as a congregational necessity. Normally, when we think about justice, we think about justice in the civil sphere. Sometimes we think about it in the personal sphere, especially if we are the ones that have been wrong. But very seldom do we think about it in the ecclesiastical or the congregational sphere.

God's love for justice does not stop at the civil sphere. Neither does it stop at the individual sphere. The truth of the matter is that God's love for justice encompasses all of His dominion. He demands justice in every sphere and especially in and among His people. Why?

God's Nature and Commands Demand Righteousness

The answer is because of His nature and also because of His commands. If you look in Isaiah 45, verses 18 and 19, the Scripture says this: "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God Himself that formed the earth and made it, He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth. I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. I, the Lord, speak righteousness."

The Lord says, "I declare things that are right. I, the Lord, speak righteousness, I declare the things which are right." The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:1, "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, be ye imitators of God." But if you are going to follow God the Father as His child, you must also learn to speak righteousness, and you must also declare those things which are right. In doing so, you learn to walk worthy of the Lord and, as Colossians 1:10 says, you learn to walk pleasing unto Him as well.

The Apostle Paul said to the Thessalonian Christians in 1 Thessalonians 2:10, "You are our witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." Paul was saying this: They were his witnesses, and God was his witness, that he had lived holy and just lives before them. When Paul said that he lived justly, the Greek word is dikaios, which literally means that he lived that which is agreeable to God's law, that which is right, that which is upright, and that which fits God's standard.

The Consequences of Neglecting Justice

Paul also said concerning the law of God in Romans 7:12, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Biblical justice, then, is also a congregational necessity,

and it is so for a number of reasons. Without biblical justice, the law is slacked. Without biblical justice, justice never really goes forth. And without biblical justice, the wicked are allowed to triumph, and the wicked are allowed to dominate the just.

This is exactly what the prophet describes in Habakkuk 1:1-4: "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save? Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me. And there are they that raise up strife and contention." Think about our situation today. What is happening with all the violence, all the contention, all the uproar, all the chaos, and all the confusion?

"Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth, for the wicked doth compass about the righteous, therefore wrong judgment proceedeth." Anytime the wicked dominate the righteous, anytime the wicked are in control, the wickedness always extends. When we are talking about congregational necessity in executing God's justice, congregations are made up of individuals. So we are talking about individual justice as well as congregational justice.

The Church as One Body with One Mind, Mouth, Motive, and Mission

There is a personal responsibility and a personal accountability, and there is also a corporate responsibility and a corporate accountability. It is true that the individual must act personally, but it is equally true that the congregation must also act as a body.

In Psalm 22 and verse 22, the psalmist said, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the congregation. I will praise thee." He talks about the brethren, which would be individuals, but then he said, "in the midst of the congregation," which would be the corporate body. In Psalm 22 and verse 25, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation. I will pay my vows before them that fear him." So we are talking about a corporate body and individuals. In Psalm 35 and verse 18, the psalmist said, "I will give thee thanks in the great congregation. I will praise thee among

much people.” Thus, even in the Old Testament, the congregation was a body, a corporate body.

It was a group of folks who moved as one. When you think about the New Testament, consider Ephesians 4:4: "For there is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." Ephesians 4:12 says, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The body of Christ is made up of individuals, but here we are spoken of as a body. Then Ephesians 4:16 says, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

The whole body is to work together, not individually only. Yes, we have individual abilities and responsibilities, but we are also to move together as a group, to the edifying of itself. Colossians 3:15 says, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful."

It is interesting how many times Scripture places the emphasis upon a body. The body moves and acts as one. Everything about your body may be different, but it is one. When my feet move, my entire body moves. When one member of my body suffers, so do the others. If you do not believe that, take a hammer and hit yourself on the thumb. You will find the entire body will groan; you will grasp that thumb, and the whole body will be in sympathy. Although it is made up of a multitude of members, it is still just one body.

Now consider what the Apostle Paul says to the Roman Christians in Romans 15. Look at verse 5.

“Now, the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.”

Pay close attention to this passage, because Paul is praying that these Roman Christians would be like-minded one toward another.

He says, "that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." One mind and one mouth glorifying God would be one motive. Then, in verse seven, "Wherefore, receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." That is one mission. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." That is still one mission.

Let me put it plainly. If you have one mind, it means you think the same way. If you have one mouth, it means you say exactly the same things. If you have one motive, it means you are moved by the same thing. If you have one mission, it means you are acting in the same way and seeking the same end. The Apostle Paul is praying that these people will have one mind, one motive, one mouth, and one mission.

He said, "Wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God." I preached on this text many years ago and titled my message "Christian Protocol." Have you ever stopped to think that we are to receive each other the way Christ received us, even though we have our differences and preferences? Jesus Christ received us as sinners. He received us when we were in rebellion. He brought us to Himself and received us exactly the way we were, and He made us totally different.

So when we receive each other as Jesus Christ received us, we are receiving each other with our differences and preferences. But we are still receiving each other as Jesus Christ has received us.

The Word of God tells us very plainly that we must move as one body. To move as one body, we must have one mind, one mouth, one motive, and one mission.

We may not all have the same abilities. Many of us do not have hardly any. One of my dearest friends, now with the Lord, was a preacher who could build a house without an architect. If you told him what you wanted, he could do it. He built 500 homes just in North Carolina alone. He could build, plumb, wire, and work as a mechanic; he could do anything. I often told him, "I hate you. I just hate you because I can't do any of those things." He had all these abilities, while I had none of them. Different ones have different

abilities. Moreover, we have different understanding. Not everyone is on the same page when it comes to growth.

That is why the Bible talks about little children, young men, and fathers. There are different stages that we go through. All of us are green behind the ears at one time in our lives, I can assure you. Then all of us become young men, and then fathers in the faith, so to speak, as well.

The Word of God tells us that we may not have everything alike, but still we are one body. I may not be able to do everything that you can do, and you may not be able to do everything that I can do. I may not understand everything that you understand, and you may not understand everything that I understand. But one thing each of us can do is bow to the authority of the Word of God and submit our minds to its teaching. We can admit, "I don't understand."

I loved Lester Roloff. I do not know if you ever knew Lester Roloff. That man would be preaching, and he would just break out singing. He couldn't sing, you know, he really could. But he'd break your heart because his singing was just so blessed. I remember him on the Family Altar program, reading from Ephesians chapter one. I thought, "Oh, this is going to be interesting." Because Lester Roloff, as much as I loved him, was not a theologian. He really was not. But he could bless your heart, and he loved the Lord. So I was eager to see what he was going to say in Ephesians chapter one.

When Lester Roloff came to that verse saying that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, he said, “I don’t understand this. I can’t explain it. But I believe it and I bow to it because it’s in the Word of God.” What I am trying to tell you is this: all of our fussing, feuding, and fighting can be resolved if we have a humble spirit and a mind that is just willing to submit to the Word of God, regardless of our understandings and regardless of our abilities. We can simply say, “I’m going to bow to the Word of God.” Thus, we have one mind, one mouth, one motive, and one mission. That is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 27, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

Judgment Begins at the House of God

In light of this truth, we need to consider a passage that speaks on what you and I would call congregational justice. First Peter chapter four and verse 17 says, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end of them that obey not the gospel be?" The time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.

The Greek word for justice is krima. It refers to a judgment, a condemnation, a condemnation of wrong, or a decision, whether right, mild, or severe, which one passes upon the conduct of another. It also has reference to a judicially declared court ruling. In other words, it is basically a lawsuit, and it involves the sentence of a judge. From this verse, there are two applications.

First of all, we must understand that as a church, as the body of Christ, we will be judged for our sins more quickly and more readily than will the lost. That is what he said: judgment must first begin at the house of God. Therefore, God is going to chasten us first.

I had four daughters, and when they were children, when they did wrong, I chastised them. I would make sure that if I ever told my child, "I'm going to whip you for this," that is exactly what I would do. I wanted them to understand that I would keep my word, that they had done wrong, and that they were going to be punished for it.

You know why I did that? Because they were my children, and I wanted them to do that which was right and to be right. I don't remember ever whipping my neighbor's children, but I did with mine. God wants us to be right.

Now, I want to show you why God is going to judge the church first. Turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 12, beginning with verse 43. Hold 1 Peter, if you would, and listen to what the Word of God says: "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But, and if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the men's servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in

an hour of which he is not aware, and will cut him asunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

"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. But he that knew not, and did not commit things worthy of stripes, he shall be beaten with few stripes. Why? For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required. And to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Let me put this very plainly: the greater the responsibility, the greater the opportunity, and the greater the culpability. The more knowledge, opportunities, and responsibilities you have, the more culpable you are if you fail in those duties and responsibilities.

Consider this absolute, astounding truth in Lamentations 4:6. Jeremiah was an eyewitness to the destruction of Jerusalem. He said, "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people"—that would be Jerusalem—"is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom that was overthrown in a moment and no hand stayed on her." As Jeremiah watched Jerusalem destroyed, he said again, "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment and no hand stayed on her."

Why in the world was the destruction of Jerusalem greater than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? Why was it more severe? Jerusalem had the temple. Jerusalem had the law. Jerusalem had the teaching priests. Jerusalem had the worship of God. Jerusalem had everything that Sodom and Gomorrah did not have. Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown as in a moment. Fire and brimstone rained down upon them, and that was it.

I recently preached a message on cataclysmic judgments. Some have said that probably the fire and brimstone came from a meteorite that exploded. They suggest it reached something like seven or eight thousand degrees Fahrenheit. The whole earth was scorched. Archaeologists say that everything was scorched; the earth itself was even burned. It was overthrown in a moment—quick, instant, over, and done.

But not Jerusalem. Jerusalem was under a siege. There was starvation, famine, and killing. Finally, there was captivity. Those who were carried into captivity remained there for seventy years. What does Jeremiah say? The punishment of Jerusalem was greater than the punishment of Sodom because Sodom was overthrown in a moment, but not Jerusalem. Jerusalem had greater opportunities, greater blessings, and greater responsibilities. Therefore, they were more culpable. They deserved greater censure and greater punishment.

The second application of this passage is also obvious. First Peter 4:17 says that judgment must begin at the house of God. It is the congregation, the church, that is to speak truth, condemn sin, expose wickedness, and apply the law of God—yes, apply the law of God.

The Church's Responsibility to Uphold God's Judgment

The Church's Duty to Proclaim and Execute Justice

There are two truths that follow right in this vein. First, do you realize that it is the responsibility of the church, the congregation, the body of Christ, to declare the Word of God, to declare the law of God, and to uphold His judgments and standards? Failure in this area not only supports the wicked; it condones wickedness and gives it energy, because it is a compromise with the world.

Consider Zephaniah, chapter 3, beginning with verse 1. God says, "Woe to her that is filthy and polluted to the oppressing city. She obeyed not the voice. She received not correction. She trusted not in the Lord. She drew not near to God. Her princes within are roaring lions. Her judges are evening wolves. They gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons. Her priests have polluted the sanctuary. They have done violence to the law. The just Lord is in the midst thereof. He will not do iniquity. Every morning doth he bring his judgment to light. He faileth not, but the unjust knoweth no shame."

Notice how wicked these people are. The princes are corrupt. The prophets are corrupt. The priests are corrupt. Nobody is doing anything. When you and I fail to preach, proclaim, and teach the

Word of God, we elevate these individuals and condone exactly what they are doing, because we fail to bring and proclaim God's judgment upon them.

Consider also this statement placed into the 1647 revision of the legal code of the Massachusetts Bay Colony: “The execution of the law is the life of the law.” In short, no sanctions, no law.

“The execution of the law is the life of the law.” In short, no sanctions, no law. Look at Antifa, Black Lives Matter, and all the communist stuff. Look at the stores that have been robbed, the people who have been raped and murdered, and all the property that has been destroyed. Nothing happened to most of those people. So, where there are no sanctions, basically speaking, there is no law. The sanction, or the execution of the law, is the life of the law. When the law is not executed, it is absolutely worthless. Every law must have sanctions. If there is no sanction, the law is useless and worthless. It is true that, as the body of Christ, we may not be able to execute every law, but we can proclaim God’s sanctions against sin and wickedness.

How else will the wicked ever know what is wicked and wrong if we do not tell them? Fallen man could care less. He believes that his wickedness is right because he is doing his own thing, following his feelings and desires, and living out what he wants. “It has to be right. I feel good about this. I enjoy this.” How will he ever know?

You remember what the old Puritans always used to say: the sharp needle of the law must precede the scarlet thread of the gospel. If the church does not proclaim, preach, and teach, how will the wicked know? Biblical justice is based upon the eternal, fixed standard of the goodness and righteousness found in the character of God and revealed in His Word. The Church of Jesus Christ, as a body, must speak out against sin. We must speak out against sodomy, transgenderism, fornication, fraud, and tyranny—political, civil, and even spiritual. We have to.

Speaking out is absolutely needed and necessary. If we do not, we are compromising with the world. That is exactly what we are doing now. Speaking out is needed and necessary, but there are things and times when that is all we can do. In one sense, there are things over

which the church does not have control. I usually tell people, "I cannot control the President of the United States."

Church Discipline: A Case Study from 1 Corinthians 5

I wish I could, but I cannot control Congress. I wish I could, but I cannot control the court system. I do not have any practical control over that. I do have control in the sense that there are imprecatory prayers in the Bible, and I can certainly pray. But there are some things I do not control, while those over which the body of Christ does have control require more than speaking out.

Consider 1 Corinthians 5. The Apostle Paul tells these Corinthians, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Here is a case that not only had to be spoken against, but also needed to be judged. A biblical censure, a biblical judgment, must be given in such an instance. This is normally what you and I would call church discipline.

Before considering this case and its outcome, I want to point out at least three reasons for church discipline—three reasons for biblical justice as a congregational necessity. First, church discipline, or congregational justice, must be accomplished for the honor and glory of God. Scripture demands that we grasp the fact that God's honor and the honor of His law are at stake in this issue. We must give forth an honest, true, and just judgment.

We cannot pretend that sin does not exist. That is the way a lot of people handle it: we simply pretend that this did not happen. It did happen. It will happen. It has happened. Therefore, it has to be dealt

with. We cannot pretend as if it did not happen. Speaking out is certainly needed and necessary, that is for sure. But something has to be done. By refusing to engage in what you and I would call congregational justice, we end up praising and justifying the wicked.

Proverbs chapter 17, verse 15, says, “He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord.” The word abomination means a stench in the nostrils. God says that he who justifies the wicked is a stench in His nostrils, and he who condemns the just is a stench in His nostrils.

What we have failed to understand is this: when we fail to speak out, and when we fail to execute biblical justice as a congregation, what we are doing, in essence, is sinning by silence and by consent. Psalm 50 makes this plain, beginning with verse 16. God 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? Now, look, seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thy back.”

Many times we keep our mouths shut when we should speak out. When we see evil, keep our mouths shut, and do nothing according to God, we are hating His instructions and casting His word behind our backs. Then He says, “When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentest with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.” When you saw a thief and consented with him, how did you consent? You never said anything. How did you become a partaker with adulterers? You knew it was happening, but you never said anything and never did anything. You pretended as if it was not happening whatsoever.

In other words, we can sin by silence. When we are silent in condemning sin, silent in censuring sin, and silent in judging sin, we are actually giving our consent to sin and giving consent to the individuals engaged in it. God calls it wicked because we are casting His word behind our backs.

Church Discipline for the Good of Others

Church discipline is not only for God's honor and God's glory; it is also for the good and benefit of others.

There is a phrase that occurs repeatedly in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament: "So shalt thou put evil away from among you," or "from the midst of thee." And so shall the people fear the Lord thy God. In Deuteronomy 17:7, speaking of the man who deserved to die, God said that the hands of the witnesses must first be upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people: "so shalt thou put the evil away from among you." It is the same principle, the exact same truth, that the Apostle Paul enunciated in 1 Timothy 5:20: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

If someone is in need of biblical justice from the congregation and none is given, that encourages everyone else to sin as well: If he got by with it, I can get by with it. If they are not going to judge or discipline him, they are not going to discipline me. Thus, it is an encouragement to sin. God said this is not only for His honor and glory, but also for the benefit of others, that they may fear. This is a warning from God.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 12:21, "And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed." Paul said, You had better deal with this. If you do not, it will encourage others to sin. Biblical justice in the congregation is not only for God's honor and glory; it is also for the good and benefit of others, that they may fear.

But here is the third reason: it is for the benefit of the individual who sinned. In 1 Corinthians 5:4–5, the Apostle Paul said, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Although someone is disciplined or justice is executed in the congregation, it is not for his destruction. It is for his benefit, that the spirit may be saved.

Church discipline, or biblical justice in the congregation, may not be enjoyable to the transgressor, but it is for his benefit.

When you look at 1 Corinthians 5, this sin is so atrocious. There are basically two views. The first, from one author, is that it was

probably a permanent union: the man and his stepmother used her as a concubine or mistress, or in some manner without formal marriage, like John 4. The woman probably was not the offender's mother; in other words, she was his stepmother. The father may have been dead or divorced.

I like what Matthew Poole says better: "That one should have his father's wife." By having his father's wife in this place, it is not to be understood as marrying his father's wife, his father being dead, but as using his father's wife as his wife while his father was yet alive. Some judicious interpreters think this is true, because hardly any nation would have endured a son openly to have married the widow of his father. In 2 Corinthians 7:12, there is mention made not only of one that has done, but of another that has suffered the wrong, which latter must be the father himself.

So there was both incest and whoredom in this act. Here, then, was a man in 1 Corinthians 5 who had taken his stepmother from his father, or at least was using her basically as his wife.

The direction of the Apostle Paul was to execute biblical justice upon him, congregationally speaking, and to deliver him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. The Apostle Paul also used that same language in 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 20, when he was talking about Hymenaeus and Alexander: "whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." So, in the case of 1 Corinthians chapter 5, the end of church discipline, or biblical justice in the congregation, is not to destroy the transgressor, but to restore the transgressor. It is to cast him over and turn him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh—that is, for the maceration of the flesh, the affliction of the flesh, the grief and sorrow—that the spirit may be saved.

This is an awful thought in one sense of the word. Do you realize what it might possibly be like to be delivered over to Satan? What that would mean is that God withdraws His protection away from that man and allows Satan to destroy him any way he wants to destroy him, and attack him any way he wants to attack him. I hope you remember that in Luke chapter 22 and verse 31, our Lord looked at Peter and said, "Simon, Simon," He said, "Satan hath desired to

have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

The Outcome of Biblical Justice: Restoration and Forgiveness

The Greek word for "sift" there is siniazo. It literally means to sift, to shake in a sieve, and figuratively refers to someone who is shaken into pieces, basically, just as you would take flour, put it in a sieve, shake it and shake it, and finally grind it out. That is exactly the word here. Our Lord said, "Satan has desired to have you that he might run you through the ringer." Here, this man is turned over to the devil for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved.

Let me ask you a question. Did biblical justice work in this instance? The answer, of course, is yes. So, if you will turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 2, I want to show you something else. I did not mention this earlier, but here it is brought out very plainly. Look in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, and let us begin reading there with verse 4. 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 4.

The Word of God says, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you, with many tears." It broke Paul's heart—not that they should be grieved, but that they might know the love which he had more abundantly unto them. If any had caused grief, he had not grieved personally, but in part, that he might not overcharge them all. Concerning this man, he says, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many."

The whole body executed biblical justice. Evidently there was repentance, so Paul says, "Contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him." He wrote to know the proof of them, whether they would be obedient in all things. "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also. For if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ."

Do you realize that congregational justice evidences whether or not you are obedient to the Word of God? Church discipline evidences whether or not you are obedient to the Word of God. Paul

forgave in the person of Christ, and he did so for their sakes. Then he says it was necessary to act, “lest Satan should get an advantage over us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” When he came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, a door was opened to him of the Lord. Sufficient to such a man? Yes. Forgiving? Yes. Lest Satan should get an advantage over us—we are not going to allow that to happen.

Corporate Accountability and the Threat of Ichabod

Let me try to tie things together for you. I want you to understand that biblical justice requires accountability. It requires accountability not only individually and personally, but it also requires accountability congregationally. Jesus Christ is the head of his church. Jesus Christ is the head of the body. The body is to move in response to the head. Just as it is possible for individuals to sin, it is also possible for congregations to sin. I hope you remember that in the book of Leviticus, among all those sacrifices, God mentioned a sacrifice specifically for the people as individuals. Then he mentioned another sacrifice for the prince or the ruler, another sacrifice for the priest, and then there was another sacrifice for the entire congregation.

I want you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Revelation chapter 2. Notice, if you would please, verse 5, at what our Lord said to the church. Our Lord was writing to the church of Ephesus and he says this: “Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” You remember that the word Ichabod means, “The glory has departed.” This is exactly the same truth. He tells the local church, unless you repent, I will come quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place.

Now, if you go back to Revelation chapter 1, the seven stars in the right hand of our Lord are the messengers, or the preachers, or the angels, or the pastors of the church. But the candlesticks are the church itself. So our Lord said, unless the church, the individual church, the bodies, unless they repent, “I will remove thy candlestick out of his place.” Think of all the multitudinous church buildings in

this land that are filled with people that never hear the Word of God. Stop and think about that.

I was down in Tampa, Florida, visiting my daughter and her family. They lived there then, and a hurricane was coming through. All stores were cleaned out, but it had not hit, so my son-in-law was going to take us out to supper. Passing a Baptist church, I saw this on the marquee and have never forgotten it: "Come as our early service. In by eight, out by 30."

Now, wait a minute. That was a Baptist church. They were going to pray, sing, take an offering, and have a benediction—which meant a ten-minute sermonette. It was designed to salve the consciences of the people on their way to the beach.

I've got news for you. This is why you can walk into many church buildings and never hear the Word of God. It is like a story I heard about an old Western worker who was in town working. He came to church in his dirty work clothes because he did not have time to change or bathe; he came to worship God. Everybody looked at him, and hardly anybody spoke to him. But he came back.

Finally, after about the third time, the pastor said, "Well, sir, based upon the way you dress and your uncleanness, we think it might be best if you found another church to worship in." The old cowboy replied, "Yes, sir, I understand. I already prayed about this." Then he said, "The Lord told me He had been trying to get in this church for forty years. No reason for me to try now."

Do you realize the truth of that? You laugh, but it is true. When the church does not move as a body and is not interested in congregational justice, what makes you think it will be interested in civil justice? What makes you think it will be interested in personal justice? God said, "Unless you repent, I will remove thy candlestick out of his place." It is necessary and proper for a congregation to repent when the body has sinned or allowed sin in its midst.

Conclusion: Pursue Unity and Obedience

Biblical justice acknowledges our culpability, accepts the consequences of our sins, and attempts to correct things by repenting and turning back in obedience and faith to the Lord Jesus

Christ and to His Word. Without justice, society disintegrates. Without biblical justice, churches also disintegrate. An Ichabod is written over the church. God requires biblical justice in every area. If I could leave you with one thing, I want you to think about this.

It is your responsibility as individuals to obey Ephesians chapter 4 when the Bible says, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It is up to you to pursue one mind, one mouth, one motive, and one mission. If you move together as a body, regardless of what it is, you will accomplish great things for God. But if you fight amongst yourself and start having personal opinions contrary to Scripture, saying, "I just don't fit in, I don't see this," no, no, no. You might not see or understand, but if it is in the Word of God, you can bow to it. And you had better bow to it. God requires justice in the church, just like He does in the judicial system, in the civil system, and in our lives.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We ask, Lord, that You would indeed help us as a church: when it comes to discipline, when it comes to missions, when it comes to whatever, Lord, to move as a body without fighting, without feigning. Help us, Lord, to have the mind of Jesus Christ, that we may say the things that Jesus Christ would have us to say, that we would have as our end His honor and His glory, and that we would look for a successful mission from Him resulting, Lord, again in His honor and His glory. Give us Your grace, we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and whose name we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 27

We Must Be Turned

January 7, 2013

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 80:1-19 (KJV)

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the

> way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.
>
> Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

We Must Be Turned

Introduction: The Stubbornness of Man

Years ago, when I was a boy, my cousin Larry came to visit me from Miami, Florida. He was a city boy and did not know much about country life. When he saw our mule, he declared that he wanted to ride the horse. After explaining the difference between a horse and a mule, I placed the bridle on the old mule we called Old Crip. We called her Old Crip, or Old Cripple, because after she worked a while, she would begin to limp. I put the bridle on her and climbed onto her back.

I had ridden her many times, and I helped Larry up behind me. We left the barn and went about thirty yards. Right in front of us stood a huge pecan tree with low-hanging limbs, and that mule headed straight for one of them. I had the reins in my hand and tried to turn her, but the mule would not turn. She kept walking straight toward the limb. I pulled the left rein until her head was twisted up, but she still kept walking toward it.

Knowing that I could not turn the mule, I said, “Duck, Larry.” Then I laid down on the mule’s neck and grabbed her. My city cousin looked straight up into the sky and said, “Where?” Just as the limb caught him across the chest, it swept him off the mule, and he hit the ground with a thud on his rear end. I could not help but laugh. He became angry and accused me of deliberately driving the mule under

the limb. I did not. Till the day he died, he swore that I had done it on purpose.

The truth of the matter is this: mules are known for their stubbornness, recalcitrance, and hard-headedness, and so are sinners. Fallen man in the Bible is likened unto an ass. Stubbornness, recalcitrance, hard-headedness, and rebellion are attributes of fallen man. He may rightly be compared to an ass in the Bible. Let me show you.

Man's Inability to Turn Himself

I want you to turn in your Bibles. Hold Psalm 80, we're coming right back there. But I want you to look first of all in the book of Exodus chapter 34 and verse 20. Exodus 34 and verse 20. And let me show you what was to be done with an ass if he was not redeemed. Notice Exodus chapter 34 and verse 20. Look what God says. Exodus 34 and verse 20: "But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty." But note if you would, the ass had to be redeemed or he faced the death penalty.

It's the same thing with sinners. We're either redeemed or we face the death sentence. If you would turn right over in your Bibles to the book of Job and look in chapter 11 and verse 12. Job chapter 11 and verse 12. And look if you would what the scripture says in this passage. Job 11 and verse 12. The Bible says, "For thou hast said," let's see, Job 11 I said in verse 12. Yeah.

"For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." Vain man, that is useless, worthless man would be wise, though he be born like a wild ass's colt.

Now if you would turn to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 22. And look at verses 18 and 19. Jeremiah 22. And let me show you what God says about Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim was a king. He was a wicked, ungodly reprobate. But notice in Jeremiah chapter 22, beginning there with verse 18. Jeremiah 22 verse 18: "Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah;

They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem." So God did not think too much of Jehoiakim. And what do you do when an ass dies? You just dig a hole and push him in it, and that's it.

It's over with, it's done with. It's kind of like the preacher who called the police department one Sunday morning and he said, "There is a dead jackass in front of my house." The police officer kind of laughed, said, knowing it was the preacher, he had identified himself, he said, "I thought the preachers took care of burying the dead." Well, the preacher said, "We do. But we normally notify the next of kin first." So sometimes preachers do get the points in.

But notice if you would, here's Jehoiakim. God said he will be buried with the burial of an ass.

In Hosea 8:9, God says concerning Israel, “For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.” So God calls Israel here a wild ass alone.

I shared these verses for one simple point: man cannot turn himself. He cannot change himself. He may be responsible to do so, but he does not have the ability to do so. In Jeremiah 13:23, God asks, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” Note the question: Can the Ethiopian change his skin?

And the answer is no. Can the leopard change his spots? The answer is no. Then he says, if they cannot do that, may you also do good who are accustomed to doing evil? In other words, you cannot change either. You are just as bad as the Ethiopian and the leopard in that sense; you do not have the ability. So it is impossible for fallen man to cease from doing evil. He cannot change himself; he cannot turn himself. And sin, by the way, is not just a habit. Sin is something ingrained in the nature of fallen man.

He sins based upon his own natural inclinations and his own natural desires. Psalm 58:3 shows how ingrained our depravity is: “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.” Their poison is like the poison of a

serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

Notice that the wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Even little babies do that. You say they cannot even speak. No, but they can cry and make you think that something is wrong with them. They are already acting according to their own natural inclinations and desires. This is not merely a learned habit acquired later; it is ingrained in the nature of fallen man.

You go pick them up, and they stop crying. Nothing was wrong with them. They just wanted attention; they wanted to be held. Have you ever noticed this? You never ever had to teach any of your children how to sin. They just did it normally, naturally. You did not have to teach them to lie. You did not have to teach them to cheat. You did not have to teach them to do anything. They learned those things on their own.

You see, the truth of the matter is this: sinners are prone to sin. It is in our nature. We want it. We desire it. We are going to have it one way or the other. The fact of the matter is, you take a man outside of Christ, and he is not going to listen, and he is not going to turn himself. It is absolutely impossible. Sinners, then, will not turn in and of themselves. They cannot change by themselves.

The Deception of Self-Repentance

Now, the problem with many professing Christians is that they have been deceived into thinking that somehow they can turn themselves around. In fact, many Christians have swallowed the lie of the flesh and the lie of the devil that they can sin and then simply repent at their leisure. You remember that old saying, “sin in haste, repent at leisure”? It does not simply work like that. Many Christians are lured into sin by the promise of an easy and speedy repentance.

Let me tell you something. Repentance does not belong to the devil to give. Repentance is not in our flesh. It is not in our power. We cannot work up repentance, no matter how hard we try. Scripture tells us—and I am going to show it to you just momentarily—that repentance is the gift of God. Here is what

happens: when sinners or Christians think that somehow they can sin and repent whenever they want to, they begin to ease down the sinful road. The next thing they find out is that sin has them ensnared, and they do not even have a desire to stop, a desire to turn, or a desire to repent. They are actually captured in their sin. The truth is, if God does not turn us, we will never be turned. If God does not give us repentance, we will never repent.

I want you to look in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 2, beginning there with verse 24. You will find that the Apostle Paul enunciates this principle very clearly. Notice 2 Timothy chapter 2, beginning there with verse 24. He says this: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,"

"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

Why does the pastor have to be gentle, apt to teach, and patient? It is not enough that he be apt to teach; he must be patient in his teaching. Why? The text says, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

According to these verses, when do men recover themselves out of the snare of the devil? The answer is, when God gives them repentance, or when they acknowledge the truth. When do they acknowledge the truth? When God gives them repentance. If men do not acknowledge the truth, they do not recover themselves out of the snare of the devil. If men are not given repentance, they do not acknowledge the truth. Notice the words, "if God peradventure will give them repentance." Man's recovering himself out of the snare of the devil and man's acknowledging the truth all revolve around God giving repentance. That is why men cannot change themselves.

Christians, as well as the ungodly and wicked and sinners, are oftentimes deceived. Look at what God says about His professing

people in Jeremiah 8. Jeremiah 8 and verse 5 is an amazing verse: "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return." They hold fast deceit.

Turn over in your Bibles to the book of Hosea, right after the book of Daniel. Look at Hosea chapter 11 and verse 7. Look what God says again: "And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him." In other words, they would not listen; they would not come back. Why? As He said in Jeremiah 8:5, they held fast deceit. When men embrace deceit, when they embrace lies, when they embrace untruths, they will not hear.

Now turn back in your Bibles to Psalm 80. Consider with me the prayer and the plea and the petition of Asaph in this Psalm. One verse occurs three times, and each time it is exactly the same. In verse 3 is the prayer: "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." In verse 7: "Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." Then in verse 19: "Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." Three times, Asaph requested the same petition; three times he enunciated the same request.

Responsibility vs. Ability

Before proceeding, listen carefully and consider the difference between responsibility and ability. You may be responsible to do something, but if you do not have the ability to do it, you cannot fulfill your responsibility. There is a difference between these two things. I may have a responsibility to support my wife, but if I am in an automobile wreck and am paralyzed, I cannot do that. I still have the responsibility, but I do not have the ability. Just because someone has the responsibility does not necessarily imply that they have the ability. But men are responsible to turn themselves. They are responsible to turn, first of all, by virtue of the fact that God is our Creator.

God made us and gave us life and being; consequently, we are responsible and accountable to Him. Every creature is responsible and accountable to God because God is the Creator. Every sinner is

responsible to God. We owe Him honor and glory by virtue of being His creatures, but now we owe Him repentance and faith because we are sinners. God is sovereign, and He has not lost His right to issue commands. Over and over in the Bible, He commands men to turn from their wicked ways.

Thirdly, fallen man has lost his ability to please God. Romans chapter 8 should make this exceedingly clear: “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

How many sinners have the ability to please God? Not one. None. If we are in the flesh, we do not have the ability to please God. It is just that simple. God says, “Here is your responsibility.” But since you fell, you now lack ability.

Here is the pressing question: If sinners cannot please God, if they have no power to turn to Him, why does God demand that they do so? God knows they do not have the ability or the power. Why, then, does He demand that they repent and turn to Him?

The answer is twofold. First, just because sinners have lost their power to obey does not mean that God has lost His right to command. God is still God. He is still sovereign, still the ruler, still the King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods, and He may do as He pleases. And God does.

The second answer is this: When sinners recognize their responsibility and accountability before God, yet perceive their powerlessness, helplessness, and inability, it should drive them to His grace and mercy, begging Him to give them that ability.

Much like old blind Bartimaeus in Mark chapter 10, when he heard that Jesus came that way, what did he begin to do? He began to cry, saying, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Finally, all those around him said, "Shh, no, no, no, don't bother him." When he heard that, he cried even louder, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me." When you realize you can't, then you always want to go to the one who can.

And let me tell you something: as long as fallen man thinks he can, he never will. As long as you think you have the key in your hand, you will never ever seek God.

Before I look at Psalm 80, I want to show you two verses, two passages, where God commands sinners to turn. God does exercise His right to command. In Ezekiel chapter 18 and verse 32, God says this: "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." God said, I don't have any pleasure in the death of the wicked, or pleasure in the death of him that dieth. God says, turn. It's just that simple. Turn. He commands it.

Turn right over to the book of Zechariah, which should be right before the book of Malachi. Zechariah chapter 1, verses 3 and 4: "Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD." So here's what God is saying: Why in the world are you going to die like your fathers did? Turn. Turn you to Me. You turn to Me, God says, and I will turn to you.

Now, I want you to understand something. When God commands sinners to turn, He is emphasizing their responsibility, their accountability. This is even true with Christians. I am going to show you how applicable this is. I want you to understand that it is our responsibility to turn and change ourselves. Think with me now. It is our responsibility to turn and change our families. It is our responsibility to turn and change our churches. It is our responsibility to turn and change our nation.

But we do not have the ability. We do not have the power. The power and the ability and the salvation belong to God alone.

The Directed Favor: Appeal to God

With that in mind, go back to Psalm 80 and consider verse 3. There are three truths I want you to see. First of all, the directed favor.

Asaph is praying, and he says in verse 3, here is his petition: "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." The psalmist directs his desired favor to the one true and living God. "Turn us again, O God of hosts," as he says in verse 7 and in verse 19. First of all, let me say this: the appeal is to God, to the Lord God of hosts.

You must remember that the word "hosts" refers to armies. God then is the Lord God of the armies of heaven and of earth. The psalmist is appealing to the sovereign God, the One who is in ultimate control, the One who has all authority. He is appealing to the right person because God is the only One who can really do anything about this.

Secondly, note in verse 3 that he says, "Turn us again, O Lord." The appeal is not only to God; secondly, the appeal is to turn us.

The Hebrew word here is shub, and it literally means to turn back, to restore, and to bring back—to turn back, to restore, and to bring back. So he says, "Turn us again, O God." Now go back up to verse 1. He says, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth." In verse 1, God is designated as a shepherd. Since God is our shepherd, the appeal here is from the sheep to the God of heaven, the great Shepherd, to turn us.

The Need for Personal, Not Just Circumstantial, Change

Now understand what the psalmist is saying: "Turn us." He did not say, "Change our conditions, change our situation." He said, "Turn us." It is not our situation, circumstances, or conditions that need to be changed; it is we, the people, who need to be changed. We are the ones who need to be turned. When God turns His people, He will always turn their condition, circumstances, and situation. But if He does not turn us, then we will never be turned.

Do you realize what most people want? Stop and think about this in our nation. I hear people moaning and groaning because our economy is in the pits. I concur; it is bad. Look at the persecution. It is bad. Look at the loss of freedom and righteousness. It is bad. But

most people want their conditions, circumstances, and situations changed just so they can live in sin more favorably. Have you ever stopped to think about that?

The psalmist is saying, "Turn us." We are the ones who need to be turned. God is called the Shepherd of Israel in verse 1. Sheep are notorious wanderers; they always get themselves into unsafe and precarious situations. Sinners do the same thing. Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

That is exactly what we have done in this country. We must be turned to the Lord's way and not our own. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Do you want to follow some man because his way seems right and end up dead, or do you want to follow the Lord, do that which is right, and be in the right way?

In Proverbs 8:36, our Lord said, "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." Some years ago I preached a message on this passage entitled "A Society of Death." That is exactly what we have today: a society of death.

The clear implication of this prayer and petition is that we must be turned, and we cannot turn ourselves. We need to be turned individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally.

The Repeated Need for Turning

Thirdly, note this appeal: the psalmist prays, "Turn us again, Lord God of hosts." When I read that, I thought, Look at that prayer: "Turn us again." Verse 7, "Turn us again." Verse 19, "Turn us again." My immediate question was, How many times do we have to be turned? What did he pray? "Turn us again." This implies that they had been turned before, and it did not take with them. Let me show you. Hold Psalm 80 and go back in your Bibles to the book of Judges, chapter 2. I am not going through all the book of Judges, though I could; I want you to see these passages. Beginning with verse 11, we read: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

They forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. 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 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.

So what did they do? They turned from God, and God judged them and chastised them. When they cried, and hollered, and bellowed, God raised up a judge and delivered them. But after that judge died, they went back to their same old sinful ways.

Judges chapter 2, verse 16: "Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel."

And he said, "Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died." Then he goes on to say that he is going to leave those nations there to prove them. They are going to be a thorn in their flesh.

The Bible says in verse 19, “And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers.” It did not matter that God had judged their former

fathers, or the people who had already died. They did not learn one thing. They had been turned, but they did not turn permanently. They turned only temporarily. Over and over in the book of Judges, God delivered them; and when the judge died, they went right back to their own wickedness.

Then they went into captivity and cried again. God raised up another judge, and the cycle continued over and over. Is there a time when God will no longer turn a people? How long will He be provoked? Is there a limit to despising the grace and mercy of God? Does there come a time when we cease to have the right or privilege even to ask God for turning grace? Israel certainly reached the state of being no longer a turnable nation or people.

In Hosea 1:6, speaking of Hosea's wife, who was basically a harlot, the Bible says, "And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away." Her name literally means "not pitied." God said, "I'm not going to turn them anymore. I'm not messing with them anymore. I'm going to destroy them. I will no longer have mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away."

Has America reached that point? Stop and think. The psalmist prayed, "Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts." It is amazing how God has had His hand upon this country, and how many times and in how many ways we have turned consistently and constantly from Him. Here is the directed favor: "Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts."

The Desire of Faith: God's Shining Face

Secondly, note the desire of faith. In Psalm 80:3 he says, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine." Have you ever stopped to think what it means to have God's face shine upon us? What would that imply? What would it be like to have God smile upon our lives, our families, our churches, and our nation?

Now let me show you what the psalmist is talking about. Hold Psalm 80, but go back to Psalm 4 and verse 6. There is a parallel verse here, and although it is worded differently, it means basically

the same thing. The psalmist says, “There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?” Notice that this is a question. Then he says, “LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.”

The phrase, “lift up the light of thy countenance upon us,” occurs very frequently in Scripture. It expresses God’s favor, friendship, and approval. The light of God’s presence and the shining of His face relate to His gracious presence, the manifestation of His love and mercies, the discoveries of His love, communion with Him, the comforts of His Spirit, and the joys of His salvation.

We have to understand that these are by far the greatest riches. Spurgeon, looking at Psalm 4 and verse 6, says, “There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?” “Any good” would refer to physical or material good. But David said, “LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” Spurgeon wrote, “The light of God's countenance is enough for him. This is his riches, his honor, his health, his ambition, his ease. Give him this and he will ask for nothing more. This is joy unspeakable and full of glory. Oh, for more of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that our fellowship with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ may be constant and abiding.”

Psalm 5, verse 12, speaks of the same truth: “For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.” When we speak of the countenance of God and God shining upon us, we are speaking of God’s favor, grace, and blessing.

One of my favorite Puritans is William Secker, who wrote a book called The Nonsuch Professor in 1660. I have the little book; it is a jewel. Listen to what William Secker wrote on Psalm 4 and verse 6, contrasting “any good” with the light of God’s countenance: “Lest riches should be accounted evil in themselves, God sometimes gives them to the righteous; and lest they should be considered the chief good, he frequently bestows them upon the wicked.”

But these blessings are more generally the portion of his enemies than his friends. Alas, what is it to receive and not to be received? To have no other dues of blessing than such as shall be followed by showers of brimstone? We may compass ourselves with sparks of security and afterwards be secured in eternal misery. This world is a

floating island, and so sure as we cast anchor upon it, we shall be carried away by it.

"God and all that He has made is not more than God without anything that He has made." He is still God, is what he is saying. "He can never want treasure who has such a golden mind. He, God, is enough without the creature, but the creature is not anything without Him. It is therefore better to enjoy Him without anything else than to enjoy everything else without Him. It is better to be in a wooden vessel filled with wine than a golden one filled with water." That is true. Would you like to be on a solid golden vessel filled with water? You are going down. But a wooden vessel that floats is far more secure than a gold one that does not float.

The shining of God's face and the lifting up of His countenance were a priestly blessing. Numbers 6:24 says, "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." That was the priestly blessing: the Lord causing His face to shine upon you and lifting up His countenance upon you. It was expressive of the same thing.

Now, one last point. Psalm 80:3 gives us directed favor: "Turn us again, O God." Here is the desire of faith: "and cause thy face to shine upon us"; and here is the declaration of fact: "and we shall be saved." When God turns Himself to us and causes His face to shine upon us, we shall be saved.

The Declaration of Fact: Salvation Belongs to the Lord

Salvation is the Lord and of Him alone. Most of you have probably never heard of Savonarola. He was burned at the stake on May 23, 1498, for exposing corruption in the Roman Catholic Church and defying the Pope. Savonarola had a prayer based upon Psalm 80:3. Remember this; it was his prayer.

"Turn us and cause thy face to shine. To thyself convert us from the earthly to the heavenly. Convert our rebellious wills to thee. And when we are converted, show thy countenance that we may know thee. Show thy power that we may fear thee. Show thy wisdom that we may reverence thee. Show thy goodness that we may love thee.

Show them once, show them a second time, show them always, that through tribulation we may pass with a happy face and be saved. When thou dost save, we shall be saved. When thou wouldst draw thy hand, we cannot be saved."

And that certainly is true. Do you know when we are going to be saved? The answer is, when God turns us. That is true individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally. When God turns us, we shall be saved from ourselves, our dangers, and our troubles. When God causes His face to shine upon us, we shall be saved from our sins and from ruin. It is only by His smile, His favor, and His countenance lifting up upon us that we can be saved in any sense of the word. All that we need individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally is the Lord's favor, the Lord's smile.

One glance of His gracious eye would transform Tophet into a paradise. No matter how fierce the foe or how dire the captivity, the shining face of God ensures both victory and liberty. We need to learn to pray this prayer: "Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved." It is only national holiness that will ensure national happiness.

In this prayer, "Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts. Cause thy face to shine and we shall be saved," there is an acknowledgement as well as a confession that all our troubles, trials, and heartaches are brought upon us and caused by our own sin and rebellion against God and His Word. It is our sins that have hidden His face from us.

Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2, says, “Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” Our sins and iniquities cause God's frown. When we pray, “Turn us again, O LORD God. Cause thy face to shine and we shall be saved,” we acknowledge that we are the cause of the problem. Remember, God is immutable; He does not change. We change, and we sin. This prayer acknowledges and confesses that we cannot turn ourselves.

We cannot save ourselves. We cannot save our children, our families, our churches, or our nation. We cannot do anything. If God

does not turn us, if God does not do something, we will not be saved. It is His power and His ability.

Conclusion: Praying for Turning Grace

Jeremiah 31:18 says, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."

When did Ephraim repent? Only after he was turned. He said, "when I was instructed," and after he was turned, "I smote upon my thigh. I understood it. I was ashamed and even confounded because I did bear the reproach of my youth." What is he saying? If God does not turn us, we do not repent. If we do not repent, we can never be ashamed and sorrowful for our wickedness and for our sins. Are you listening?

That is true individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally. We need to learn to pray with Asaph: "Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, and cause Thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved."

If God is not pleased to save this country, He might be pleased to save several states that would repent and come to righteousness. He might be pleased to save a people saying, "Lord, we've had enough of sin and wickedness. We want Thee, and Thy law, and Thy mercy, and Thy grace." We need to learn to pray, "Turn us again." We should be ashamed that we even have to pray that. Again? "Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, and cause Thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved."

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask You for Your grace, Your mercy, and Your help. How desperately we need Thee.

Powerless and helpless, we are nothing and can do nothing in and of ourselves. We confess with Asaph: Lord, if You do not turn us, we will never be turned, and we will never be saved. We need Thy countenance; we need Thy blessing, favor, grace, and power. Grant

us, O Lord, a turning back to Thee in Thy righteousness. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 28

Second Opportunities

July 28, 2024

SCRIPTURE READING - Jonah 3:1-10 (KJV)

Introduction: God of Second Opportunities

"And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered

> with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."
>
> There's an old saying that opportunity only knocks once. That old saying may be true in relationship to man, but it's not true in relationship to God. Jonah, the runaway prophet, is given a second opportunity to obey God. He's given a second opportunity to obey and accomplish the will of God after his repentance. We are all sinners by nature. And I might also add that we are also selfish by nature.

Oftentimes we idolize our own thoughts and our own desires. In fact, we idolize them to the extent that we place our thinking and our desires above God, His Word, and His will. That is exactly what Jonah did, and that is exactly what we do oftentimes. Jonah thought that he knew more than God, and he certainly did not want to see the Assyrians spared. Thus, in Jonah 3:1, the Bible says that the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying...

Jonah Counted Faithful by God

John Trapp, the old Puritan, said this concerning Jonah: "Jonah is a sinner and not a castaway. God does not lay him aside as a broken vessel, or tread him under unto the dunghill as unsavory salt, but receives him upon his return by repentance, and restores him to his former employment, gives him yet a name and a nail in his house, yet sends him a second time on his message to Nineveh, and counting him faithful, puts him again into the ministry, who was before a runaway and a rebel."

The thing that caught my attention in this quotation was the last statement concerning Jonah: God sends him a second time on his message to Nineveh and, counting him faithful, puts him into the ministry. So the question automatically arises: How in the world can Jonah, by any stretch of the imagination, be counted faithful when

he ran away from God, ran away from his commission, and did not want to preach that which God ordained him to preach?

The Apostle Paul gives us an answer in 1 Timothy 1:12–13: “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

The interesting thing about verse 12 is that the Apostle Paul said Jesus Christ counted him faithful. How in the world could the Apostle Paul be counted faithful, in the sense that he himself confessed that, before he was saved, he had been a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious? Yet even after he was saved, you cannot say that the Apostle Paul was absolutely perfect. Neither can you say that the Apostle Paul was faithful in all things.

He was a sinner just like Jonah. He's a sinner just like you and I are sinners. But the interesting thing about verse 12 is the word "counted." The Greek word happens to be the word hegeomai, and it means to consider, to deem, to account, and to think. So, the Apostle Paul is just simply saying that God counted him as faithful.

The Meaning of 'Counted' (Hegeomai)

Now, I want to very quickly give you two other passages where this same exact Greek word occurs, so you can grasp the understanding of it. So if you'll look in your Bibles to the book of Philippians chapter 3, Philippians chapter 3, and notice if you would please verse 7, and I'm sure that you will remember the context of this, because in this passage the Apostle Paul is giving his pedigree, and he's telling you everything that he was before the Lord converted him. And then he adds this in verse 7, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." So what Paul does in this passage, he talks about his ancestry, he talks about his education, his stature in life, and he may also have had money because the Bible tells us that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, which I'm sure cost money as well. The Apostle Paul said that all of these things that he valued before his conversion, after his conversion, after he saw the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, he counted them but dung.

Now the question you'd have to ask is this, is ancestry dung? No. Is education dung? No. But what the Apostle Paul is saying, everything that he had, everything that he was, everything that he possessed before Jesus Christ, in comparison to Jesus Christ and His grace and mercy, everything by him was counted as dung. It was deemed worthless. It was thought to be worthless. Now, the Apostle said that God counted him faithful.

Let me give you another one. If you look in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 10 and verse 29. Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 29, because here, we're reading about the Lord Jesus Christ, and you're going to see the word "counted," the same Greek word, hegeomai. Look at it in verse 29: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" So here's the question. Is the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work something to be despised as unholy and unneeded?

And the answer is no. And yet there are some who count His person and His work as worthless and useless. But Jesus Christ is still salvation. Jesus Christ is still the Son of God incarnate. Jesus Christ is still the only way to be saved, regardless of people who count Him as worthless and useless. So the Apostle Paul is saying that God counted him faithful; whether he was or not is immaterial. This is what Trapp was saying about Jonah: God counted him as faithful.

The truth of the matter is this: each one who is counted faithful is counted that way only because we are in the Lord Jesus Christ. Who is the faithful witness? Who is faithful in every area? Who was the obedient Son of God? We are counted faithful only because of Christ.

Calvin said it like this: “There is here set before us a remarkable proof of God's grace, that he was pleased to bestow on Jonah his former dignity and honor. He was indeed unworthy of the common light, but God not only restored him to life, but favored him again with the office and honor of a prophet. This, as I've said, Jonah obtained through the wonderful and singular favor of God. As he had previously fled and by disobedience deprived himself in a manner of

all God's favor, the recovery of his prophetic office was certainly not obtained through his own merit." What God did was simply restore Jonah. God gave him back the honor as well as the office of that prophetic office.

God Restores and Re-commissions Jonah

Here is the point that I want to make, and that I think is exceedingly applicable to us today: God does something very unlike most Christians. God takes the man who has sinned, grants him repentance, restores him, and uses him again. Just because someone sins, God does not necessarily toss him into the garbage can. He does not necessarily put him on the shelf. He does not necessarily press him down into the dunghill. No, what He does is chastise him, give him repentance, give him forgiveness, and then send him again in obedience to His command.

In fact, the truth of the matter is that you and I are commanded to do the same. Look in your Bibles at Galatians, chapter 6, verses 1 and 2: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Then verse 2 says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

The Believer's Duty to Restore the Fallen

We must consider the fact that each of us is weak, sinful, and prone to the flesh. The only reason that you and I have not fallen is the grace and mercy of God. Christians are usually the only group I know that try to slay the walking wounded. When a man gets down, it appears that most Christians are ready to stomp him further into the ground. We gossip and tattle; we do anything and everything other than try to restore the individual.

We are like chickens when they start pecking at one: they peck until blood comes, and once they taste blood, they continue pecking until they kill the hen. That is usually the way Christians work. The truth is, the only reason any of us are left standing is the grace, mercy, and patience of God. If God took each one of us, placed us on the shelf, and counted us absolutely unworthy, there would be no one left.

Each of us sins, and each of us is a sinner. You may not have committed the same sins I have committed, and I may not have committed the same sins you have committed, but we have all committed sin. If God simply set us aside, none of us would ever be blessed or used of God. We certainly do not deserve it.

In Galatians 6:1, he says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one.” God commands us to restore a fallen brother. The word “restore” is a present active imperative: an imperative means it is a command, and present active means it is to be done constantly and continually. The Greek word is katartizo, literally meaning to make sound, make complete, and mend that which is broken. Thus, it means to strengthen and perfect, and to make one into what he ought to be.

John Trapp, the old Puritan, said that it is a metaphor from surgeons and bonesetters, who handle their patients tenderly, or from those who take a mote from one's eyes gently and warily. John Gill goes farther: the allusion is to setting bones that are broken or out of joint, which is done with great care and tenderness. Professors fallen into sin are like broken and dislocated bones.

They are out of their place and lose both their comfort and usefulness. They are to be restored by gently telling them their faults and mildly reproving them for them; when sensible of them and troubled by them, by speaking comfortably to them, bringing them again, and resettling them in their former place in the church, restoring them to their former usefulness and good conduct. So this is what the word “restore” means.

In Matthew chapter 4 and verse 21, this same Greek word, katartizo, is used for the mending of nets—in other words, putting everything together the way it should be. If you look back in verse 1 of Galatians chapter 6, he says, “In the spirit of meekness.” When we seek to restore a fallen brother, it is not with a haughty attitude.

It is not with an arrogant attitude: “I’ve never done that,” or “I will never do that.” We have to understand that the only reason we are not that fallen brother is because of the grace of God to us and in us. God has enabled us to stand, and God has not allowed that to

happen to us. We are just as weak. We are just as sinful. God has simply preserved us.

So we need to consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted. Matthew Henry goes a little farther, speaking about Jonah's restoration: "By this it appears that God was perfectly reconciled to Jonah, that he employed him again in his service, and the commission anew given him was an evidence of the remission of his former disobedience. Among men it has been justly pleaded that the giving of a commission to a criminal convicted is equivalent to a pardon. So it was to Jonah. The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time."

God gives Jonah a second opportunity. He gives him the exact same commission and sends him to the exact same spot. Look at Jonah 3:1–2: "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." But notice that God said, "...and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

Jonah was not just sent to preach any message. He was not simply to preach that which he desired to preach, nor that which the Assyrians wanted to hear. He was to preach only that which God ordained him to preach, only that which God commanded. He was to preach the Word of God.

In Jeremiah 23, God is dealing with preachers and prophets who want to preach anything and everything other than the Word of God. One of the biggest problems facing this country is that we have preachers who are not preaching and teaching the Word of God.

The Necessity of Preaching God's Word

If you look in Jeremiah chapter 23, beginning with verse 21, God says, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." God said, These men are preaching; I did not send them. I did not even give them the message. But had they stood in my counsel,

listened to me, and preached my words, they would have caused this people to turn from their evil way.

So let me show you what preachers and prophets are doing that is contrary to God. In verse 26, God says: “How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”

Now watch what these preachers and prophets were doing. He says in verse 30: “Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness. Yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.”

The preachers who refuse to preach the Word of God are absolutely worthless. God accuses them of stealing His Word by talking about their dreams, substituting for the Word of God, and taking from the Word of God. He says they are not doing the people any good whatsoever. You look around today at most pulpits, and most pulpits are doing absolutely nothing.

I laugh many times, and I've thought about this for the longest. I try to study every week. I study every day, practically, unless something unusual happens. A lot of these messages are very time-consuming, especially when you look at the context and linguistics, take time to look up all the words, and make sure you get the interpretation intended in the Scripture. It does take time.

There's no two ways about that. But I've often thought, "Oh, Lord, look how long it takes me to bring a message from the Word of God. But, Lord, how awful it must be and how long it must take some

preachers to make sure that they have a sermon in which they really don't preach anything or teach anything, and to make sure that they don't offend anybody." It must be a hard line and a hard road to hoe to come up with a sermon like that. But that's what God is saying is happening in Jeremiah 23. They profit the people absolutely nothing.

Now, in Jonah chapter 3 and verse 3, when God commissioned Jonah and sent him again to the same city to preach the same message, Jonah was quite willing and ready to go. The Bible says, "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Interestingly, verse 3 says, "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey." Matthew Poole says in his commentary, "An exceeding great city, the greatest city of the known world at that day. It was then in its flourishing state, greater than Babylon, whose compass was 365 or 385 furlongs. But Nineveh was encompassed 480 furlongs. Listen to this. Her walls 100 feet high and broad enough for three coaches or three chariots to meet and to safely pass by each other. The wall had 1,500 towers on it, and these towers were 200 feet high. And 1,400,000 men were employed continually for eight years to build the wall." Wow.

Evidently, it was some city. But this great city, of course, was full of sinners. Jonah was to go to this city and warn them, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." He was to warn them of the impending judgment of God unless they repented. Notice verse 4: "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." It is no longer that Jonah is to cry out against the sins of Nineveh, which were great and multitudinous. He is to cry out against the ultimate destruction of Nineveh. In other words, if nothing happens, if there is no repentance, within forty days Nineveh shall be overthrown. Of course, forty in the Bible is assimilated into our thinking because we understand it to be a figure of judgment.

During Noah's flood, it rained forty days and forty nights, and in the Bible forty is also associated with humiliation because Elijah and

Moses and Christ fasted forty days. Then, of course, forty years elapsed from the beginning of Christ's ministry to the destruction of Jerusalem.

The interesting thing about the word "overthrown" in verse 4, where Jonah says, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," is that the Hebrew word is actually haphak, meaning to overturn and overthrow. John Trapp says that the word properly notes a sudden, inevitable, and perpetual destruction such as that which was upon Sodom and her sisters. Jonah is saying, "Yet forty days and an extreme catastrophic judgment is going to fall upon the city of Nineveh."

In Jonah chapter 3, you are going to see the absolute sovereignty of God, but you will also see the sovereignty of God in relationship to God's mercy and compassion. Romans chapter 9 shows what the Scripture says concerning the sovereignty of God. Beginning with verse 14, here is the question: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" Notice the two words, "God forbid." When you see these words in the New Testament, they mean "perish the thought." Do not even think that thought or let it enter into your mind. Is there unrighteousness with God? Do not even say that or think that. God forbid. No, there is no unrighteousness with God. And now he explains.

Mercy is God's to dispose as He chooses. Compassion belongs to God, and He displays it and gives it as He chooses. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." By the way, we do the same thing. We do not have mercy on everyone, nor are we sympathetic with everyone. We pick and choose with whom we will be compassionate and to whom we will show mercy. And God does the same thing.

So look at verse 15 again: "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

It is true that Scripture says God hardened Pharaoh's heart. It is equally true that Scripture says Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Man hardens his heart by rejecting the Word of God and the commands of God. Notice: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee," and God did. He showed His power against Pharaoh and against Egypt. He did not have mercy or compassion upon Pharaoh or upon the Egyptians.

Now, why does he say in verse 18, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth"? Look at verse 19: "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" Here is his answer: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." So, the Bible is teaching us here that God has mercy on whom he will have mercy. He'll have compassion on whom he'll have compassion. And if he doesn't choose to have mercy, doesn't choose to have compassion, then there's not going to be any mercy or compassion given. It's that simple.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is speaking in Matthew chapter 11, verse 20: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." He rebuked the cities where his mighty works were done because they did not repent. Verse 21 says, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you."

Jesus said, “Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

Our Lord said that if the mighty works done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, Tyre and Sidon would have repented. Here is the question: Since God knew that they would have repented, why were those mighty works not done in Tyre and Sidon?

Jesus continued, “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.” Since He knew the people in Sodom would have repented if the works done in Capernaum had been done there, why were those works not done in Sodom?

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

“Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.” That is why those mighty works were not done there: it was good in the Father’s sight to leave them undone. The purpose of God and the glory of God reveal the will of God.

When we are talking about Nineveh, God certainly knew that the Ninevites would repent, because God is the giver of repentance. If God does not give or grant repentance, no one will turn from his sins. In Acts chapter 11, Peter related how God had converted Cornelius and his house. When he returned, the believers in Jerusalem upbraided him for going into the house of someone who was not an Israelite. He explained how God had saved Cornelius and his house. Then the Bible says, “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

God granted—God gave—repentance unto life. The word "granted" is the Greek word didomi, which means a gift, something that you give someone. God gave the gift of repentance. That is what he says in 2 Timothy chapter 2: no man will recover himself out of the snare of the devil until he confesses the truth. And he will not confess the truth unless God grants him repentance.

So many people think, "I can repent any time I want to." That is not true. Sin is a tyrant. Sin enslaves. Sin captivates. You think you can stop, but you cannot. You think you can repent, but you cannot unless God grants you repentance. Anyone who says, "I'm going to do this, and it's not going to ensnare me, and I can stop any time I want to," is a fool who certainly does not know the Word of God.

Man is accountable to repent. Man is responsible to repent. Man is commanded to repent. But man does not have the ability to repent in and of himself. If God does not give his gift of repentance, no one actually repents.

Go back to the book of Jonah, chapter 3, and see what happens when Jonah runs through the city preaching, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Verse 5 says, "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God."

Nineveh's Repentance and God's Response

"Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." Then he said, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" The interesting thing is that we are told the people believed God. They certainly believed Jonah, because Jonah was the one doing the preaching, but they understood that the message Jonah was proclaiming was from God Himself.

Thus they actually repented. The evidence of their repentance was the fact that they fasted, humiliated themselves, sat in sackcloth and ashes, and even made the animals fast by refusing to feed them. The end result of their repentance was that everyone was to turn from his evil way and from the violence in his hands. Repentance does involve godly sorrow, godly regret, and godly shamefulness.

I am ashamed of my sins. I certainly do not want to brag about them, not by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, I wish I had never sinned. There are many things I wish I had never done. I regret that I am a sinner, that my flesh is wicked and foul. Each of us has a sinful nature; by nature, we are selfish and sinful.

The truth of the matter is, each of us needs repentance on a continual basis. When you look at the word "repent" in the New Testament, it comes from the Greek word metanoeo, which is made up of two Greek words. The word meta means "with." Noeo refers to the understanding and also to a change of mind. The noun for mind is nous; noeo is the verb. Repentance, then, is a change of mind that results in a change of direction and also a change in our thinking. If I am walking to the north and repent, I have only changed my mind about going north; I actually turn around and start heading back south.

When you have repentance, several things are involved. There is normally a change in your thinking, a change in your direction, and a change in how you view things that you used to do. When you used to enjoy them, now you are ashamed of them. When you used to do them happily, now you regret having even done them. In other words, repentance involves not only a change of mind and a change of direction, but godly sorrow as well.

In repentance, there is a positive and a negative, and you have to have both if there is going to be real, genuine repentance. "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

Note the positive: they turned to God, to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son. Here is the negative: they turned to God

from idols. In other words, there is a positive—we are turned toward God and His truth—and we turn negatively away from sin and evil and that which is contrary to God altogether. The Ninevites believed God, and they turned from their sins, and God spared the city. They at least turned to God in a formal manner. It was the later generations that God destroyed.

Both Nahum and Zephaniah speak about the destruction of Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire. Nahum 3:7 says, “And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?” Zephaniah 2:13 says, “And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.”

So, yes, Nineveh was going to be destroyed, but not right away. The book of Jonah was written probably from 780 to 750 B.C.; Nahum, from 615 to 612 B.C.; and Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah, probably from 640 to 609 B.C. Thus, Nineveh probably was spared at least 150 years. They at least repented, and there was sparing of the city and the people.

Here is the principle. In Ezekiel 33:14-15, God says concerning the wicked, “Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.” So God says that if there is real repentance, restoration, restitution, and obedience, he shall surely live.

Nineveh was spared probably at least 150 years. Remember Genesis 15, when God entered into that covenant with Abraham. He told Abram that his people were going to be enslaved in a strange country for 400 years, and then explained why in verse 16: “But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” God gave the Amorites 400 years to turn from their sins, and they did not. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he put a sword in their hand and said, “Slay every one of them.” God did indeed grant the people in Nineveh repentance at that particular time, and he spared the city for a while.

Go back to Jonah chapter 3, verses 9 and 10, because we have dealt with about everything except one little sticky detail. We can explain verse 9, because this is what the king is saying: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Then verse 10 says, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

Explaining 'God Repented' as Anthropomorphism

How in the world do we explain the statement that God repented? You will find that expression used several times in the Bible. First of all, we have to understand that God does not repent, although the Bible says that He repented. Secondly, when the Bible says that God repented, it does not mean that God repented in the sense that He demands that we repent. We are commanded to repent because we are sinners and have sinned against Him. God is infinitely holy; He has not sinned, and He does not need to repent.

Certainly, this does not include a change in God's purpose. God has no need to change His purpose because He knows the end from the beginning, and everything that comes to pass He ordained. The Bible says in Acts 15 and verse 18, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." So God knew that these Assyrians would repent before the world was ever created, and He knew that He would give them repentance. How, then, do we explain this phrase?

Here is what Calvin said, and I certainly agree with him; I think this is the correct answer. John Calvin explained it like this: "The repentance which is here ascribed to God does not properly belong to him." How can he say that? Let me give you a Scripture. Turn back in your Bibles to the book of Numbers, chapter 23, and look at verse 19. Numbers 23, verse 19 says, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent.

“Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” In other words, God is not going to change His purpose or His mind. There is no such thing. God is not a man that He should lie, neither the Son of Man that He should repent. So let me go back to this quote by Calvin: “The repentance which is here

ascribed to God does not properly belong to Him, listen to this, but has reference to our understanding of Him.

"For since we cannot comprehend him as he is, it is necessary that for our sake he should, in a certain sense, transform himself. That repentance cannot take place in God easily appears from the single consideration that nothing happens which is by him unexpected or unforeseen. The same reasoning and remark applies to what follows that God was affected with grief. Certainly God is not sorrowful or sad, but remains forever like himself in his celestial and happy repose."

Yet because it could not otherwise be known how great is God's hatred and detestation of sin, therefore the Spirit accommodates himself to our capacity.

Here is what Calvin is saying: when you read that God repented, or that God was grieved, it is an anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism is made up of two Greek words, anthropos, which is man, and morphe, which is form. An anthropomorphism is nothing more than man-form speaking. Calvin said this correctly. Since we cannot conceive of God as He is, can anybody explain God? No. We cannot conceive God as He is. We know what Scripture says about God, and that is all we know. Had God not revealed that, we would know absolutely nothing about Him. Since we cannot conceive Him as He is, He speaks in language that we understand.

Here is an illustration. My child has done something wrong, and I am going to punish that child. I am going to whip that child; I have the rod in my hand, and my hand is raised, ready to strike the child. The child shudders and cries, "Daddy, please forgive me. Please, please, I'll never do it again. Please, Daddy, I promise you this will never happen again." What am I going to do? Am I going to continue to whip the child or not? I have already gotten from the child that which I want: submission and obedience.

This is exactly what God did. God threatened, and we put it in language that we understood. They repented, and God says, "All right, I'm not going to chastise you; I'm not going to correct you, because you have given me that which I want."

An anthropomorphism is simply man-form speaking. Turn to Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 11. Here is the one thing that we cannot understand; this is why everything is broken down into anthropomorphisms for us. The Bible says, "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Did you hear that? "According to the eternal purpose," singular, "which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

You and I think in succession. We think one thought, then a second thought, and then a third thought. God is not like that. God is not like us. God had only one thought, or one purpose, and it included anything and everything that ever came to pass in time and history. God does not think in succession as we do. God is omniscient; He is instantaneously all-knowing. We cannot conceive God as He is or comprehend Him as He is. Therefore, He has to speak to us in human language that we can comprehend.

Let me make a couple of quick applications. First, are we as interested in restoring fallen saints as God is? Are we ready and willing to restore and heal that which was broken? Every Christian sins. Every preacher sins. There are none without sin. If God laid aside every Christian who sinned, there would not be any left standing. There would be no one to do His will and no one to carry out His commission.

Applications: Restoring Saints and Heeding Warnings

Stop and think about David. David committed adultery and murder, yet God did not remove him from being king. David deserved to die. According to 2 Samuel chapter 12, Nathan said, "God has pardoned thy sin, thou shalt not die." David deserved the death penalty on two accounts, but God gave David repentance and kept him king. David even continued writing Scripture and Psalms. How many Psalms he wrote after being restored, I do not know. But I do know that he wrote seven penitential Psalms after his restoration, which we have in the book of Psalms: "Lord, I'm sorry, I was wicked, I was wrong." David confessed and condemned the things he had done. If God simply set us aside because of our sins, there would not be any bone for Him to use. We have all sinned, and none of us deserve to be used or blessed by God.

You have to remember this as well. David was called a man after God's own heart. The sins that he committed were the exceptions, not the rules, because the general tenor of his heart was obedience. The general tenor of our heart should be obedience. That does not mean that we will not slip up, make mistakes, or sin. We are sinners, and we are going to sin. But it does mean that sin has to be the exception and not the rule, because David was a man after God's own heart.

Here is a second application, along with a quote from Augustine: "The city was saved. What shall we say? Was this the anger of God or rather His mercy? Who doubts that the most merciful Father willed by terrifying to convert and not to punish by destroying? As the hen is lifted up to strike and is recalled in pity, when he who was to be struck is terrified, so it was done to this city." So here is my question: Will any of God's warnings now move our great Babylon and our great Nineveh to repentance, that it be not ruined?

Stop and think about this. We as a nation are in just as bad a shape as Nineveh and Babylon. We may even be worse. Will we heed God's warnings and His Word? Will we repent? Repentance has to begin on an individual basis. God requires and demands that each of us repent individually. We cannot repent as a family unless we repent individually. We cannot repent as a church unless we repent individually and as a family. We cannot hope to repent nationally unless we begin at the very bottom, with each of our lives. So the question is, are we willing to repent individually?

"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." What if I said, "Yet forty days or 120 days America shall be overthrown"? God still demands repentance, and we must hear and heed God's warnings. Thankfully, God is the God of second opportunities. I did not say second chances, but second opportunities, because God does not put us on the shelf the first time we sin. He grants us repentance and forgiveness and continues to use us, just as He did Jonah.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word and for the truth that you are a gracious, merciful, forgiving God, and that you do use us in spite of ourselves. We confess and admit, Lord, we do not deserve any of thy blessings, neither do we deserve to be used by thee. But, Lord, thou hast been

so gracious and so kind, and we praise thy holy name. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray and ask these things. Amen.

CHAPTER 29

Four Fearful Words

February 24, 2013

Introduction: Four Fearful Words

In Jeremiah 21:11–14, the Lord says concerning the house of the king of Judah: “Hear ye the word of the Lord. O house of David, thus saith the Lord, Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire and burn, that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the Lord, which said, Who shall come down against us? Or who shall enter into our habitations? But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the Lord, and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about.”

There is a childish riddle that asks, What four letters of the alphabet will scare a burglar away? No, they are O-I-C-U. I told you it was a childish riddle. I do not think those four letters would scare any burglar away. If you are going to use letters in the alphabet to scare a burglar away, I suggest five: G-L-O-C-K. That would probably do a whole lot better job. But the four fearful words I am

talking about today have nothing to do with G-L-O-C-K. “You’re in my sights” is pretty good, but these words are different.

The World's Hatred vs. God's Opposition

Look down in verse 13. God says, “Behold, I am against thee.” Think of those four words: “I am against thee,” or “I am against you.” When you hear those words, they have absolutely no power upon you if they come from an adversary who does not have the power to accomplish his threat.

As far as I know, I have been threatened only one time in my life, and that threat came from an individual who could not carry it out. He was much younger, and the truth of the matter is that I could have squashed him like a bug. So when he threatened me, I simply laughed, because I knew he could not possibly carry out his threat. No one is really threatened by an adversary who cannot carry out his threats. Many times, however, there are incidents in life when we do have adversaries and know that they are against us. It may upset us.

It may cause us some discomfort and sometimes even embarrassment. But the truth of the matter is this: as Christians, we know, or at least we should know, that the world is against us.

Our Lord makes it very plain in John 15: "If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own. But because you're not of the world, but I've chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." He continues, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

Our Lord says, therefore, that we should not become excited and upset if the world hates us. We must understand that it hated Him first. If they persecuted Him, they will persecute us. Mark it down: the world does not love God's people.

I know good and godly men who have been scandalized and excoriated by the Southern Poverty Law Center, which is neither Southern nor in poverty, and which I really doubt is a law center. It may be a legal center, but not necessarily a law center.

The question is this: Why would such organizations be against good, godly men? Why would they be against Christians, a conservative organization, or Second Amendment organizations? If they were a law center, why would they oppose such organizations? The answer is very simple: they hate Jesus Christ, they hate His Word, and they hate the truth of His Word. Our Lord said that if they hate Him, they will hate us; if they persecuted Him, they will persecute us.

In one sense, then, it should not bother or upset a Christian to discover, using the term Robert E. Lee used, that those people are against us. That is what he referred to as the Yankees. He simply called them "those people."

On the other hand, it should also encourage us to have the wicked and the ungodly against us. Our Lord said in Luke 6:26, “Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” Woe unto you when all men speak well of you. Let me put it very plainly: it should be an honor for the child of God to be hated by those who hate Jesus Christ. It should be an honor for the child of God to have those people against us who are against Jesus Christ.

In one sense of the word, you must understand that Jesus Christ and His truth divides. Our Lord says, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

If one's own family is divided based upon the salvation and the truth that is in Jesus Christ, it should be extremely obvious that anyone who is outside of the family will be more readily and quickly against us. They have no interest in us. They do not know us. Therefore, their animosity will be more quickly made evident.

I have found it absolutely amazing that people can hate others, despise others, and spread rumors and untruths concerning individuals whom they do not even know and have never talked to. In my Christian life, I have had people lie about me and say things about me, even other preachers. When I find out, I do not even know them. They do not know me. If I am going to say something about Henry, at least I ought to have the grace to say, "Henry, is this true?" before I spread this about you. It is just absolutely amazing to me.

But such unbiblical and ungodly tactics always follow a simple procedure. I do not care if it is individuals or organizations. Usually, here is the procedure: You first identify your target.

Secondly, you ridicule, belittle, and mock your target. Thirdly, you ostracize your target. And fourthly, you try to eradicate your target. That is exactly what individuals do. That is what organizations do as well.

God Targets the Wicked

It is one thing for you and me to have men rage against us. It is one thing for you and me to have men who are adversaries to us. But it is quite another thing when the sovereign God of heaven and earth sets His sights against you. Does God target individuals? The answer is yes. Look at Psalm 55 and verse 23: "But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction. Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, but I will trust in thee." Why do bloody and deceitful men not live out half their days? Because God cuts them down in their prime.

Psalm 7, verses 11 through 13, says that God judges the righteous and is angry with the wicked every day. "If he"—that is, the wicked—"turn not, he"—God—"will whet his sword. He"—God—"hath bent his bow and made it ready. He"—God—"hath also prepared for him"—the sinner, the wicked—"instruments of death. He"—God—"ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." Verse 14 continues: "Behold, he"—the sinner—"travaileth with iniquity, hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood." So God does indeed target sinners; that is for sure.

Sometimes even godly people think that God has targeted them. Godly Jeremiah, who is known as the weeping prophet and who wept as he saw the destruction of Jerusalem, said in Lamentations 3 and verse 13, “He had caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.” Jeremiah thought, “God’s using me as a target is what He’s doing.” But God was not shooting at Jeremiah; He was shooting at a wicked, ungodly people.

Psalm 21 and verse 12 says, “Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.” God does indeed have enemies, and God does indeed shoot His arrows at His enemies. Usually sinners run from God. If they had any sense, they would run to Him and beg for mercy and grace.

In James 4:6, the Bible says, "But he giveth more grace, wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace unto the humble." In 1 Peter 5:5, it says, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." The interesting thing is the word "resisteth."

The Greek word is "antitassomai," and literally it means to range oneself in battle against. It is not merely to resist or oppose; it is to actively fight against. Has it ever dawned upon you that God actively fights against the wicked? He arranges Himself in battle array. It should be an awesome and sobering thought to understand that God is our enemy.

When I say that, I am not talking about Christians; I am talking about the unsaved—to have God as your enemy. In one sense, before our conversion, we indeed were enemies of God. Romans 5:10 says, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Notice: "for when we were enemies." Colossians 1:21 says, "And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled."

Even we as God's people, before our conversion, were considered the enemies of God; yet now we are reconciled. We are no longer enemies, but friends, and far more than friends: we are now in the

family of God. There is a big difference between those who were enemies and those who are enemies; between those who are reconciled to God and those who continue hostilities against God and actively fight against Him. Those who continually fight against Him and refuse to submit to His Lordship will undoubtedly one day hear His words from Luke 19:27: "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

I was reading through my Bible and came across these words: "I am against thee." A question came into my mind: To whom does God speak those words?

We know that God is against individuals who are wicked and ungodly. But when I began to research this phrase, I found something interesting: every time God uses these words, “I am against thee,” He speaks to entire societies and nations. In fact, I am going to show you seven nations against which God spoke these words, and what it means. Please look to Jeremiah 21 again.

Seven Nations God Spoke Against

In Jeremiah chapter 21, beginning with verse 11, the Lord speaks to Judah and Jerusalem: “And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of David, thus saith the Lord.” He is speaking to the entire nation.

“Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it because of the evil of your doings. Behold, I am against thee.” Stop and think about that. Think about everything that happened to Judah and Jerusalem—not only in 586, when the Babylonians came, but when the Assyrians came. And in 70 AD, God said, “Behold, I am against thee.”

Now look in Ezekiel chapter 5, beginning with verse 5. Watch these words: “Thus saith the Lord God, This is Jerusalem. I've set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations and my statutes, more than the countries that are round about her. For they have refused my judgments and my statutes,

they have not walked in them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because you multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee, in the sight of the nations." Note what God said: "You've changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations."

"You've changed my statutes more than the countries that are round about. You've refused my judgments. You've refused my statutes. You will not walk in them." That almost sounds like today. And God says, "Behold, I am against thee."

In Ezekiel chapter 21, He is still speaking to Judah and Jerusalem: "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel, and say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked." "I'll draw forth my sword out of his sheath." When God says, "I am against thee," He speaks first to Judah and Jerusalem.

That reminds me of the passage, "Judgment must first begin where? At the house of God. If you first begin with us, what shall be the end of the wicked and the ungodly?"

Secondly, God uses this phrase, "I'm against thee," to Babylon. Jeremiah 50: "Call together the archers against Babylon, all you that bend the bow, camp against it round about. Let none thereof escape. Recompense her according to her work, according to all that she has done, do unto her. For she has been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel. Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all of her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the Lord. Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of hosts. For thy day is come, thy time will I visit thee, and the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up, and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all around about him."

Notice what God is going to do when He tells Babylon, "I am against thee." Remember, God is speaking to Babylon now.

He has already spoken to Judah and Jerusalem. Now He speaks to Babylon. Jeremiah 51:24 says, "And I will render unto Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the Lord. Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth, and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain." Take note of what happens to all these societies, people, and nations when God says, "Behold, I am against thee." As you can see from the context, they are all consumed and destroyed.

Thirdly, God spoke this phrase, "I'm against thee," to Tyre. Ezekiel 26:1 says, "And it came to pass in the eleventh year and the first day of the month that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,"

"Son of man, because that Tyrus hath set against Jerusalem, 'Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people, and it is turned unto me, I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste.' Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus"—that is Tyre—"and will cause many nations to come up against thee, and the sea causeth its waves to come up." God said, "I'm going to destroy you. Behold, I am against thee." You should read about the destruction of Tyre.

Tyre sat in the ocean, at its edge, surrounded. The armies actually built what you would call a dam or a walkway out to the walls of Tyre. When you read what happened—how they shot from the walls—I think it was Alexander who built towers and pushed them closer and closer, protecting the builders as they built the bridge out, and still conquered and destroyed Tyre. Ships came around and helped destroy her. God said, "Behold, I am against thee."

This phrase is also spoken to Zidon. Ezekiel 28:20 says, "Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it. And say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon, and I will be glorified in the

midst of thee. And they shall know that I am the Lord when I shall have executed judgments in her and shall be sanctified in her."

God says to Zidon, "For I will send into her pestilence and blood into her streets, and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side. And they shall know that I am the Lord." Then He says, "Behold, I'm against you." Zidon will be destroyed and cut off.

God also speaks these words to Egypt. In Ezekiel 29:10 He says, "Behold, therefore, I'm against thee and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate from the towers of Syene, even to the border of Ethiopia. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities and the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries."

Note what God said: "Behold, I am against thee, and against thy rivers." Now notice Ezekiel 39, because Egypt is mentioned here as well. God says, "Therefore thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and I will turn thee back and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and I will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel, and I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and I will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand, And thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee, and I

The passage continues: “will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field, for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.” He says he is against Egypt as well.

The passage that was wanted is in Ezekiel chapter 29: “In the tenth year and the tenth month and the twelfth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all

Egypt. Speak and say, Thus saith the Lord God. Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. I will put my hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of the rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales. And I will leave thee thrown in the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers. Thou shalt fall upon the open fields. Thou shalt not be brought together nor gathered. I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the fields and to the fowls of the heavens."

He is also against Gog and Magog. That was in Ezekiel chapter 39. If you look in Ezekiel chapter 38 and verse 3, he says the same thing about Gog and Magog again: "Thus saith the Lord God, behold, I am against thee, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." So God is against Gog. He is against Magog.

He is also against Mount Seir, or Edom. Look at Ezekiel chapter 35, beginning with verse 1: "Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Mount Seir, which is Edom, and prophesy against it, and saying to it, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O Mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will"

God said to Mount Seir, "I am against thee": "I will make thee most desolate. And I will lay thy cities waste, thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, because thou hast had a perpetual hatred and hast shed blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee. And sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee." So God is against Edom. He is against Mount Seir. He is against Gog and Magog.

Nahum 2:13 speaks against Nineveh: "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions, and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of the messenger shall be heard no more." Notice that God said, "Behold, I am against thee." Here are seven distinct nations to whom God spoke these words. Every one of

these nations was deeply rebellious and revolting against God. These words need to sink deeply, not only in our individual hearts, but in our national heart and soul as well. Have you ever considered that God might speak these words to America? Or that He might have already spoken them to America?

Application to America

Our nation has murdered over 60 million babies; promoted, financed, and legalized a Sodomite lifestyle; defrauded people with paper money; embraced socialism, fascism, communism, and Marxism; denied God; trampled His law under our feet; rejected His Son; and become some of the most unthankful, ungrateful people that have ever lived. Then we begin to wonder why everything is falling apart in this country. What happens to a country or nation against whom God arises in righteous anger and judgment? What happens to a nation or society when God says, “Behold, I am against you”?

Destruction of Military Power

Undoubtedly, there are many answers to that question, but one answer God gives and shows us is this: If you have been paying attention, you will have gathered this from all these passages we've already read. When He says, "Behold, I'm against thee," the most prominent manifestation of His anger is that He destroys that nation's military power. He fights against its military power, causing it to be devastated and destroyed. Have you considered what is happening in our military today?

I know there are veterans here, but times have changed from the 50s and 60s. We may have improved weaponry and advanced technology, but, as Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. used to say, you can borrow brains, but you can't borrow character. Consider not only the low morale, but what is happening to our soldiers. Here is the New York Times.

Let me just read it. "More United States soldiers have died this year by taking their own lives than on the battlefield. The Pentagon says there have been at least 154 suicides among active duty troops in 2012, a rate of nearly one each day. The number represents an

18% increase over the 130 active duty military suicides for the same period in 2011. There were 123 suicides from January to early June 2010, and 133 during that period in 2009, the Pentagon said. By contrast, there were 124 American military fatalities in Afghanistan as of June this year, according to the Pentagon. Suicide rates of military personnel and combat veterans have risen sharply since 2005 as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan intensified. Recently, the Pentagon established a Defense Suicide Prevention Office." By the way, I read an article the other day for those soldiers who attempt suicide and fail, there to be prosecuted.

That's going to really stop them, I'm sure. But I want you to listen. That was from the New York Times. While Bill Clinton was campaigning for Obama, he was speaking in Virginia and here's what he said. Listen carefully. "One of the things the decider-in-chief has to decide is whether he's going to bring this country together against all its diversity or let it drift apart. Look at how much stronger the American military is because it is less racist, less sexist, and less homophobic, and we're just looking for people who can do the job." What? Do the facts contradict Clinton? Of course they do.

I can assure you that Sodomites do not increase morale, and they do pass on disease and can be blackmailed, especially if they are in higher positions. I could not in good conscience recommend any honest, godly young man to join the military today.

It does not matter how strong the military is, how advanced the weaponry is, or how advanced our technology is. If God is against us, it will all be destroyed. No one can withstand the righteous judgment of God. A prominent aspect of God's judgment, when He says to a nation, “I’m against thee,” is the destruction of its military.

That could be done through war, but it could also be done through what we are seeing today: suicides, sodomy, and Marxism. Look in Jeremiah 21, beginning with verse 3: “Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall you say to Zedekiah, Watch! Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith you fought against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them in the midst of this city.”

What is God going to do? He is going to fight against you in Jerusalem. The Babylonians are coming, but God says, “I’m going to fight against you myself. I will turn back your weapons, and those Babylonians will be assembled in this city because I am against you.”

Look in Jeremiah 37, beginning with verse 6: “Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord the God of Israel, Thus shall you say to the king of Judah that sent you unto me to inquire of me, Behold, Pharaoh’s army which has come forth to help you shall return to Egypt into his own

land. And the Chaldeans shall come again and fight against this city and take it and burn it with fire. Thus saith the Lord, Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us. For they shall not depart. For though you had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remain but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent and burn the city with fire.

God said, "It's not going to do you one good to whip them. Because I'll raise them up and they'll still whip you." God says, "No. No. And Pharaoh coming to help you? No," says God. "He's going to go back into his own land. He's not coming to help you. I'll turn him back." Ezekiel 30, beginning with verse 20, shows that when God is against a society, He will destroy its military. Incidentally, I read an article this week about the North Koreans launching a satellite. Some reports said it was tumbling out of control, which is probably not true. But one article said that it was capable of sending an EMP attack even upon America. Let me ask one quick question: If all of our electronics are devastated by an electromagnetic pulse attack,

What happens to all of our advanced technology? All I'm trying to show you is that it is so easy for God to destroy a military power. Look in Ezekiel chapter 30, beginning there with verse 20: "And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, king of Egypt." What? Wait a minute. If I break your arm, can you fight against me? No. You're powerless. Watch. He said, "I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword." What

did God do? He destroyed their power. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and I will break his arms, the strong and that which is broken, and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand, and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through

"And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand, and I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man. But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down, and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall put my sword in the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries, and they shall know that I am the Lord."

What is God going to do to Pharaoh? He is going to break his arms. He is going to break his power. He will not be able to hold the sword; he will not be able to fight. It is useless.

In Ezekiel 39:3, God said: "And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and I will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee, and I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field, for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God."

What is God going to do? He is going to knock the weapons out of your hands. He is going to make you, totally helpless. Every one of these countries, nations, and societies to which God said, "Behold, I am against thee," He destroyed their military power and their countries.

Applications and Conclusion

What must it be like to hear and know that God has said, "Behold, I am against thee"? When God says, "I am against thee," you are doomed. No one can fight against God, at least not successfully.

The first application is this: God is immutable. He does not change. Whatever God opposed 4,000 years ago, He opposes today.

Whatever He was against in times past, He is against today. If God judged these seven nations for their wickedness in times past, will He still not judge nations today for their wickedness when they continue in the same sins? The answer is yes, because God is immutable. He does not change.

The second application is this: Simply because judgment does not come instantly and immediately, and simply because it does not come when you think it should or when you want it to come, does not mean that it is not coming. You may say, "Look how long we've existed as a nation. I thought God was going to judge us in 1999 and 2000 at Y2K. I thought God was going to judge us during the Great Depression. I thought God was going to judge us last year."

God said in Deuteronomy 32:35, "To me belongeth vengeance and recompense, their foot shall slide in due time, and the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them shall make haste." Their foot shall slide in due time. God has His time for vengeance, and it is coming.

You can mark it down. The Bible tells us in Nahum that He will not at all acquit the wicked. He will not excuse it or overlook it; He will judge it. We are under the judgment of God even today, but we have seen nothing yet. When we hear God say, “I am against thee,” it ought to send a holy, righteous, godly fear into our souls. If God does not help us, there is no help from man. As the psalmist prayed, “Give us help from God, for vain is the help of man.”

Jerusalem and Judah thought, “The king of Egypt is going to come. Pharaoh will deliver us out of the hand of the Babylonians.” But God said, “I’ll break the arms of the king of Egypt. He will not help you.”

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We humbly beseech Thee to speak to Thy people, to turn us, O God, and cause Thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved. Give us repentance, obedience, and faith. O Lord, may we not as individuals hear those words, “I am against Thee,” although, Lord, like Daniel confessed in Ezra and Nehemiah, to us belongs confusion of face, because we have sinned against Thee, violated Thy law, and Thou art righteous and holy. In all Thy judgments, remember mercy and Thy

people, and grant that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 30

The Martyrdom of Thomas Hawks

November 1, 2013

Introduction and Scripture Reading

Hebrews chapter 11, verses 32 through 38: "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of

whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

I want to bring a message entitled, "The Martyrdom of Thomas Hawkes." I read about Thomas Hawkes not too long ago, and I was so moved by what I read that I decided to delve into his life and death. Many of you know that one of my pet peeves is injustice. You look around today and can see injustice on every hand. It is abounding left and right.

But the truth of the matter is this: injustice is not something new. I have often been asked—in fact, I was asked yesterday in an email—"How do we deal with the injustice? What in the world can we do?" I wanted to bring a message that might encourage us in light of the injustices of the day, and that is on the martyrdom of Thomas Hawkes.

The Meaning of Martyrdom

Whenever we hear the word "martyr" as Christians, we automatically think of someone who has died for his faith in Christ. Certainly, many individuals have sealed their faith with their lives. Simply look at the number of people listed in Hebrews chapter 11. We also need to look at the various ways in which they were killed. Look in verse 37. The Bible says they were stoned, they were sawn asunder,

They were tempted and were slain with the sword. I am sure that there were multitudinous other ways that they were killed as well. In fact, if you go back to verse 35, it says, “Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured.” I can assure you that torturing can be done in many various ways. They were put to death in various ways.

When we think of the word “martyr,” we automatically think of someone who has suffered a violent death for Christ. But our English word “martyr” comes from the Greek word “martus,” which signifies simply a witness. A witness is someone who avers that which he has seen and that which he knows. The word “martyr,” initially and originally, was not associated with death. It simply meant a martyr, or a witness.

Hold Hebrews chapter 11, but turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 23. Let me show you several passages illustrating how the word "martyr" is used in Scripture. The Apostle Paul says, "Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth." The word "record" there is "martus," or "martyr." Thus he says, "Moreover I call God for a martyr," or, "I call God for a witness," upon his soul. Paul is calling upon God as a witness to the integrity and love which he had for the Corinthians. Turn to Philippians chapter 1 and verse 8. Philippians chapter 1 in verse 8.

Here the apostle uses the same word "record" again, but he says this: "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." So literally he says, "For God is my martyr. God is my witness." In 1 Thessalonians 2:5, the apostle Paul again talks about God as being his martyr, or his witness: "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness," or "God is martyr." Then, in verse 10, he also calls those Thessalonians martyrs. He says, "Ye are witnesses," that is, "ye are martyrs, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." So once again, he is using the word "martyr."

In Romans 1:9, the apostle Paul says, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." When he says, "For God is my witness," he is simply saying that God is my martyr. Originally, therefore, the word "martyr" did not refer to one who died for the faith. It simply referred to someone who gave a testimony concerning that which he knew.

For instance, consider Hebrews 12:1: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," or martyrs, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Thus, in this instance, the word "witnesses" or "martyrs" refers to those whose lives and actions testified to the worth and the effect of faith, and whose faith received witness in Scripture. Certainly Hebrews 12:1 would include those who have died for the faith, but it would certainly include those who had lived for the faith and gave an accurate testimony throughout their lives.

One does not necessarily have to die a violent death in order to be a martyr. Simply speaking, a martyr is one who witnesses, speaks, and lives according to that which he knows. Every Christian should have a martyr attitude. This does not mean that we should desire to die a violent death for Christ. That may happen to some of us, and it certainly could be the end of a martyr attitude. However, every Christian should be a consistent and constant witness for the truth of our Lord and His Word in daily life. That is a martyr attitude.

What type of martyr attitude do we display and manifest in our lives? Do we reveal to a lost and dying world our testimony by our faith? Do we speak a word in due season to those who need to hear the Word of God? Do we have the knowledge and ability to help those who truly desire help? Martyrdom is the witness that we have in our lives of Christ and for Christ. Yet, when we speak of martyrs, we understand that some individuals have sealed their testimonies for Christ with their lives. Many times their deaths were violent, brought upon them simply because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Historical Context: The Marian Persecutions

One such martyr was Thomas Hawkes. Sometimes his name is spelled H-A-U-K-E-S as well as H-A-W-K-E-S. He, along with many others, suffered in the Marian persecutions. By the Marian persecutions, I mean those under Queen Mary, also known as Bloody Mary, who reigned from 1553 to 1558. Queen Mary followed her brother, Edward VI, who died at a very early age. Listen to what Bishop Burnett says concerning Edward VI. He calls him “that incomparable young prince.”

Edward VI died on the 6th of July 1553. Bishop Burnett goes on to say, “Never perhaps did any royal personage in this land die more truly lamented or leave behind a fairer reputation. Never perhaps to man's poor fallible judgment did the cause of God's truth in England receive a heavier blow.” His last prayer before his death ought not to be forgotten. King Edward VI prayed, “O Lord God, defend this realm from papistry and maintain thy true religion.” Edward VI was born October the 12th, 1537, and died July the 6th, 1553. He was King of England and Ireland from January the 28th, 1547, until his death.

He was crowned on February the 20th at age nine. In February 1553, Edward VI, who was fifteen years of age, fell ill. When his sickness was determined to be terminal, he and his council drew up what he called a "Device for Succession," an attempt to keep England from reverting to Catholicism. Edward named his cousin, Lady Jane Grey, as the one to inherit the throne, bypassing his half-sisters Mary and Elizabeth.

However, as quickly as Edward VI died, Mary challenged Lady Jane Grey. Within thirteen days after Edward's death, Lady Jane Grey was deposed, and Queen Mary came to the throne. Mary was the daughter of Henry VIII and his first queen, Catherine of Aragon, who was a Spaniard. Henry VIII and Catherine produced Mary, who is better known as Bloody Mary. She had been brought up from infancy as a rigid adherent to the Roman Catholic faith. She was indeed a papist of the papists—conscientious, zealous, bigoted, and narrow-minded in the extreme.

Mary was born in 1516 and suffered what you and I would call an absolutely terrible childhood. Henry VIII had numerous wives, and he was looking for a male heir. When his wives could not produce one, he would divorce them, have their marriages annulled, and so forth. Catherine of Aragon did not give him a male heir; consequently, he wanted a divorce from her and constantly called Mary illegitimate. He neglected her and caused all kinds of problems. She was humiliated by her father over and over simply because he wanted to divorce her mother. This and other things caused Mary to become so bitter that she hoped one day to exact revenge.

Mary began her tumultuous reign at the age of thirty-seven. Her first act was to repeal the Protestant legislation enacted by Edward VI, hurling England into severe religious persecution. She immediately began to pull down and destroy everything Edward VI had made possible. She wanted to restore popery in its worst and most offensive form, and decreed that all England should return to Catholicism.

Mary and her advisers were not content merely to deprive and imprison the English reformers. It was resolved that the reformers must abjure and recant their faith, or else be put to death. One by

one, they were called before special commissioners, examined concerning their religious opinions, and called upon to recant under penalty of death. There was no alternative.

There was no third option. So the English reformers either had to recant or face death. They were either to give up their Protestantism or be burned alive. Refusing to recant, they were handed over to the secular power. They were publicly brought out and chained to stakes, publicly surrounded with faggots, and publicly sent out of the world by the most cruel and painful of deaths—that is, death by fire.

Protestants in England and Wales were executed under the anti-Protestant legislation that punished anyone judged guilty of heresy against the Roman Catholic Church. The standard penalty for treason in England at that time was to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. Those who remember seeing Braveheart will recall how he was literally cut up while alive, then drawn by horses and quartered—cut up and sent to the four corners of the kingdom. That was the standard execution for anyone guilty of treason.

Mary, however, brought around burning at the stake. It is a well-known fact that during the four years Queen Mary reigned, no less than 288 people were burned at the stake for their adherence to the Protestant faith. Listen carefully: 71 in 1555, 89 in 1556, 88 in 1557, and 40 in 1558, for a total of 288. In other words, the faggots never ceased to blaze or burn while Mary was on earth. A week after her death, five more martyrs were burned alive in Canterbury. Of the 288 who suffered death by fire, one was an archbishop, five were bishops, 21 were clergymen, 55 were women, nine were girls, two were boys, and two were infants, not counting the farmers and workers. Mary was indiscriminate.

She was willing to burn anybody or everybody who did not submit or bow to the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church was the agency that condemned the martyrs for heresy and then handed them over to the secular power for execution. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church and England are both guilty before God for the murders of these innocent and godly people.

You will remember that Pilate tried to wash his hands from the blood of Jesus Christ, but the blood remained. He sentenced Christ

to death and crucifixion, although he acknowledged His innocence, saying at least three times, “I find no fault in Him.” Yet he cowardly and wickedly condemned Him to death. Do you remember what our Lord told Pilate in John 19:11? He said, “He that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin.”

The Jews cried out, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him. Let His blood be upon us and upon our children.” They desired a murderer to be granted freedom rather than Christ: “Give us Barabbas and not Christ.” It does not matter how Pilate tried to wash his hands or how the Jews proclaimed their innocence. The truth is that both the Roman Empire and the Jewish people were guilty of the blood of Jesus Christ. It is that simple.

Samson had slain the Philistines, and the men of Judah bound him. He consented to be bound, asking only that they promise not to execute him or take his life. They agreed, but they were willing to turn him over to the Philistines, who would take his life. Therefore, they were just as guilty as if they had taken his life themselves. In the same way, the Roman Empire, the Jewish people, and the Judahites could not wash their hands from the blood of Christ or Samson. Neither can the Roman Catholic Church nor the state or government of England cleanse themselves from the blood of these martyrs. Both were complicit in their deaths, and both are justly condemned.

Thomas Hawkes came from a respectable family of Essex. He was carefully reared and sent as a page to the court of King Edward VI. As he grew older, he was noted for his comeliness of person and gentle manners. John Foxe, in Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, says of Thomas Hawkes: “In education, he was erudite; in person, comely and of good stature; in manners, a gentleman and a sincere Christian.” Since the death of Edward VI, everything had changed.

Thomas Hawkes's Arrest and Trial

Hawkes knew that those who held to the Reformed faith were in danger, so he went back home. He was not going to stay at the court or change his faith simply because Mary, now head of state, was a Roman Catholic. Thomas Hawkes had married while at Oxford, and soon after coming home, a son was born unto him. He was not interested in having his son baptized by a Romanish priest.

Therefore, he refused to have the child baptized in the papal manner, which had become mandatory by decree of Queen Mary.

You have to remember that many Protestants at that time also believed in infant baptism. Certainly the Baptists did not, but many Reformers were associated with the Church of England, and some were Presbyterian. The Church of England had recognized King Henry VIII as the Supreme Head of the Church on February 11, 1531. During the reign of his son, Edward VI, in 1552, forty-two articles were written under the direction of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, who also suffered death at the hand of Queen Mary. In these articles, Calvinistic thought reached its zenith in the influence of the English Church. But they were never really put into action because of the king's death and the reunion of the English church with Rome under Queen Mary.

Thomas Hawkes had basically become a marked man because of his absences from mass. He strongly opposed and voiced his opposition to the current religious regime and met with other Protestants. But what really put the nail in his coffin was his refusal to have his newborn son baptized into the Catholic faith. That brought things to a head. Hawkes was arrested in the summer of 1554, taken before Bishop Edmund Bonner, questioned concerning his religious beliefs, and imprisoned in Newgate. Since he had delayed his son's baptism, his enemies used this against him and charged him with being unsound in religion. He was sent to London and placed in the hands of Edmund Bonner, the Bishop of London. When Hawkes was brought before the Bishop, he was asked why he had kept the child from being baptized so long. Hawkes replied, "Because we are bound to do nothing contrary to the word of God. His institution I do not deny, but I deny all things invented and devised by man."

In one session they tried to teach him that if his son died he would be damned and that only by baptism would his sins be washed away. That is the official position of the Roman Catholic Church, by the way. Hawkes reminded them that only by true faith and belief in Christ Jesus are sins washed away. His accuser said, "How can your child, being an infant, believe?" Hawkes replied, quoting 1 Corinthians 7:14, "The deliverance of it from sin standeth in the faith

of his parents. The unbelieving man is sanctified by the believing woman, and the unbelieving woman is sanctified by the believing man: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."

He was insistent that baptism did not save. Each time they insisted upon their rituals, ceremonies, and traditions, Hawkes answered them with Scripture and showed them powerfully how the Scriptures proved them wrong. Later, they brought individuals who had recanted to speak with Thomas Hawkes and encourage him to recant, but to no avail. Hawkes said that he believed he was doing better for the child by keeping him away from baptism than by taking him to a Roman Catholic priest.

After a good deal of argument, the bishop asked him if he would have his child baptized according to the form set forth in the service book of King Edward VI. Hawkes replied that this was the very thing he desired from his soul. The question, however, was merely a device to discover his real faith. The bishop then sent him as a prisoner to the gatehouse in Westminster, commanding the keeper to confine him closely and not permit outsiders to speak with him.

Hawkes's Imprisonment and Condemnation

During Hawkes's imprisonment, various plans were devised to make him recant—arguments, reading, taking him to sermons, and the like—but all proved absolutely useless. Hawkes's standard answer was, "I am no changeling." In other words, "I'm not going to change. There's nothing you can do about it. I'm not going to change."

At last the bishop summoned him with several others to appear publicly in the consistory court of St. Paul's, where the charges were read against him. They urged him to recant, that they might not pass upon him the awful sentence they were obligated to pass upon him if he did not recant: death.

To this he firmly replied that he had rather suffer death than renounce his faith in the gospel. When the Bishop of London urged him to return to Catholicism, he said, "No, my Lord, I will not. For if I had a hundred bodies, I would suffer them all to be torn in pieces, rather than I will abjure and recant." So at that particular time,

Thomas Hawkes, along with five others, were sentenced to death by fire.

Hawkes was sent back to prison. It was February the 9th, 1555, when Thomas Hawkes and the five others were condemned to be burned at the stake. Hawkes was to stay in prison for four months before his ordeal by fire. While he was waiting to be taken to the stake, some of his friends were allowed to visit him. They were absolutely horrified as well as terrified by the sentence imposed upon him—death by burning. They asked him whether he thought it possible that one could endure such torture and such pain for one's faith in Christ. Thomas Hawkes said that he thought it was absolutely possible to endure the greatest of all tortures and be elevated above the pain and misery because of faith in Jesus Christ. His friends urged him to give them some signal that the pain was endurable, some sign that it was possible for a Christian to endure such torment and pain and be above it.

The Martyrdom and the Signal

He agreed that, with God helping him, he would raise his hands toward heaven to show that the pain was bearable. When the time came for Thomas Hawkes to be led to the place of his execution, he walked willingly. He was fastened to the stake with a chain. He was then able to address the crowd and Lord Rich, particularly, who had accompanied him to the stake, admonishing Lord Rich of the dreadful consequences of shedding innocent blood.

He then prayed a very fervent prayer. I could tell you what happened, but I would rather read the short account written by John Foxe:

"Not long after, Mr. Hawkes was led away to the place appointed for slaughter by Lord Rich, and being come to the stake, mildly and patiently prepared himself for the fire, having a strong chain cast about his middle, with a multitude of people on every side compassing him about, on whom he had spoken many things, and poured out his soul unto God in prayer. Afterwards, the fire was kindled. When he had continued long in the fire, and his speech was taken away by the violence of the flame, his skin was drawn together

and his fingers consumed with the fire, so that it was thought that he was gone.

"Suddenly, and contrary to all expectation, this good man, being mindful of his promise, reached up his hands in the burning flames over his head to the living God, and with great rejoicings, as it seemed, struck or clapped them three times together."

A great shout followed this wonderful circumstance. Then this blessed martyr of Christ, sinking down in the fire, gave up his spirit, June the 10th, 1555.

The awestruck multitude stood speechless at this unlooked-for signal from one whom they thought already dead. His friends, remembering the promise he had made to them in prison, were thus convinced of the wonderful power of faith to support believers through every trial. He not only raised his hands, but, after his skin was grown together and his fingers consumed with the fire, clapped them three times to show that a saint could endure the stake and be blessed during the torture.

Applications: Fearlessness in Death

The testimony of Thomas Hawkes should remind us of King David's testimony in Psalm 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Though the death of Thomas Hawkes was detestable and cried of injustice, it was a testimony to those who were against him and a wonderful consolation to those who supported him. It brought comfort and hope in knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ will never leave us or forsake us. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Why? For thou art with me.

We can endure anything and all things by the grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The second application is this: If our sovereign God is able to sustain and uphold us in the cruelest and most torturous of all circumstances, will He not do so if it is His will that we die of natural causes? If He can do it in the greatest, certainly He can do it in the least. We must understand that we are never alone and never

forsaken—not in life, not in death. Our Lord said in Hebrews 13:5, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

A Christian should never be afraid to die. We may not want to die, and we may not be eager to die, but we should never be afraid to die. Why? Because our Lord has taken away the fear of death. Hebrews 2:14–15 says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Why were we subject to bondage? Because we had fear of death.

But what did our Lord do? He delivered us from the fear of death, because we are no longer in bondage to sin. A Christian may not want to die, and he may not be eager to die, but he is not afraid to die. If you are afraid to die, there is something seriously wrong. Death holds no fear for the child of God. We must remember that, for the child of God, death is life.

The truth of the matter is this: We do not die, and we cannot die. It is true that we might drop this mortal shell, or this mortal body, but just because we drop this mortal body does not mean that we have died.

You know what our Lord said in John 11, verses 25 through 26? Martha said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Jesus said unto her, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" He that believeth in Him shall never die. Do you understand that our Lord has taken the pains out of death for us? He has not only taken the pains out of death; He has taken the fear out of death. He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and He has told us that we cannot die. Why then should we fear death?

For the child of God, death is life. How can I say that? Because death is merely the entrance into life. In 2 Corinthians 5:1, Paul says, "For we know"—not hope, not think, not maybe—"for we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved"—that is, our bodies—"we have a building of God, an house not made with hands,

eternal in the heavens." So we have a glorified body. "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked." We that are in this tabernacle, this body, "do groan, being burdened." Roy said to me again today, "Pastor, why didn't you tell me getting old had all these pains?" Well, it does.

There are certain things I can no longer do that I used to do, and my body does not respond the way it used to respond. So he says, "For in this tabernacle we do groan, being burdened." And yes, we are burdened: "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." What is death for the child of God? It is life—entrance into the presence of God, where the psalmist said, "At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Here is the truth: If Thomas Hawkes and a multitude of others endured gladly, willingly, and victoriously the most cruel and torturous means of death that man can impose upon anyone, how much easier would it be for God to undertake for us if we died of old age or a natural death?

Conclusion and Prayer

We always rejoice at a birth, but the book of Ecclesiastes tells us it is better to rejoice at a death. When a child is born, we must think of everything he will have to face, go through, and endure. But when a believer dies, his work is over, and there is nothing but life and joy.

I heard about an old Confederate veteran sitting in a barber chair. The veteran was a Christian, and the barber was a Christian. They began talking about death and dying, and the barber asked, "Do you really believe that when you die you are going to heaven?" "Well, yes, I do," said the veteran. "What do you think you might do when you get to heaven?" "I understand that when we get to heaven, the Lord will put us doing some kind of work at which we are good and which we enjoy." "What kind of work do you think the good Lord will put you to doing?" "I think the good Lord will put me to work killing Yankees, if there are any there." We laugh at that, but it is true that we do not know what life is until we die. Life does not begin at forty.

For the Christian, it begins at death. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we love Thee. We thank Thee. We give Thee praise, Lord, for men like Thomas Hawkes, John Huss, Thomas Cranmer, and Ridley; many of these were burned at the stake and endured gladly, willingly, and joyfully one of the most cruel punishments placed upon men. And yet, Lord, You undertook for them, enabled them, empowered them, and gave them grace and glory. Help us, Lord, to see that Your grace is sufficient for us, and that, Lord, we are more than conquerors through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In whose name we ask for grace to serve Thee and bow to Thee, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER 31

You Must Die

December 3, 2015

Introduction: The Certainty of Death

The main verse today is Deuteronomy 31:14. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die. Call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle, and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle. And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers. And this people will rise up, and go a-whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant that I have made with them."

Now look back at verse 14: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, the days approach that thou must die." Have you ever really considered the fact that you must die? Life is short, death is sure, and eternity is forever. Unless our Lord returns in our lifetime, none of us are going to get out of this world alive. That's all there is to it.

Denial is absolutely useless. Failure to think of death and dying is childish, because some act as though they are going to live forever. Like children, they think that if they do not think about it or talk about it, it will not happen, or it will somehow vanish and go away. The Word of God teaches differently. God said to Moses specifically, "Thou must die."

It is not a matter of whether or not we want to die, would like to die, or desire to die; we must die. Have you ever considered that there were some in the Bible to whom God spoke directly and told them that they must die?

Biblical Examples of God Declaring Death

One of them, of course, is Moses, which we just read about. He said, “Thou must die,” and certainly he did.

God said the same thing, basically, to King Hezekiah. Isaiah 38:1 reads: “In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came unto him and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live.” Here God is telling King Hezekiah that he is going to die.

Pashur was a false prophet who prophesied lies to the children of Israel, and God pronounced the penalty upon him through Jeremiah. In verse 6, Jeremiah said: “And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity, and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou and all thy friends to whom thou hast prophesied lies.” So God said to Pashur, “You’re certainly going to die.” That is all there is to it.

In Amos 7:17, we find another example. Amos was a prophet who lived actually in Judea, but he prophesied to Israel, the northern kingdom. While he was there, Amaziah, who happened to be the king’s preacher, told Amos not to prophesy against Bethel because it was the king’s chapel and the king’s court. He basically told Amos, “Get back to Judah and there eat bread.” In other words, “If you don’t get out of here, we’re going to kill you.”

Amos therefore said to Amaziah: “Therefore thus saith the Lord, Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line, and

thou shalt die in a polluted land, and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land."

So he said again, "You are going to die." It is just that simple. God says to the godly and to the ungodly alike, "Now must die." It is not just the wicked.

In Numbers chapter 20, beginning at verse 23, God tells Aaron that he has to die: "Now the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, for he 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. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up into Mount Hor, and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son. And Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there." Moses did as the Lord commanded. He stripped Aaron of his garments and put them upon Eleazar his son. "And Aaron died there in the top of the mount." When all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for him thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

God said to Moses, "Now you take Aaron your brother up to Mount Hor. You take Eleazar, and you take all the priestly garments off Aaron, and you dress Eleazar. And when all those priestly garments get off of Aaron, then he's going to die." If you were Aaron, would you not try to hold on to those garments as long as you could? Stop and think about that. Can you imagine the psychological and emotional experience Aaron was having? He knew that as quickly as those garments were taken from him, he was going to die.

God has spoken and said, "Aaron is going to die." So here is my question: Has God spoken to you and told you that you're going to die?

The answer is yes, if you understand the biblical doctrine of inspiration. It is true that God spoke in the Old Testament in different ways and at different times through the prophets. But the Bible tells us that in these last days He has spoken to us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. When you understand 2 Timothy 3:16–17, which involves the biblical doctrine of inspiration, the Bible says: "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 unto every good work."

When the Bible says, "All scripture is given by inspiration," the Greek word is theopneustos, literally meaning God-breathed or God-exhaled. Every word we have has been breathed out, or exhaled, from the mouth of God. When I ask, "Has God said that you are going to die?" the answer is yes, because He said that in His book. He has given us the very fact that we must die.

Reason 1: God's Sovereignty Ordains Death

When I was reading through Deuteronomy recently, I came across the phrase that God spoke to Moses and said, "Thou must die." The question struck me: Why must we die? Most of us probably know one of the answers, but let me give you three answers to that question today.

The very first reason we must die is simply because of God's sovereignty. God is sovereign in that He has not only ordained the day of our birth; He has also ordained the day of our death. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto man once to die, after that the judgment." Notice that it is appointed unto man. In other words, it is ordained unto man once to die. God has ordained death. Death, in one sense, is therefore a divine necessity because of God's ordination.

The fact is that our time on earth is very limited. In Job 7:1, here is the question: "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?"

"Are not his days also like the days of a hireling?" So, look at the first part: "Is there not an appointed time to man upon the earth?" Do you understand that there was a set time for our coming into the world? There is a set time for our continuing in the world, and there is a set time for our going out of the world. Everything has been ordained by God. It is not left to chance, luck, fate, or fortune. It is in the ordination of God.

Now, if you would hold the book of Job, please, but look in your Bibles back to Deuteronomy 31 and look, if you would please, at verse 16. Look what he says: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold,

thou shalt sleep with thy fathers." God has already told him in verse 14, "You must die." Now He says, "You are going to sleep with your fathers." If you look in chapter 32, beginning there with verse 48, you will see exactly where and when Moses died. Notice Deuteronomy 32, verse 48: "And the Lord spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho. And behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for possession. And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother died in Mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people. Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee, but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel."

So God tells Moses, "Look, you're not going to get into the land, but I'm going to let you see it. Now climb up in the mountain and look. And when you're through looking, you're going to die." I think I'd be looking for a long time if I could have. But He said, "You are going to die." Moses knew exactly, when he climbed that mountain, what was going to happen to him. He knew that he was going to die.

Now here is the interesting thing: Moses lived 120 years. One hundred twenty years is a long time. It is more than any of us are going to live, that's for sure. But even though he lived 120 years, there was a set time for his exit out of this world. It came to pass.

In Job 14, we find a number of truths concerning man, especially death. Job says, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble." Thus, if you have been born of a woman, you have fewness of days and fullness of trouble.

He continues: "He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down. He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." In other words, man cannot do anything for himself. Then notice verse 5: "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."

This is like when God created the oceans. Into the seas He said, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” God says, “This is it. This is your boundary. You are not coming any farther.” God has set our boundaries. Just as He set up the pillar of the world, we cannot trespass those boundaries. He has ordained not only the number of our days, but the number of our months.

We are not going to live one day longer, one hour longer, or one second longer. Everything will be exactly as God says. Yet there are verses that speak of lengthening or shortening our days. So here is the question: If God has ordained the day of our death, how can we either lengthen or shorten our days?

Proverbs 10:27 says, “The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the days of the wicked shall be shortened.” The fear of the Lord prolongs life, while the days of the wicked are shortened. How do we explain this in light of the fact that God says our days are numbered and the number of our months is with Him? The answer is simple: God has ordained not only the end, but also the means to that end. Therefore, a righteous man will use obedience and godliness to lengthen his days.

The wicked man will use sin and rebellion to shorten his days, and yet he is still going to die in God's appointed time. If we are obedient, we may outlive a lot of folks, but we are still going to die in our appointed time. It is just that simple. No matter how long or how short our time is upon this earth, we have to understand that our term upon this earth is very, very brief.

Psalm 90 is a Psalm of Moses, the man of God. David did not write all of the Psalms; he wrote most of them. Asaph wrote some of the Psalms, and Moses wrote Psalm 90. The heading says, "A Prayer of Moses the man of God." Beginning with verse 5, Moses describes our lives:

"Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins

in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Notice what he says in verse 5: "Thou carriest them away as with a flood." In other words, our lives on this earth are kind of like a flash flood. Most of us do not understand flash floods.

If you lived in Arizona, Nevada, or even Northern California, where you get a lot of water from the snow melts, you could be in the desert and come to a gully. You start trying to cross it, and suddenly the snow melts in the mountains. The water comes rushing down, sweeping cars away. People die instantly. Then, just as quickly as the water washes you away, it is gone, and the next thing you know, it is dry again.

So he said it is like a flood. But look again in verse 5: "They are as a sleep." Have you ever thought about sleeping? Isn't it amazing that you can lie down at night, go to sleep, wake up eight hours later, and it seems like you just went to bed? You do not even realize the time that has passed. That is what he is saying: our life goes by just that quickly.

Then he says that we are like grass that grows up in the morning; in the evening it is cut down and withers. In verse 9 he says, "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told." How long does it take to tell a tale? Not very long. He said it is all gone. He is using all of these illustrations to tell us how quickly our lives are over. Each illustrates the shortness, the brevity of our lives.

Then he points out that many lives are still filled with anguish and heartache. Job also uses an illustration. In Job 7:6, he said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope."

I do not know if you have ever seen a weaver's shuttle when those things work, but it is just back and forth almost instantly. It flies almost as fast or faster than your eyes can see. So he said, "My life is over like a weaver's shuttle."

But look in James chapter 4, beginning at verse 13. Here is another illustration of the brevity and shortness of our life. He says, "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life?"

“For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.” James is talking about the brevity of our lives. A vapour is like a fog. I got up one morning this past week and there was a little fog, but an hour later it was gone. We do not know what tomorrow may hold.

Anyone who is seventy or older understands the brevity of life. We can sit around and say, “Where did those years go? How in the world did time pass so quickly?” It seems as if yesterday we were playing with our children, and now we are playing with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. When we were young, we thought we would live forever, and we wanted to get older. I remember thinking, “If I can just get to be sixteen.” Then it was eighteen, and then twenty-one.

I never will forget the time that Alice’s father and I were sitting and playing chess. He died at eighty-nine and would have been ninety on his next birthday. I was probably in my thirties, and Pop was seventy-five. Finally, he looked up and said, “Son, now when I get old…” I thought, “Pop, you are old!” To a thirty-year-old man, seventy-five is an old age. But the closer I get to it, the more I realize it is not too old at all.

It does not matter if we live two hundred years; we are still going to die, and comparatively speaking, it is still a short time. It seems as if we went to sleep young and woke up old. You actually begin dying when you are born. In one sense of the word, we grow into death.

We grow into death because death is simply the natural end of life. That is all there is to it. We must understand that we must die because God is sovereign. He has ordained and appointed the time of our death, just as He ordained and appointed the time of our birth.

Reason 2: Death Results from Sin

The second reason we must die is that we are sinners. Most of you know this, and I will not spend too much time on it, but we must die because we are sinners. Death is the result of sin. If there had been no sin, there would not be any death. Frankly, we may blame death and sin upon Adam, because Adam was our federal head and federal representative. We were in him, and what he did, we did. Because of his sin, sin was imputed to us.

Romans 5:12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This is a tremendous passage talking about the imputation of sin. Why does the Bible not say, "Wherefore, as by one woman"? Did not Eve sin before Adam? Yes, she took of the fruit and gave it to her husband. So why does it not say, "Wherefore, as by one woman sin entered into the world"?

The answer is that God had entered into His covenant with Adam, with the man. He was the head. He was the representative. Notice again what the Bible says: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." When you look at that phrase, "all have sinned," it is an aorist passive, which means it happened one time and is over with. When did all of us sin at one time? The answer is: in Adam, who was our federal head and federal representative. When we sinned in Adam, sin was imputed to us. It was charged to our account, and we inherited a sinful nature that now results in actual sin. We sin because we are sinners; we do not become sinners because we sin. We are already sinners.

So many people think, “Well, I’m not so bad. I have not violated God’s law like a lot of people have.” You do not have to violate the whole law in order to be a sinner. All you have to do is violate one part or one point. James 2:10 says, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.”

Obviously, you do not have to commit every sin in the book to be a sinner. All you have to do is commit one sin, and God's Word says you are guilty of all. You remember I told you in times past that the law demands three things of every individual: a personal obedience, a perfect obedience, and a perpetual obedience. None of us have ever given that to the law. Therefore, there can be no excuse and no denial of sin.

There are certain groups that try to deny sin. I think the Christian Scientists deny sin, and they even deny death. One of my favorite stories is about the little boy who came running into the house and said, "Mother, mother, mother!" She said, "You know, that lady down the street has been sick so long." The mother said, "No, no, son, you mean the lady that thinks she's been sick so long?" He said, "Well, now she thinks she's dead." You can try to deny it all you want.

But the fact of the matter is that we are sinners and we are going to die. That is what the Bible means in Romans 3:10–12: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Not one. By the way, I cannot ever read this passage without thinking about a preacher friend of mine.

A Baptist preacher in Kentucky—I think he is dead now—once advertised a Sunday sermon as "The Four Nuns," spelling "nuns" on the church bulletin board during a Roman Catholic convention in town. The unusual announcement drew Catholics to the Baptist church. The "four nones" were his playful name for Romans 3:10–12: "There is none righteous, there is none that seeketh after God, there is none that understandeth, and there is none that doeth good." He had simply misspelled the word, but the Scripture declares the truth. Well, those are the four nones.

You cannot deny that we are sinners, and death is the result. Everybody knows Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." But stop and think: even as Christians, we are nothing more than saved sinners. That's all. None of us is perfect—no, not one, not in this life.

Have you ever stopped to think about this? I do not care how godly you are.

No matter how obedient or holy you are, if you are still on this earth, there is enough sin in your obedience to damn you if it were not for Jesus Christ. God commands us to pray, yet how often we fail to pray, pray selfishly, or pray wickedly. He commands us to study, yet how often we read our Bibles merely for the sake of reading, or study only to gain intellectual knowledge with which to argue, boast, and fill ourselves with vain pride and arrogance. We may be obedient, but our obedience is certainly not perfect in this life. If it were not for the Lord Jesus Christ, His grace, and His mercy, our obedience would not amount to anything.

One of my favorite verses is where the Apostle Paul spoke of God putting him into the ministry: "He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." There was probably no better preacher than the Apostle Paul in one sense of the word, and God used him to write so many books in the Bible. But notice what Paul said: "He counted me faithful." Not that he was faithful, but God counted him that. He charged him, He imputed him as being faithful. So many times we fail, and yet God counts us as being faithful regardless. Isn't that amazing?

If it were not for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, none of us would ever be saved, period. The Bible says that none can keep alive his own soul—not one. We must die because we are sinners, and we must die because God is sovereign. God has ordained our end just as He ordained our beginning.

A New Glorified Body

Reason 3: Death Prepares for the Eternal State

This is the third point: we must die in preparation for the eternal state. It is impossible to enter the eternal state with flesh and blood; it requires a new body. In 1 Corinthians 15:50, the Apostle Paul sets the record straight: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." That makes the matter plain: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. You and I must die because our flesh

and blood is not going to inherit the kingdom of God. There must be a resurrection body, a glorified body. You remember that our Lord lived, died, was buried, and was raised from the dead, and He had a glorified body.

It is interesting that in Luke 24:39, when our Lord was talking to His disciples, some of them thought that He was a spirit, a ghost. He said to them: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." He did not say flesh and blood. He said flesh and bones. It was a new glorified body.

In 2 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul again speaks of a resurrected, or glorified, body. He says: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." He is talking about the fact that we have an earthly body now, but there is a heavenly body, made without hands, eternal in the heavens. Then he says: "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

"Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." The Apostle Paul is saying that we have a glorified, resurrected body awaiting us. While we are in this body, we are absent from the Lord; that is, we are not in His presence. We would much rather be absent from this body, have a glorified body, and be in the presence of Christ.

Notice how he talks about our tabernacle and our building. He is referring simply to the body. Have you ever considered that it requires a new body for the beatific vision? The beatific vision is nothing more than seeing God. Our Lord says in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Have you ever thought about seeing God? Yet our Lord told Moses in Exodus

33:20, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.” Flesh and blood cannot see God. It requires a glorified body.

I get tickled at some of the things people say they are going to do when they get to Heaven. Alice and I were talking about it, and I may preach a message on it. We heard a song this past week that began beautifully, but its chorus turned to foot-tapping, jumping up and down, hollering, and fleshly emotion, talking about shouting in glory. I looked up the words “shout,” “shouted,” and “shouting.” The only time the Bible talks about shouting was when the sons of God shouted for joy at the creation of the world in Job. That is it. We can say, “We’re going to do this and that,” but I would imagine that when we see God in His majesty, beauty, greatness, and glory, all we will do is fall down and worship.

We are going to be like those four and twenty elders who bowed down and cast their crowns at His feet and said, “Thou art worthy, O Lord.” The interesting thing is that when we see God, it has to be with a glorified body if we are going to behold Him.

First John 3:2 says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” We are right now children of God. We have been regenerated and converted by His grace and mercy, adopted into the family. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” In other words, we are not exactly sure what our glorified bodies will be like. “But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” That should be sufficient to satisfy anyone. We will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. So, there is a glorified body.

Now the question has to be asked: how do we get that glorified body? First Corinthians 15:40 shows the difference in bodies: “There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.”

“So also is the resurrection of the dead.” This is why I am telling you we have to die: “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown

in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." But notice: He is saying it has to die. It is sown in corruption, but we're raised incorruptible. It is sown in dishonour, but we're raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, but we're raised in power. It is sown a natural body, but it's raised a spiritual body. He then goes on to show that although we're talking about a new body, and we must die to get this new body, there is no sting of death. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Sting of Death Removed for Believers

The Apostle talks about there being no sting in death: "O death, where is thy sting?" For the child of God, there is absolutely nothing to fear. It's just kind of like the metamorphosis of a butterfly. You have the cocoon, the larva, the caterpillar, and then the butterfly. That's exactly what he's saying. He asks, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He is talking about death. Death for the child of God has to be viewed as victory. It is nothing less than a metamorphosis into glory. There should be no fear of death for the child of God.

Why? Let me show you. We're still talking about that sting—the sting is gone. Here we're talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that

The devil held people through fear of death in bondage all their lifetime. But our Lord, through death, not only destroyed the power of the devil; He destroyed death in the sense that He took the sting out of it. The Bible teaches us that He is our victory, our Deliverer, and our deliverance. David said, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” There is a great difference between a shadow and reality. Our death is only an entrance into life.

Consider John 11, where Lazarus had died. Martha went to Jesus and said, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” She answered, “Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God.” She did not really answer His question, but she affirmed that He was the Son of God.

What was He saying? “I am the resurrection.” The resurrection had walked into town. There was no need to worry; He would take care of it. Do you understand that our Lord is our guide unto death, in death, and through death? When the child of God dies, our Lord is right there. He has been there Himself, so there is no need to fear. There is no sting in death for the child of God.

You may not want to die. You may not desire to die. You may not look forward to dying, but you must die. There is no two ways out of it.

Application 1: Prepare for Death

Since we know that we must die, here is the first application: If you genuinely believe that you must die and that you are going to die, have you prepared to die? Have you prepared spiritually? Have you prepared in other ways? Do you have your house in order? You remember what God told Hezekiah: "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." Do you have your house in order?

Do you have your cemetery plots? Do you have your casket picked out? Do you have your funeral services arranged? Have you paid for everything, to save your children the financial and emotional decisions of having to do it themselves? Have you laid out the

service, picked out the song, and picked out the preacher? If you own property, have you made a will? Have you arranged for your children to inherit?

I am simply saying that if we are going to die, and we know we are going to die, something should be done in advance. My father died instantly twenty-one years ago, at seventy-six years of age, on July the 4th. He asked my mother, "Is dinner ready?" She said, "No." He was watching the news and said, "Well, I'd like a glass of tea." She said, "Well, I'll get it for you." She went into the kitchen, fixed a glass of tea, turned around, and came back, and he was dead. Just that simple. Just that quick. Of course, he had things pretty well taken care of.

After he died, my mother lived until she was ninety. I took her to the funeral home, and she picked out her casket. She did everything in advance; we laid it out and paid for it in advance. The same thing happened with Alice's mother, who lived to be ninety-five. It was all taken care of in advance.

Not only was there no financial strain, but there was not too much emotional strain either, because dying is a part of living. You cannot die unless you have lived. If we genuinely believe that we are going to die, we must make some preparations.

The Second Application

Application 2: Do Not Delay Your Duty

I find it absolutely amusing and yet comforting that some must be told they are old and ready to die, and need to get on with what they need to do. Look at Joshua 13:1: “Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the Lord said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.” God was telling Joshua, “You have conquered a lot of the land, and that is true, but the land has not been divided. There is some division, but there is still work left. You are old and stricken in years. Whatever you are going to do, get on with it and get it done.”

Isn’t that amazing? God says, “You’re old and stricken in years, and there’s a lot that has to be done. Get on with what needs to be

done." I tell people that many of us want to do a lot of things, but we keep putting them off. Some things do not need to be done, but I have thought about my father many times. He and I had planned for years to go out west and go elk hunting. Dad could have done it. He was not a rich man, but he was not broke either. He could have done it for a number of years after he retired, but he kept putting it off. He died and never did it.

You can look at Joshua 13:1 and apply it in many ways. Whatever we want to do, we need to go ahead and do it, because we are getting old, we are going to die, and it will be left undone. God had to tell Joshua, "You're getting old and stricken in years. Get on with it, son. You're not going to live forever."

In Deuteronomy 31:14, we read: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation."

Application 3: Remain Faithful Despite Death

The news or knowledge of our death should not move us or shake us from our faith or our duty. God said to Moses, "You must die. Now you go get Joshua and bring him to the tabernacle. I'm going to give him a charge." Moses knew he was going to die, but that did not stop him from obeying God. He did as he was commanded.

Our pending death should not surprise us, nor should it deter us from doing our duty. We already know that we are going to die, so we need to learn to be faithful even unto death. Moses said, "I've got to die, but I'm still going to be obedient. I'm going to do what I can while I can."

The death of a loved one, no matter how close, should never deter us from our duty and our service to the Lord. I have lost father and mother, aunts and uncles, and cousins; I have never lost a mate. My wife has lost a great deal of her family as well.

Consider Moses and Joshua. Joshua was the man who ministered to Moses. Study the matter, and you will find that the only two men who went up into that mount were Moses and Joshua. Joshua was

always with Moses. He defended Moses, stood up for him, and spoke up for him. Yet Joshua's closeness to Moses did not excuse him from continuing his duty after Moses died. Joshua 1:1-2 says, "Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, 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." What did God say? "Moses is dead. Get on with your life. Get on with doing what I've commanded you to do. Go ahead and obey." It's just that simple. I'm sure there's grieving time. I understand that. We're human. But God says we have to get on with our lives.

I love that passage. In fact, I've preached on it where God told Ezekiel, "Behold, I take away the desire of thine eyes with a stroke," talking about his wife. And he said, "But thou shalt not mourn nor weep." "So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded." Isn't that amazing? He just obeyed. That's what Joshua did. He just obeyed.

We have to understand that dying is a part of living. I'm not in any rush to die. I enjoy life. I'm thankful for the life that God has given me. But I'm not afraid to die, because Jesus Christ has taken the sting out of death. He's been there, done that, got the t-shirt, and will take us through it.

Conclusion: Death Without Fear

Let's pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to you this day. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. And Lord, help us to face honestly this truth that we must die. May we prepare ourselves spiritually, mentally, emotionally, financially, in every way possible, Lord. Help us to honor thee in our lives and in our deaths. May we give honor and glory to thee. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 32

Condemning Or Damning Christ

November 7, 2016

Introduction and Scripture Reading

In Mark 14:55–64, we read:

"And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death, and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain to bear false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another temple made without hands. But neither did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am. And you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming into the clouds of heaven."

The Meaning of Condemnation

"Then the high priest rent his clothes and said, What need we of any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy, what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death."

Condemnation is a powerful word, but we do not understand its impact unless we understand it theologically. We normally understand condemnation in the legal sense: a criminal is found guilty, meaning that he is condemned, and then sentenced. The condemnation and sentence may be just or unjust. Since man is not perfect in this life, most judgments are not completely just; innocent men have been condemned, and wicked men have been declared innocent. Unjust and unbiblical sentences have also been meted out to individuals who certainly do not deserve them.

The theological implications of condemnation can be seen in the Greek text. The word is *katakrino*, translated in our Bibles "condemned" seventeen times and "damn" twice. It means to condemn, to damn, to give judgment against, and to judge someone worthy of punishment. Thus it is used in various ways throughout the Bible.

First, it refers to what Adam did to his posterity. When Adam sinned, we were condemned in Adam. Romans 5:16 says, "And not as it was by one that sinned, so was the gift. For the judgment was by one to condemnation." Romans 5:18 says, "Therefore as the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation."

And then he goes on to make a comparison of Jesus Christ. But notice: "judgment came upon all to condemnation." All men are now in a state of condemnation—that is, all unsaved men. In fact, we were born under condemnation. Romans 5:12 says, "as by one man sin entered in the world, and death by sin. And so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." The very fact that men die demonstrates that we are under the condemnation of God and the curse of sin as well.

John 3:18-19 gives us the same word: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." "For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but the world through him

might be saved." Now watch: "he that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already. Because he had not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation. This is the damnation. This is a judgment that light is coming to the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil."

The Bible teaches that man by nature is already condemned, and the demonstration of that is that he loves darkness rather than light. I could also say that he loves error rather than truth. That is for sure.

The Old Covenant as a Ministry of Condemnation

Moreover, the Old Covenant, the Old Testament, with its ceremonial laws and sacrifices, is specifically called a ministry of condemnation. In 2 Corinthians 3:9, the Bible says, "for if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." Although the Old Covenant was a ministry of condemnation, yet it was glorious. The Apostle Paul is saying that the ministry of righteousness is far more glorious than that of condemnation. So you are going to ask, why was the Old Covenant referred to then as a ministry of condemnation?

Hebrews 10 explains why the Old Covenant is regarded as a ministry of condemnation: "For the law," that is, especially the ceremonial 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 therein too perfect." Obviously, the ceremonial law was a shadow; it was not the reality. All those sacrifices could never make anyone perfect.

Verse 2 continues: "If it had of, for then would they not have ceased to be offered, because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices," that is, the Old Covenant, "there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." The sacrifices did not remove sin; they brought a remembrance of sins every year. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Thus the Old Covenant was a ministry of condemnation because it could not make anyone perfect. Verses 5 through 8 turn particularly to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only perfect sacrifice.

The Word 'Damnation' in Scripture

Condemnation, then, is the passing of judgment; it is condemnation or damnation. The word is used and translated in several Scriptures. Matthew 23:14 says, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayer. Therefore you shall receive the greater damnation,” or condemnation. You see this several times, translated in the same way. Here it is translated as damnation. Mark 12:40 likewise says, “which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers, these shall receive greater damnation,” or greater condemnation. Luke 20:47 says, “which devour widows' houses and for show make long prayers the same shall receive the greater damnation.” Three times, the word damnation is used.

Many individuals take God's name in vain and attach the word “damn” to God's name. In doing so, they are asking God to judge, condemn, and damn the individual at whom they are angry.

They do not realize their sin—not only in taking the name of the Lord in vain and profaning it, but also in the implications of their request. If merely calling someone a fool puts us in danger of hellfire, what is the verdict if, because we are angry, we ask God to damn someone? Let us look at Matthew 5:22. Our Lord said, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 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 council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” When someone takes God’s name in vain and asks God to damn another person simply because he is angry and upset, he is asking for serious trouble without realizing the implication of his request.

The Unjust Condemnation of Jesus

Condemnation may be either just or unjust. When we speak of the condemnation of Jesus Christ, we understand that it was unjust and that our Lord was unjustly condemned. Even the repentant thief recognized His innocence. The other thief said, “If thou be the Son of God, come off the cross and get us off as well.” But the repentant

thief rebuked him: “Dost thou not fear God, seeing that we are in the same condemnation, and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our sins: but this man hath done nothing amiss.” Thus, even one of the thieves recognized the innocence of Jesus Christ.

Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, made an astounding statement: “Hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God”

Peter says that God “hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, it was not possible that he should be holding of it.” In verse 22, he speaks of Jesus Christ as “a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs.” They could not deny His miracles. Yet verse 23 says, “Him being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

Did not God the Father ordain everything concerning the death of Jesus Christ? The answer is yes. Nothing was done to Jesus Christ except that which God ordained in eternity past. But Peter also said, “you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified.” The chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, and others were not interested in glorifying or honoring God. They were not trying to fulfill prophecy. They did what they did to Jesus Christ because they hated and despised Him. Thus their rebellion and wickedness are demonstrated. Their actions were absolutely, totally wicked and unbiblical.

Illegalities and Predetermined Verdict

There were a number of illegalities concerning the trial of Jesus Christ. I will mention only a few, not delve into all of them. The truth is, there could be an entire series of sermons on this subject, but that is not the point of this message. I want to set the stage by looking at Mark 14:53: “They led Jesus away to the high priest, and with him with the high priest were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.”

Remember that the Sadducees controlled the temple. Further, there was a clique in the ruling family. I could say the Clinton Foundation or the Democratic National Party, and you can understand what I mean.

But Scripture shows us that there was a ruling, corrupt clique in the Sanhedrin. Look in Acts 4, verses 5 and 6: “And it came to pass on the morrow that the rulers and elders and scribes, and Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest were gathered together at Jerusalem.”

Essentially, one family was controlling the temple and, in effect, the Sanhedrin. The Sadducees controlled the temple, while the Pharisees controlled the general populace. Usually, the Pharisees and Sadducees were at odds with each other, fighting each other. The reason was simple: the Pharisees claimed to be the Bible believers, or the fundamentalists, of their day. At least, they believed in their interpretation of the law.

The Sadducees were extremely liberal. They did not believe in the Spirit, nor did they believe in the resurrection from the dead. The Pharisees confessed both. You remember the Apostle Paul, when he saw the council made up of Pharisees and Sadducees, saying that he was a Pharisee and raised a Pharisee for the hope of Israel. He divided the council because normally they were in each other’s throats. However, Jesus Christ confounded both the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

They had come together to condemn Him and to execute Him. Matthew 22:34 says, “But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.” They were enemies, but they came together against Christ.

The passage in Mark 14 says, “And after two days was the feast of the Passover and of unleavened bread, and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft and put him to death.” They were trying and planning to capture Christ and execute Him. Verse 55 says, “the chief priests” and all the council sought for witnesses against Jesus to put him to death and found none.

John 11 shows how they had come together to destroy Christ: “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council,” so here the rulers of the temple were the ones who had the people in their hand, “and said, What do we? For this man doeth many miracles.” In other words, they could not deny what was happening.

“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. And one of them named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, You know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

“Then from that day forth they took counsel together,” the Pharisees and the Sadducees, “to put him to death.” When Caiaphas said to the council, it was easier for one man to die than the nation. They could execute one man and be rid of their problem. If they let Jesus alone, the Romans would come and take away their place, position, power, and nation.

Caiaphas did not know what he was saying. He prophesied that Jesus should die not only for those people but for His other people everywhere else, though he did not understand it. All he was thinking about was getting rid of Jesus Christ and executing Him. After this, they determined that they were going to put Him to death.

In Mark 14:55, we read, “And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death and found none.” They were seeking witnesses so they could put Jesus Christ to death. Matthew 26:59 says, “Now the chief priests and elders and all the council sought false witness against Jesus to put Him to death.”

Everything about this trial was already predetermined and prejudged. First, there was no complaint filed against Jesus Christ. No one could claim personal harm or injury; He had harmed no one. How do you proceed in a legal case against someone without an official complaint? The court does not simply go up and down the

street, snatch somebody off the street, and say, “We’re going to put you on trial.” No, there has to be a complaint.

Secondly, the judges initiated the action. Without the judges, there would not have been a case. That is like a circuit court judge saying, “Well, I’m kind of bored. We don’t have anything else to do around here. Go arrest Gary and bring him in here and we’ll think of something to charge him with.” Here the judges are seeking witnesses.

Thirdly, note that they intended to condemn Christ and execute Jesus Christ. They were not interested in justice; they simply wanted Jesus Christ condemned. In desiring Him condemned, they were violating one of their own canons, one of their own principles. Here it is: “In pecuniary causes,” that is, causes relating to money, “they begin either with absolution or condemnation. But in capital causes they begin for absolution and do not begin with condemnation.”

It is just like our adage: a man is innocent until proven guilty. This court, then, was beginning with condemnation, contrary to its own canon. When it came to the death penalty, they were to begin with absolution. They should have been looking for evidence to acquit Jesus Christ, but they were not interested in acquitting Him. They were looking for information and witnesses to condemn Him to death.

John Gill said, “They first take him up and then seek for witnesses against him, being determined right or wrong to put him to death, if possible, and false witnesses too, even those whose business it was to examine and detect false witnesses, and to inflict the same punishment upon them which they by their false testimony intended to have brought on another.”

Why does Gill say that the judges had a responsibility to examine and detect false witnesses? The answer is Deuteronomy chapter 19, verses 18 and 19. If a man bore false witness against a brother, the judges were to examine him. If he was found guilty, they were to put the same judgment upon the man who bore false witness as he had thought to have done to his brother. It was therefore their responsibility to examine and detect false witnesses.

Gill goes on to say that, besides, it was in the night, when their canons forbade beginning capital causes or receiving and admitting witnesses. The trial, then, began at night, a violation of their own canon. He continues: “Indeed the Syriac and Persic versions read only witnesses or witness and leave out the word false. Perhaps imagining that men could never be so wicked to seek out for false witnesses. But this need not be wondered at, when all men were bent upon the death of Christ at any rate, and were aware that nothing true could be objected to him that would legally take away his life.”

Besides, their procedure and judgment against a false prophet, a deceiver, or one who enticed to idolatry—such a person as they would have Jesus to be—was quite different from their treatment of other persons. Their canon stated, “The judgment of a deceiver is not as the rest of capital judgments.” Here is where they violated their own canon: “His witnesses are hid and he has no need or ought not to have any premonition or warning as the rest of those that are put to death. And if he goes out of the Sanhedrin acquitted, and one says, I can prove the charge against him, they turn him back. But if he goes out condemned and one says, I can prove him innocent, they do not return him.”

Obviously, everything about this trial was unjust. The judges themselves were unjust. Everything was deliberately set to condemn Jesus Christ.

Now look at Mark 14: “For many bear false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain mere false witnesses against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together.” The obvious implication is that the false witnesses could not agree, and were obviously false witnesses. Yet the fact that they were bearing false witness did not upset the priests, the Pharisees, or the council. They did not care. What upset them was that no witness testified against Jesus in a way that demonstrated he merited the death penalty. They wanted him dead.

False Witnesses and Jesus' Silence

They had planned to execute him, but these witnesses testified about trivial and mundane matters: “I heard him say he's going to destroy this temple in three days, build it again without hands.” Why would that warrant the death penalty?

John Gill says, “Though this is not much the sense of the passage here, it was not the falsehood of their testimony, which this council was unconcerned about, or the contradiction that was in it, which does not appear, but their testimonies were not equal or answerable to the wishes of the council. They were not sufficient to prove a capital crime upon him in order to put him to death, which is what they wanted.” They respected only light and trivial matters, which did not amount to a charge of blasphemy or sedition. They wanted Him dead, obviously.

Look at verse 60: “And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?” Verse 61 says, “but he held his peace.” The high priest’s question was provocative, designed to indicate and imply the guilt of Jesus Christ. In effect, he was saying, “Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?” You have so many witnesses testifying against you. There must be something wrong. You have done something wrong. Look at the multitude you have. You are hiding something; you must be guilty.

What they wanted Christ to do was confess and condemn himself, but He did not fall into that trap. The Bible says, “but he held his peace and answered nothing.” He did not speak.

The high priest was extremely frustrated. He wanted to put Jesus Christ to death, but so far there had been no reason. Thus, verse 61 says that He “held his peace and answered nothing” to all those false witnesses. Again the high priest asked Him, “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” The Blessed One was a common name for the one true and living God. God is called the Blessed One because He is everlastingly blessed in and of Himself, and He should be blessed and praised continually by men and angels. Zacharias began his canticle in Luke 1:68 with these words: “Blessed is the Lord God.” God is the Blessed One.

Now consider the question in verse 61: “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus said, “I am. And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Jesus Christ had been standing silent. Why did He answer this question when He had not answered previously?

Matthew gives a fuller account in chapter 26, verse 63: “But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.” “I adjure thee by the living God.” The high priest was putting Jesus Christ under a solemn oath and saying, “You must answer this.”

"Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" Here is the reason Jesus Christ answered. Leviticus 5:1 says, "And if a soul sin and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity." Jesus Christ was indeed a witness to the fact that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, and therefore He had to answer. He could testify to the fact that yes, He is the Messiah and the Son of God.

Jesus' Confession and the Charge of Blasphemy

Listen to what Calvin said: "Christ the Son of God." From the words of Caiaphas we may infer that it was at that time common among the Jews to bestow on the Messiah the title, Son of God. This form of interrogation could not have originated any other way than from the ordinary custom. Indeed, they had learned from the predictions of Scripture that it was not less the Son of God than the Son of David. It appears, too, that Caiaphas employed this epithet with a view of either terrifying Christ or exciting a prejudice against Him, as if he had said, "See where you are going with this, for you cannot call yourself Christ the Messiah without claiming at the same time to be the Son of God. Scripture honors Him."

Such is also the reason for using the word blessed, which Mark gives instead of God, for this pretended reverence for God was intended to bring a heavier charge against Christ than that of simply profaning the holy name of God. The high priest was saying that if Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the Anointed One, then He also

claimed to be the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, and the Son of God.

Mark 14:61 says, “Again, the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Jesus said, I am. And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Jesus was saying, “You said it. You got it right. You were correct. I am the Son of God.” He gives two proofs. The fact that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God demonstrates that He is not only the Messiah but the Son of God. The second proof is that they shall see Him coming in the clouds of heaven. He is either going to be coming in judgment in A.D. 70 or coming in the last judgment, but He is going to be coming—that is for sure.

Now notice verses 63 and 64: “Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.” On the surface, “What think ye?” appears to be an innocent question, with the high priest asking the council what they thought. However, it was a loaded question. As president of the council, he was to vote last, but now he had voted first. In essence, he said, “He is a blasphemer. What do you think?” Then they all condemned Him as guilty of death. It is significant that the Bible says, “Then the high priest rent his clothes, and said, What need we have any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy.”

The rending of his robe and the rending of his clothes indicates the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant, because now the priesthood is going to be gone and have the beginning of the priesthood of Jesus Christ. So now they have charged Him with blasphemy. By the way, when Jesus Christ would say that God was His Father, they understood that He was claiming to be God.

For instance, look in John 5 and verse 18. John 5, in fact, let us read verses 17 and 18: "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the Lord to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath," that is their interpretation of it, "but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

They understood the implication. So when the high priest asked him, "Art thou the Christ and son of the blessed?" Jesus Christ said, "I am." Then they said, "You're a blasphemer because you're claiming to be God."

Now look in Leviticus 24 and verse 16. In this passage we read about the penalty for blasphemy: "And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death. And all the congregation shall certainly stone him, as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death." So blasphemy did indeed carry the death penalty.

The Changed Charges Before Pilate

Why did the Council condemn Jesus Christ? They charged Him with blasphemy because He claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God. But when they got Jesus Christ before Pilate, the charges changed. Luke 23: "And the whole multitude of them arose and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ the King."

Where is the charge of blasphemy? They knew that Pilate would not be interested in their charge of blasphemy. So they had to change the charge in order to get the Romans to condemn Him. Do you remember what they told Pilate in John chapter 19? They said, "If you let this man go then you are not Caesar's friend."

Application: Agreeing with the Sanhedrin or with Christ

Here is what they did in Mark 14: They condemned Christ. They damned Christ. Why? Because they believed that Jesus Christ was an imposter, a charlatan, a deceiver, a liar, and a blasphemer.

Here is the point of this entire message: Unless individuals repent of their sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, bow to Him, submit to Him, and acknowledge Him as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior, the Lord of Glory, the Great I Am, God incarnate—that is,

God in the flesh—they are agreeing with the Sanhedrin that He is a blasphemer, a liar, a charlatan, and a deceiver.

Stop and think about the implications of this charge. That means we either condemn the wickedness and rebellion of the Sanhedrin, or we condemn and damn Jesus Christ. We are saying that they were right and Christ was wrong. Unless we condemn ourselves and say, "Yes, we're sinful and wicked and rebellious; we need to repent," we are saying that they are right, and we are damning Christ and condemning Him.

As Christians, when we know and understand the principles and truths of God's Word and knowingly and willingly violate them, what are we saying in practicality? That Jesus Christ is not God, and that He does not have the right to tell us how to live, how to act, what to do, and what not to do. In other words, we would be saying with the Sanhedrin that He is a deceiver, a charlatan, and a blasphemer.

We will either agree with the Sanhedrin or agree with Jesus Christ. There is no neutrality. We either bow to Him or bow to the Sanhedrin. We either condemn the Sanhedrin or condemn Christ. We either condemn ourselves or condemn Christ. Multitudes today are doing exactly what the Sanhedrin did over two thousand years ago: condemning Jesus Christ and saying He is not God. They say they do not have to bow to Him, obey Him, or bring their lives into conformity with His Word.

But here is the truth: Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ is God. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and God of gods. We had better bow to Him, acknowledge who He is, and serve Him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your grace and Your mercy. Help us, dear Lord, not to sin against Thee, not to grieve Thee, and certainly not to condemn Christ. Help us to love Thee and live for Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 33

Committing The Sins Of The Jews

November 18, 2016

SCRIPTURE READING - John 18:36 (KJV)

Introduction: The Jews Crucified Christ

> John 18:36 says: Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. So Jesus Christ is claiming to be king. John 19:14 says, and it was the preparation of the Passover, about the sixth hour, and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your king. But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Verse 19 says: And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the

writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city. It was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. Imitation is said to be the highest form of flattery, but imitation of sin, rebellion, and wickedness is not flattering. Scripture shows how we in the 21st century commit the same sins the Jews committed when they crucified Jesus Christ, the Messiah. It is not politically correct to refer to the scriptural fact that it was the Jews who crucified Christ.

Many Christians water this down by saying He died for all our sins, so we were all responsible for His crucifixion. He did die for the sins of His people. Yet Scripture is specific: the Jews crucified Christ, rejected His person, sought His life, delivered Him to Pilate, and demanded His crucifixion.

John 5:16 says: And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. Verse 18 says, Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. John 19:11 records Christ's answer to Pilate. When Pilate told Christ that he had power to crucify him and power to let him go, in verse 11, Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. And it was the Jews who delivered Christ over to Pilate.

Several passages in Acts specifically charge the Jews with crucifying Christ. Peter preaches in Acts 2:23: Him, talking about Jesus Christ, Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Peter pulls no punches. Acts 4:10 says: Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. Acts 10:38–39 says:

Speaking of Jesus Christ, verse 38 says, How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about

doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. Verse 39, And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. The Jews used Roman soldiers as instruments. In his defense, Stephen calls the Jews betrayers and murderers in Acts 7:52: Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers. The Bible specifically states over and over that it was the Jews who crucified Christ.

We may believe the politically correct version and try to say, well, no, they were not guilty. Or we may believe what the Bible states and say, yes, they were guilty of crucifying Jesus Christ. As for me and my house, I prefer to believe the Bible. It was the Jews who were responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. The question has to be asked. Why did they want him crucified? We know that the death of Jesus Christ was foreordained by God the Father. In fact, the Bible tells us that every detail was worked out before the world ever began.

Peter preaches in Acts 2:22: Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, Christ, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. It was no accident that Christ was crucified. God had determined and foreordained before the world ever began that His Son, Jesus Christ, would be the Messiah, the God-man, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Lord of Glory, and that He would give His life for His people. Acts 4:26 explains in greater detail: Scripture says, The kings of the earth stood up, Herod, Pilate, all of them, the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers, that is those elders of Israel, were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. against the Lord, and against his Christ, for of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. Do you realize there was not one thing that happened to Jesus Christ that was not ordained before the foundation of the world? Nothing was left to

chance, fate, or fortune. Every aspect of the life of Jesus Christ was under the sovereign control and sovereign predestination of God the Father. Everything that happened according to the will of God. However, although God had foreordained his crucifixion and death, yet when the Jews crucified him, they did not do so in obedience to God, but in rebellion to God. They hated Christ, and they would not receive Him as their Messiah. In John 15:25, our Lord says, But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. In other words, there was nothing in Jesus Christ that would merit or draw forth their hatred. They hated Him freely. without a cause. As Peter said to them in Acts chapter 2, which I've already quoted, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. So what they did, they did in absolute rebellion to God. So the Jews were responsible for the death of Christ. They crucified Him because they hated Him, despised Him, refused Him, and rejected Him. Why did they want Him crucified? Consider Daniel 9.

In Daniel chapter 9 verses 25 and 26, we read in those two verses about the Messiah. Now the word Messiah in the Hebrew is Mashiach, and in the Greek it is Messiahs. The same word that is translated twice as Messiah, and Daniel chapter 9 is translated anointed 37 times in the Bible. What does the word Messiah mean? It means the anointed one. When we say Jesus the Messiah, we're saying Jesus the anointed one. So once you call Jesus the Messiah, Once you refer to Him as the Anointed One, you're acknowledging that Jesus Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King.

Jesus as the Messiah: Prophet, Priest, and King

Our Lord's earthly name is Jesus. That comes from the Hebrew word Yeshua, which simply means Savior. That is where we get the English name Joshua from. The word Joshua, like Jesus, just simply means Savior. When you come to the New Testament and you read about Jesus Christ, the word Christ in the Greek is the word Christos. Christos literally means Anointed. So when you say Jesus Christ, You're actually saying Jesus, the Messiah, or Jesus, the Anointed One. So Jesus Christ is the Messiah of God. Jesus Christ is the Anointed One. Remember: In the Bible, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. Now prophets were not anointed in exactly the

same manner as priests and kings were. But yet they were anointed in the sense that God blessed them and bestowed upon them and gave them His Word to the extent that He put His Word in their mouths.

In Deuteronomy 18, Moses speaks by inspiration concerning Jesus Christ. Verse 17 begins, and the Lord said unto me: They have well spoken that which they have spoken. God says through Moses: I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, that is like unto Moses, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. God put His words in His prophets' mouths, especially the prophet Jesus Christ. He bears three offices: He is prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, He declares unto us the true word of God. As priest, He makes intercession and atonement for us. As king, He rules over us.

One cannot divide the person of Jesus Christ. You cannot divide His person or His work without destroying salvation. You cannot divide His person: Jesus Christ is one person with two natures. He is perfectly God and He is perfectly man. Hence, He is the God-man. Now, there have been some throughout history who want to deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Well, if you deny the deity of Christ, then all you have is the manhood of Christ. You thus destroy salvation. Others would deny the manhood of Christ. Well, you still destroy salvation. How can that be? Well, Jesus Christ must be God and man. He must be God to atone for our sins, and He must be man to be a substitute on our behalf. Thus, if you try to divide His person, either deny His deity or His manhood, you not only destroy the reality of Christ, you destroy salvation. Likewise, there are some who try to say, well, you know, Jesus Christ is prophet, priest, and king.

And what we can do is this. We can pick which offices we want Christ to fill in our lives. Oh, what we will do is this. We will choose Christ as our prophet and our priest, but we don't want Him as king. In other words, we want to be saved, but we want to live the way that we please and the way that we desire. What we're going to do is we're going to bow to His office as prophet and priest, but we're not going to bow to His office as king.

You cannot do that, because Jesus Christ is God's Messiah, and as Messiah, He is prophet, priest, and king. You cannot pick and choose which nature you're going to have in Christ, neither can you pick and choose which office you're going to bow to in Jesus Christ. It is all or nothing. Jesus Christ is prophet, priest, and king. There is no such thing as having a halfway salvation. Nor is there any such thing as having one-half or one-third of the offices of Christ. Christ is one person with two natures who holds three offices. He is prophet, priest, and king. And all three offices are absolutely necessary for salvation. To deny those three offices or deny the two natures of Christ is to deny God and to destroy salvation. The Word of God shows the importance of understanding Christ's offices and how we commit the same sins the Jews committed.

Peter preaches in Acts 2:36:

The Exaltation of Christ Proves His Kingship

He addresses the Jews at Pentecost, again charging them: Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Lord is kurios: boss, owner, master. Christ is christos: the anointed one.

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now, the word assuredly is very important. It is the Greek word asphalos, which is also translated in our Bibles as safely. Mark 14:44 shows its meaning in Judas's betrayal: And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. Safely is the same Greek word asphalos. The word safely here does not mean without harm.

Safely here means securely, rather than without harm: do not let Him escape. The verse and context show this, as does the same Greek word in Acts 16:23.

Paul and Silas have been thrust into prison. Verse 23 says, And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely. That doesn't mean

without harm. They had just harmed them. They'd beat them with whips. Keep them securely. Make sure they do not escape. When Peter said in Acts 2 and verse 36, Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly. He's saying let all the house of Israel and everybody else know securely there is no escaping this truth that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. In other words, Jesus Christ is the sovereign. He is the Messiah. He is the God-man. He is the Redeemer. He fills every office that has been ordained by God the Father.

Two commentators expound verse 36: Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Albert Barnes writes: The word Lord properly signifies proprietor, master, or sovereign. Here it means clearly that God has exalted him to be king and that he'd given him dominion in the heavens, or as we should say, ruler of all things. The extent of this dominion may be seen in John 17 and in Ephesians 1.

In the exercise of this office, he now rules in heaven and on earth. and will yet come to judge the world. The truth was particularly fitted to excite their fear. They had murdered their sovereign, now shown to be raised from the dead and entrusted with infinite power. They had reason, therefore, to fear that he would come forth in vengeance and punish them for their crimes. Sinners opposing the Savior are at war with their living and mighty sovereign and Lord. He has all power and is not safe to contend against the judge of the living and the dead. Notice what he says: the word Lord properly signifies proprietor, master, sovereign. It means that God has exalted him to be king and that he now rules in heaven and on earth.

John Gill writes on Acts 2:36: God the Father had not only constituted and appointed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, the Lord of lords and King of kings, and had invested him with that office, power and authority, but he had made him to manifest to be so by the Holy Spirit which he had received, and now poured forth the same, and not another, even him whom they had rejected with so much contempt, whom they had treated in such a scornful and brutish manner, had spit upon, buffeted, and scourged, and at last crucified. And yet now even he had all power in heaven and earth

given him, and was exalted above every name, that in his name every knee should bow.

Let all Israel know assuredly, absolutely securely: there is no escaping the fact that Jesus Christ is sovereign Lord, King of kings of heaven and earth.

Acts 5:30–31 shows why they crucified Christ and how we repeat their sin: The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Now here, Jesus Christ is referred to as the Prince. The word prince is the Greek word archegos, which literally means prince or captain or author, someone who leads in some manner. Albert Barnes refers back to Acts 3:16 and says, he, Christ, is called the prince of life. When God calls Jesus Christ prince, he says this, here it means that he is actually in the exercise of his office as a prince or a king at the right hand of his father. The title prince or king was one that was well known and applied to the Messiah. It denotes his dominion and power. And especially the power which is needful to give repentance and pardon of sin. The commentators say Acts 5:31, Acts 3:16, and Acts 2:36 show Christ actually exercising His power as Lord and King. Why did the Jews crucify Him? Why is His New Testament exaltation significant? Why did the apostles insist on His resurrection? There is an important reason that affects our view of salvation.

John 20:30–31 shows the implications of calling Jesus Messiah. John writes, And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: that is, in the book of John. But these are written, that is the signs and the miracles that he did write about, but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. John wrote his book so we might believe Jesus is Messiah.

Jesus is the Christ. If Jesus is the Christ, if Jesus is the Messiah, if Jesus is the anointed one, that means he is prophet, priest, and king. If Jesus Christ is the Messiah, if He is the prophet, priest, and king, it also means something else. In verse 31, it means He is the Son of God.

John is saying, in order to be saved, you must really believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And if you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then you also believe He's the Messiah, He's the prophet, priest, and king. And if you believe that, you're saved. He said, but if you don't believe that, then the opposite is true, then you're not saved. In other words, how can you be saved if you deny either His deity or His manhood or either of His offices? John said, I wrote this that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. and that believing, that is believing what he's written, and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that you might have life through his name. It is impossible to be saved and deny the person of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to be saved and deny either of the offices of Jesus Christ.

Why were the disciples so adamant about His resurrection and exaltation—rising from the dead, ascending to heaven, and sitting at God's right hand? Romans 1 gives the answer.

Romans 1:3–4 speaks of Jesus: Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. The resurrection manifested Jesus Christ as God in the flesh. Had Jesus been an imposter, He would have never been raised from the dead. He could not have raised Himself from the dead. But the very fact that He was raised from the dead by the power of God proves conclusively that He is the Son of God. And as the Son of God, He's King of kings and Lord of lords. So the emphasis in the Bible upon the exaltation of Christ, especially His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, is not only an indication of His Godhood, but also of His kingship.

Our Savior, mediator, and priest is king. The Son of God, Jesus the Messiah, Jesus the Savior, is King. You cannot bow to Him as Savior or Priest while refusing Him as King; He is the same person. He fulfills all three offices. Why did the Jews crucify Christ? He claimed to be Messiah, prophet, priest, and king, with the absolute right to rule them, tell them what to do, teach them, and make demands of them. Pilate did not ask whether to crucify their prophet or priest, but their king. They answered, Crucify him.

Rejecting God's kingship rejects His person. In 1 Samuel 8:4–8, Israel wants a man as king, rejecting God: Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us.

Rejecting the Kingship of God Is Rejecting His Person

And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now God said, Samuel, you give them what they want. But I want you to understand, Samuel, first and foremost, it is a rejection of me. Only secondly is it a rejection of you. And he said, and the reason they're doing this is because ever since they came up out of Egypt, all they wanted is idolatry and wickedness.

First Samuel 12:12 states this rejection of God: And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king.

God was their king, but they wanted a man to rule. He told Samuel they had rejected Him. Rejecting God's kingship rejects His person. The only God who exists is King. In 1 Samuel 12:20, Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness. Rejecting God as King is wickedness, sin, revolt, rebellion, and idolatry. Return to John 19.

When Jesus stood before Pilate, who asked, Art thou a king?, His answer was basically, You said it, buddy. For this end was I born, and for this end came I into this world. He was born and sent into the world a king. What would they do with their king?

The Jews' Declaration: 'We Have No King but Caesar'

Verse 14 says, behold your king. Verse 15 says, but they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. The word have is the little Greek word echo, and it is translated have, but occasionally it is translated need.

The verb is present tense, an action occurring and continuing. They were saying they needed, wanted, and had no king but Caesar; Caesar was enough. Consider four implications. First, John 19:15 denies theological salvation—salvation of God. Jonah 2:9 says salvation is of the Lord. God promised salvation in Genesis 3:15, the Protoevangelium, the first promise of Messiah. He gave the promise to Abraham by covenant, and taught it throughout Scripture.

Four Implications of Rejecting Christ's Kingship

There are enough verses on this subject for a lifetime of study and teaching, never exhausting them. Paul spoke of Israel's hope: that God would send His Messiah. In declaring no king but Caesar, they denied God's salvation in one stroke. They said salvation was not of the Lord.

Calvin writes on this verse: We have no king but Caesar. This is a display of shocking madness that the priest who ought to have been well acquainted with the law reject Christ in whom all the salvation of the people was wholly contained, on whom all the promises depended, and on whom the whole of their religion was founded, and indeed, by rejecting Christ, they deprived themselves of the grace of God and every blessing. Consider that: we have no king but Caesar; we do not want God's salvation. Their history and the Old Testament's truth were denied. Denying Christ's kingship denies His salvation, for salvation exists only where Jesus Christ is king. This is a denial of theological salvation.

Secondly, as in 1 Samuel 8, they desired and were satisfied with political or governmental salvation. They wanted neither God nor Christ; Caesar would do and would save them. They looked to the emperor for bread and circuses, entertainment and care.

Peter says in Acts 4:12: Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Now when Peter said that, Peter was preaching to the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 4. Peter was declaring an all-out war against Caesar of the Roman Empire.

When Peter said, neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. When he said that in Acts 4 and verse 12, he was directly contradicting the words of Augustus Caesar, who in 17 BC had proclaimed, salvation is found in none other save Augustus and there is none other name under heaven given to men whereby they must be saved. Augustus Caesar said, I am the Savior. Peter says, oh no you're not. Jesus Christ is the Savior. Peter was going head to head with the civil government.

He was denying the kingship and lordship of the Roman Empire. How many preachers today that you know will take on the government head to head and say, no, you are not the highest authority. Jesus Christ is King. On January the 1st, 42 BC, the Roman Senate recognized Julius Caesar as a divinity. a god of the Roman state and called him Divus Julius, Julius God, or Julius the Divine. Octavian, who followed him, had on his coinage Divi filius, that is Augustus Caesar, the son of God. Caesar claimed to be God. And Caesar, Augustus Caesar, had proclaimed throughout the Roman Empire, there's none other name given among men whereby we must be saved other than the name of Augustus. Augustus Caesar was called Lord, God, and Savior. He referred to himself as the Just and Holy One and the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He was claiming divinity for himself. What you had in the Roman Empire was a religious imperial cult. And in the Roman Empire, the cult was Caesar worship.

It was worship of government as God: Rome itself was God, and Caesar the highest God on its throne. The priesthood comprised senators and consuls elected from the provinces, regarded as loyal local leaders. People looked to them for the Empire's best interest and thus their own. Senators and consuls taxed more and more to maintain excessive lifestyles and promote their programs, until Roman citizens knew enslavement.

the heaviest duty was upon those who claimed to be non-Romans because they looked to them to support and take care of the government. The imperial cult had risen to such a state as that the emperor was supposed to have superhuman power or divine power. The cult actually began with Julius Caesar, but it continued especially with Augustus Caesar, so much so that all of the Caesars were given the title Dominus et Deus, that is, Lord and God. It was Domitian, a Roman emperor who reigned from 86 to 96 AD, who actually demanded that he be worshipped as a god. And, of course, Christians were persecuted because they would not worship the Caesar as God. They would not acknowledge him as Lord. It is said that Tiberius did not want to be worshipped as God, but he said in a speech before the Senate, listen to what he said, here is his quote, I am immortal, and divine honors belong only to Augustus, the real savior of mankind. The coinage of Rome evidenced that Augustus claimed to be God.

Divi filius, the Son of God. In the first century the war was between Christ and Caesar: who was Lord and King? Christians were persecuted for refusing allegiance to the emperor cult. The Empire allowed belief in Jesus Christ, Aphrodite, Zeus, or Apollos if once a year one raised a hand or offered an offering, saying Caesar is Lord. Caesar supposedly gave the right to believe as one pleased. Christians were executed as unpatriotic traitors guilty of treason. The war between Christ and Caesar still exists. You may object that this is not the Roman Empire. I understand.

The same state religion continues: political correctness, government infallibility, demands for total unlimited submission, and confiscation of personal wealth for government's benefit. Government is still treated as God. In an emergency, to whom do people cry? To the true, living God revealed in Jesus Christ, or to federal government for funds and emergency declarations?

Those Jews rejected Christ for the god of government: no King but Caesar. We do the same, preferring our sins to repentance and loss of our souls to personal responsibility. We do not want Christ's reign; we want government to care for us. Thus their declaration denied theological salvation and accepted governmental salvation. Thirdly, a king rules by his law. Whose law do you obey? That tells

who your king is. Why does federal government insist on every I dotted, T crossed, and unlimited submission?

It acts as God: we rule by our law, and you must obey us. If Jesus Christ is King and God, we must obey Him. When man's government conflicts with Christ's government, Peter's answer in Acts 5:29 is, we ought to obey God rather than man. A king rules by his law. Consider John 14:21.

He said, if you love me, keep my commandments. He said in verse 24, he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings. First John 5:3 says, and this is the love of God, that you keep his commandments. And when you get to 1 John 2, he said, once again, If we love him, we'll keep his commandments. But when you get to verse 4, he says this, He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

A king rules by his law. Government is fastidious about laws and regulations, and King Jesus is protected by his law as well. If He is our law, king, ruler, and Messiah, we obey Him. The war between Christ and Caesar continues, each claiming divinity, lordship, kingship, and authority. Whom will you obey? Whose law do you keep? Fourthly, remember the consequences: wicked men fleeing Christ and His law rush into tyrants' arms and laws.

They bring misery and destruction on themselves and their posterity. We are ruled either by God or man, and God's severity is much milder than wicked men's tender mercies.

They crucified Christ because they refused Him as Messiah, prophet, priest, and king. First Samuel 8:7 shows the consequences of rejecting God's kingship: And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. This is rejection of God's kingship. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. You don't want me, says God? You want a man? I'll give you man,

but let me show you what kind of king you're going to have. Verse 10 says, And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. Verse 11. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 8 (KJV)

> He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day. You refuse God and want a man; He gives what you want. Once you get it, you will not want it. You will cry out, but He will not hear. Rejecting God's kingship has a price.

When Pilate asked what to do with Christ, whether to crucify their king, they wanted Caesar. They rejected Christ's deity and kingship, looking to Caesar for care, food, promotion, and protection. Caesar took them and showed his mercy in 70 A.D. when Titus went and destroyed their city and millions were slaughtered. The words of our Lord in Proverbs 8 and verse 36 rings true. Our Lord said, but he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death. The only thing you can have outside of Jesus Christ is a society of death. The only kind of government you can have outside of Jesus Christ is a government of death. Those who trust in Caesar will always be crying, give us better government. But all Caesar can give you is more bureaucracies and more little Caesars who in the end will destroy us. It is impossible to have a righteous government apart from Jesus Christ. As the parchment copy of the Declaration of

Independence was being signed by the members of the Continental Congress on August the 2nd, 1776, Samuel Adams declared this. We have this day restored the Sovereign to whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven and from the rising to the setting sun, let his kingdom come. Our founding fathers wanted a government where Christ would be king. Who is your Sovereign? Who is your Savior? Is Christ your King? Is Christ your Salvation? There is no other Salvation except that which is in Jesus Christ.

How do we commit the sins of the Jews? They did not want Christ as king, only political, governmental, or national deliverance. They wanted deliverance from Rome, rather than their sins.

Modern Application: Committing the Same Sin

Even His apostles asked in Acts 1:6, Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? They wanted a white charger bearing a deliverer from Rome's yoke, not a suffering Messiah forgiving sins. They thought they had no sins and needed no such salvation, only national deliverance.

They rejected Christ as King because He sought to deliver them from their sins, rather than the Roman Empire. That was their sin.

Today we want deliverance from sin's penalty, from suffering, judgment, and hell. We want Christ as our fire escape and Savior, but not King. We refuse to bow, obey, or conform our lives, families, churches, society, and government to King Jesus.

We repeat their rejection of Christ as Messiah, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Luke 1 shows He came to save His people both from sins and enemies, if we submit to Him as king. Zacharias, John the Baptist's father, prophesies in verse 67: And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, that is, through sending Christ, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; that is, Jesus Christ, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant.

Conclusion: Christ Is King Now

Zacharias speaks of deliverance from our enemies at Christ's first coming, not His second. Christ will not become king in the future; He is king now and always has been, because He has always been God. Will you bow, worship, and say, Lord Jesus, You are King of kings. and Lord of Lords, and God of Gods, and I will obey you? Who is King, Christ or Caesar? Do not commit the sins of the Jews by rejecting Him as King.

For to this end was He born. And to this end He came. He is King. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We ask, Lord, that You would help us to see the glorious greatness and majesty of King Jesus. May we see, Lord, the magnificence and beauty of His law and submit to His Word and worship Him and Him alone. Give us grace, Lord, to serve Thee effectively with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen and Amen.

CHAPTER 34

Have You Been Under A Fig Tree Lately?

April 19, 2020

SCRIPTURE READING - John 1:43-51 (KJV)

Introduction and Scripture Reading

The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee and findeth Philip and saith unto him, Follow me. Now, Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael said unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I

> saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And he said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see the heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

The Significance of Figs in the Bible

> Fig trees were very common in the land of Israel in the days of our Lord. Figs were considered a very important part of the diet during biblical times. Figs are also a very important part of my diet because they happen to be one of my favorite foods. I watch our fig trees constantly, and every time they start to bud out every spring, I let Alice know, "Well, the fig trees are budding out." Once that starts, I keep watching them because I want to be the one who gets those first ripe figs; they are usually very big and very juicy. I think that dried figs, fig preserves, fig conserve, and fig cakes are all delicious. Although I like pear preserves and perhaps some others as well, fig preserves are still my favorite.

Alice can make strawberry preserves out of fig preserves. I just love figs, I suppose. You remember that cluster of grapes the spies brought back from the Valley of Eshcol, because it took two men to carry one cluster on a pole. But there might be something you missed when you read that passage in Numbers chapter 13, verse 23. It says, "And they came to the brook Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff, and they brought of the pomegranates and of the figs." It was not just grapes that they brought, but pomegranates and figs as well.

While the children of Israel were in the wilderness of Zin, they complained to Moses in Numbers 20, verse 5: "Wherefore have you made us 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." Once again, they were complaining that there were no figs available.

David and his men kept the sheep of Nabal. When Nabal was shearing those sheep, David sent some of his men and asked for an offering, to rejoice with them in all that God had done for them.

Nabal reproached David's servants and sent them away empty. When Abigail, his wife, heard what had happened, she took matters into her own hand, because she knew that Nabal, as his name indicated, was indeed a fool. She made up a gift to carry to David and his men in order to pacify them. In 1 Samuel 25, verse 18, the Bible says, "Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two bottles of wine and five sheep ready dressed and five measures of parched corn, a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs." They had a lot to eat and much with which to rejoice.

When the Amalekites raided Ziklag, which had been given to David, his wives, his family, and the families of his men were there. The Amalekites burned Ziklag with fire and took all its inhabitants. David and four hundred of his men pursued them in order to recover their families and their property.

And they found an Egyptian slave that was wandering around in the desert. The Egyptian slave had been a slave to one of the Amalekites. He'd become sick. And so they just simply left him to die. But he did not die. So the Bible tells us in 1st Samuel chapter 30 and verse 12, when they found this Egyptian slave and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. And when he'd eaten, his spirit came again to him for he'd eaten no bread and drunk no water for three days and three nights. So it was cakes of figs and raisins that restored his spirit. I don't know if you have thought about this or not, but figs may even be used medicinally.

Especially under and with the blessing of God, because when Isaiah confronted Hezekiah, he told him, Set your house in order for you shall die and not live. But Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and wept. And God said, All right. I'm gonna add fifteen years to his life. And so Isaiah went back in to see Hezekiah and he said this in 2nd Kings 20 verse 7, And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it upon the boil and he recovered. So it was figs that was placed upon the boil of Hezekiah that enabled him to recover. I want you to hold John 1, we're certainly coming back there, but I want you to look in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 13, because an interesting thing is whenever God judged a land, one of the aspects of his judgment was that the fig trees and

the vineyards did not bear fruit. So in the book of Jeremiah, chapter eight, look, if you would please there at verse 13 and notice what the Bible says, Jeremiah eight and verse 13. God says, I will surely consume them, saith the Lord. There shall be no grapes on the vine or figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. So obviously God is judging them. And he says there's not going to be any grapes on the vine, nor are there going to be any figs on the fig trees. On the other hand, the fullness of God's blessings are demonstrated by an abundance of grapes and an abundance of figs. So if you will turn back to first Kings chapter four, first Kings chapter four, and you're going to see God's blessings under King Solomon. Notice if you would first Kings chapter four and verse 25, the Bible says this, And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba all the days of Solomon.

Dan was the farthest northern tribe, and Beersheba the southernmost city in the south. So they all prospered by sitting every man under his vine and under his own fig tree.

The plenteousness of figs and grapes is also emblematical of the millennial reign of our Lord. Micah 4:1-4 says: “But in the last days, it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.”

Obviously, there is a great deal of figs in the Bible. Our Lord also used the fig tree in parables and as a visual lesson in the Bible.

The Calling of the First Disciples

In John chapter 1, our Lord is calling to Himself His disciples. Initially, two of these disciples heard John the Baptist speak. “Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?” They said unto Him, “Rabbi, which is to say, being interpreted, Master, where dwellest thou?” Watch His invitation: He said unto them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

What happened next is very plain. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. Look at verses 41 and 42: He first findeth his own brother, Simon, and said unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is being interpreted the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonah. Thou shalt be called Cephas, which by interpretation is a stone.

Andrew had found his brother Simon. Look what happens the next day in verses 43 and 44. The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee and findeth Philip and saith unto him, Follow me. Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Notice how our Lord is gathering His disciples around Him.

If you look now in verse 45, after Philip had come to Christ, Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Our Lord gave the invitation in verse 39 to Andrew and the other disciple: Come and see. Now Philip was giving this invitation to Nathanael: Come and see. But when Philip invited Nathanael, Nathanael asked in verse 46, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Why did he ask that question? What could possibly have been in his mind?

Nathanael's Skepticism and the Prophecy of Nazareth

The answer as to why he asked is basically that there was absolutely no prophecy in the Old Testament concerning Nazareth. In fact, if you look in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 2 and verse 23, you will find this passage concerning Jesus Christ: “And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets. He shall be called a Nazarene.” But this passage was not written at that particular time. When Nathanael asked, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? he did not know Matthew 2:23. There was no prophecy in the Old Testament about Jesus Christ coming out of Nazareth. In fact, I am going to say this.

Nathanael knew his Old Testament. In Micah chapter five and verse two, the Scripture says, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old from everlasting.” So he knew that the Messiah was to come out of Bethlehem.

John chapter seven continues among these people: “Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, that is, the teaching of Jesus Christ, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?”

Interestingly, they asked, “Shall Christ come out of Galilee?” Galilee was that northern region, and Nazareth was a town in Galilee. There was a Sea of Galilee; that whole region was called Galilee. Nathanael asks, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip requests that he come and see. Now look back to Matthew 2 and verse 23.

In Matthew 2:23, the Bible is speaking particularly about Jesus Christ. I have pointed out that there is no specific Old Testament passage referring to Nazareth. Yet Matthew 2:23 says, “And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets. He shall be called a Nazarene.” There is no specific passage and no specific prophecy, yet the Bible says it was spoken by the prophets.

Notice that the word is plural. It means that more than one prophet spoke about it.

Interestingly, the word Nazareth means a shoot, a stem, or a branch. In the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown commentary, you read this paragraph: “The best explanation of the origin of this name appears to be that which traces it to the word, the Hebrew word netzer. In Isaiah 11 verse one, which we'll look at just for a moment, which means the spoil, the small twig sprout or sucker, which the prophet says there shall come forth from the stem or rather the stump of Jesse, the branch which should fructify from his roots. The little town of Nazareth, mentioned neither in the Old Testament or in Josephus, was probably so called from its insignificance as a weak twig in contrast to a stately tree and held in special contempt that seemed to rest upon it. Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” The commentary is saying that the Hebrew word in Isaiah 11 means twig, sprout, or sucker.

Turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 11. Then we are going to go to the book of Zechariah. Zechariah is right before the book of Malachi. Notice Isaiah chapter 11, verse 1. It says, “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse,” or a branch, a twig, or a sucker out of the stem, or root, of Jesse; “and a branch shall grow out of his roots,” or out of the stump of Jesse.

If you have ever cut down a tree—and I have cut down plenty of trees—you know that you may cut down a little oak tree or any kind of tree and think, “Well, it is dead. It is gone. It is over with.” Wait a little while, and little suckers or stems come up out of that stump. The tree is going to grow again.

This is what he is talking about: a twig or branch coming up out of the stump. David is gone, but He who comes up from David is not gone.

In Zechariah three and verse eight, the Bible says, “Hear now, O Joshua, the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee, for they are men wondered at, for behold, I will bring forth my servant, the branch.” Then, in Zechariah six and verse twelve: “And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold

the man whose name is the branch. And he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord."

We know that Jesus Christ is the Branch. Jesus Christ builds the true temple of God. Thus, actually, Isaiah and Zechariah, and possibly David also, spoke of Jesus Christ in this sense, because Jesus Christ is the true root, the true stem, and the true branch that was prophesied. And so, when Jesus Christ told Andrew and the other disciples, "Come and see," Nathanael asked whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth. Philip said, "Come and see"; come investigate for yourself and find out for yourself. That is exactly what we did.

Jesus' Testimony of Nathanael

Nathanael was now coming to investigate, taking up Philip's offer to come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and saith of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile." This statement is a remarkable testimony concerning the life of Nathanael, especially since it comes from Jesus Christ.

The Jews gloried in the fact that they were descendants of Abraham, even though they did not possess the faith of Abraham or do the works of Abraham. In fact, most of them were absolutely degenerate and had no faith at all. Do you remember when they came to the baptism of John the Baptist in Matthew chapter three and verse nine? John told them, "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." They were not to boast of their lineage to Abraham; it meant nothing because they did not have Abraham's faith. Neither did they have his works.

In John chapter eight, verse 39, our Lord was speaking to them. They answered and said unto him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."

"But now you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God. This did not Abraham." And, of course, He goes on in verse 44 and says, "You are of your father, the devil."

They were not the children of Abraham; they were the children of the devil. They boasted very clearly of their lineage, but that did not mean that they were the true sons of Abraham.

Now turn in your Bible to Romans chapter 2, while holding John 1. You can understand what the apostle Paul says in light of our Lord's statement about Nathanael: "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Anytime you see the word Jew here, it means Judahite—someone from the tribe of Judah, or someone who lived in the southern kingdom, which was Judea. Paul says in verse 28, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly."

"Neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh." Simply claiming descent from Abraham and having been physically circumcised did not make someone a true Judahite. Verse 29 says, "But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." The true Judahite is someone who possesses the faith of Abraham and consequently does the works of Abraham.

Our Lord, then, looks at Nathanael and says, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Evidently, Nathanael was the exception to the rule; he was totally different from all these other people. He walked in the steps of Abraham, followed in Abraham's faith, and did Abraham's works. He was not deceitful or hypocritical, and this was evidenced by the fact that he truly trusted in the one true, living God.

Now go back to John chapter 1. In verse 47, Jesus sees Nathanael coming to Him and says, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." When Nathanael heard this, he asked in verse 48, "Whence knowest thou me?" In other words, "We have never met before."

The Fig Tree and Divine Knowledge

"How do you know me? How do you know that I'm an Israelite in whom is no guile?" Obviously, when somebody starts speaking to you whom you have never met, you want to know how they knew you. So he asked, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."

Notice that Jesus Christ did not call Nathanael by name. Why did He not say, “Nathanael, I know you”? There is a very obvious reason. Nathanael could have surmised that Philip had told Jesus he was going to invite Nathanael to come. Certainly our Lord, being God in the flesh, is omniscient. He knew Nathanael’s name, yet He did not call his name. Rather, He identified him by his character: “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.”

Psalm 32:1-2 says, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man in whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile”—no hypocrisy, deceitfulness, or insincerity. He is just as pure, untruthful and honest as he could be.

When our Lord said, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile,” the first thing Nathanael asked was, “How do you know me? We've never met before.” Our Lord answered, “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.” What He was saying was, “Nathanael, I know you. I know your faith. I know your character. I know everything about you.” Our Lord was revealing to Nathanael His omniscience. He already knew that Philip had invited him to come to see Him. He knew not only of the invitation, but also the objection Nathanael had raised: “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” He knew everything that had transpired between Philip and Nathanael. “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.”

Pay close attention to this. Our Lord did not say, “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under a fig tree, I saw thee.” There were multitudes of fig trees in Israel. We have a half a dozen or more in our yard. No, it is a specific fig tree; the Greek is tēn sykēn. Literally, look at what He says in verse 48: “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree.” That is a particular, specific fig tree. Our Lord knew where Nathanael was. He knew where that fig tree was that he was under. He knew everything about Nathanael.

Fig trees are not only leafy and beautiful and aromatic and cool. This was one specific fig tree that Nathanael often resorted to for prayer, meditation, and Bible study. Our Lord is saying, “Nathanael,

I not only know your name. I know the deepest recesses of your heart. I know everything about you."

Do you realize that godly men usually have a certain place where they pray and meditate? Everybody knows that Judas betrayed our Lord. But how did Judas know where Jesus Christ was in order to betray Him? John 18:1–2 says that Jesus went with His disciples into a garden, "and Judas also, who betrayed him, knew the place. For Jesus oft times resorted thither with his disciples." Our Lord had a specific place to pray, and Judas knew exactly where it was. Godly men, men of faith, are consistent in prayer, study, and meditation on the Scriptures. Many times they have special times as well as special places that they frequent for spiritual activity. It is their closet.

It is their chosen place to be with the Lord. I believe there is a hint given to us in this verse concerning the specific truth that Nathanael was meditating upon under the fig tree. I believe that Nathanael understood the implication. In fact, he had to understand it, because look what he said in verses 48 and 49: "Nathanael said unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Isn't that interesting? The answer of Jesus Christ immediately removed all doubt and indecision from Nathanael, and he immediately confessed that Jesus Christ was the King of Israel, the Son of God, and the Messiah. All this shows you is that God had already worked in the heart of Nathanael.

For instance, notice Matthew 11:27. Look what our Lord says: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

The only way anyone can savingly know God the Father is through a revelation of the Father by Jesus Christ. The only way anyone can know Jesus Christ savingly is that the Father must reveal Him. What is Nathanael doing? He is confessing that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, that He is the Messiah, and that He is the King of Israel. God had evidently revealed to him in his heart who Jesus Christ was.

Matthew 16 gives us the same truth. When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?” They said, “Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” He asked them, “But whom say ye that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Now watch closely, verse 17: “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for thou hast figured this thing out, but no one else could do so. Thou art smarter than all men.” Is that what that says? No. “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.” The only reason you know who I am is that God revealed it to you. God showed it to you. Thus, when Nathanael confesses that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, he is saying that God the Father has opened his eyes and revealed the Son of God to him.

Here is the hint I think our Lord gave us concerning what Nathanael might have been thinking under that fig tree. In verses 50 and 51, after Nathanael makes this confession, Jesus says, “Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these.” Again, the definite article is in front; it is a certain fig tree.

The Ladder of Genesis 28 and Greater Things

“And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” Why would Jesus Christ mention angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man? Could it be that Nathanael had been reading and meditating upon Genesis 28? Hold John 1, but turn back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 28, and begin reading there with verse 10.

Jacob is fleeing to Haran, and he has to stop, rest, and spend the night. Something extraordinary happens. Genesis 28:10 says, “And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set. And he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and he lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to

heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth.

"And thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Jacob awaked out of his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not." He was afraid and said, "How dreadful—or that is, how awful or how marvelous—is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." What did he see? He saw the ladder, angels ascending and descending, and God speaking.

What did our Lord say in John chapter one? "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these." Then He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, just like Jacob, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." God promised Nathanael that he would see greater things than these. Those who believe always see greater things than those who are filled with unbelief.

Application: Have You Been Under a Fig Tree Lately?

Here is the question I want to ask you today: Have you been under a fig tree lately? Let me explain what I mean. Has the Lord observed you in a special place of prayer, study, or meditation? Do you have a special place where you read the Scripture? Think about it and pray.

This text teaches us that our Lord not only takes note of our devotions and private worship; He also takes note of the sincerity and genuineness of our hearts. He knows what is really and truly in our hearts. He knows whether we are being honest or deceitful.

First of all, Jesus Christ sees us where we are and what we do, even when we do not see Him. He sees our hearts. He knows whether our hearts are single or double, plain or false and deceitful. When it comes to prayer, you might as well be honest with God, because He already knows what is in your heart anyhow. There have been times when I have prayed and had to say to Him, "Lord, I just don't feel like praying." Have there ever been times in your life when you have not felt like praying? What about times when you wanted to pray but had no idea what to pray for?

In Romans 8, the Bible says, "The Spirit knoweth our infirmities and he helpeth our infirmities," for He makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Sometimes the Holy Spirit prays in us, through us, and for us, even when we do not know what to pray for. Let us be honest: the Bible tells us very clearly that God knows what is in our hearts. He is omniscient.

Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 4 and look at verses 12 and 13. This is why we might as well be honest with God in prayer. If we are cold, we need to ask Him to stir our spirits. If we are lethargic, we need to ask Him to wake us up, motivate us, and move us to some holy exercise. But notice Hebrews 4, verse 12.

The Bible says, "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and open in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." You cannot fool God. You can fool man. You can fool preachers. But you cannot fool Him. The Bible says in Proverbs 15 and verse 3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good." God sees. God sees.

So we need to learn that we have to be honest with Him wherever we are and whatever we are doing. The second application I want to give you is from Matthew Henry. Matthew Henry sums up Nathanael's confession in simple paragraph. First, he confesses Christ's prophetical office in calling Him Rabbi, a title which the Jews commonly gave to their teachers. Christ is the great Rabbi at whose feet we must all be brought up.

Secondly, he confesses His divine nature and mission in calling Him the Son of God. Though He had but a human form and aspect, yet having a divine knowledge, the knowledge of the heart, of things distant and secret, Nathanael then concludes Him to be the Son of God. Thirdly, he confesses, “Thou art the King of Israel,” that King of Israel whom we have been long waiting for.

When Jesus Christ saw Nathanael coming, He said, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” “Lord, how do You know me?” “Oh, Nathanael, before that Philip called thee, I saw thee when thou wast under the fig tree.” So here is my question: If Jesus Christ judged us by our private devotions and the genuineness and sincerity of our hearts, where would we stand before Him? Think about that. Our Lord said to Nathanael, “I know you. I know everything about you.” What we are in secret before God is what we really are. It is not the profession that we make before everybody else. You remember those Pharisees? They loved to pray in the open so that people would see them pray. They loved to give alms so that people would see them give alms. They loved the chief seats in the synagogue. They wanted to be high and honored. No, no, no.

Our Lord knows all of that. What we are is not what we are in public, but what we are in secret. Character is what a man is in the dark. If you would tell me what you would do if you knew that no one else would ever find out about it, I would tell you exactly what you are. If you say, “If I knew nobody would ever find out about it, I would go down that bank and steal everything in it,” you are a thief. If you say, “I would run off with old sister so-and-so,” you are an adulterer. If you say, “I would take my vengeance out on that man,” you are a murderer.

Character is what a man is in the dark. Our Lord is saying that our spirituality is what we are in our devotions before Him, not what we do in public. May I remind you that our Lord Himself demands secret devotions? In Matthew 6:6 He says, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

So the question has to be asked: Where is your fig tree? Have you been under it lately? You need to read the Bible every day. You need

to pray every day. You need to meditate every day. You may not have time to spend hours in study, but you have time to read a chapter or two, or several verses, and at least think about them. God expects us to have our own particular fig tree. You need to have it and stay under it.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, help us to worship Thee privately as well as publicly. Help us to love Thee, to study Your Word, to think upon it, and to meditate upon it. Give us, Lord, Your grace and Your mercy. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 35

How Much Do You Value Death?

August 15, 2022

SCRIPTURE READING - Philippians 1:12-26 (KJV)

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places. And many of the brethren of the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill. The one preached Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as

> always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor. Yet what I shall choose I wot not.
>
> For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming again to you.

How Much Do You Value Death?

Introduction: The Strange Question of Valuing Death

How much do you value death? That is a strange question indeed. The truth of the matter is that we value life above everything, and we do everything we can to prolong, enrich, and enjoy life. We struggle to live. I have preached for 57 years, and I never kept an account of how many people I married. It is a large number. I never kept an account of how many people I buried, which is also a large number. Neither did I keep an account of how many people I have watched die. An interesting thing when you are watching someone die is that even then the body is struggling for life.

We think of life more often than we think of death. In fact, we never really entertain in our minds the concept of valuing death. I think one reason that we devalue death is because oftentimes we view death as the cessation of life. And the truth is, death is not the cessation of life. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches that life exists after death.

Death is nothing more than simply the separation of the soul from the body. So life does indeed continue after death, and our Lord emphasizes this in Luke 20:38, when He said, “For God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him.” I want to enunciate a principle you have probably never thought upon: according to the Bible, there is indeed a value to life, but there is also a value to death. What we need to do is view both life and death from a biblical perspective.

Biblical Principle: The Day of Death is Better than Birth

In Ecclesiastes 7:1, Solomon says, “A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.” Now, the first half of this verse is very easily understood. “A good name is better than precious ointment.” In other words, we should always endeavor to have a good name, a good testimony, and a good reputation. That is, we are to live an honorable life, full of character, integrity, and obedience. He is telling us that this is far more valuable than the most precious of all ointments. Then he says, in the latter part of verse 1, “and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.” In other words, he is saying that the day of one’s death is better than the day of one’s birth.

That is exceedingly true if one is a believer, genuinely saved, and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. For one who is unsaved and not a Christian, the day of one's death is not going to be a good day, nor is it going to be a joyous day. You have to understand, when you read the book of Ecclesiastes, that Solomon is writing as a man under the sun. That is, he is writing basically from the position of a natural man.

In Ecclesiastes 6, verse 12, he says, “For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?” Without giving a commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes, let me tell you that you cannot understand it without understanding that it is a goads-and-nails study. I am going to show you this.

Look in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes, chapter 12. Notice verse 12; well, let us read verse 11. That is the verse I want right now. In Ecclesiastes 12:11 he says, “The words of the wise are as goads and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.”

Everyone knows what a goad is. They used them to goad oxen. It was a long stick, sharpened on one end. When the oxen stopped or hesitated, they would take the goad and punch, stick, or prick them, making them move. A goad is something that pricks you, goads you,

stings you, and makes you think. Then he speaks of the nails, and that is what Solomon is doing in this book.

He is goading you with many things as the natural man under the sun, and then giving you a biblical truth to nail a principle down. When you study Ecclesiastes, it is a goads-and-nails study. In verses 13 and 14, particularly, you see how he concludes the whole matter. He says, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, that is, of everything that is taught so far. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.”

Solomon is telling us that the day of one's death is actually better than the day of one's birth. Certainly, that would be true if one is a child of God.

Death is indeed precious, honorable, and valuable for the Christian. The Bible says in Psalm 116 and verse 15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

The word "precious" there is the Hebrew word yaqar, and it literally means precious, costly, valuable, rare, splendid, highly valued as precious stones. So precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

Paul's Perspective: To Die is Gain

I want you to turn back to Philippians chapter 1, and I will show you the verse that really goaded me to consider this. Here is a verse that you and I have read many, many times. In fact, probably everyone in this room could quote this verse. The verse has been preached on over and over. Look, if you would, in Philippians 1 and verse 21. For the apostle Paul says, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." So Paul definitively states that death is a gain. The Greek word is kerdos, which refers to a gain, a profit, or an advantage. He is saying that death for him—death for the child of God—is an advantage; it is a profit. He reckons that his death is indeed a profit or an advantage, especially in comparison with what he was like before he was converted. Here is his death after conversion, and now consider what he says about his life before conversion.

In Philippians 3, beginning with verse 7, after Paul gives all of his pedigree in the preceding verses, he says, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I've suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." He counted everything in his life prior to conversion as loss, and then he counted it as dung.

From a biblical perspective, life without Jesus Christ, no matter how pleasing, profitable, and pacifying it is to the flesh, is a loss. It is worthless. It is meaningless. In fact, it is reckoned as merely dung, and dung has absolutely no value except to fertilize the ground.

Before I go farther, turn back to two passages in your Bible. Turn to the book of Nahum, chapter 1 and verse 14. Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk. Notice what God says to these wicked folks: “And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that is, the wicked folks, that no more thy name be sown out of the house of thy gods: I will cut off the graven images and the molten image, and I will make thy grave, for thou art vile.” In other words, God says, “You’re nothing but filth, you’re nothing but dung. I will make your grave because you are vile.”

Now look in the book of Malachi, chapter 2, beginning with verse 1. Notice what He says to the priests: “And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feast, and one shall take you away with it.”

So here is what Paul is saying: life without Jesus Christ is wasted and worthless, and it is to be counted as nothing but dung. It does not matter how many temporary pleasures one enjoys. Without Jesus Christ, it is a worthless life. The truth of the matter is, when the individual who dies without Jesus Christ stands before Him on the day of judgment, he will indeed acknowledge that his life was a wasted life and a worthless life.

Alice and I had a dear friend. He and his wife both are now dead. This man, before his conversion, was a drunkard.

That did not mean he did not work. He did work, but he was still a drunkard. He was also a musician who played the saxophone very, very well. Many years after he was converted, he would visit us. We called them Mama and Papa, although we were not related, and they referred to us as their children. Papa would bring his saxophone, Alice would be at the piano, and he would stand and play for hours. Finally, I would have to say, "Papa, would you please put the saxophone down so Alice can get up from the piano and go fix us some dinner?" He could play all day long.

One of his favorite songs, which he played over and over, was called "Wasted Years." Wasted years. Oh, how foolish. I have seen him many times weep over the fact that he was converted only later in life, and that he counted his previous life as nothing but wasted years. That is the truth.

That is what the Apostle Paul is saying. He counts it all but dung. He counts it all but loss because it was worthless. It was wasted. I have often said that I do not want to die without Jesus Christ, but the truth is, I do not want to live without Jesus Christ either. He is not only our hope in this life; He is also our hope in the next life.

Reasons We Devalue Death

One of the reasons we do not value death is that we tend to think of death as the cessation of life. But there are other reasons as well. In 2 Timothy chapter 4, the Apostle Paul says, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I fought a good fight. I finished my course. I've kept the faith.”

Notice that he was ready to be offered because the time of his departure was at hand. Why? Because he had fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith. Clearly, one reason most of us are not ready to be offered is that we have not fought a good fight. The truth is that most of us have never even entered into the ring. We have not fought for the Lord; moreover, we have not finished our courses or kept the faith. Consequently, we hesitate, dread, and recoil even at the thought of death.

Our lives have often been in contradiction to our profession of faith, and we know the violations of the principles of the Word of God that have occurred in our lives. We basically know how we have lived and what we have done. Therefore, it is very difficult for us to say, “I'm ready to be offered. My departure is at hand.”

Paul's Readiness and Reward

When Paul said, “I'm ready to be offered,” the word suggests a sacrifice. Interestingly, the Greek word for “offered” here is spendo, which literally means to pour out as a drink offering, or as a libation. It is used figuratively of one whose blood is about to be poured out in a violent death. You remember how Paul died: he was axed. His head was cut off. He was literally offered, and he said he was ready. His departure was at hand.

The Greek word translated “departure” is analusis, which means unloosening, a departure, or a dissolving. It is a metaphor drawn from the loosing of a ship from its moorings right before it sets sail. So the Apostle said that he was ready to be offered in a violent death. He was ready, willing, and eager.

Was Paul crazy? Was Paul insane? Who could say, “I’m sitting here ready to have my head cut off”? But Paul was ready, because he said, “I fought a good fight. I finished my course. I’ve kept the faith.” Now we can understand why he could say that: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day. And not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.”

The apostle Paul said, “I’m ready to be offered, my departure is at hand. I’m ready. And although my head’s going to be cut off, God’s going to give me a crown.” You might think, where in the world is he going to wear it if his head is cut off? But the truth is, he is going to have a new body. That is for sure.

The Furtherance of the Gospel Through Suffering

Paul said, “I want you to understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance, or the advancement, of the gospel.” His bonds in Christ were manifest in all

the palace and all the other places, and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by his bonds, were much more bold to speak the word without fear. The things that happened to him did not stop the gospel; they advanced it. His imprisonment became a means by which others grew confident and spoke more boldly.

What were the things that happened to Paul? He was arrested. He was thrown in the dungeon. He was sitting there thinking that his head may indeed be cut off. He was facing a violent death, yet he could speak of his departure as though he were a ship being loosed from its moorings and setting sail. He was not merely resigned to what was coming. He was ready, willing, and eager, because he knew that the Lord, the righteous judge, would give him a crown of righteousness at that day—not to him only, but to all them that love his appearing.

The apostle was calm in the midst of it all. Since our troubles may bless many, we ought to rejoice. Whatever promotes our salvation is by the Spirit of Christ, and prayer is the appointed means of seeking for it. Our earnest expectation and hope should not be to be honored by men or to escape the cross, but to be upheld amid temptation, contempt, and affliction. Let us leave it to Christ, which way He will make us serviceable unto His glory, whether by labor or suffering, by diligence or patience, by living for His honor and working for Him or dying for His honor and suffering for Him. The Apostle Paul was calm in all of this, and he could see all the blessings of God in it.

His bonds in Christ were made manifest in all the palace and in all the places as well. Everyone in the palace knew of Paul's incarceration and why he was there. Moreover, he said, "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

In other words, it encouraged others. They said, "If Paul can endure imprisonment, so can I. If he can endure being arrested, so can I." They were much more bold to preach the word. Some indeed preached Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill. "The one preached Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached."

"And I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

Paul says that the gospel was furthered by his imprisonment. He was standing for the truth and was willing to be imprisoned for it, and many of the brethren waxed bolder and preached the truth. But there were also some who were contentious and hated Paul so much that they wanted to add to his misery and discomfort. They mocked and ridiculed him, preaching the same gospel he preached, but not genuinely or sincerely. They did it to mock him. Yet Paul said, “But Christ is preached. Whether it's in pretense or whether it's genuine, Christ is preached, and I therein am rejoicing.”

How could Paul rejoice in someone who wickedly mimicked and mocked him and preached the Word concerning Jesus Christ, although they hated and despised Jesus Christ? If God could use a dumb ass to rebuke a mad prophet, could He not use the words of these reprobates? The answer is yes. In 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 16, the Bible says, “...and the dumb ass forbade the madness of the prophet.” The dumb ass—that is, Balaam’s donkey—spoke to Balaam and rebuked him. Balaam answered the donkey, which is the amazing thing. The donkey asked him, “Have I ever done this to you before?” He said, “Nay.” The donkey was prophesying, and the prophet was naying. God used that donkey, so He can use these reprobates.

Paul said, “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” The word “salvation” is used in many different ways in the Bible. This does not mean that Paul was unsaved, not by any stretch of the imagination. Paul was certainly saved and was a true preacher of God. When he says, “For I know this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer,” he is simply talking about being released from prison. He is not going to die at this particular point. He is ready to die now, but he will not die until 2 Timothy, which we have already read. As the passage continues, you will see that this is the context as well.

Paul said, “According to my earnest expectation, my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by

death. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor."

Paul's Dilemma: To Depart or to Remain

Then he said, "Yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I'm in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better, nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." He added, "And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." This is why, in verse 19, he is talking about his release from prison. In verse 26 he says, "That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again." The apostle's earnest expectation and hope was that he would not be ashamed, but would always be bold concerning Christ, and that Christ would be magnified in his body, whether he lived or died.

"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." To die is a profit; it is an advantage. Paul certainly preferred that. He said, "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor," that is, ministering. "Yet what I shall choose I wot not, for I am in a strait betwixt two." He had two choices: he could depart and be with Christ, or he could stay and continue to preach.

He had "a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better"—for him. "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." The strait in which he found himself was this: to die and be with Christ was better for him, but to continue to live, preach, and teach would be better for them.

By this time, Paul understood that he was not going to be martyred; he was actually going to escape. He valued death, counted it an advantage, and looked at it as an improvement and as something to be desired. However, he said that he would probably continue to live for their benefit. So think about this: Should we value death?

And the answer would be absolutely yes. Why? Death is not the end for the Christian. Death is really the beginning for the child of God. Death is not the cessation of life; death, in reality, is the

entrance to real life. Life does not begin at 40. Life begins, actually, at death for the child of God.

There is to be no fear in death. Hebrews 2:14–15 says, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

For the child of God, we have actually been delivered from death. That is true, and from the fear of death as well, because when we die, we are actually not dead. We have been delivered from the fear of death.

So what is death for the Christian? I want to give you a couple of passages to meditate upon. In 2 Corinthians 5, the first nine verses are important, especially verse 9. First and foremost, death for the Christian is a transformation, a transformation. Consider 2 Corinthians 5:1.

Death as Transformation and Conformation

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved," that's our body, "we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." When this body dissolves, when our soul leaves this body and our body rots in the ground, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Notice that he begins this verse, "For we know." This is something that we understand and know: there awaits us a glorified body. Then he says, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven." It is natural that we should want this glorified body. "If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle," this soul-fleshly body, "do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

We are mortal, and we are going to die. But as Christians, when we die, our mortality is swallowed up in life. That is why, for the

child of God, death is not the end. It is the beginning. It is real life. "Now he that hath wrought us for this selfsame thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord."

"For we walk by faith and not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor that whether present or absent, we shall be accepted of him." We know this: we are going to be transformed and have a glorified body. This old body will expire.

I have a good friend in our church in Waycross. He is younger than I am, but not too much. Usually he comes up to me about once a month and says, "Why didn't you tell me that getting old had all these problems?" I usually say, "Cheer up, things are going to get worse." But it is true. Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to Romans chapter 12. As you turn there, let me emphasize this.

What is death for the Christian? Death to a Christian is the door of hope, the gate of heaven, a glorified body, the entrance into eternal glory, the brightness of eternity, the presence of Jesus Christ, the glory of God the Father, freedom from all that is sinful and evil, and the reception of all that is good, godly, and joyous.

Death for the Christian is going to be fixing permanently that which we are to be doing practically. In Romans 12:1–2, Paul writes, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.” Usually, when you think of a sacrifice, you think of something that has been killed, but now he says our sacrificial work is a living sacrifice, “holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Then he says, “And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

That which we are to be doing right now, practically in this life, will be done for us permanently in glory. The word “transformed” is metamorphoo. From it we get the English word metamorphosis, which means to transfigure, to transform, to change, to go from one

form to the other. By renewing our mind, we are to be transformed; we are to be metamorphosized; we are to go through changes as we become more and more like Jesus Christ. A caterpillar goes through stages and ultimately is transformed by metamorphosis into a butterfly. The Scripture teaches that our metamorphosis will only be complete when we are transformed in eternity.

Death for the child of God is first and foremost a transformation. But that is not all. Death for the child of God is not only a transformation; it is a conformation. Romans 8:29 says, “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” You have been predestinated as a child of God to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

The word "conformed" is the Greek word summorphos, and "sum" is a preposition meaning "with." It is from morphe, which means "form." Thus, the word put together means fashioned like unto, having the same form, or being conformed. We are talking about conformity to Jesus Christ.

In Philippians chapter 3, beginning with verse 9, the apostle says, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." He said, "being made conformable unto His death."

Ultimately, we're going to be conformed to Jesus Christ. We are to be constantly being transformed and conformed in this life, but it will become permanent when we die. First John chapter 3, beginning with verse 1, gives us this tremendous truth: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him. For we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in himself purifieth himself even as he is pure."

Did you hear what he said? "But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The scripture tells us that our Lord is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. When we are conformed to His image permanently in heaven, we too will be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sin, sinning, and sinners.

Here are some quotes from old Puritans and more modern-day individuals on the subject of death for the child of God. Charles Spurgeon said, “The best moment of a Christian's life is the last one, because it is the one that's nearest to heaven.” William Nicholson wrote, “Death ends all the conflicts and trials and sorrows for the righteous. Death is the commencement of all the woes for the wicked.” Richard Sibbes, the old Puritan, said, “Death will be the death of my misery, the death of my sins, the death of my corruption, but death will be my birthday in regards to happiness.”

Quotes from Puritans and Others on the Value of Death

Adoniram Judson, missionary to Burma, said, “When Christ calls me home, I shall go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from school.” You cannot get any happier than that if you are a boy. That is a fact. John Calvin said, “We may positively state that nobody has made any progress in the school of Christ unless he cheerfully looks forward to the day of his death.” Think about that. The truth of the matter is, if we really understood the value of death, we could look cheerfully to the day of our death.

Samuel Bolton wrote, “It is the privilege of saints that they shall not die until the best time, not until when, if they were but rightly informed, they would desire to die.” Isn't that amazing? If they were rightly informed, they would desire to die. Thomas Watson said, “For the child of God, death is the funeral of all of his sorrows.” John Bunyan wrote, “Death is but a passage out of a prison into a palace.” William Gurnall said, “Let your hope of heaven master your fear of death. Why should you be afraid to die who hope to live by dying?”

Death is not a cessation of life. As William Nicholson said, “We're ever gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of eternity.” John Newton, the old slave trader and author of Amazing Grace,

said, “I'm packed, sealed and waiting for the post who would desire to live always in this poor world?”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “He who does not prepare for death is more than an ordinary fool. He’s a madman.” Commenting on Paul’s statement, “and to die is gain,” Spurgeon says: “And to die is gain,” because death would free him from all sin and from all doubts as to his state in this present and in the future. It would be gain to him, for then he would no longer be tossed upon the stormy sea, but he would be safe upon the land where he was bound. It would be gain to him, for then he would be free from all temptations, both from within and from without. It would be gain to him, for then he would be delivered from all of his enemies.

There would be no more cruel Nero, no blaspheming Jews, no false brethren. It would be gain to him, for then he would be delivered from all suffering. There would be no more shipwrecks, no more being beaten with rods or being stoned. Dying too would be gain for him, for he would then be free from all fear of death, and having once died, he would die no more forever.

It would be gain to him, for he would find in heaven better and more perfect friends than he would leave behind on earth. And he would find above all his Savior, and be a partaker of his glory. This is a wide subject, and the more we think over it, the more sweetness we shall get out of it.

Application: Do You Value Death?

Here is the application. First, the question: Do you see any value in death? After having heard this truth, do you think that you can regard death in a more valuable light? Death is not our enemy. Death is our friend. Death does not destroy us. Death enables us to enter into eternity. Death for the child of God is not a cursing; it is a blessing, because it is our passage from this life into eternity.

I do not understand, in one sense of the word, how we could be so pessimistic when it comes to death. Now, I do not want to die. I tell people I want to live. There is a value in life, and there is a value in death. There are two reasons why I do not want to die. The first is that I do not want to leave Alice. The second is that I do not want to

quit preaching. I love to preach. I enjoy preaching. Whether you get anything out of my preaching or not, I do. I like it. I enjoy it. I am glad to do it. I just love it. That is what God called me to do.

So I am like Christ and like Paul in one sense of the word. If I live, I want to keep preaching. I do not want to quit preaching. But I also understand that there is a value in death. There are things that I can never have in this life unless I die. Let me show them to you.

Here is a wonderful truth for the child of God when it comes to death. Where do we go when we die? What do we encounter? He says, "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, unto an innumerable company of angels." So when we die, we enter into the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. We will be surrounded by an innumerable company of angels.

Those we cannot number, there will be so many of them. Then we will be coming “to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” How could we not want those things? How could we not count it valuable to come to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all the saints of God—and then, of course, to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant? Death is exceedingly valuable to the child of God, for without death none of those things would be ours. So again, the question is, how much do you value death?

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your grace and Your mercy. We pray, Father, that You would put us on a biblical perspective concerning death, as well as concerning life. May we be able to say with the Apostle Paul, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” May we not, Lord, waste our lives by living a worthless life. May we fight the good fight of faith, and may we finish our course and understand, Lord, that when we keep the faith, there is indeed a crown of righteousness laid up for us. Help us, Father, to long to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. We will not only be transformed, we will

be conformed. May, Father, our heart's desire be to be like unto Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 36

Two Reasons Why You Don't Love The Lord As You Should

October 9, 2022

Two Reasons As To Why You Do Not Love The Lord Jesus As You Should

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 7:36-50 (KJV)

Introduction and Scripture Reading

> And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at his feet behind him, weeping and began to wash his feet with tears, and had wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a

> sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he said, Master, say on.
>
> There was a certain creditor which had two debtors, the one owed 500 pence, and the other 50. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, and thou gavest me no water for my feet. But she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.
>
> Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven. For she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith has saved thee. Go in peace.
>
> Have you ever wondered as to why our love for our Heavenly Father is actually so small? When you look at our lives, the truth of the matter is, we're occupied with so many things.

The Problem of Small Love for God

We seemingly do not have the time, the energy, or even the effort to obey His commands. Colossians 3, verses 1 and 2, says, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above and not on things below.”

Have you actually set your affection on things above? Are you seeking those things that are above? Is there a desire in your heart to be more loving toward our Lord Jesus Christ and to be more obedient toward Him?

Why do we really not love Him the way we have been commanded to love Him? In Deuteronomy, chapter 6 and verse 5, the Bible says, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” When you get to Mark, chapter 12, one of the scribes asked Him, “Master, which is the greatest commandment?” Instead of quoting one of the ten, our Lord simply said this, quoting from Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 4: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment.”

There have been some Christians, I am absolutely sure, who have recognized their sinful failure in not loving the Lord Jesus as He commanded, and certainly not recognizing the greatness of His grace and mercy. However, most professing Christians simply go on their merry way without thinking about these things, without desiring a greater love or a greater obedience. It does not bother the average professing Christian that he is unthinking, unthankful, ungrateful, and unappreciative. He simply lives his life without thinking about these things. In Luke chapter 7, our Lord actually deals with this issue.

The Pharisee and the Sinful Woman Contrasted

This issue then involves a Pharisee, whose name was Simon, and a very notorious woman. Simon the Pharisee is openly named. You must remember that Pharisees were indeed self-righteous bigots. They believed that they were sinless simply because they kept the externals of God's law.

You remember that the Apostle Paul himself was raised as a Pharisee. He said in Philippians 3:6, concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness of the law, blameless. The Apostle Paul understood that he was not really blameless, but in his pharisaical attitude, in keeping the externals, he actually thought himself to be blameless at one time. Interestingly, the Greek word for blameless is amemptos, and it literally means to be blameless, to be unblameable, to be faultless, one who deserves no censure, one who is free from fault and free from defect. He said it was touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

To show you the attitude of Pharisees, our Lord gives us a good illustration in Luke 18 between the Pharisee and the publican who went to the temple to pray: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, and probably to himself as well. God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess.”

So he believed that he was righteous, not just because of his works, but because he kept the externals. “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner.” Our Lord said, “I tell you, this man, that is the publican, went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone that exalted himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

I point this out so that you can be aware of the Pharisees' attitude. You remember how they condemned our Lord for associating with publicans and sinners. In fact, they asked the disciples, “Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners?”

When our Lord heard that, he said, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,” and, “Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.” He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Let me show you a good illustration of a Pharisee before there basically were Pharisees, in one sense of the word.

God says in Isaiah 65:2, “I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.” They were not walking after God's law or God's thoughts, but after their own thoughts. They were “a people that provoked me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick.” That is, they were not worshiping at the temple. They remained among the graves, lodged in the monuments, ate swine's flesh, and had broth of abominable things in their vessels.

But look what these people said: “Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou.” God says, “These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.” These people did not want to be around others lest they should defile or pollute themselves. They had a pharisaical attitude that they were holy when in reality they were not. Unhappily, the same pharisaical attitude is prevalent today among many professing Christians.

Many professing Christians believe they have arrived at a very special place in their walk. They embrace certain doctrines, views, or theories, and therefore look with disdain, despite, and disgust upon those who have not attained the same views. In reality, they have embraced a form of Gnosticism, which taught salvation and spirituality by certain knowledge attained only by the elite. Whenever someone looks down on and despises other Christians because they do not hold the same position or attitude, that is not only a pharisaical attitude; it is Gnosticism as well.

Simon the Pharisee evidently did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke 7:39, Simon said, “Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.” Simon would not even ascribe to our Lord that He was a prophet. In verse 40, Jesus, answering, said unto him, “Simon.” Simon is named in this passage, but the woman is left unnamed. Why?

The answer is the greatness and gravity of her sin. The Greek word in verse 37, “this woman, which was a sinner,” is hamartolos, referring to one devoted to sin, especially one who is preeminently sinful, especially wicked. This woman, undoubtedly, was probably a prostitute, known for a real lack of chastity and morality. The word “was” in verse 37 is an imperfect indicative. The imperfect tense essentially takes the present and puts it back into the past. In other words, this woman was this in the past, and she was this up until a very recent time. Evidently, she was an eminent sinner and had only just recently repented. Her life had been one of sin, wickedness, rebellion, and impurity. Yet the Lord had been gracious to her and evidently had granted her repentance.

Now she hears that He is at this meal with Simon, and she comes to Him. Our normal thought when we see someone who is preeminently wicked is that such a person will always be wicked; there is no hope for an individual like that. That is not true. Certainly, this woman demonstrates that there is hope for sinners like that.

Consider John Newton. He was a drunkard, a whoremonger, and a slave trader, and yet God saved him. John Newton wrote "Amazing Grace." Spurgeon said of this woman, "Her name is not given, and there are good reasons why it should not be given. Certainly she was not Mary, the sister of Lazarus, nor yet Mary Magdalene."

We may be quite sure of that. Our Savior leaves her anonymous. It is usually best that converts of this character should not be exhibited and their names made known. Much cruel wrong has been done to reclaim sinners when they have been pushed to the front.

He says, "Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner." It seems that men always want to magnify sin and sinners instead of the grace that saves sinners. I have known very, very wicked men who repented, and God saved them. The very first thing they do is get pushed forward—not only in front of the church, but in front of every meeting—to give their testimony. Their testimony always begins with how wicked and vile they were and what they had done.

Let me ask you a question: I am so thankful that God does save sinners. I know God saves drunkards because I have seen drunkards who were genuinely converted. I have seen whoremongers, murderers, and even mobsters who were genuinely converted. In fact, I preached with one a number of times in years past.

Which do you think is a demonstration of the greater grace of God: the grace that reaches down and saves a drunkard, a whoremonger, a dopehead, a murderer, or a mobster, or the grace of God that preserves a man and keeps him from going into all of those sins and then saves him anyhow?

Isn't it strange that in our churches everybody wants to push these great sinners forward, and yet someone who's never been a great sinner, at least according to the world—someone whom God has protected and held back—seemingly has a useless or absolutely

worthless testimony? There is a vast contrast in this passage between the Pharisee and this woman. In verse 44, Jesus turned to the woman and said unto Simon, “Seest thou this woman?”

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

What our Lord is speaking of here is what you and I would call the normal, everyday, hospitable manners and customs of that day. If I came to visit Gary and he took me inside his house, he or his wife might say, “Pastor, would you like a glass of tea or a glass of water? Would you like to sit here and rest for a few minutes?” That is simply mannerly and hospitable.

In Bible times, everyday hospitality meant that when someone came to your house, you provided a bowl of water so they could wash their feet. Everybody wore sandals, there were no paved roads, and everybody's feet became dirty and dusty. It was hospitality to provide water for them before they came in, since they would usually leave their shoes at the door. Moreover, it was normal everyday hospitality for men to kiss other men.

Do not jump to conclusions. The Bible says, “Greet ye one another with a holy kiss.” But the way men greeted other men was by taking a man's beard in the hand and kissing his beard. They would not kiss the man; they would kiss the beard. That was a normal everyday custom honoring the individual. Usually, when you went to a home, they would take a few drops of oil and put it on your head—not pour a whole bottle of oil on you, but apply enough to refresh you. These were simply clear hospitality and clear manners.

Let me give you a quote by Spurgeon: “What a blessed amalgam of humility, penitence, gratitude, and love.” All these are seen in what she did, especially in the unbinding of the tresses of her beauty—that is, her hair—which had been her nets in which she had taken the souls of men. Now she uses these for a towel. She begins to wash His

feet with tears and wipes them with the hairs of her head, kisses His feet, and anoints them with ointment.

Let me show you how much disrespect and dishonor this Pharisee had for the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, "Simon, when I came to your house, you did not give Me any water to wash My feet. You did not kiss Me. You did not give Me any oil for My head."

Now skip down to verse 49: "And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" There were more people there than Simon, our Lord, and this sinful woman. Evidently, they were Pharisees, because they were saying, as other Pharisees said throughout the Scriptures, "Who is this that forgives sins also?"

Here is a question: I wonder if Simon had provided water for their feet. I wonder if he had kissed their beards and given oil for their heads. I wonder if they had gotten there early, before the Lord. This makes you wonder whether this was a setup. Were they there to make fun of our Lord, to mock Him, and to ridicule Him? These other guests evidently were Pharisees, and they were taking this as an opportunity either to entrap Him or simply to mock and ridicule Him.

The contrast is very clear: the sinful woman loved the Lord Jesus Christ and believed in Him, while the Pharisee did not. There was absolutely no love in the heart of the Pharisee for the Lord Jesus Christ. So look at verse 39, because our Lord begins to question Simon and gives him a good illustration and a good question.

The Parable of the Two Debtors

"When the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it"—saw what the woman had done—"he spake within himself," though he did not say it aloud: "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." Of course, our Lord knew his thoughts. "And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." And he said, "Master, say on."

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors. The one owed 500 pence and the other 50. When they had nothing to pay, he

frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him the most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And our Lord said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

One debtor owed ten times more than the other debtor, and the amount of the debt was very significant, yet the creditor frankly forgave each one of them. The question that our Lord asked had a very obvious and clear answer, and Simon answered it correctly.

I want to show you from this passage two reasons as to why we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ the way we should, and why we do not love Him the way He has commanded us. The first is this: We do not perceive the greatness or the gravity of our sins.

First Reason: Not Perceiving the Greatness of Our Sin

It is true that practically everyone is going to admit that they are sinners, because everyone knows that they have sinned. In fact, I have known people who not only admit it, but laugh about it while they admit it, and think it is very funny. Most people—and I am talking about most Christians—have never really considered the seriousness of sin. Let me ask you just a couple of questions. You know the answers to each one, but here they are: How many sins does it take to make a sinner? How many sins does it take to condemn you? How many sins does it take to bring about death? The answer to each question is one. Just one sin makes you a sinner. Just one sin condemns you, and one sin is enough to bring about death.

Listen to this quote from A. W. Pink: “Because God is holy, He hates all sin. He loves everything which is in conformity to His laws, and loathes everything which is contrary to it. His word plainly declares, the froward is an abomination of the Lord, and again, the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination of the Lord. It follows, therefore, that He must necessarily punish sin. Sin can no more exist without demanding His punishment than without requiring His hatred of it.”

God often forgives sinners, but He never forgives sin. God has often forgiven sinners, but He never forgives sin, and the sinner is only forgiven on the ground of another having borne his

punishment, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore we were told, “The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.”

For one sin God banished our first parents from Eden. For one sin, the posterity of Canaan fell under a curse which remains over them to this day. For one sin, Moses was excluded from Canaan land. For one sin, Elisha’s servant was smitten with leprosy. For one sin, Ananias and Sapphira were cut off out of the land of the living. It is sin that brings sorrow and heartache and suffering and death.

And yet the truth of the matter is, most Christians engage in sin as easily as they open a box of chocolate candy and eat the candy, and they think nothing of it. We have not really understood that sin is indeed a transgression of God’s law. The Bible says in 1 John 3 and verse 4, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” We cannot sin without transgressing God’s law. Galatians chapter 3, verse 10, says, “Cursed is every one which continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

So it means then that God requires us to be perfect. Our perfection has to be perpetual, consistent, and constant, which it is not; therefore, we are under the curse. Do you realize what we do? We try to make ourselves more spiritual by comparing ourselves to other people. In fact, that is what the Apostle Paul talks about—I think it is 2 Corinthians, maybe chapter 10—where he speaks of people who compare themselves with themselves, and they are not wise.

I can be the smartest man in the world, I can think, if I could compare myself with an imbecile. But just because I compare myself with an imbecile does not mean that I am really smart. When you compare yourself among yourselves, you may say, “I don’t do what Steve does, so I must be more spiritual than Steve.” But Steve is not my standard. The imbecile is not my standard. That is exactly what people do: we compare ourselves. I preached in prisons many, many times.

Do you realize there is a pharisaical division even in the prisons? I have talked to prisoners, and the thieves will say, “Well, at least we

have never murdered anyone. We are not murderers." The murderers will say, "Well, at least we are not pedophiles." In other words, they try to justify themselves by comparing themselves with other prisoners in the prison. Well, we do the same thing. We say, "I may be a sinner, but I am not really that bad."

Listen to James, chapter 2, verses 9 and 10: "If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." So if I ask you, "Are you a murderer?" I am sure you will answer no, because you have never really murdered anyone. But if you have committed any sin in your life, you are guilty as a murderer, because whatever sin you committed means that you violated the whole law. You are a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, an idolater—you are everything. When you violate one of God's laws, you are guilty of all. Now I want to show you some pictures.

We do not usually perceive the greatness and gravity of our sins. Look in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Isaiah, chapter 1, beginning with verse 4. I want you to look at what God says. Here is a good picture of our sins. If you want to see the greatness and gravity of our sins, here is a picture.

He is talking to Judah and Jerusalem, a sinful nation: "A people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters. They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." Then He asks, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." In other words, correction does not change you at all.

"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." God says this is a good picture of the greatness and gravity of our sin. From the top of our head to the sole of our foot, we are nothing but open, putrefying sores, which have never been bound up or mollified whatsoever. In other words, we are just one huge pus factory, is what it amounts to.

I was preaching in South Carolina. Before I began, a special was still to be sung. A man walked in wearing an extremely large pair of overalls. The pastor leaned over and said, “I’m so thankful to see him.” “Why?” “I’ll explain after the service.” Afterwards, the pastor took me to the man and said, “Brother, I’m so happy to see you. I told Brother Weaver I was thankful you were here tonight. Would you show Brother Weaver how difficult it was for you to get here tonight?” The man reached down and pulled up the pant legs of those huge overalls.

Every spot on his legs was nothing but open, running, putrefying sores. I could not take my finger and touch a spot where there was not a sore. When I saw his legs, I immediately thought of Isaiah 1, verses 5 and 6. Just as repulsive as that was to me—I wanted to back up—I thought, That's how repulsive our sins are to God. They're nauseating unto Him. That is a picture of the greatness of our sins.

If you look in your Bibles to Isaiah 64 and verse 6, here's a passage that most of you can quote. At least you've heard it many, many times. But we've never seen, once again, the greatness of this passage in declaring our wickedness. In Isaiah chapter 64 and verse 6, He says, “But we're all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” Now, we're all as an unclean thing. Then he says, all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

Actually, it's menstrual cloths. That's what it is. He said that is how defiled we are. That's why we all fade as a leaf. That's why our iniquities are like the wind, and they simply take us away. In other words, God is showing us how sinful, how wicked, how detestable, how vile we really are.

Let me give you another illustration. Look in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel, chapter 24. I want to take the time to read the first 14 verses, then come back and point out the words that God uses. Please understand that He is talking about Judah and Jerusalem. Ezekiel 24, verse 1: “Again in the ninth month, in the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against

Jerusalem this same day. And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water in it. Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, the shoulder, fill it with choice bones. Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it. Make it boil well, and let them see the bones of it therein. Now watch. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! Bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it."

For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it upon the ground to cover it with dust; that it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance; I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for the fire great.

Now watch what he says: Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned. Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, and the scum of it may be consumed. He's talking about Jerusalem. She had wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her: her scum shall be in the fire. In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.

I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God. So God says, here's a great pot. You put everything in it. You've heated it up. All the water's boiled out. And it keeps cooking and cooking and cooking until there's nothing melted in it, but nothing but pure scum, which stinks to high heaven.

I do like chicken salad, but I have been around a pot of boiling chicken that was forgotten until the water boiled out and everything melted became the scum on the bottom of the pot, and it stunk. God calls sin scum, great scum, and filthiness. So I want you to

understand something: scum stinks, filthiness stinks, spiritual garbage is still garbage, and spiritual filth is still filth.

It has a distinctive smell about it, and that distinctive smell is disobedience, wickedness, and rebellion. The Bible is telling us this smell causes God to be nauseated. It demands His punishment. That's why He said the wages of sin is death. You remember how David sinned? David wrote these penitential Psalms, seven of them. But in Psalm 38 and verse 5, he said, My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. His foolishness was his sin. He said, My wounds stink and are corrupt. So we need to understand: here are pictures that demonstrate our great sin and the gravity of our sin.

In Romans 7:24, the Apostle Paul says, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” What in the world is “the body of this death”?

Albert Barnes says, “The body of this death denotes the corrupt and evil propensities of the soul. It is thus used to denote the law of sin in the members as being that which the apostle was struggling and from which he desired to be delivered.”

John Gill explains it this way: “The body of sin speaks of the load of sin and the burden of corruption under which he groaned and still bespeaks him a regenerate man, not for outward calamities but of indwelling sin is he all along speaking in the context.” He says it is better called “the body of death,” and understands it in connection with Romans 6:6, where Paul calls it “the body of sin.” It is that massive corruption lodged in him, called a body because it is fleshly and carnal in nature, operates through the members of the body, and consists of various parts and members as a body does. It is a body of death because it makes men liable to death. It was that which the Apostle says slew him, and which itself is, to a regenerate man, a dead carcass, stinking and loathsome.

Thus, Romans 7:24 contains a Hebraism in which the dead body is understood to be the body of sin, or the carcass of sin, to which the Apostle Paul was inseparably fastened—which you and I are as well, in that sense of the word.

This illustration alludes to an ancient custom used by many tyrants, and not only in the punishment of murderers. If a man murdered another and was captured, one punishment was to take the man he had murdered and tie him to the dead man: the dead man's face to the living man's face, his chest to the living man's chest, his arms to the living man's arms, his hands to the living man's hands, his legs to the living man's legs, and his feet to the living man's feet. He remained tied until the corruption of the dead man killed the living man. Sometimes tyrants did this simply as a punishment. Virgil paints the horror of it in his account of the life of the tyrant Mezentius.

Our sin, our disobedience, and our lack of holiness should make us groan under this weight as well. It is not that Paul did not know how to be delivered. He said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And now he gives us the answer: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the answer.

Here he is talking about this body of death, this body of sin, which is corrupt and defiles. Our Lord Himself said this same truth to the Pharisees, who believed that they were righteous: "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." So here are pictures of our sin.

The good question you should be asking yourself is this: Have you really seen yourself this sinful? Have you really seen yourself this depraved, this corrupt, this filthy? It is not just that we are sinners; we are sinners exceedingly. Isaiah gives us a passage with which we are familiar. When he sees the holiness of God, he proclaims:

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because

I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." But notice what he said: "Woe is me, for I am undone."

"I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." So my question would be, have you and I really seen that we are undone? Have we really seen that we are of unclean lips? Have we really seen not just our sin, but the sins of others? Have we also seen the sins of our nation? In other words, if we have never seen the depth and the depravity of our sins, we have never seen the greatness and the gravity of our sins.

How in the world can you be thankful or appreciative? How can you love our Lord like you should if you have never seen what you were delivered from? Do you remember what our Lord said? Our Lord said, "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." So if we want to love our Lord more, we really need to see what we were, what we are, and what He delivered us from.

The first reason we do not love our Lord the way we should is because we do not perceive the greatness and the gravity of our sins. The second reason we do not love our Lord as we should is that we do not perceive the graciousness of our Savior. Have you ever considered how much grace and mercy it would take for God just to forgive one sin? Just one sin. Consider the multitude of sins that you and I have committed, and that everybody else has committed. Not one of us deserves forgiveness; each one of us actually deserves justice. And yet God graciously and kindly forgives us for our sins.

Second Reason: Not Perceiving the Graciousness of Our Savior

David said it like this in Psalm 130, verse 3: "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" If God started marking iniquities on us every time that we sinned, not only could we not stand physically, we could never stand spiritually. We could not

stand before Him if God counted those. Let me mention this: do you remember any of your sins?

And I know the answer is yes. Do you remember some of the sins that were very grievous, very wrong, very unethical? You can say yes, you can remember those. The one thing about sin is this: although it's forgiven, some of these sins are forever etched upon our memories. We can't erase them; they're there. I know you can remember your sins. I can remember my sins. But how about this? Think also of the multitude of sins that we have committed and forgotten. Yet God knows every detail of those sins, and they have not been forgotten. Because God is omniscient, He knows everything.

I've often said most people have a peace of mind that comes from their own forgetfulness, and that's true. We forget our sins so many times. Yet God hates all sin. That's what He said in Jeremiah 44 and verse 4: "Howbeit I sent unto you my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

When you look at Luke 7 and think about this woman, probably everyone knew her. The Pharisees knew her, not only because of her immorality, but also because of the gossip machine. Everybody talked about her. But one thing this woman did know was the depth of her sin. She was humbled in her soul and sorrowed over her transgression. She could not undo what she had done, but she could come to the Savior for forgiveness.

Our Lord said to her in verse 48, "Thy sins are forgiven." Then in verse 50 He said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Someone says, "Well, I'm not a notorious sinner the way that woman was." Yes, you are, and yes, I am, because whoever violates the law on one point is guilty of all.

Applications and Conclusion

Think about two Scriptures before I make an application. Psalm 130 and verse 4 says, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Ephesians 1 and verse 7, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, says, "In whom we have redemption through his blood,

the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." We have forgiveness of sins through the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, there is not a sinner too vile to be saved. I've had people tell me they are too sinful to be saved, but that is not true. No one is beyond the grace and mercy of God. It does not matter how deep, vile, or wicked the sin is, because the Bible tells us that the Lord is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

We do not deserve the least of His mercies, yet He is very gracious and gives us forgiveness. He is righteous, that is sure. The good news is this: if you are a sinner, then you are a candidate for salvation, because Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. No one is beyond the pale of salvation when it comes to God's grace and mercy.

There is another reason this woman was so broken. Undoubtedly, she realized that her sins and transgressions caused pain to the Lord Jesus Christ. We never think about that. When we think about sin, we think about enjoying it. We think about how far we want to go, but no further. We think, "I can sin and ask forgiveness," but we never think about how our sin affects the Lord Jesus Christ or has affected Him.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Have you ever contemplated the pain and suffering that your sins cause the Lord Jesus Christ? God often forgives sinners, but He never forgives sin. Sin has to be paid for. Whatever our sins are or were, our Lord Jesus Christ paid for them. We will never recognize the graciousness of His forgiveness until we recognize the greatness and gravity of what He forgave.

The Bible 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. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Think of what our Lord endured; all that He endured, He endured for us.

If we want to love Him more, we need to pray two prayer requests. The first is, “Lord, show me myself.” If God ever opened your eyes to who you are and what you are, you would be in absolute fear, dismay, discouraged, downcast, and downtrodden. Then pray the second: “Lord, show me Thyself.” When God shows us Himself and His mercy and grace through the Lord Jesus Christ, showing that Jesus Christ is the only answer for who we are and what we are, that brings the joy of salvation.

We will recognize this simple truth: “To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much.” If we do not recognize what our Lord has delivered us from, and the grace He gave us in delivering us, our love will continue to be little, small, and insufficient compared with what He deserves. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy strength.”

The reason we do not love Him as we should is that we have never perceived the greatness and gravity of our sins, or the graciousness of His sufferings and forgiveness.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank Thee for Thy Word and truth, and for the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, we are sinners—grievous sinners, grave sinners. We have never really seen the depths of our depravity, nor perceived the greatness of Thy mercy and grace in delivering us from our sins and from ourselves. Lord, we need to see Thee as Isaiah saw Thee, in all Thy holiness, righteousness, and majesty. Help us, Father, to love Thee with all our hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 37

Faith, Little Faith, Great Faith

April 27, 2024

Faith, Little Faith, and Great Faith

Introduction: Faith as God's Gift

Matthew 6 and verse 30. The title of the message is "Faith, Little Faith, and Great Faith." Several weeks ago I was asked a question by a friend in Colorado. I answered the question, and later I began thinking that there may be other people who have the same question. So I took the answer to his question and developed it into this message.

Our Lord says, "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Faith is indeed the gift of God. You may not have faith apart from God's gift. There is a vast difference between a humanistic faith and a saving faith. To say that another way, there is a vast difference between a natural or fleshly faith and a divine faith.

I may believe that a chair will hold me up, and I may gently ease myself down in that chair, and yes, the chair holds me up, but that is not saving faith. I also may believe that things are going to work out for my good, based on some presupposition, but that is not necessarily saving faith. I also may work myself up into a frenzy trying to make myself believe, and yet that is not saving faith.

The Bible speaks of faith, a little faith, and a great faith. The Bible says in Acts chapter 7 that Stephen was a man that was full of faith. Whatever amount of faith one has is indeed the gift of God, if it is real, genuine saving faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." It continues, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." It is impossible, then, to please God or even obey God without faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it

“It is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must first believe that he is, and secondly that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” If you do not believe that God is, and if you do not believe that God hears and answers prayer, you are never going to seek Him in the beginning. Faith, then, is foundational. Faith is absolutely mandatory, and it is an absolute necessity to please God.

Degrees of Faith

Obviously, there are degrees of faith, since our Lord Jesus mentions little faith and later mentions great faith. If there is little faith and great faith, there must be degrees in between. Moreover, remember the parable of the sower, found in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. The Bible speaks of some who brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. Obviously, someone either had more faith, or exercised the faith he had more than others, to produce more fruit. If you say they simply exercised the faith they had, it would still be a greater faith because it was exercised and strengthened.

Another passage shows that there are degrees of faith. In Luke 17:5, the apostles said unto the Lord, “Increase our faith.” Clearly, if faith can be increased, there are degrees in faith, and certainly we would want that. But consider the context in which this request came. In verse 3, our Lord says to His disciples, “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.” If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

The apostles then said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” They understood that it would require greater faith than they possessed at that particular time to deal with what we would call interpersonal relationships between the brethren. When someone hurts us, criticizes us, or says things we do not like, we tend not to forgive them. We tend not to rebuke them.

Our tendency is either to ignore offenses or simply cut them off totally and completely. But our Lord said, No, if your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. If that happens seven times in a day, that is exactly what you should do. Therefore, the apostles said, “Increase our faith.” In other words, it would take more than they had to be obedient and deal with the situation as our Lord demanded.

Let me emphasize this: faith is faith. While we may discuss the differences between little faith and great faith, faith is still faith. In one sense, it does not matter whether it is little faith or great faith; it is still a saving faith. If it is in the Lord Jesus Christ, if it has been given to you, it is still a saving faith, whether it is great or small. Whether we call it little faith or great faith, it remains faith if it is in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the size of the faith that makes it saving, but the Lord Jesus Christ in whom that faith rests.

The Power of Small Faith

In Matthew 17:19, the disciples came to Jesus apart and asked, “Why could not we cast him out?” They were attempting to cast out a demon, but could not. Jesus answered, “Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye

shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

The whole point of our Lord's answer is to demonstrate the power of a small or little faith. The grain of a mustard seed is extremely small. When Alice and I were teenagers, it was common to see a young girl wearing a necklace with a little clear, round globe and, in the middle, a very tiny mustard seed. That was it. Our Lord said that if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, which is among the smallest of many, many seeds, it is sufficient. The illustration shows that even a very small faith is sufficient when it is genuine faith in the Lord.

Matthew Poole explains our Lord's answer: "The reason assigned here by our Lord why his disciples could not cast out this demon was their unbelief, not their total want but the weakness of their faith. Christ here again lets us see the power of faith and the mischief of unbelief.

"I take the plain sense of this text to be this, that there is nothing which may tend to the glory of God or to our good that may not be obtained of God by firm exercise of faith in him. Whether our Saviour speaketh of a faith of miracles or no, I will not determine. I rather think that he speaks here of any true faith. We must have the power and the promise of God for its object. The promise of working miracles by a divine power committed to them was a particular promise made to the disciples.

"And then he gives you Matthew 10 verses 1 through 42. And so was the only object of their faith. But I take our Saviour's words to extend to a further latitude, though as to miraculous operations, it was applicable only to them. That is the original ones. There is nothing without God, there is nothing which God has promised to give or bestow on any, but faith will obtain it from him if attended by fervent prayer to which fasting is subservient as preparing us to it. There are some things which are obtained by a stronger faith and more fervent and importunate prayers than others. A mercy sometimes seems to us to come out of the hand of God with more difficulty and wrestling for it. But there is nothing within the latitude of a promise but is to be done and obtained by vigorous exercise of faith and by fervent, importunate prayer. The apostles had yet but a

weak and imperfect faith. And they had not used such fervent and importunate prayer in this case as they ought to have done, and hence did this work appear so difficult to them."

John Gill gives this explanation: "Ye shall say to this mountain, perhaps pointing to the one they just came down from, or which might be inside of the house where he was, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; meaning not that it would be ordinarily or ever done in a literal sense by the apostles, that they should remove mountains, but they should be able to do things equally difficult and as seemingly impossible if they had but faith, when the glory of God and the good of men required it."

I believe Scripture supports Gill's view, as well as the former view, in understanding that through faith, even small and insignificant faith, great and seemingly impossible things can be accomplished. Hebrews 11, the great chapter on faith, gives examples of what was done by faith. Hebrews 11:32 says, "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith" subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

"Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

It was faith that allowed them to accomplish everything they accomplished. Moreover, it was faith that allowed them to endure suffering and persecution. A small faith is just as much faith as a great faith. It is still faith. There may be degrees, but it is still faith.

Faith Illustrated: Touching the Machine

Let me try to give you an illustration of what I will call a small faith and a great faith. It is not the perfect illustration, but I think it will show you the difference. Suppose there is a city where everyone has cancer. Some have had cancer for years, and their bodies are very, very weak. They can hardly move. They have one foot in the grave. Others have just discovered that they have cancer. While they have cancer, they are still full of vim and vigor, so to speak.

Now suppose that, in this technological age, a machine was invented that could cure cancer. The only thing required was to touch that machine. Here is a man who has had cancer for several years. He hears about the machine, and it is not too far away. He begins walking, then walks as far as he can until he stumbles and falls. He crawls on his hands and knees until he can reach the machine. He is almost out, but gets there just in time and is barely able to touch it with the tip of his finger. He is healed.

On the other hand, here is a younger man who has just discovered that he has cancer. He hears about the machine, runs to it as fast as he can, dives straight to it, and hits it so hard and grabs it that he knocks it over. But he is healed. Which one was healed? Both. The requirement was touching the machine, not the degree to which it was touched.

It is the same when we are talking about saving faith. Faith touches and receives the person and work of Jesus Christ. However small it is, if it touches and receives the person and work of Jesus Christ, it is not only a divine faith; it is also a saving faith.

In Matthew 9:18, we read: “While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath

made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour." What did she say? "If I may just touch the hem of his garment."

A little faith, or a small faith, that touches the Lord Jesus Christ and receives His person and work is just as saved as the one who was knocked down on the road to Damascus and struck blind, who eventually became the mighty Apostle Paul. The truth of the matter is, faith is faith in one sense of the word. There is a difference between a little faith and a great faith, but we must understand again that faith is faith.

Little Faith in Scripture

Here is an interesting thing: a little faith is spoken of more frequently in the Bible than a great faith. Surprisingly, three out of the five times when a little faith is mentioned, it is in relationship to the twelve apostles.

The phrase "little faith" occurs in several Scriptures. In Matthew 6:30, the Scripture says, "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Then, in Matthew 8:26: "And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. Matthew 14:31 says, "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" In Matthew 16:8, "Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?" The last passage is Luke 12:28, comparable to Matthew 6: "If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

In all these passages, every time you see the two words "little faith," they are based upon one Greek word, oligopistos. It is made up of two Greek words: oligos, which means small or little, and pistos, which means faith. So the word means a little faith, or a small faith, or one that is believing or trusting too little.

Characteristics of Little Faith

I want to combine Matthew 6 and Luke 12 because they are teaching basically the same thing. They are both the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5, 6, and 7, you have the Sermon on the Mount, and in Luke 12 you have the Sermon on the Mount as well. In this passage, our Lord was speaking to his twelve, but to other disciples as well. Matthew 6 tells us, “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.” Luke 12:1 says, “In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” The truth is, our Lord was there. Matthew 5:1 is where that is, and Luke 12:1 as well.

Look at Matthew 6:30: “Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Luke 12:28 gives the context: "If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?" And then he says, "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after—and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

In both of these passages, when he is talking to these people about having a little faith, a little faith is concerned with your own life and with your own necessities. He is saying, do not go around asking,

"What are we going to eat? Where is it coming from? How are we going to get it? How will we pay for it? What are we going to wear? Where will we get our clothes? Where will we get the money to pay for our clothes, or the ability to make our own clothes? What is it? From whence will it come? Will it come in time?"

Our Lord answers all of these questions by pointing to the grass of the field. He says, "Don't be concerned." Then he points to the lilies: "Consider the lilies." Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. He says, "I am going to take care of you. I know that you have these needs. I know that." Here is what you must do: Do not be concerned about these everyday necessities, but rather, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." Here is the point that he is making.

He is saying that He is to be first, and our needs are to be second. A little faith puts oneself first and God second. Everyone knows the Lord's Prayer, sometimes called the disciples' prayer or the model prayer. It goes like this: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread." In other words, God's glory, God's honor, and God's kingdom come first. Our needs and necessities come second.

A little faith seemingly does not go beyond ourselves. We are tied up with our own concerns and the necessities of our life, more concerned with these than with God's honor, God's glory, and God's kingdom. Look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 8, verse 23.

Here we have the twelve apostles again: "And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"

In Matthew 6 and Luke 12, little faith was concerned with the necessities of life. In this passage, little faith is concerned with safety

and the preservation of our lives. Scripture tells us that our times are in His hands, that He holds our souls in life. Fear and fretting display a lack of trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord does not need to be physically present to protect and preserve us. In this instance, He was asleep in another part of the ship. The ship seemingly was about to be swamped, and they ran to Him and said, "Lord, carest thou not that we perish?" He rightly accused them of having very little faith.

Our Lord is not telling us to be stupid or to tempt the Lord. I believe in doing everything I can to keep myself safe. If there is a thunderstorm and lightning is hitting everywhere, I am not going to stand out in the rain and tempt the Lord to hit me. I may be in my house, trying to stay dry and away from the lightning.

I understand that my times are in His hands, and He is the one who can protect me. The same thing applies to a hurricane or a tornado. There is no reason to get bent out of shape. Yes, you must do what you need to do to be safe, which is our responsibility. But at the same time, it is God who must absolutely protect us. So we need to understand this one little principle: we are immortal until God is through with us. Nothing is going to happen to us. God has not only appointed the day of our birth; He has also appointed the day of our death.

So far as little faith is concerned—what we eat, what we drink, and how we can stay safe—consider Matthew chapter 14. Our Lord was walking on the water, and His twelve disciples supposed Him to be a ghost. Our Lord said, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” Peter said, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.” Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water. “And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

“But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”

Note this very carefully: living faith, although it may be a saving faith, is also a doubting faith. Peter actually walked on water until he saw the wind boisterous and the waves.

Surely Peter had seen those things before, because he had been through storms before. But the point is this: he ceased focusing upon the Lord Jesus Christ and focused on the circumstances and the situation. A little faith sidelines Jesus Christ, putting Him over here while we look intently at the circumstances and the situation.

I want you to know that Peter was indeed saved; that is for sure. But our Lord said, "Wherefore didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith?" Interestingly, many of these passages apply little faith directly to the twelve apostles, whom we hold up as giants in the faith.

Matthew chapter 16 contains the last occurrence of little faith. The first twelve verses begin: "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas."

Matthew records: “And he left them, and departed. And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?”

“Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the

Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Our Lord again said to them, "O ye of little faith."

Mark gives us the same scenario: "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?"

Mark and Matthew give us the reason for their smallness of faith: first, they did not remember; second, they reasoned unscripturally, or unbiblically. Therefore, they did not understand or comprehend the real spiritual impact and truth our Lord was giving.

Consequently, they were making the wrong application. You cannot make a right application of Scripture unless you understand the Scripture, and you are not going to understand the Scripture unless you remember the Scripture. According to these two passages, our Lord expects us to remember. The Bible says, "Take heed lest thou forget." He expects us to study, understand, comprehend, and make a proper application.

If we do not, we will continue to be those who have a little or small faith. Small faith is always associated with oneself: our necessities, our food, our raiment, our safety, and our preservation. We think humanistically, as the apostles said, "It is because we brought no bread." Our Lord said, "No, I'm not talking about physical bread. That's no problem to me." You need to understand and reason biblically.

Great Faith: The Centurion's Example

Here is the passage concerning a great faith. "Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into

Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." Evidently, he was quite well off.

"Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick."

There is much to say on this passage, but allow me to give what I will call some noticeable observations. If you will remember, all of these passages that dealt with little faith dealt with one's self and the necessities of life. Here is a Roman soldier who is concerned about one of his slaves, and yes, the word servant literally means slave. It is an unusual fact in and of itself. When you begin to think of Roman soldiers, they were warriors and fighters; they killed relentlessly, and a centurion would be someone who had at least a hundred soldiers under him. The very fact that this man was a soldier and concerned about his slave is unique in and of itself.

The soldier was high up, while the slave was low down. Are you concerned about those who are beneath you? Are those whom you consider beneath you of concern to you? Are you concerned about others who are not quite up to par according to your vision? Are you concerned about others who do not have your abilities or your opportunities? Are you concerned about others who criticize you and condemn you?

Evidently, there was a loving relationship between this Roman centurion and his slave. Clearly, he was probably a very humble man and probably a very moral man as well. So, first of all, you have to understand—listen carefully—that a great faith is concerned about others. It is not just concerned about oneself. He was concerned about someone who was exceedingly beneath him militarily, politically, economically, and in every way that you can imagine. The man was a slave.

Here is the second observation: a great faith is also a humble faith. This man, this Roman centurion, was obviously, clearly, and truly a humble man. He did not even think himself worthy to go to the Lord Jesus Christ. Others went and said to Jesus Christ that he was worthy: "This man loveth our nation, and this man has built us a synagogue." But when Jesus started approaching, he sent more friends and said, "Lord, I am not worthy for you to even enter under my roof."

I want you to understand that real humility stems from the realization that we are poor and wicked sinners and that God does not owe us anything but justice. Anything that we get from God is grace and mercy. Everything that we are, everything that we have, everything we ever will be, and everything that we ever will have is only based upon God's absolute mercy and grace.

When you realize that you do not deserve any of it, you may apply this to your life as well. I am thankful for life. I am thankful that God has allowed me to live to be as old as I am. But I do not deserve to live, and neither do you, because the wages of sin happen to be death. Yes, we are going to die. But look at how long God has been gracious and merciful to us. The soul that is truly humble understands that he deserves nothing; therefore, he can be thankful for anything and everything.

This Roman centurion said, “Lord, I am not worthy.” Here is the third observation: The man with the great faith recognized divine sovereignty and divine authority. He said, “Lord, you do not even need to come under my roof. You do not even need to come to this house. I am a man set under authority”—that is, I take orders. I have to take orders. There are others over me.

But he said, “I also have men under me. I say to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. And Lord, all you have to do is just speak the word. You do not have to be present. Just speak the word.” Great faith not only recognizes God’s sovereignty; it recognizes God’s sovereign authority. Have you ever considered God’s authority?

You have heard the old expression, “God said it, I believe it, and that settles it.” No, God said it, and that settles it, whether you believe it or not, because God is the sole, complete, and total authority. He is God. He is sovereign. He has all authority. Great faith, then, is concerned about others, exceedingly humble, and recognizes God’s sovereign authority. In other words, it is a faith more concerned with God and His kingdom than with ourselves. Great faith can truly, honestly pray and say, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” I want Your will. I want Your kingdom. I want Your honor. I want Your glory.

How to Increase Faith

God goes first and man goes second. God is to be honored and man is to be humbled.

Since there are degrees in faith—there is little faith, there is great faith, and there must be some in between—how do we increase our faith? The first answer should be obvious, because the apostle said, "Lord, increase our faith." We must pray that the Lord will give us greater faith, that He would indeed increase it, because faith is His gift. He alone can give divine faith.

The second way is by a serious and honest study of His Word. The Bible says in Romans 10 and verse 17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It is not merely that we read and study the Word of God; we must also hear the Word of God expounded, explained, and applied. If you really want to increase your faith, you have to be faithful to the preaching and exposition of the Word of God.

I tell people that I do not know everything. One thing Dr. Bob Jones Sr. used to say, and I certainly agree with it, was, "You can borrow brains, but you can't borrow character."

In other words, I may not understand a certain mechanical issue, but Steve does, and so I would ask him, "What about this?" He could explain it to me. If I had the character to carry it through, I could do it. If I did not have the character, all that explanation would fall on deaf ears.

I will be the first to admit that I do not know everything about the Bible, and I do not know anyone who does. But I have preached it for 59 years, and I know something about the Bible. I probably know more than you. If I do not know more than you about the Bible, you should be teaching me. So what I am trying to say is this.

Exercising the Faith God Has Given

God does not call everybody to be a mechanic, a doctor, or a preacher. I can borrow brains, but I cannot borrow character. I learned a long time ago that you cannot beat a man in his own game. When you understand that God does indeed call men and ordain them to preach His Word, there are things you will learn from the preaching of the Word of God that you will not learn from your private study. Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. You need to hear the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

There is a third way that we increase our faith. We should pray to the Lord; we should study, listen, understand, not forget, and apply. But we are also to use the faith that God has given us.

Everybody knows what going to the gym is about: exercising the muscles, strengthening them, and building them up. The Bible tells us to build ourselves up in the most holy faith. How do we build ourselves up in the most holy faith? By exercising the faith that God has given us.

The Apostle Paul said in Acts 24:16, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” Then he said in 1 Timothy 4:7, “But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.” The

word exercise is the Greek word gumnazo, from which we get gymnastic and gymnasium. Literally, he said, “Gymnasticize yourself unto godliness.” Work at it. Exercise at it and in it.

That is why he said in Proverbs chapter 3, beginning with verse 5, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.” Trust in

The LORD with all thine heart; lean not unto thine own understanding. Learn and exercise yourself to lean toward the Word of God, not toward your own understanding. Ask the Lord to help you believe, and to believe whatever you need to believe and however you need to believe. It is all Him. We can go from a little faith to a great faith.

I could be wrong—dead wrong—but I believe that before this year is over, we are going to need all the faith we can get. It may be faith to suffer, faith to prepare, or faith to fight through. We need to be praying, “Lord, increase our faith.” We need to be studying, listening, exercising, and strengthening what we have. What did our Lord tell the churches? “Strengthen what thou hast.”

Conclusion: Give God the Glory

That is what we must do. Alice and I passed a church building this morning, and it had a sign out front. I shuddered when I read it. It said, verbatim, “I did my best, God did the rest.” That is blasphemous. Do you know what that sign just said? “I started it; God finished it.” Had I not started, God could not have done a thing. No. Everything we are and everything we have is of God. God gave us everything we are and everything we have. We are to exercise it and use it for His honor and glory. He receives the honor and glory, not us.

I think it is Psalm 115 that begins, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.” Let us give God the glory.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask You for Your grace, mercy, goodness, and kindness. We thank You for the truth You have

given us. Enable us, Lord, to cry unto Thee: “Lord, increase our faith.” Give us great faith, that we may be concerned not just with ourselves, but with others; that we may be more humble; and that we may honor Thee, put Thee first, and recognize Thy divine sovereignty and authority. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 38

The Scars of Sin

April 27, 2024

Introduction: The Question of Marking Iniquities

Psalm 130, verse 3, just one simple verse, and actually this verse is to get me started to answer a question that was asked of me several weeks back. So if you look in Psalm 130, and look if you would please at verse 3, the Bible said, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Note, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Of course, the Bible says, "But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared."

The Physical, Mental, and Emotional Consequences of Sin

We do not understand the consequences of sin. The title of this message is "The Scars of Sin." And we do not understand the consequences of our sin. We don't understand the physical impact that sin has upon our bodies. We do not understand the consequences of the mental and emotional as well as spiritual consequences of sin. There is a book that I have in my library that is entitled, "The Body Keeps the Score." And the whole emphasis upon

that book is the fact that our bodies indeed keep the score of all the sins that we sin against our bodies and abuse our bodies with. When I began working on this message, I knew the definition of the word "scar," but I looked it up again just to reaffirm my thinking. Now I want you to listen to this definition that was given.

Definition and Biblical Terms for Scars

Any mark left on the skin or other tissue following the healing of a wound. We understand that. Here's the second part, though. Also, it refers to a permanent change in a person's character resulting from emotional distress. For instance, his wife's death left scars on him.

Now, the verb "scar" actually means to mark with a scar or to be marked with a scar. Our English word "scar" actually comes from the Greek word "scara." Now, there is another word that is used in the Bible for scars, and that happens to be the Greek word "stigma." I want you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Galatians and look, if you would, at chapter 6 and verse 17, Galatians chapter 6 and verse 17. In fact, we use the word "stigma" all of the time, and most of the time you hear the word "stigmata," which of course refers to the marks or the wounds on the body of Christ. But the Apostle Paul said it like this in Galatians 6 and verse 17. He said, "For henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ."

A mark, or stigma, in the ancient Oriental usage was usually a mark burned into or cut into the flesh of a slave or soldier. The mark either gave the name or indicated the name of the slave's master or the soldier's commander. Sometimes devotees of false gods were so devoted that they would carve or cut the name of their false god on their skin as well.

Paul's Physical Marks for Christ

If we turn to 2 Corinthians, we can understand why the Apostle Paul said that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 11:23, Paul asks, "Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool, I am more. In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes, save one."

Usually, when they beat someone, they would stop at thirty-nine to make sure they did not go over forty. Paul says that he received the full count, at least those four times. Then he says, "Thrice I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, night and day I've spent in the deep," with journeyings often, and perils of water, robbers, his own countrymen, the heathen, the city, the wilderness, the sea, and false brethren. He endured weariness and painfulness, watching orphans, hunger and thirst, fasting often, cold, and nakedness.

Besides those things that are without, he says, that which came upon him daily was the care of all the churches. Certainly Paul could say that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. Most of us have never been stoned, whipped, or beaten for the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Paul certainly was.

Stigma as Reproach and the Physical Effects of Sin

The word “stigma” is usually used as a word of reproach, indicative of someone who has done something wrong, wicked, or cruel. For instance, if you were born in the South, the name Sherman would be a stigma, because Sherman was a wicked, vile commander in the Union Army, and Sheridan as well. We would call that a stigma. Usually, when Alice and I were her children, if you did anything that violated the law, there was a stigma: he was a thief, robber, adulterer, or something similar. It was a stigma, a stain upon your character as well.

The Bible emphasizes repeatedly the effects of sin on our physical bodies. I am not speaking now about the mental or emotional effects. In 1 Corinthians 6:18, God says, “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” In other words, there are physical consequences to fornication.

Proverbs 5 speaks of this same subject: “For the lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But her end is bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell, lest thou shouldest ponder the path of her life. Her ways are movable, thou canst not know them. Hear me now, therefore, ye children, and

depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove her way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house. Why? Lest thou give thy honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel, and strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labours be in the house of a stranger, and thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed." There is your character, your economics, and your personal life. Sin reaches into every one of these areas, and at the last the flesh and body are consumed.

That would include, of course, venereal disease. Say, "I have hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof." Of course, there again would be character as well as mental consequences.

If you look in Proverbs chapter 6, he says in verse 23, "For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life."

Now look at these questions: "Can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" So he that goeth into his neighbour's wife, whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. Again, he is talking about the physical aspect of sin.

Then, in Proverbs chapter 7, beginning with verse 21, still talking about this woman, he says, "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." Hearken unto me now, therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths, for she hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

The Law of Sowing and Reaping

The consequences of physical sin are very clear in the Bible. There is that which is known as the law of sowing and reaping. In Galatians 6:7–8, the Word of God says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatsoever man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

The problem with sin is that it is basically a seed. Once you plant a seed, it always produces more than you really expect. For instance, I might take one grain of corn and plant it, but that one grain of corn will bring forth a stalk with two to four full ears of corn. So it is with sin. You might plan on reaping just a little bit, but you end up reaping an awful lot. You will always reap more heartache, disappointment, and destruction than you want when you plant the seed of sin.

Divine Forgiveness Through Christ

The truth of divine forgiveness is undeniable: God forgives our sins. But He forgives them based upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. Author A.W. Pink said many years ago that sin must be paid for, and that is the absolute truth. The only reason God forgives us is because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the one who is the propitiation for our sins; He satisfied the anger, wrath, justice, righteousness, and holiness of God. In the New Testament, forgiveness is always tied to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Psalm 130:4 says concerning God, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

Turn in your Bibles, please, to the book of Acts, chapter 5. We are going to look at several passages. Acts 5:30–31 deals with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Look why God raised Him from the dead: “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” Forgiveness of sins and repentance are connected with the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Then look in Acts chapter 13, verse 38: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man, that is Jesus Christ, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” The forgiveness of sins is preached through the Lord Jesus Christ. When you get to Ephesians chapter 1, verse 7, and Colossians chapter 1, verse 14, you have almost basically the same Scripture. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:14 says the same: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

Let me say this before I begin sharing what has really impressed me: In no way is what I am about to say intended to castigate God’s forgiveness. God’s forgiveness is full, complete, gracious, and kind. I am not belittling the forgiveness of God at all. In fact, I am going to show you about five verses that are absolutely astounding concerning what God has done for us in forgiveness. I want you to follow me in these five verses, because you need to know them.

The Extent of God's Forgiveness

So let us look first at Psalm 103 and verse 12. You may use these verses many times when you have what I am talking about—the scars of sin. The Bible says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.”

If the West is over here and the East is over here, God has removed our sins as far as the East is from the West. And if you continue East and keep going, you are still going East. You never begin going West by continuing East. That is all there is to it. God says He has removed our sins that far.

In Isaiah 38 and verse 17, the Word of God says, “For behold, for peace I had great bitterness. But Thou in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption, for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.” So God has cast all of our sins behind His back.

Years ago, I read about where an atheist was talking to a little boy. The little boy was a Christian, and the atheist asked him, said, "What about your sins?" He said, "Well, sir," he said, "my sins have been forgiven and God has cast them behind His back." And so the atheist kind of smiled and said, "Well, what if God turns around?" The little

boy said, "Sir, they'd still be behind His back." Well, that's true. So the Bible said He's cast all of our sins behind His back.

Look in Isaiah 43 and verse 25. Isaiah 43 verse 25. I'm going to remember this one because I've got to comment on it just a few minutes. Watch this. God says, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Now, you need to pay attention to that. God said, "I will not remember thy sins." Then if you will turn right over to the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 31, Jeremiah 31, and look at verse 34. Jeremiah 31, look if you would please at verse 34. Look what God says: "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord. For they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." I will remember their sin no more. So I want you to look in the last one of these and that's in the book of Micah, right before the little book of Nahum you'll find the minor prophet Micah. Notice in Micah chapter 7 and verse 19. Micah 7 and verse 19. Look at this. The Bible says, "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us, He will subdue our iniquities, and I will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

So obviously, clearly, when you look at these passages, God does indeed forgive us completely and totally and freely and graciously. However, let me point something out. The forgiveness of sins does not necessarily equate with the removal of consequences. God may forgive our sins, but we still, many times, have to suffer and suffer the consequences from our sins. Now, moreover, it does not mean, when God forgives us, that there is no longer any emotional distress because of our sins. It does not mean that the memories of our sins are erased. We still have those.

Forgiveness Does Not Remove All Consequences

This is why I am talking about the scars of sin. Do you realize a scar can not only be disfiguring and ugly, but a scar can also be very painful? We had a lady in our church who had to have some emergency surgery. They came to find out it was a scar from a previous surgery that caused the new problem. The scar tissue had

actually wrapped around one of her intestines and was choking it. I am simply saying, scars can be very painful at times. I had surgery when I was two years old.

I do not remember anything about it. But even now, every now and then, that little scar will prick me like somebody is sticking a needle in me. I do not know why. I am simply saying, scars can not only be disfiguring; they can at times be very painful as well. A scar often reminds you of what has happened to you previously. The past may be in the past, and the past may still be the past, but the scar of that past is still on you.

So that is what I want to deal with today. We have read several passages where the Bible says that God will not remember our sins anymore. You must also recall the fact that God is omniscient; that is, God is all-knowing. There is absolutely nothing that God does not know. God knows everything, and He knows the end from the beginning because He ordained everything. When the Bible says that He will never remember our sins, it does not mean that He somehow eradicates them from His mind. What it means is this: He will never remember them against us as far as executing a penalty for them. He will never remember them against us to try to manipulate us and control us the way some people do. In other words, He is not going to count those sins and hold those sins against us.

God's 'Not Remembering' Explained
Forgiving Others as God Forgives

In Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30, the Word of God says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you're sealed on the day of your redemption." Verse 31 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice." Then verse 32 says, "And be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you." So God says that when we forgive each other, we are to forgive each other even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us.

So let us suppose that Gary and I get into a row, into an argument. It might be a pretty heated one. I say, "Gary, we should not be doing this. We should not be fussing." Then I get out of hand, and he gets out of hand. But I say, "Gary, please forgive me. I do not want to be

like this." He says, "Okay, I'll forgive you." He may or may not ask me to forgive him.

The next week I come around, say something to him, and he takes it the wrong way. Then he says, "I knew it. I knew it. I knew you didn't repent. I knew it."

What does that tell me? It tells me that he never, ever forgave me. If he forgave me as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven me, then he does not remember my sins. That does not mean he has the power to erase them from his mind. But it does mean he has the power not to bring them up, not to speak about them, and not to use them to manipulate and control me.

That is where most husbands and wives get in trouble. They will tell each other that they forgive each other, and then they argue over the same thing the next day. As one man said, "I don't have to remember my sins. My wife does." That is probably true in many instances. But the going man, a lot of times we say, "Well, I forgive you," and the next thing we know, we are arguing over the same thing again. If you are arguing over the same thing the next day, you have never really forgiven anybody to begin with. The Bible says that when we forgive, we are to do exactly as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us.

We do not have the power to eradicate these things from our minds, but we do have the power to control our tongues, not speak about them, and not use them against one another. So that brings me to this question: What about the scars of our sins? What about the scars that we have in our memories?

Dealing with Sinful Memories and the Flesh

It amazes me how quickly a flood of memories can inundate your mind when you are not even thinking about those things. You may be occupied doing some technical work, working on the computer, studying your Bible, or praying, and all of a sudden these thoughts flood your mind. You ask yourself, “Where in the world did that come from? Why, without even entering into my mind at this particular time?” Well, I am going to show you why.

Look in your Bibles at Romans chapter 8. You know the answer, but I am going to show it to you again. Beginning at verse 7, the Bible says, “For the carnal mind, that would be the fleshly mind. For the carnal mind is enmity against God.” The word enmity is a very strong word for hatred. “For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are flesh cannot please God.”

Our carnal, fleshly minds are enemies of God. They are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. You may educate your flesh, refine your flesh, or manicure your flesh, but your flesh is still flesh. It is like putting ribbons on a pig’s ear and a diamond in a pig’s nose. It is still a pig. That is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 50, “Now this I say to you, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither does corruption inherit incorruption.”

Our flesh does not love the Lord. It does not love holiness or righteousness; it is enmity with God. Moreover, we have another problem: the devil, or Satan. The Bible tells us in Revelation chapter 12 and verse 10 that he is the accuser of the brethren. Now turn in your Bibles, if you would please, to the book of Zechariah, which is right before the

Look in Zechariah chapter 3. In this passage, the Word of God blows apart an old gospel song. I remember hearing it when I was a boy. I do not remember the tune, but it went like this: “When Satan sees the weakest saint upon his knees, then Satan flees.” That is not so. Sorry—bad grammar, but it is not true.

Zechariah 3:1 says, “And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.” We are not talking about just any priest; this is a high priest. “And the Lord said to the Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

Our flesh is the enemy of God, and now we have Satan, who is the accuser of the brethren. He accuses us before God. He reminds us that we are sinners, that we have sinned, that we are wicked and

wrong. He tells us we do not deserve anything, which is basically true. How in the world do we deal with this? First of all, we ask the Lord to rebuke him, because that is exactly what happened in this verse: “The Lord rebuke thee.” God is sovereign. He certainly has control over Satan; He has control over everything.

But notice that Satan, in reality, has no right to accuse or condemn us. He does it, but he does not have the right or authority. Why? Romans 8 states it plainly: “What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Then it says, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” No one has the right to condemn us before God. “It is God that justifies.”

Your enemy will always get away with whatever you allow him to get away with. As long as you do not fight or resist, that is it.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” When the Bible says our Lord makes intercession for us, He is not only our high priest; 1 John 2 tells us He is our advocate—that is, our attorney and lawyer. If Satan is trying to accuse and condemn us, we say, “Yes, we are guilty, but Lord, You take care of this. You are my advocate. You rebuke him.” Then Satan has no basis to condemn us, because Christ has justified us. Jesus Christ is our high priest.

The devil does not have to trouble most of us. The truth is, we are not important enough. When we look at Scripture, Satan tempted very few people: Adam and Eve; Job; Joshua, the high priest; Peter, whom he desired to sift as wheat; and the Lord Jesus Christ. Why does he not trouble most of us? Galatians chapter 5, beginning at verse 19, shows us why he does not have to trouble most of us.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these." Look at what the flesh does: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like, of the which I tell you before, and I've also

told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." In other words, our flesh does most of this.

It was Flip Wilson, that old black comedian, who made popular the saying, "The devil made me do it." The devil doesn't make you do anything. He may tempt you, but if he forced you to do something, you would not be responsible; he would be responsible. All he does is tempt. Then there are your desires, your lust, and what you want satisfied; you yield to the temptation. That means you're responsible, not him.

We have the accuser of our brethren. Let me point something out: we basically have three main adversaries—the world, the flesh, and the devil—and the Bible gives us answers for dealing with each one. When it comes to the devil, the key word is fight. You resist the devil. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The word "resist" means to fight. First Peter 5:9 says, "Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Your adversary the devil walketh around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. "Whom resist stedfast in the faith." That means you fight.

When it comes to the world, it is faith. First John 5:4 says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." When it comes to the flesh, the key word is flight—run. Paul told Timothy, "Flee also youthful lusts, but follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." Timothy was in his forties when Paul said this to him.

He was not a teenager. And I have news for you: I do not care if you are seventy or eighty; there are still youthful lusts. That is all there is to it. It is much like Joseph when Potiphar's wife made a play for him: he left his coat, got out of there, and fled. When it comes to Satan, you fight. When it comes to the world, it is faith. When it comes to the flesh, you flee.

What about our sinful memories? I call them sinful memories because sin does scar us. What about all those memories that flood into your mind concerning your past? There is an old hymn that we

used to sing when I was a child, "Precious Memories, How They Linger." Some memories are not precious, and they linger. Bill Evans, a good friend of mine, said that one of our problems is this: we forget what we should remember and remember what we should forget. That is a fact.

The Bible says in Hebrews, chapter 2, that we are to remember His word, lest at any time we let these things slip. The Apostle Paul also said in 1 Corinthians 15:2, "By which things ye also are saved, if ye keep them in memory." And in Philippians, chapter 3, the Apostle Paul said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended"—in other words, I had not made it yet—"but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Notice what he said: "forgetting those things which are behind."

Thankfully, we do forget most of our past. I have often said to Alice, when we would observe something, "I could never do that." She would look at me and say, "You used to." I said, "Well, if God is for God, then maybe I should as well." You do not need to recall when you have a wife that she keeps. That is a fact.

Now, let me tell you something about these thoughts. Have you ever wondered why? Listen carefully. If a man is unsaved, his sinful thoughts do not bother him because he enjoys them. In fact, he will brag about them: "I did this and I did not get caught, and I got away with this." He is just as happy as the Lord. They do not bother him. Sometimes there are Christian people who are very seldom bothered by sinful memories. Why?

Let me make an observation. You remember we read in Romans 8 that the carnal mind, the fleshly mind, is enmity against God. It hates God. The more obedient, righteous, holy, and godly you are and strive to be, the more your flesh hates you, and it hates God. Your flesh is going to remind you constantly of everything that you used to do before your conversion. It is just that simple.

If you are pressing forward like the Apostle Paul, you may try to forget the past, and you may forget much of it, but some of it you are not going to forget. That is a scar on our emotions and a scar on our

minds. The Apostle Paul told Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. When we fight that good fight, it is not merely a daily struggle. Sometimes it is an hourly struggle, and sometimes it is a minute-by-minute struggle. It is a constant battle to keep our minds pure and keep them on the Lord Jesus Christ and on the things of God. Your mind is unique.

I do not care how educated you are or how many doctorates you have behind your name. You can think of only one thing at a time. If your mind is on the memories of your past sins, it is not on Jesus Christ, His forgiveness, or the promises of God. If your mind is on the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not on those sinful memories of the past. You can think of only one thing at a time, no matter how hard you try. The Bible tells you in Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee." What we want and truly desire is to have our minds stayed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we have to remove and refuse all these thoughts and memories that are wicked, wrong, and ungodly.

We must put sinful memories out of our minds, refuse to think upon them, and place our minds upon the Lord Jesus Christ and upon a promise. As Paul said, "Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are clean, think on these things." You do not have to think about those memories. The Bible tells us in Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you, which also is in Christ Jesus."

Over and over in the Bible, we are commanded to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. God requires us to be renewed in our minds because our minds not only control our thoughts; they also control our conduct and actions. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, the Bible says, "Casting down imaginations and every high thing or every high thought that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing every thought into subjection and captivity to the Lord Jesus Christ." Thus, every thought is to be brought into subjection and captivity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we do that, we will be more apt to say—and I wish we could say it truthfully in every sense of the word—what our Lord said in John 8:29: "He that sent Me is with Me. The Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always those things which please Him." Would it not

be wonderful if we could say not only that we always do those things which please Him, but that we always think those things which please Him? If I could get rid of all my sinful, wicked, and wrong memories, I would gladly do so. But I cannot, and neither can you.

Yet your sinful memories of the past afford you great opportunities. You may ask, "How in the world can something wicked like that afford me great opportunities?" Like you, I would be happy to have mine totally gone, but they are not. When these sinful thoughts come into my mind, I have the opportunity, first, to acknowledge and confess that I am a sinner and that I have sinned.

The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." When my sins come back in my mind, I am ashamed of my sins, and I hope you are ashamed of your sins, but I am not ashamed to admit and confess that I am a sinner. I am ashamed to admit and confess that I have sinned in times past. The Bible says that if we confess and forsake our sins, we will have mercy. Thus, I have an opportunity once again to acknowledge and affirm in my own mind that I am a sinner. I am not yet glorified or made perfect in Jesus Christ. I am a sinner, and I still need His mercy and grace.

I also have the opportunity to revel and glory in the forgiveness we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, because God the Father sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He has cleansed me, washed me, and forgiven me. Although my past springs up in my mind, I may acknowledge it, but I can say, "Lord, thank You that I am not like that anymore. I do not want that any longer. I want holiness, I want righteousness, and I glory in the fact that You have changed me and changed my desires."

Thirdly, we have the opportunity to praise God—to praise Him for deliverance. The Bible says in Proverbs 50 and verse 23, God said, "Whosoever offers praise glorifies Me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Whosoever offers praise glorifies Me. How often do you praise Him? How often do you thank Him for deliverance?

I think of that passage in Colossians where He hath translated me out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His own dear Son. I thank Him that He has not left me in my sins, nor left me as others who glory in their wickedness. We have an opportunity to praise Him.

Fourthly, when sinful memories or memories of the past arise in our minds, we have an opportunity to fight against them and purposely and deliberately reject and refuse them. We have the opportunity to do, as Paul told Timothy, to fight the good fight of faith.

You cannot be holy, godly, or obedient without a fight. It is a daily fight, and I must learn in my fighting to lean upon Him, think upon Him, love Him, and trust Him even more. That is why the Bible says in Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

We have sinful past memories, and they must be dealt with. We have memories today that we wish we could forget. We have done things in our past that we wish we had never done, and there are times that we desperately try to forget them. Yet they keep popping up in our minds. Here is something you can be thankful for: the aggravation of these memories is only temporary. It is not permanent—not even permanent in this life—and it certainly is not going to be permanent in eternity, because we will have glorified bodies and glorified minds.

While we are on this subject, turn to Luke chapter 16. I want to tell you very clearly what I believe is implied in this passage. You know the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man died, and the Bible says that in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments. Lazarus died and was carried by angels into the bosom of Abraham. The rich man said, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." Look at verse 25, at the answer Abraham gave him: "Son, remember." You see that?

"Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things. And likewise, Lazarus, evil things. But now he is comforted and art tormented." Abraham said, "Son, remember." Part of the torment

and punishment of dying lost is that you will remember every sin, trespass, and transgression, every violation of God's law. You will rue the day you did those things. You will remember every time you heard, spurned, and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, His word, and His gospel, and every time anyone attempted to witness to you and tell you about salvation. "Son, remember. You remember in your lifetime, you had this, this and this." Simple memory will haunt the lost for eternity.

Thankfully, our sinful memories are temporary; they are not permanent.

Here is the second application: You may have the regrettable scars of sin in your life. There is probably not a person in this room who would say, "If I could do everything all over again, I would do it exactly the way I did it." I have always said that I would love to live my life over only if I had the knowledge then that I have now. Without that knowledge, I would do the same stupid things all over again.

The point is this: The scars of our sins are unimportant because they are temporary. Although they aggravate and hurt us, what matters is whether we have the scars, marks, or stigma of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would rather be known as a Bible-thumping, Bible-believing Christian totally sold out to Jesus Christ than anything else.

If people hate me for that, they hate me; if they ridicule me, it does not bother me. I have not been stoned for Jesus Christ. Thankfully, we do not have that around today. I have not been a night and day in the deep, nor have I been whipped five times. We may suffer, though differently. I would much rather have in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ than the marks of sin any day of the week.

When you look at the leaders of this world and the world system—their wickedness and corruption—and consider the suffering of the average Christian who cannot normally make ends meet, you may think that is bad. No. I would rather suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ than have the money of every rich man in the

entire world. The important thing is that we have the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in our life.

The best mark is the mark of obedience, the mark of submission. We bow to Him and obey Him. Jesus Christ said in Luke 6:46, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not those things which I say unto you?"

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your grace. Lord, we acknowledge the scars of sin in our lives. We are sinners; we have sinned, and we are imperfect sinners. But we pray with Jabez that Your hand would be upon us, that You would enlarge our coast, and keep us from evil, that it might not grieve us. Keep us from evil, that we might not grieve Thee and displease Thee. Help us to think more of the Lord Jesus Christ and His great forgiveness than of our sinful memories and the scars of our sins. In Jesus Christ's name, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 39

The Displeased Prophet - Jonah Series

Part Four of Four

December 1, 2024

The Displeased Prophet

SCRIPTURE READING - Jonah 4:1-11 (KJV)

Introduction: The Displeased Prophet

> “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take I beseech thee my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?
>
> So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth and sat under it in the shadow,

> until he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord God prepared a gourd and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow or shade over his head to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did rise, that God prepared a vehement east wind, and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.
>
> And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast pity on the gourd for the which thou hast not laboured, neither made it sit to grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?"
>
> Jonah is the only preacher that I know, or at least one of the few that I've ever known, that was displeased with the fact that his message was successful and blessed by God. Jonah, of course, was mad that God spared the Assyrians. He did not want them spared. He wanted them destroyed.

The Danger of Bitterness and Anger Toward God

Have you ever been mad at God? Have you ever been displeased with the providence of God in your life? Have you gone through tests, trials, and afflictions and thought to yourself, "I don't deserve this"? The truth of the matter is, you did deserve it. Actually, you deserve even worse. God was just merciful unto you and did not give you that which you really deserved.

Recently, I saw a headline from WALB, a television station in Albany, Georgia. I read it on the internet. It concerned a wreck, and the headline was this: "No one deserves to die like this." Someone died in that wreck. I do not know who. I did not say at that particular time. But I can assure you that the family who lost a loved one in that wreck was certainly mad at God and displeased with the providence

of God in that individual's life. The truth is, yes, he did deserve to die like that. In fact, he deserved even worse.

It is never a joyous experience for a family to lose a loved one. I understand that. But we have to understand also that we are sinners and that we are going to die. Jonah is one of these individuals who is exceedingly critical and angry with God.

Before you condemn Jonah, and his bitterness, resentment, and anger, you have to examine your own life. Have you ever been upset with God enough to voice your anger? Jonah certainly did. He voiced it very fully and freely. Most of us would never voice our anger, resentment, and bitterness at God. Although we would not say what Jonah said or necessarily act the way Jonah acted, we would display our anger not only in our attitude, but in our disposition as well. I have known Christians who became angry with God at the loss of a husband, a wife, or a child.

I had an uncle who lost his wife at something like fifty-five or fifty-six years. He was exceedingly critical and angry with God because he lost his wife, and he died as well shortly thereafter. There is not one family that has not been touched by death. There is not one family that has not lost a loved one. So Jonah here is exceedingly angry.

In light of the title of this message, “The Displeased Prophet,” here are a few questions: Have you ever been angry with God? Did it do you any good to be angry with Him? Did it change His providence or stop Him from accomplishing His purpose? The answer, of course, is absolutely not. Who, then, suffered because of your anger, resentment, and bitterness? Certainly, it was not God. It was you, and probably others who suffered because of you.

Let me show you. Hold Jonah chapter 4, but turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 12, beginning with verse 15. Look at what God says concerning bitterness: “Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” He continues, “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.”

Notice that he speaks of the root of bitterness springing up and troubling you, and then says, “and thereby many be defiled.” Bitterness and resentment will not only eat you alive; they will spread to other people like a canker and affect them as well.

When you consider what is happening in the land today, and especially in most churches, most Christians are like spoiled children, particularly when it comes to discipline and correction. We want what we want, and we want it when we want it, and God had better not get in our way. We think we must have our way, or else we will show Him. But the truth is, we do not show Him. God is absolutely sovereign. He does His pleasure, fulfills His counsel, and fulfills His purpose. No one can hinder, thwart, overthrow, or stop Him, because God is sovereign and God is God.

God's Sovereignty and Our Response

That is what the psalmist said in Psalm 115:3: “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” God is the only One who can truly do as He pleases. Isaiah 46:10 says, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

We have to come to the realization that God's will is absolutely best for us. We may not understand it, may not like it, and may not necessarily agree with it, but we have to bow and say, yes, God's will is absolutely the best for us.

Each one of us has suffered, some more than others. Each one has been through tests, trials, and afflictions, and some are going through them now. Don't you understand that God is not some old meanie in heaven waiting to beat the living tar out of each one of us? That's not what the Scripture says. In Lamentations chapter 3 and verse 33, the Bible says, "He does not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men." God does not willingly afflict us. He is not waiting just to spring upon us and whip us so we cannot walk.

Our Heavenly Father is not some old meanie who enjoys depriving us, chastening us, and causing us heartache. I can say that no a thousand times, no. Consider Matthew chapter 7 and verse 11:

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him?"

Every one of us who has had children knows what it means to give good gifts to them and to please them. We are happy to do that, especially when they are obedient and submissive, and live and do that which is right and which they should do. God says, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him?"

If we are going to be bitter and resentful, then what we need to do is be bitter and resentful at ourselves, at our ignorance, our sin, and our rebellion that often cause God to chasten us.

I told you that Jonah was a very angry man, and he was. In Jonah chapter 4 and verse 1, we read, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." In verse 4: "Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?" In verse 9: "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" Three times, God pointed out that Jonah was one angry man.

Why Jonah Was Angry

The word "angry" here is the Hebrew word "charah," which literally means to be hot, to be furious, to burn, to become angry, to be kindled, and to work oneself into vexation. Jonah is not someone who is just a little ticked; he is someone who is exceedingly furious against God. Why was Jonah angry? The answer is that God had mercy on the Assyrians. As I pointed out in the first message, the Assyrians were enemies of God's people. If the Lord allows us to live and I get to preach next Sunday, you will find out something very informative about the Assyrians, something that most of us have not even considered at this particular time. But the truth of the matter is, Jonah knew exactly that which the Assyrians were going to do to Israel, and he did not want the Assyrians to attack Israel and destroy Israel.

Therefore, he wanted their destruction. He wanted their doom. If you will turn in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 8, I will give you a

good parallel. This is almost the way Elisha felt when he was talking to Hazael. Notice what Elisha did and how he composed himself until, basically, he was ashamed. In 2 Kings chapter 8, beginning with verse 7, we read: "And Elisha came to Damascus, and Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, was sick."

"And it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither. And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, Shall I recover this disease?" Ben-Hadad only asked one question. He wants to know one thing: Will he recover? Now watch verse 9: "So Hazael went to meet him and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, 40 camels' burdens and came and stood before him." I do not really know how much you can pack on a camel. I am sure it is pretty hefty. This is probably almost a semi-truckload of goods, or a half a truckload of goods, that are being brought just so Elisha can answer whether Ben-Hadad will recover.

Now watch verse 10: "And Elisha said to him, Go, send him. Thou mayest certainly recover. Howbeit the Lord has showed me that he shall surely die." Now look at verse 11: "And he settled his countenance steadfastly until he was ashamed, and the man of God wept. And Hazael said, Why weepeth my Lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou will do to the children of Israel."

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 8:7-15 (KJV)

> "Their strongholds will thou set on fire, and their young men will thou slay with a sword, and will dash their children, rip up their women with child. And Hazael said, But what is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria. So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master, and said unto him, What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me that thou shouldest surely recover. And it came to pass on the morrow that he took a thick cloth and dipped it in water and spread it upon his face, so that he died, Ben-Hadad, and Hazael reigned in his stead."

In Jonah chapter 4, Jonah is exceedingly angry because God has spared the Assyrians. The reason is that he knew exactly what the Assyrians were going to do to Israel. Just as Elisha knew what

Hazael was going to do to his people, Jonah knew what the Assyrians would do.

The Bible says that Elisha settled his countenance steadfast until he was ashamed, and the man of God wept. Hazael asked, “Why in the world are you weeping?” Elisha answered, “I know what you’re going to do to the children of Israel. You’re going to rip up their women with child. You’re going to slay their young men.” Hazael said, “But what is thy servant, a dog, that he should do this great thing?” That is exactly what Hazael did. He went, murdered Ben-Hadad the king, reigned in his stead, and did exactly what Elisha said he was going to do.

So Jonah knew that the Assyrians were going to attack Israel. I have told you about the book of Nahum and the book of Habakkuk, how they also dealt with the Assyrians and Babylonians. They knew exactly what was happening. Jonah, therefore, was exceedingly angry.

“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? Therefore, I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take I beseech thee my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?”

Jonah was running from God in chapter 1 and running back to God in chapter 2. But here he is essentially saying, “Lord, I knew you were a merciful God. I knew you’d have mercy upon those people. I knew you would spare them.”

“Lord, I did not want to see them spared. I wanted to see them destroyed. Therefore, I fled to Tarshish. I knew exactly what You were going to do. Your mercy is exceedingly great, and You are as kind and gracious as You can be. I did not desire their repentance.” So God asked him, “Doest thou well to be angry?”

Notice that Jonah wants to die because God blessed his preaching. In verse 3 he said, “Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.” Back in

chapter 2, Jonah wanted others to kill him when he told them, “Throw me in the water.” He wanted to die, and he thought that would be the end of it. Now he is not willing to do anything but is asking God to take his life.

In Jonah chapter 3, after Jonah repented, God renewed his commission and sent him back to Nineveh with the message, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” Why did God send Jonah? Jonah said, “God, I knew You were going to have mercy upon these people. I knew You were going to spare them. That is why I fled.” But God subdued Jonah in the belly of that whale. God prepared that fish especially for Jonah, and when He had the whale spit Jonah out, Jonah was willing to obey and went and did exactly what God said. So why did Jonah have to preach if he knew God would be merciful?

The Necessity of Preaching

God has not only ordained the end; He has also ordained the means to the end. He has ordained not only the end itself, but everything that leads to that end as well. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1, the Scripture asks, “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” Then it says, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” What was the means of achieving salvation? Preaching.

Turn back a few pages to Romans chapter 10, and let's begin with verse 13. Here's a verse that most people can quote, but we usually take it out of context: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Wow. Well, that's good. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But I want you to look at verse 14: “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?” What precedes calling?

The answer is faith, belief. Calling does not save you. Calling just demonstrates the faith that God has given you. You're not going to call on someone in whom you do not believe. You must believe before you call. “And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?”

If I tell you about my youngest daughter, you are hearing about her. But if she is in this room speaking, you hear her. Notice verse 14: “How then shall they call on Him whom they have not believed?” You must believe before you call. “And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” Not heard about, but heard.

What did Jesus Christ say in John chapter 10? “I know my sheep, and I call them by name, and they follow me.” It's just like when Mary went to the tomb. She turned about, saw our Lord, and supposed Him to be the gardener. She said, “Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me, and I'll take him away.” And all he said was, “Mary.”

She said, “Rabboni, Master.” She instantly knew him when he called her name. Now watch this: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Yes. “How then shall they call on him whom they have not believed?” You must believe in order to call. “Now shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?” You must hear Christ in order to believe. And then he said, “And how shall they hear without a preacher?”

"And how shall they preach except they be sent?" So God sends His preachers to preach His Word, and He speaks to His people through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Clearly, it was necessary for Jonah to go and preach in Nineveh. God sent him and told him he needed to go.

Here is the truth: Whenever God is going to have compassion upon a people, He always sends them a preacher. Whenever God is going to judge a people, He always removes the preacher, or at least silences the preacher. When you stop and think about what is going on in our country today, and especially in Christendom, think of the churches that cannot find a pastor. Every week, I see churches asking for and begging for preachers from all over this country. I get an email in which churches are asking for pastors. I do not doubt that some of those churches probably ran some of their pastors off.

The truth of the matter is that most churches really and truly do not want a real preacher. What they want is an administrator, an orator, or an entertainer. They do not want someone who is actually going to teach the Word of God, and people get upset with that.

God's Compassion and Judgment Through Preachers

Consider Judges chapter 6. This passage shows the absolute devastation that was happening in the land by the Midianites and the Amalekites. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. And because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them the dens, which are in the mountains, and caves and strongholds." In other words, they were driven out of the cities and their homes, so they were living in the mountains and the caves. "And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them. And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude."

Consider the devastation described in Judges 6: “For both they and their camels were without number, and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.” Israel was crying to the Lord because of the Midianites, the Amalekites, and all the destruction of the land.

Verse 7 says, “And it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel.” The prophet reminded them, “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up out of Egypt and I brought you forth out of the house of bondage. And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all that oppressed you and drave them out from before you and gave you their land. And I said unto you, I’m the Lord your God. Fear not the gods of the Amorites, whose land you dwell, but you have not obeyed my voice.”

The passage then speaks of Joash and Gideon when Gideon is called. But notice again: “And it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, the Lord sent a prophet.” Why did God not send a warrior, a captain, or a great military leader? He sent a preacher. God was saying, in effect, “I’m

not even going to deliver you unless you repent and come back to me. And if you're not going to repent, you call on those gods that you've chosen, let them deliver you." If God is going to have compassion upon a people, God always sends a preacher.

In 2 Chronicles 36:15, we read, "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers," that is, the prophets, "rising up in times and sending," why? "Because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place." God sent his preachers because he had compassion. But verse 16 says, "But they," that is, the people, "mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against the people till there was no remedy." When God has compassion on people, He sends them His preachers. When God judges a people, He removes His preachers.

Remember how Elijah was in a foreign land, away from Israel, for three years. There was a drought for three years. What did he say to Ahab? "As the Lord God liveth, for whom I stand, there shall not be rain nor dew these years, but according to my word." The drought was nothing more than a physical symbol of a spiritual reality, because the man of God had been taken out of the land. For three years, they had no word from God.

When you come to Jeremiah, God left him in the land, but God shut his mouth. In Jeremiah chapter 7, God said to Jeremiah, "Pray not for this people." Jeremiah wanted to pray for them. In chapter 11, God said, "Pray not for this people." In chapter 14, God said, "All right, Jeremiah, you want to pray for them? I won't let you pray for them. But here's what you pray."

"You pray that I'll destroy them for that's exactly what I'm going to do." So God took Elijah out of the land, but God left Jeremiah in the land, but he just shut his mouth. He said, "No, I'm not going to allow you to pray for these people. No."

Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Amos, Hosea, Joel, Amos. Notice if you would, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and look in Amos chapter 8, if you would, and let's begin reading there, verse 11. Look what God says. We're talking about when God has compassion upon a people, he sends them a preacher. When God

judges a people, he either removes a preacher or shuts their mouth. So, Amos chapter 8, verse 11, God says, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, not a thirst for 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 shall not find it." So God said there will be a famine. A famine of hearing the word of God.

Now, I want you to turn back in light of this to the book of Jonah, chapter 4, because we're talking about the displeased prophet. Because Jonah is so upset with God because God has spared the Assyrians. Now, I don't know if you've picked out the theme of the book of Jonah, but I'm going to give it to you, and you will find this over and over. In Jonah chapter 1 and verse 4, God sent out or God prepared a great wind. In Jonah 1 and verse 17, the Bible says, "God prepared a great fish." In Jonah 4 and verse 6, "God prepared a gourd." In Jonah 4 and verse 7, "God prepared a worm." And in Jonah chapter 4 and verse 8, "God prepared a vehement east wind." So in this brief book, you can see God's absolute sovereignty, not only His sovereignty in dealing with Jonah, but also His sovereignty in dealing with people in general, especially nations. So I want you to look in Jonah chapter 4 and let's begin reading there with verse 4. Look at this: "Then said the

The Gourd and the Worm: A Lesson in Priorities

Jonah was still angry: “Doest thou well to be angry?” He went out of the city and sat on the east side, where he made himself a booth and sat under it in the shadow until he might see what would become of the city. The Lord God prepared a gourd and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. It is astounding how merciful God is. Jonah did not deserve the gourd, but God sent it to spare him from his grief. “So Jonah was exceeding glad for the gourd.”

But God prepared a worm when the morning rose, and the next day it smote the gourd that it withered. When the sun did rise, God prepared a vehement east wind, and the sun beat upon the head of

Jonah till he fainted. He wished himself to die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”

Jonah still wanted to see the destruction of Nineveh. He built a little brush arbor on the east side, probably made of sticks, leaves, and branches to shield himself from the sun. He sat there hoping that somehow God would change His purpose and, instead of sparing the Assyrians, would kill them. Nineveh was a city of three days’ journey. Jonah had started at one end and gone to the other preaching, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” Undoubtedly, he was tired from walking and preaching for three days. Now he waited under the booth to see what God would do. God caused the gourd, with its big, broad leaves, to grow and shade him, cooling him immensely.

I notice this frequently because I have a creek and swampy area on our land. It can be ninety-seven degrees on the hill, but under the shade trees around that little water, it will be in the eighties. It is a remarkable difference. God has created this gourd, and it shades Jonah and cools him, so he is thankful for it. But the next morning, God prepares a worm, and the worm eats the root of the gourd, so the gourd dies. If you do not think that can happen quickly, let a tomato worm get into your tomato plants, or let any kind of worm underground get hold of a plant's root; it will die almost the same day. Jonah has now lost the gourd.

Look at the question God asked Jonah in verse 9: “And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?” Look at Jonah's answer: “And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.” Jonah appears to be the kind of child you would really love to slap—by which I mean slap some sense into him. How can you be so absolutely stupid? Look at this.

He has an attitude that is the height of unthankfulness, the height of ungratefulness, and the height of pure sorriness and rebellion. Jonah is upset and angry over the gourd and the fact that the worm ate it. He believes he has an absolute right to be angry, even unto death. I know some people like that, and even a few preachers like that. It is insane.

Now watch this, because we are going to make the applications. Look at verses 10 and 11: "Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, which thou hast not labored, neither made it sit to grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And shouldest not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle." Jonah had concern for that gourd. He did not plant it, water it, or fertilize it.

The gourd was exceedingly temporary. Jonah was not merely concerned for it; he was concerned for his own comfort and pleasure. He had no concern for the inhabitants of Nineveh, nor for its animals. As God pointed out in verse 11, Nineveh was the greatest city of that era, greater than Babylon. I gave you some of its statistics in the first message. God mentions 120,000 persons who could not discern between their right hand and their left hand—120,000 babies, or little children. If there were 120,000 little children, they had brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles. There were probably more than a million people in Nineveh.

Jonah was not concerned about any of them, nor even about the animals. He was concerned only about that stupid gourd. Let me ask you a question: Have you realized that God is pointing out the crooks, not only of the matter with Jonah, but the crooks of the matter with each of us? We are more concerned with our comfort, desires, wills, and wants than with anything else.

Years ago, I was preaching in Indiana, and Alice and I were staying with a couple while I preached that week. They had just returned from Russia, where they had taken a mission trip. The husband brought back pictures of a Russian baptism. There, they had axes and ice picks breaking the ice in a river so they could baptize new converts. Now show me a professing Christian who is willing to enter a freezing river just to be baptized. Most people will not walk across the street to go to church.

The fact is, most churches are air-conditioned, with cushioned seats and all the rest. Why? In some countries, people have to begin congregating a day or two before the church meeting. They must walk individually, or in groups of no more than one, two, three, or

four, because it is illegal for them to have a church. Yet they go to a secret place.

This is indeed where we are today. Look in Amos chapter 6, beginning in verse 1. God says, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and that trust in the mountain of Samaria.” That would be the government. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom. Mountains refer to nations and governments. He said, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations to whom the house of Israel came. Pass you into Calneh and see, and from this go ye to Hamath the great. Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Be they better than these kingdoms, or their border greater than your border?”

“You that put far away the evil day, and cause the seed of violence to come near. They lie upon beds of ivory, and they stretch themselves upon their couches, and they eat the lambs out of the flock,” that is, the best and the tenderest, “and the calves out of the midst of the stall, that chant to the sounds of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David, that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments.”

“But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” You take care of yourself. You want the best for yourself, but you are not concerned about the afflictions of Joseph. Hosea 4:12 says, “My people ask counsel at their stocks,” that is, idols, “and their staff declares unto them, for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they've gone a-whoring from under their God.”

“They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains and burn incense upon the hills under oaks and poplars and elms.” Why? “Because the shadow thereof is good.” In other words, they want comfort. They would rather be comfortable in their idolatry. This is exactly what God is pointing out to Jonah: You are more concerned about your personal comforts than you are the people or the animals that happen to be in Nineveh. Here is another truth that we have to learn from Jonah chapter 4.

Ministries of Reconciliation and Condemnation

This is very disconcerting to some folks, but it is still the absolute truth: preachers do not get to choose the type of ministry they prefer or desire. God is the one who ordains their ministry for them. There is a ministry of reconciliation and there is a ministry of condemnation. Jonah was given a ministry of reconciliation, but he really wanted a ministry of condemnation. Isaiah and Jeremiah were given a ministry of condemnation, but they really wanted a ministry of reconciliation. What about Noah? Noah preached 120 years and never had one convert. The Bible says in 2 Peter 2 and verse 5 that he was a preacher of righteousness.

Jeremiah had a ministry of condemnation. God said, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out and to pull down and to destroy and to throw down and to build and to plant." He had to do three times as much destruction as he did building and planting. Then God said, "For lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the earth, saith the Lord, and they shall come. And they shall set every one his throne at the entering into the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them, touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me and have burned incense unto other gods, and worship the works of their own hands. Thou therefore gird up thy loins and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee. Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For behold, I've made thee this day a defense city and an iron pillar and a brazen wall against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, against the people thereof, and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, for I'm with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

What was God saying to Jeremiah? Nobody is going to listen to you. I am going to end up destroying them. In Jeremiah chapter 9, verse 1, Jeremiah says, “Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.” He wanted to weep all the time. He was a man full of compassion.

He is known as the weeping prophet. And yet God gave him a ministry of condemnation, not a ministry of reconciliation. The same is true of Isaiah. God called him into the ministry, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Isaiah answered, “Here am I; send me.” And God said, “Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”

God said, “I want you to go. These people are going to listen to you, but they are not going to see, hear, or understand.” Isaiah finally asked, “Lord, how long?”—that is, How long do I have to go to these people? God answered, “Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.” In other words, I am not going to let them hear you. You are going to have a ministry of condemnation.

Isaiah wanted a ministry of reconciliation. So did Jeremiah, but they did not have it. God does not give every preacher a ministry like Charles Haddon Spurgeon, George Whitefield, or the Apostle Paul. No, He gives some a ministry of condemnation and others a ministry of reconciliation.

In 2 Corinthians 2, the Apostle Paul shows us the ministry of reconciliation and the ministry of condemnation. In verse 14 he says, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place.” Then, in verse 15, he says, “For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish.” The sweet savor refers to the incense and smoke that came up from those offerings in the Old Testament. Thus, we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish.

“To the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life, and who is sufficient for these things?” Let me explain this. Suppose there are 100 lost men and women in this room, none saved. I preach as hard as I can, God blesses the Word, and the Holy Spirit works in their hearts. Suppose all 100 are regenerated and converted by God, and they are all praising the

Lord. What does God do? My Son is preached, and I am satisfied. One would be a ministry of reconciliation.

Now take that same 100 unsafe men and women. I preach as hard as I can, and I preach Jesus Christ. Every one of them raises his fist, clenches his teeth, and says, “We’ll not have this man to reign over us.” They try to run me off and out of town. What does God say? My Son is preached, and I am satisfied. The other would be a ministry of condemnation. That is what he said. “We’re the savor of life unto life and death unto death. And who’s sufficient for these things?” Only God. Only God.

Understand this: it is faithfulness that counts, not greatness. Noah was faithful for 120 years and never had one convert, yet God put him among the heroes of faith. Isaiah and Jeremiah are heroes of faith; they never had any converts. It is faithfulness that counts, not greatness. There are preachers we have never heard of, and Christians we have never heard of and probably never will hear of, who have led faithful, consistent, godly Christian lives. God counts them as successful.

Success is not in numbers, bigness, or greatness. Success is in faithfulness. We may be small and insignificant, but what counts is faithfulness. Our Lord said, "Moreover it is demanded that a steward be found faithful." That is true: 1 Corinthians chapter 4. God demands faithfulness.

Now note what God said. In Jonah, God said there were 120,000 babies in that city who could not discern between their left hand and their right hand. There were undoubtedly plenty of sinners in that great city, but there were also children and animals. God said, "and all the cattle."

God's Care for All Creation

Here is an astounding thing: God is concerned about animals. He is not only concerned about humans; He is concerned about animals as well. Animals are just as much God's creation as we are, and God takes care of them. He feeds them, protects them, and provides for their needs.

Psalm 104, verse 10, says: "He sent the springs into the valleys which run among the hills. Why? They give drink to every beast of the field. The wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from his chambers. The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works."

"He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, an herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted. Where the birds make their nests is for the stork, the fir trees are her house."

"The high hills are refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies. He appointed the moon for seasons, the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth." The young lions roar after their prey and seek their meat from God. The sun arises, they gather themselves together and lay them down in their dens. Man goes forth into his work and to his labor until the evening. Then he says, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works and wisdom thou hast made them all. The earth is full of thy riches. Praise the Lord."

No animal deserves to be abused, mistreated, starved, beaten, or destroyed any more than any man or woman deserves to be beaten, mistreated, abused, starved, or destroyed. God takes care of the animals as well. When we treat God's creation with contempt, we treat God with contempt. When we disrespect God's creation, we disrespect God.

There are three reasons in the Bible why the lives of animals may be taken. We may take an animal's life for food. God has given animals to us to eat; there is no problem with that. We may take the lives of animals in self-defense. I know men who were attacked by deer, a buck. In fact, one man was killed in Texas by a buck. I've known several people who were attacked by animals. When you are attacked, yes, you may defend yourself. God gives animals to us for food, and God gives us the right of self-defense.

Thirdly, animals may be destroyed if they are hindering dominion. If rabbits are eating up my garden, I might shoot the rabbits because I want my garden. I'm not going to just let the rabbits lie. I don't eat them, but I will give them somebody who does eat them. The point is that these are three reasons why animal life can be taken based upon God's terms: if those animals are hindering dominion, then they may be rightly destroyed.

I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 22, and look, if you would please, at verses 6 and 7.

This is an astounding thing. Deuteronomy 22, verses 6 and 7, gives another reason God promises long life. One reason, of course, is obedience to parents: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, honor thy father and thy mother, that your days may be long upon the earth.” Another reason relates to money, whether we are honest or not. But here is another reason. The Bible says, “If a bird’s nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, or the dam, the female sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young. But thou shalt in anywise let the dam go and take the young to thee, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest prolong thy days.” Did you see that?

Why would you let the dam go? Because if you take the dam, the young are going to die as well. God says that if you are going to eat them, take the young and let the female, the mother, go. She can have more babies; that is no problem. Notice the latter part: “that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest prolong thy days.” In other words, God promises long life based upon how we treat animals, how honest we are with our money, and how we honor our fathers and mothers. Those are the three promises for long life in the Bible.

Seven Lessons from Jonah

So God says to Jonah, “No, Jonah, you are more concerned about your comfort than you are about the people of Assyria.” Let me show you what we are to learn from the book of Jonah. I have seven things, recapping the other three messages as well as this one. First, the Word of God teaches us that we cannot run from God. I explained what that meant in Jonah chapter 1. Second, God knows

exactly what it will take to break us and bring us into submission and obedience. When God got through with Jonah, he might have smelled a lot like fish, but he felt a whole lot more like preaching. God knew exactly what it would take to break Jonah, and He knows exactly what it will take to break us. Third, God desires repentance and faith, and He certainly gives second opportunities. Fourth, we should be more concerned about God's will than our will and our comforts.

The fifth one is this: it is God who determines our ministry. Number six, we must learn to honor His creation, not abuse it, and not misuse it. Number seven, it does us no good to be angry with God. We should be angry with ourselves and our sin, but we should never, ever find fault with God. For God doeth all things well. Whatever God does, He does for our good and for His glory. We have to honor Him and submit to Him. There's so much in the book of Jonah, and there's so much for you and I to learn and apply to our lives.

Father, thank You again for the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the truth. Lord, help us to learn. Help us, Lord, to be students of Thy Word and apply Thy Word to our lives. Help us not, Lord, to commit the same sins and errors that others have committed, which, Lord, You revealed for our benefit, that we might not be critical and angry with Thee.

Thou art a God of love. God is love. Lord, we love Thee today and we submit to Thee. We ask, Lord, that You would teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 40

The Feeling Is Mutual

April 23, 2025

Introduction: The Mutual Feeling

Proverbs 29:27 says, “An unjust man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.” An unjust man—a man who is unsaved, a man who is wicked—is an abomination to the just. That is, a snitch and a scoundrel. And he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked. The man who is saved is an abomination to the wicked.

I remember as a boy, whenever there was an argument between us and words, phrases, and epithets began to be exchanged, we would listen to what everybody was saying about us. Once we heard what they said, we would simply say, “Yeah, and double to you.” Besides that, our feeling is mutual. Go fly a kite. What we were saying was, “I don’t really care. I don’t want to be around you. You don’t want to be around me. You stay out of my way, and I’ll stay out of your way.” Basically, that was it.

Oddly enough, as I was reading through the book of Proverbs again, this verse popped out because the sentiment expressed here

between the righteous and the unrighteous is exactly the same. The righteous, basically speaking, do not desire or have any strong inclination to be around the wicked, and the wicked, on the other hand, have no desire or strong inclination to be around the righteous. So the feeling is basically mutual.

I could say it like this: I have no desire to be around drunkards, or whoremongers, or thieves, or adulterers. I am sure that they have no desire to be around me. They are certainly not going to come to church. They are not going to sit with me while I study, listen to me while I pray, or listen to me while I am preaching.

The Root of Enmity in Genesis 3:15

So when you look at Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 27, we must understand that this verse teaches and also expresses not only the innate contrariness, in one sense of the word, or contrariety if you want to pronounce it like that, that exists between virtue and vice, that exists between light and darkness, that exists between good and evil, that exists between the righteous and the unrighteous. So we could sum this verse up with a well-known sentiment: The feeling is mutual.

Now the animosity, if you can use that word, that exists between the righteous and the wicked actually has its root and has its foundation in what is known as the Protoevangelium. If you hold Proverbs 29, but turn back in your Bibles to the book of Genesis chapter 3 and look at verse 15, you will see what is known as the Protoevangelium, which is indeed the very first promise of the Messiah in the Bible. But note that while you have this promise, there is also a declaration of the enmity that exists between the seeds.

So in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15 we read this: God said, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” This verse not only teaches that our Lord is going to be our Savior—He is called the seed of the woman—but there’s also the seed of the serpent. And it shall bruise thy head, that is, our Lord shall bruise the serpent’s head. And he said, “And thou shalt bruise his

heel." So a heel bruise is not anything fatal, but a head bruise certainly is.

But notice, if you would, he said, "I will put enmity between thee and thy seed and the woman's seed." The word enmity in the Hebrew is the word ebah. And it literally means enmity or that which you and I would call extremely strong hatred. Now the interesting thing is most of the time we don't pay attention as we're reading some of the Proverbs, some of the Psalms. But if you would pay attention, you will see that there is this tension, and I'll even go farther, hatred that exists oftentimes on the part of the wicked and at times and should be on the part of the righteous.

Biblical Hatred in the Old and New Testaments

For instance, in Psalm 25 and verse 19, David prays, and he said, "Consider mine enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with a cruel hatred." So David was a man after God's own heart, and yet he was hated with a cruel hatred. In Psalm 34 and verse 21, the Bible says, "Evil shall slay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate." So once again, here's a group of people that hate the righteous. When you get to Psalm 97 verse 10, which I'll quote a little bit later as well, the scripture says, "Ye that love the Lord hate evil."

He preserved the life of the saints. He delivered them out of the hand of the wicked. So the wicked then are plotting against the righteous. When you get to the book of Proverbs, chapter 8 in verse 13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth do I hate," saith the Lord. And then, of course, in Proverbs 29 in verse 10, the Bible says, "The bloodthirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul." And here are three others that I want to really quote and emphasize. The next one is found in Amos chapter 5 and verse 10, and I want to explain this one momentarily. The scripture says, "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, they abhor him that speaketh uprightly." So you have to remember then in Bible times, the gate was where the ruler sat. That's where you had the politicians. That's where you had the diplomats. And the Bible says they hate him that rebuketh in the

gate. So anytime someone stands up against that which is evil and wicked and rebukes the wicked, they hate him.

When he is simply proclaiming the truth. In Amos chapter 5, verse 15, God says, “Hate the evil, and love the good.” The last one in the Old Testament is Micah chapter 3, verse 2: “Who hate the good, and love the evil and pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones.” Here are people so absolutely wicked that they hate the good, love anything evil and wicked, and are willing to skin people alive, so to speak, and destroy them.

When you look at the Old Testament and see all of these verses, someone is apt to say, “But, oh, that’s Old Testament.” May I remind you that the Old Testament is just as much the Word of God as the New Testament? You have the exact same truth in the New Testament. Romans chapter 12, verse 9, says, “Let love be without dissimulation, abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good.”

As you read through the Old Testament and the New Testament, when you see the word abhor, it is an exceedingly strong word for hatred. God says, “Abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good.” The Greek word for abhor is apostugeo, and it literally means to dislike, to abhor, to have a horror of. Old John Trapp, the Puritan, said it like this: the word means literally to hate it as hell itself. In other words, hate evil as hell itself.

No Fellowship Between Righteous and Wicked

The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 exposes the lack of fellowship and the lack of communion between the righteous and the wicked. “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” Now look at the questions: “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” The answer would be none. “What communion hath light with darkness?” None. “And what concord hath Christ with Belial?”—the devil—none. “And what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” None. “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” None. Then he says, “For you are the temple of the living God. As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

"Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. And I will be a father unto you, and you shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord." The Apostle Paul is telling us that there are absolutely no grounds for fellowship between the righteous and the wicked. We are opposites. We have no common ground, and there cannot be any compromise. Oil and water do not mix, and neither does righteousness and wickedness.

The fact that there is no common ground for fellowship or communion between the righteous and the wicked does not negate kindness, graciousness, and consideration in general. It is not necessary to be hateful and unkind to those who hate and despise us. We are different, and we are to follow our Lord.

The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 2:23 concerning Jesus Christ, "When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." If Ron stood up today and cussed me out, up and down one side and down the other, does that give me a right to turn around and cuss him back? The answer is no. I am not to render evil for evil, not by any stretch of the imagination.

Simply because there are vast differences between the righteous and the wicked, and simply because there is no ground for fellowship or communion between us, there is in the righteous a genuine desire to see the wicked either converted or condemned. Just because the wicked hate and despise us does not mean that we have no desire for their salvation.

Misconception 1: Desire for the Wicked's Salvation

We understand where they are because we have been there. We understand their blindness to the truth, their hesitancy to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, their loyalty to the flesh, and their desire to find pleasure in sin. The reason we understand that is because we have been there.

Ephesians 2, verse 1, says: “And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past”—that would be before your conversion—“wherein in times 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"—or conduct—"in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

We know exactly where they are because that is where we came from. We are no longer in the kingdom of darkness; we have been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

First Peter chapter 4, verse 3, says: "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles," that is, when we were lost, "when we walked in lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revelings, banqueting, and abominable idolatry." This passage has always caused me to smile, not because it is funny, but because it exposes this lack of commonality. Let me paraphrase it: now you are fed up with sin. You do not want it anymore. You have had a sufficient amount of it. That is speaking of the lost, those who are unsaved, the Gentiles. The passage says that the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in those things.

Look at verse 4: "Wherein they think it's strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." The word "they" refers to the lost, the Gentiles. Has that thought ever entered your mind—that the wicked, the unrighteous, the ungodly, think that you are strange? The word strange is the Greek word xenizo. In this context, it means to be surprised or astonished at the novelty of a thing, or to be shocked. Literally, the Bible says they are shocked. They are standing there gaping with their mouths open.

They cannot believe our lives. We shock them. Peter says, "When they think it's strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot." The word excess is anachysis in the Greek. It refers to an excess, an overflowing or pouring out, and is a metaphor used for a flood. They are shocked that you do not run with them to the same overflowing outpouring of riot. The word riot is asotia, referring to a desolate life—a life of sin, wickedness, and rebellion. They are shocked beyond measure that you do not run with them in the same excess, pouring out and flooding of wickedness and rebellion.

And what is the consequence? Because they are so shocked at our demeanor, disposition, and conduct, they speak evil of us.

The interesting thing is that "speaking evil of you" is blasphemeo in the Greek. They blaspheme you. It means they speak reproachfully of you, revile you, and blaspheme your name. Why? Because you are different. You do not live the way they live, and you do not do what they do. James asks a very good question in James chapter 2 and verse 7: "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name wherewith ye are called, or after which ye are called?" What is that worthy name? Christ. We are called Christians after Christ, who is the anointed one. When they speak evil of us and blaspheme us, they are at the same time blaspheming the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that they are shocked because we do not live the way they live. We can look around today and become shocked very easily when we see what is going on, but they are just as shocked at us. Since there is so much animosity and hatred between the righteous and the wicked, and since the righteous have what I would call a biblical hatred, you might think that the righteous would have no regard at all for the wicked. But that is not true. We still desire to see them either converted or condemned.

We have a truth that they have no idea concerning, and that truth is found in Psalm 110:3, which is quoted in the New Testament: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." When we look today at all the preaching and teaching, it seems as if the wicked have stopped their ears and refuse to listen. They have no desire for truth or righteousness. Yet we have this promise: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." They may be unwilling now to listen. They may not heed our testimonies or listen to our witness. But when our Lord exerts His sovereign power upon them, He will make them willing. He shall overcome them. They may refuse and resist initially, but they cannot refuse and resist successfully, because He is the sovereign God of heaven and earth.

When He calls them, they come. I would challenge you to take a pen and paper, read through the New Testament, and write down every time Jesus Christ calls someone and they refuse to come. I will save you some time: there are no instances like that in the New

Testament. Every time Jesus Christ calls someone, they come to Him. Whether it is for salvation or service, no one denies His call.

In fact, in Romans 1:6, those who are saved are referred to as the called of the Lord. He has called us into the fellowship of His dear Son. The call came in such a way that it was effectual and actually brought us into fellowship with His dear Son. The first misconception I want to get rid of is that, just because there is no common ground and no time for fellowship or communion, so to speak, between the righteous and the wicked, there is not therefore a genuine concern for their salvation or condemnation. The second misconception I want to get rid of is this.

Misconception 2: Separating the Sinner from His Sin

We have to make it clear in our minds that we cannot separate the sinner and his sin. You have probably heard preachers and other Christians say that we must love the sinner and hate the sin. In fact, I have heard it said, "God loves a sinner, but God hates the sin." The only problem is that this is not quite scriptural.

Think about sin. Sin is not some ethereal, abstract phenomenon floating around somewhere in the universe. Sin does not exist in anything material; it is not anything outside of us. Anytime you place sin in something material, you have fallen into Greek dualism and Gnosticism. The only place sin exists is in the sinner. If you did not have sinners, you would not have sin. It is true that God hates sin, but it is equally true—though most people do not preach it—that God also hates sinners.

You say, "But wait a minute. The Bible says He has loved us with an everlasting love." That is true. But He loved us in Jesus Christ. He did not love us in and of ourselves, for what we are in and of ourselves.

Sinners are hated by God, just as their sins are hated by God. Psalm 7:11 says, "God judgeth the righteous, but God is angry with the wicked every day." There are no safe days for sinners. God is not only angry with sinners every day; He is angry with them every hour, every minute, every moment. There is not one split second that God

is not angry with sinners. That is what he says. How about this one in John 6 in verse 36?

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Those who are without Jesus Christ are facing the anger of God, and the wrath of God abides upon them. If you go to Galatians chapter 3, there is the curse of the law upon them as well.

Look back to Ephesians chapter 2. I told you I was going to come back to this, and I want this to sink into your mind. Look at verse 3: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past," our conduct, the way we lived, "in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." What are we by nature? What is everyone by nature? A child of wrath.

So what he is saying is that even we as God's elect, even we as God's people, while we were yet unregenerate and unconverted, although He loved us with an everlasting love, we were still under His anger, under His wrath, and under His curse. Romans 1:18 says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

Years ago, I preached a message on the biblical doctrine of hatred. Harold Hardy loved that message and got about twenty or thirty copies of it, passing them out like candy. I said, "Harold, why don't you start off with something a little easier and work them into something like this?" I never will forget what he said: "I like to separate the wheat from the chaff at the very beginning."

If you have ever listened to that message, it will separate the wheat from the chaff, because I gave three points in that message. The first point was the Sovereign's hatred. The second point was the Savior's hatred. The third point was the saint's hatred. It is still on SermonAudio, and yesterday I looked at it and saw that it had been listened to 2,100 times.

The sinner cannot be separated from his sin, because sin does not exist outside the sinner. So let us begin with Psalm 5, beginning there in verse 4. Look at what Scripture says: “For thou art not a God

that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight. Are you looking at this? Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing"—or lying. "The Lord will abhor"—remember, that is a strong word for hatred—"the bloody and deceitful man."

So look back at verse 5: "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." Why? Because that is where sin exists. Sin is in the sinner. That is why the Lord will abhor the bloody and the deceitful man.

So if you look in Psalm 11, Psalm 11, and begin reading there with verse 5: "The Lord trieth the righteous, but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright." Note, if you would, the Bible says, "But the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth."

Now, verse 6 tells you that upon those whom he hates, the wicked, he is going to rain snares, fire, brimstone, and a horrible tempest. That certainly does not sound like love to me. It is very clear that it is hatred.

Now turn right over in your Bibles to the book of Malachi, the very last book in the Old Testament, Malachi chapter 1. Let us read just verses 2 and 3 to begin with. In fact, I will not even read all of verse 3, just part of it. Then I am going to come back and read it. So look at Malachi chapter 1, verse 2.

God is speaking to Israel, and He says, "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?" Here is God's answer: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau."

If you have been in the average church, you have heard this verse explained very easily by someone saying that God simply loved Esau less than He loved Jacob. He loved Jacob more, but He still loved Esau. If that is your interpretation, I would like you to explain the rest of verse 3. How was His hatred expressed? "And laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. I destroyed him." Edom said, "We are impoverished, but we will

return and build the desolate places. We're going to rebuild." Thus saith the Lord of hosts, "They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them the people, the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever."

That does not really sound like loving a little less. It sounds like God hates Esau. That is exactly what He said. Proverbs 6, verse 16, says, "These six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination unto him." In Proverbs 8, verse 13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."

Until a sinner—even an elect sinner—is regenerated and converted, he is still under the curse, anger, and wrath of God because of his sin and sinful nature. It is only the person and work of Jesus Christ that propitiates God the Father and expiates—that is, washes away—the sin of the believing and repenting sinner.

Acceptance Only in Christ

The word propitiate means to satisfy, appease, and placate. Jesus Christ appeased, placated, and satisfied the righteous anger, justice, and holiness of God the Father. In propitiating God, He expiated, or washed away, our sins.

It is only the person and work of Jesus Christ that can propitiate the Father; only through the Son do we have access to the Father. Through imputation, the work of Jesus Christ removes sin from the repenting, believing sinner. You will find this in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21. So what did God do? God imputed our sins to Jesus Christ.

Our sins were placed upon Him, and then He took that perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ which He worked out and earned in perfect obedience to God and His law and imputed that to us. So yes, it is true that God hates sin, but it is equally true that God hates the sinner because sin is located in the sinner. And listen to me, it is only because we are in Jesus Christ that we are made acceptable to God the Father.

In Ephesians chapter 1, there is one word that you really need to grasp in this passage. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

"According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Now look at this verse: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

After all that God the Father has done for us, He says in verse 6, "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Make sure you underline this little word: accepted.

The Greek word is charitoo, and it literally means to make graceful, charming, beautiful, lovely, and agreeable, and to compass with favor, honor, and blessing. The vile, wicked sinner, who was nothing but sin, hated by God and under the curse, anger, and wrath of God, is now made absolutely, perfectly pure, holy, and righteous in Jesus Christ. He has made us acceptable, beautiful, charming, and lovely to behold, because when God the Father sees us now, He sees the perfection of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is only in Jesus Christ that we can be acceptable to God the Father. There is absolutely nothing we can do in and of ourselves to please or placate Him. There is no way we can come to Him except through the Lord Jesus Christ. Think about verse 6: “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” He has made us acceptable. He has made us beautiful.

The opposite implication is just as true: those who are not in Jesus Christ are not acceptable. They are not charming, beautiful, or lovely. They are outside of Jesus Christ and unacceptable to God the Father. The Bible teaches this repeatedly. Proverbs 10:16 says, “The labor of the righteous tendeth to life, and the fruit of the wicked is sin.” What do the wicked produce? Sin, because they are sinners. Proverbs 10:20 says, “The tongue of the righteous is of choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little worth.” Proverbs 11:23 says,

“The desire of the righteous is only good, but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.” That is all he will get.

Proverbs 15:8–9 says, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.” The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, and the way of the wicked is an abomination. Proverbs 15:26 says, “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord.” His sacrifice, his way, and his thoughts.

There's nothing he can do that would be acceptable to God the Father. Consider Proverbs 21:4: the plowing of the wicked is sin. It is not God-ordained work. Farming is not sinful in and of itself. David was a husbandry, full of loving of husbandry. So was Solomon, who speaks about it many times. Why, then, is the plowing of the wicked sin? First, they do not plow in faith; second, they do not plow for God's honor and God's glory. Everything they do, the Word of God says, is the fruit of sin. Proverbs 21:27 says, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination. How much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?"

He thinks he will be acceptable simply because he gives or sacrifices something. No one can be acceptable to God the Father unless it is in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:6-8 makes this truth exceedingly clear: "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God"—which is a strong word for hatred—"because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." It is impossible for anyone to please God outside of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think about our text. The Word of God tells us that an unjust man is an abomination to the just, and that the man who is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked. Suppose I could arrange for you to spend a few days and have meals with George Soros, Bill Gates, Obama, or many others. How many of you would jump at the chance? I have no desire to be around those men. If I were able to be around them, I would want to tell them that they are under the curse

and wrath of God, and then explain God's grace and mercy to them. But in all probability, they would not listen; they would not hear a word I said.

I do not care how prominent someone is, how rich he is, or what position he holds. As long as he is wicked, there is no commonality, no common ground for fellowship or communion if you are righteous. I have preached many sermons where people came up afterward and said, “Wow, if you could preach that sermon in Congress, it would be wonderful.”

First, that will never happen. Secondly, if it did, they would not listen. Years ago, I had the opportunity to preach to our state legislators. They put all those politicians in one room, like a chapel, with chairs and a pulpit, and locked the doors so nobody could get up and walk out. For thirty minutes, I preached on the sovereignty and kingship of Jesus Christ, His law, and their responsibility to obey Christ, obey His law, and apply it. You could have heard a pin drop among all those legislators. They were mighty quiet. I can assure you they had never heard anything like that in their entire lives. What was the response? I was never invited back.

They do not want to hear. They are not listening, and they will not listen. Someone will object, “Well now wait a minute, Brother Weaver. Are we commanded in the Scripture to love our enemies?” The answer is yes. In Matthew chapter 5, verse 44, and Luke chapter 6, verse 27, our Lord says, “Love your enemies.” But we must ask: What is love, and how do we love our enemies?

Loving Enemies vs. Hating God's Enemies

Romans chapter 13 will show us very quickly how we are to love our enemies. Romans chapter 13, verse 8 says, “Owe no man anything, but to love one another.” Then he says, “For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet. And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

So how do I fulfill the law toward a wicked man? The answer is, I act biblically toward him.

I do that which is scriptural and right. God does not require me to be gushy, emotional, or sentimental toward my enemies. All He requires of me is to be biblical toward them and to keep His law toward them. Romans chapter 12, beginning with verse 19, says, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

If I have my enemy before me and he is hungry, and all I have is peas, that is what I share with him. If he is thirsty, I give him a glass of water. God does not require me to take him out to a steak dinner and buy him a latte, a coffee latte, or whatever you call them. He just requires me to be kind and gracious and fulfill God's law toward him. That is how I love him. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Although He tells us that we are to love our enemies, there is a vast difference between our enemies and God's enemies. There is also, and should be, a vast difference between our attitude toward our enemies and our attitude toward God's enemies. So many Christians get hurt because they tend to think that if they are obedient, holy, righteous, and do that which is good, inevitably folks are going to love them. No, it does not work like that.

Do you realize that God is the apex, the epitome of holiness, righteousness, love, grace, and mercy, and yet He has enemies galore? Just because you are righteous and holy and do that which is good does not preclude the fact that you are going to have enemies. You will have enemies, and they are going to be shocked that you do not act the way they act.

In Psalm 21 and verse 8, God says, "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee." God has plenty of enemies. May I ask you who the right hand man of God is?

It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is sitting at the right hand of God the Father. The Lord Jesus, at God's right hand, is going to find out

all of His enemies. So God's enemies hate Him without a cause. This is found in the Lord Jesus Christ; this is personified in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalm 69 is a Messianic Psalm, and this passage is quoted in reference to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Psalm 69, verse 4, says, "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away."

John chapter 15 shows how this verse is applied directly to Jesus Christ. There is a message in that one passage. Beginning with verse 21, our Lord says, "But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin."

“But now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” They hated Jesus Christ freely and deliberately. There was nothing in Jesus Christ that drew forth their hatred. He was and is the sinless Son of God, yet they hated Him without a cause. There was no reason to hate Him; they hated Him because they hated Him.

I want to show you David’s attitude. There should be a different attitude between our enemies and God’s enemies. Usually our enemies are enemies of our own making. We have been unkind or impatient, or we have said things we should not have said, and we make enemies. But that is not the way it is with God.

David says in Psalm 139, “Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God. Depart from me, therefore, you bloody men, for they speak against thee wickedly. Look, and thine enemies take thy name in vain.” Then watch David’s attitude: “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 he says, “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 was a man after God's own heart. He said, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? Am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies." Then he asked the Lord to search him, try him, and show him if there were any wicked way in him: "Oh Lord, I don't want a bad attitude. If this is wrong, Lord, show me." This is the right biblical attitude that we should have toward God's enemies.

Because they are seeking to dethrone God, overthrow God, destroy Him, destroy His church, destroy His creation, and destroy His kingdom, the attitude is biblical. God's enemies hate Him. They want to destroy Him and overthrow Him. In fact, if we love God as we should, according to the Scripture, we would hate anything and everything that is against Him. We would hate every sin like hell itself. We would hate His enemies. And, by the way, He has enemies. George Soros is an enemy of God. So is Bill Gates. Anyone who fights against God is His enemy.

The Bible says in Psalm 97:10, "Ye that love the Lord hate evil." If you love the Lord, you are going to hate that which is evil. There are men who hate God. And guess what? There are men whom God hates. The feeling is mutual. You remember what God said in 1 Samuel 2:30? He said, "Them that honor me will I honor, saith the Lord, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

You despise Me? God says, "That is fine. I will despise you. The feeling will be mutual."

Now, you remember the Lord Jesus Christ, and you certainly remember Isaiah 53:3: "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised." Listen to this part: "And we esteemed him not." You know what that means? It means we did not even think that He was worth thinking about. We would not even give Him a moment in our minds. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

I want to show you truth. Since you are in Psalms, turn to Psalm 73. Psalm 73 is a psalm of Asaph. Asaph has a real problem. He becomes envious when he looks around and sees the prosperity of

the wicked. In verse 2 he said, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." Then he describes all their prosperity, and he is grieved. Now skip down to verse 12. Concerning these ungodly people, he says, "Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase in riches." He is suffering while the wicked are prospering. So he says in verse 13, "Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

"For all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning. If I say I speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." In other words, he said, "Lord, I don't understand this. I'm living right. I'm being holy. I'm being godly. I want to serve you. I want to honor you. And I'm suffering. Look at all the wicked and look how they're prospering. When I thought to know this, it was too difficult for me. It was too painful."

"Until, until, until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down into destruction. How they are brought into desolation as in a moment. They are utterly consumed with terrors." "As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image." Those who despise God shall be despised by God. Psalm 81 and verse 15 calls these people the haters of the Lord. Those who hate God shall be hated by God.

Consider the implications of this text: Those that despise God shall be despised by God, and you have to add eternally despised. Man's disdain and despisement is absolutely nothing in comparison to the disdain and despisement of the eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, sovereign, almighty God of heaven and earth. If you want to challenge God, you are going to lose. It is just that simple. If you want to hate him, go ahead. You'll be hated by him. If you want to despise him, go ahead. You'll be despised by him.

Applications: Mutual Feelings and Eternal Consequences

Mutual feelings are wonderful as long as they are just, right, holy, and biblical feelings. However, mutual feelings of hatred, disdain,

and despisement will inevitably result in a clash. Someone will lose. Someone will be destroyed. It certainly will not be God. Man cannot overcome God. Man cannot prevail against Him. Proverbs 21 and verse 30 says, "There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the Lord." There is none.

Psalm 37 verse 20 says, "But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs, they shall consume, into smoke shall they consume away." It will not be God who loses the fight. I want mutual feelings of love between myself and the Sovereign God, and the only way I can have that is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you ever thought about this? We love Him because He first loved us. Not only did He first love us, but He gave us His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the propitiation for our sins. Have you ever stopped and said, "Lord, thank You for allowing me to love You. Thank You, Lord, for placing in me a desire to love You, a desire to do what is right, a desire to be holy, a desire to be godly, and a desire to be submissive and obedient"? Have you ever thought about the grace and mercy of God that has put mutual feelings between you and the Father? He loves you, and you love Him.

But there are also mutual feelings between those who hate God and those whom God hates. Those who despise God shall be despised by Him. The feelings will be mutual. The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; that is, they are the sacrifice, and they shall consume away into smoke.

If I were unsaved, I would be running to the Lord Jesus Christ as fast as I could, for the only way I could ever be acceptable to God the Father is through the person and work of His own dear Son. Mutual feelings are found in Scripture.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth. We pray, Lord, that You would impress upon our hearts that which is right, holy, and godly. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

It is a very uncomfortable subject to talk about: hatred, the way God looks at evil. We Christians need more courage to speak about

this and to warn people of the fire and the spot of fire. We do not worry about God's wrath; it is not that we are trying to—and we are getting toward the end of something here.

We have to get these hard messages. Hard times require hard messages. I'm sorry if I sound a little jaded, but I've been up for twenty-four hours. I really appreciate you. You have an historical preaching that you did today. It was very encouraging. You're never going to hear this in mainstream preaching.

Think about it like this: everybody said, “Well, that's hard preaching.” No, it's biblical preaching. It's true preaching. But can you imagine if this kind of preaching was before Congress, and if everybody understood that you're either an enemy of God or the friend of God, either loved by God or hated by God? I think it would make a big difference. You wouldn't have too many people pretending to be Christians, I don't think. It is a very serious message, that is for sure. It would separate the sheep from the goats quickly, wouldn't it?

If someone tells you it's always wrong to hate, they certainly don't know the Bible. There is a biblical doctrine of hatred. You need to go back and listen to that message on the biblical doctrine of hatred. It is just like our Lord said: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” But wait a minute. If you're not rebuked and chastened, what does that mean? It means you're not loved. If you're not loved, it means you're hated. There are a lot more scriptures on that if you would listen to that message.

Thank you, Father, again for your love and grace and mercy. Keep us safe, Lord, and lead us, guide us, and direct us, in the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 41

Why Good Things Happen to Bad People

August 13, 2025

Introduction and Text

Our Lord says, “That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven. For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” If you remember last week, I brought a message titled “Why Bad Things Happen to Good People.” Today I am doing the opposite: “Why Good Things Happen to Bad People.”

The Problem of Wicked Prosperity

We could ask this question another way: Why do the wicked prosper and the righteous struggle many times? I can assure you that many Christians have wondered about this phenomenon. In fact, they have asked repeatedly—in fact, they have asked me many times—why it is that God has not struck some of these people down instantly. God is a God of justice, and God is a God of righteousness. Yet here are

these people fighting against Him, who hate Him and despise Him, and yet they seemingly are prospering.

Now, we understand that each of us deserves death. There is not one of us who has not sinned against God, and one sin is sufficient for death, that is for sure. But when we are talking about sinners in that sense of the word, we are talking about what you and I might refer to as normal sinners. The ones I am talking about are sinners in a very unique way. They not only have multitudinous sins, but their sins are of vast magnitude as well. These individuals hate God, fight against Him, and do everything they can to destroy His kingdom and destroy His people.

When you think about men like that, I hope that the name George Soros would come to your mind, and maybe even Bill Gates. There are plenty more, but just to show you what I am talking about, here is a quote from Bill Gates given in 2010 during one of the TED Talks. He said, “If we do a really good and great job on new vaccines, health care, reproductive health services, we could lower the world population by perhaps 10 or 15 percent.” That ought to tell you right up front what all the vaccines were about. Now, here is a short article on George Soros.

The title of the article is "The God Who Carries Around Some Dangerous Demons." It was published October the 4th, 2004. The article says, "It seems that Soros believes that he was anointed by God. 'I fancied myself as some kind of God,' he once wrote. 'If truth be known, I carried some rather potent messianic fantasies with me from my childhood, which I felt I had to control, otherwise they might get me into trouble.'" When asked by Britain's Independent newspaper to elaborate, Soros said, "It is a sort of disease when you consider yourself some kind of God, the creator of everything."

"But I feel comfortable about it now since I began to live it out." Those unfamiliar with Soros would probably dismiss the statement out of hand. But for those who have followed his career in socio-political endeavors, it cannot be taken quite so lightly.

Soros once confided on British television, "Next to my fantasies about being God, I have a very strong fantasy about being mad. In fact, my grandfather was actually paranoid. I have a lot of madness

in my family. So far I have escaped it." And the answer is, no, he has not escaped it. He's still mad. He's still insane. That is for sure. When you stop and think about exceedingly wicked and vile men, think about the economic destruction as well as physical suffering that has abounded because of Soros and his unbiblical and ungodly views.

You have to ask this question: Why has he lived to a ripe old age? Why has God not simply destroyed him? Think also of the millions who have suffered and died due to the wickedness of tyrannical rulers. How about the millions who are not only disabled but have died because of Anthony Fauci and his so-called vaccine? Why has God allowed these people to live?

When I'm talking about men like Fauci, Soros, and Bill Gates, we're not talking about normal sinners. We're talking about men who hate God, who fight against Him.

Defining Good and Evil

Remember that our definition of bad and good often varies with someone's worldview, understanding, or interpretation. Many times, the definitions of good and bad, right and wrong—those that are Christian and biblical and those that are wicked and evil—hold absolutely opposite views. For instance, Isaiah 5:20 says, "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

There are some of us who are Christians and believe the Bible. We talk about that which is sweet, that which is light, and that which is good. Then there are those who will absolutely take an opposite definition. They would call our good bad, our light darkness, and our sweetness bitter. So God is talking about these individuals. Now, I told you that there are degrees when we think about that which is bad.

There are three main Greek words used in the New Testament that happen to be translated as evil. It would benefit us if we understood these words and how they applied. The first word is phaulos, spelled F-A-U-L-O-S in English. Phaulos literally means that which is worthless, useless, base, and wicked. It refers to what

you and I would call a lazy, indolent, or slothful person. A person who will not work, who will not keep his word, or who will not finish a job would be called worthless. We would call him a phaulos person, because he is useless and does not accomplish anything.

The second Greek word is kakos, spelled K-A-K-O-S. It refers to that which is bad in nature, troublesome, injurious, pernicious, and destructive. We would say that the riots were bad and destructive, bad and evil in and of themselves.

Now the third word is ponēros. Ponēros refers to that which is evil in and of itself. This word is very interesting and very important. Let me give you a comparison. If I were to use the word theos, which is the Greek word for God, theos could simply refer to any god. It could refer to Zeus, who is a false god, or Aphrodite, who is a false goddess. It simply means god. But when you put the definite article, ho, in front of theos—ho theos—it means the God, the one true and living God.

The same is true of ponēros. Ponēros means that which is evil in and of itself. But if you put ho, the definite article, in front of it—ho ponēros—it means the evil one. That is how it is translated in our Bibles: the evil one, referring to Satan, or what we would simply call the devil.

We normally think of good and bad in degrees. We say, "He's a pretty good fellow," or, "He's not so bad." Thus, we define good and bad based upon degrees. But even when we consider the word phaulos, which normally refers to that which is worthless and useless, we have to understand that this is a sin as well. In Proverbs chapter 6, God says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise." What does she do?

She puts up her food in the summer so she will have it in the winter. Of course, the lazy are condemned in Scripture, often called the slothful as well. The slothful, lazy, indolent individuals will use even the most outrageous excuses not to work. For instance, Proverbs 22:13 says, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the street. I shall be slain." In other words, "I can't go out. I can't go to work. I can't accomplish anything because I heard there's a lion on the loose somewhere and he might kill me." We are probably not

going to run into that here unless one escapes from a zoo somewhere.

How about Ecclesiastes chapter 11 and verse 4? The Scripture says, “He that regardeth the wind shall not sow,” and, “he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.” In other words, “It looks cloudy; I had better not go out and work today. The wind is blowing; I had better not sow today. It might rain; I had better just stay home.” In other words, they are willing to use any excuse not to work.

Even if we excuse and discount the worthless, the useless, and the indolent, there are still those we would call bad, inherently evil, and wicked. It has always astounded the righteous that God could use the wicked, and that the wicked are often used to chastise the righteous. Habakkuk knew that God was going to use the Babylonians to chastise Judah and Jerusalem. But consider his predicament. In Habakkuk 1:13, in reference to God, he says, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.”

Here is what Habakkuk is actually saying: “Thou art of purer eyes than to look upon evil condoningly.” Or, “You cannot look upon iniquity approvingly.” God looks upon evil to judge it, but He does not approve of it, and He certainly does not condone it. Look at it again: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” Now here is the question: “Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously,” the Babylonians, “and holdest thy tongue, when the wicked,” the Babylonians, “devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”

Habakkuk understood that Judah and Jerusalem deserved judgment, chastisement, or punishment. What troubled him was that God was going to use someone more wicked and evil than Judah and Jerusalem to chastise them, when they were less wicked and evil than the Babylonians.

The truth is that God does use wicked men. He can use a crooked stick to draw a straight line. God used Nebuchadnezzar and the kings of Assyria; you can read about that in Isaiah chapter 10. God used Darius and Cyrus. He used wicked men.

Since God is God, He may use whomever He pleases, whenever He pleases, however He pleases, and wherever He pleases, because He is God. Whatever God does is just and righteous.

So the question today is, why do good things happen to bad people? Before entering the message, I want to establish the fact and reality that God is good to all His creatures. The wicked are His creatures as well. He created them just as He created the righteous. In Matthew chapter 5 and verse 45, the Bible says plainly, “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

God's Goodness to All Creatures

The wicked and the good, the wicked and the righteous, are both partakers of God’s goodness. They receive rain and sunshine exactly as we do. God is good even to those who hate Him, despise Him, and refuse Him.

Now look back in your Bibles to Psalm 104. Let me show you the goodness of God in this passage. Begin with verse 10: “He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.” Why does God send springs of water?

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 104:11-13 (KJV)

> Here's why: "They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He," that is God, "watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works."

Psalm 104 describes the goodness of God toward all His creatures: “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.”

“The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies. He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.”

The psalm continues: “Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.” Then he says, “O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.” In other words, God takes care of all of His creatures.

Psalm 107 repeats the same verse four times: “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” Four times in this one psalm God says that men should praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men. God is good to all. He is good even to those who hate and despise Him.

Now here's another verse. I want you to think about it. We're talking about the goodness of God. Acts 14:17 says, “Nevertheless he,” that is, God, “left not himself without witness.” How did God do good? “And gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” God did not leave Himself without witness. The goodness of God is a witness to the fact and the reality that God is God. It is the goodness of God that feeds and cares for all of His creatures.

Thomas Manton was an old Puritan. Here is what he said on the goodness of God: “He that is God is originally good, good of himself, which nothing else is, for all creatures are good only by participation and communication from God. He is essentially good, not only good, but goodness itself. The creature's good is a super-added quality. In God, it is his essence. He is infinitely good. The creature's good is but a drop, but in God there is an infinite ocean of gathering together of

good. He is eternally and immutably good, for he cannot be less good than he is, as there can be no addition made to him, so no subtraction from him."

So God in theology is known as the chief good. God is good in and of His essence.

Why is God good to the wicked? Why do good things happen to bad people? There are several answers given to us in Scripture. The first is this: the goodness of God leaves the wicked without excuse.

Romans 2, verses 2 through 6: "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds."

First Reason: Goodness Leaves the Wicked Without Excuse

You must notice right away that the goodness of God is in the context. He says, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness." And later he says, "Not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."

First of all, let me deal with this: "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." The Greek word for "leadeth" is agō, which literally means to guide, to direct, to point the way, to conduct, and simply to bring. It is the goodness of God that points the way to repentance. Based upon God's goodness and the wickedness of the sinner, he ought to repent when he sees God's goodness.

There is a difference between the leading here and the drawing in John 6:44: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." "No man can" is a term of ability. No man has the ability to come savingly to Jesus Christ on his own. But Romans 2:4 speaks of leading: "The

goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." It directs and points the way. Moreover, "leadeth" is a present active indicative in the Greek. The indicative means it is a truth, while the present active means that it is something constantly and continually going on.

Here is what he is saying: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God is continually pointing the way to repentance." You have heard the old adage, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." Here is the goodness of God leading, pointing, and directing to repentance. But the wicked will not repent.

Now let us see why. The Greek word kataphroneō literally means to condemn, to despise, to disdain, and to think very little of. The wicked disdain and despise the goodness of God; they do not even think it is worth thinking about. Although the goodness of God is pointing the way to repentance, they are not thinking about it as they should.

That is what should be in their life. Here is the question: Since the wicked—and I am talking about the exceptionally wicked and vile; I know each one of us deserves death, and I understand that—but why does God not just strike exceedingly wicked people dead? These are people who fight against God, hate God, and will do anything they can to destroy the people of God and the work of God. That would seem to be the easy thing to do, and we know God is just. Of course, if God struck each one of us dead the first time we sinned, there would not be anybody left.

But look at what happens. Look in verse 4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance?" When the wicked despise the goodness of God and refuse to be led to repentance, instead of instantly smiting them, God forbears a little longer with them. The word "forbearance" is anochē in the Greek. It means that He tolerates them and puts up with them a little longer. He allows them to continue to live, even in their own wickedness and rebellion.

What happens when the wicked despise God's goodness and also despise His forbearance? The wicked man normally thinks that if he can get by with something and God does not strike him dead, God is

not going to do it at all. But when a man despises God's goodness and forbearance, the next thing that comes into play is God's longsuffering: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering?" The Greek word is makrothumia. Makro means that which is great or large, and thumia comes from thymos, meaning passions. Thus it means large passions or large sufferings, so to speak. Literally, it means to be patient, to endure, and to show slowness in avenging wrongs. God allows the wicked who despise goodness and forbearance to continue; He suffers long with them. Makrothumia is the quality of being patient and enduring, especially in the face of provocation. Think of the Hebrews in the wilderness: God said they provoked Him ten times. Ten times God should have destroyed them, but He did not. Now here is the interesting thing: in the Septuagint—and any time you

The Septuagint is called the LXX, the Roman numerals for 70, because it is the 70: 70 scholars translated the Hebrew into Greek in Alexandria, Egypt. Our Lord quoted from the Septuagint, and so did the disciples. In the Septuagint, the word “longsuffering” is translated from the Hebrew words erek apayim, which literally means “long of nose” or “long nostrils.” Now, how can “longsuffering” be “long nostrils” or “long of nose”? The answer is this.

When individuals become angry, when they get upset, when they are ready to fight, when they are ready to do something, their nostrils always begin flaring. They start breathing heavily, and you can see the nostrils flare and know that a man is getting ready to punch you. But the longer the nose, the more indiscernible the flare of the nostril becomes. You cannot really tell the anger that is building up. So when God is long nostrils, they are provoking Him, yet they cannot see the righteous anger and righteous indignation building as He suffers long with them and their rebellion, sin, and wickedness.

Look again at verse 4: “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.” Now look at verses 5 and 6: “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the

righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds." Now, look in verse 5: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart." An impenitent heart is a heart that will not repent. The goodness of God has pointed the way to repentance, but here are the wicked who have an impenitent heart. They do not want repentance because of the hardness of their heart. A hardened heart is an impenitent heart.

The interesting thing is that the Greek word for "hardness" is sklēros. I hope you know that we get many of our English words from the Greek, and many of our medical terms as well. Everyone has probably heard of arteriosclerosis: hardening of the arteries, straight from sklēros, meaning that which is hard, rough, or intolerable. This is what he is talking about: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart." The goodness of God has no effect on it. The forbearance of God has no effect upon it. The longsuffering of God has no effect upon it because it is a hardened heart.

It is a sclerosis; he has a real, real trouble. After thy hardness and impenitent heart, he treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

What is happening? When the wicked despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, and refuse to be pointed toward repentance, their hardened and impenitent heart enables them to treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath. The word for "treasurest up" is the Greek word thēsaurizō. We get another English word from that.

If I were to ask you, do you have a thesaurus? A thesaurus is a book, a treasury of words, synonyms, and antonyms. It is a good treasure. I have one on my desk and use it quite frequently.

Here is what the wicked are doing: they are despising all of this, leaving themselves without excuse. God has been good to them, has forborne with them, and has had longsuffering with them. They have no excuse. In despising all this, they are treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

The Goodness of God Increases the Condemnation of the Wicked

Second Reason: Goodness Increases Condemnation

Here is the second truth: The goodness of God increases the condemnation of the wicked. He says, in verse 5, “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds.”

In the judgment, God will give you exactly what is due. You will receive the full wrath of God if you have despised His goodness, His forbearance, and His righteousness, because you are absolutely without excuse. The wicked have their portion in this life.

In Psalm 17, David is praying against the wicked. He says, “Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: from men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

Here he gives us an excellent contrast between the wicked and the righteous. The wicked have their portion in this life, but he says, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” Some of these men are rich beyond our wildest imagination. They have whatever they want, do whatever they want, and go wherever they please. If you get in their way, they will simply run over you; it does not bother them. They have their portion in this life.

Consider Lazarus and the rich man in Luke chapter 16. Lazarus was laid at the rich man's gate, full of sores, and the dogs came and licked him. The Scripture says, "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send

Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

You notice what he said: "Son, remember." I believe that part of God's judgment upon the wicked is that they will remember every sermon they ever heard, every Scripture they ever memorized as a child, and every testimony that was ever given to them. They will remember all of God's goodness, patience, longsuffering, and forbearance, but it will not do them any good. It will only torment them throughout eternity. He said, "Son, remember, thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." You had your portion in this life. Now Lazarus is comforted, and you are tormented.

Consider also the rich farmer in Luke chapter 12. He said, "What in the world am I going to do? My barns are full. I've got more to put in. I know what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and I'll build bigger barns, and I will say, Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry, for thou hast much goods laid up for many years." The Scripture says, "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Then He said, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." In other words, the man who wants his portion in this life, and has it in this life, God calls a fool because he is not rich toward God.

Among believers especially, there is difficulty when they see the wicked prospering while they are suffering. Think about the persecution of believers—those 70 in the last several weeks who had their heads chopped off by the Muslims because they were Christians. Why did that happen? I want to show you the crowning passage that demonstrates this conflict. Look in your Bibles to Psalm 73.

The Believer's Struggle and Resolution in Psalm 73

We will begin with verse 1 and see how the situation is laid out. This psalm is a psalm of Asaph. David did not write all of the psalms. Asaph wrote a number of psalms, Solomon wrote some, and Psalm

72 is a psalm of Solomon. Moses wrote Psalm 90. Most of the psalms were written by David, but not all of them. Asaph, in Psalm 73, has a problem. Look at verses 1 through 3.

He says, “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” Note that the goodness of God is involved. He said, “Truly God is good to Israel, but as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. Why? For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” Here is a man who is undoubtedly suffering, and he sees the wicked prospering.

The righteous are hurting. What moves him? What makes him so envious? Let us read verses 4 through 12. He says, “For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.” In other words, up until the day they die, they do not have any problems. Look at verse 5: “They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.” They do not have the problems. They have the money, the position, and the power, and trouble does not bother them. Verse 6 says, “Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment.” They are proud, arrogant, haughty, and high-minded. You can see them all in the world. Violence covers them as a garment; they would just as soon run over you as look at you. Look at verse 7: “Their eyes stand out with fatness.”

“They have more than heart could wish.” When you are hungry, doing without, facing financial difficulties, praying, living right, and doing what is right, it seems there is no light at the end of the tunnel. Then you look around and see the wicked who ain’t God, just prospering to no end. It is troublesome and bothersome.

He says, “Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.” Look at verse 8: “They are corrupt,” and that is how they got a lot of their riches, too, “and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.” They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. They are just as soon to curse God as you. It does not bother them. They will blaspheme man and blaspheme God.

Then he says, “Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.” The wicked say, “How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the most High?” In other words, “How does God know what I’m doing? God’s not here.” They are denying the omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence of God: “God doesn’t know. And if He did know, He’s not going to do anything about it.” That is according to Psalm 10.

Look at verse 12: “Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.” That is a pretty good description of the ungodly. Now, what does it mean that “waters of a full cup are wrung out to them”? I want to give you a quote from a commentary by Albert Barnes. I believe Barnes is correct; that is why I am quoting him and showing it to you.

Barnes says, “And waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.” Literally, “waters of fullness”—full waters. The Chaldee renders this, “many tears flow from them.” The Septuagint says, “full days shall be found by them.” The word rendered “wrung out” comes from the Hebrew and properly means to suck, then to suck out, and to drink. Generally, it is applied to one who drinks greedily of an intoxicating cup, and then to one who drinks a cup of poison to the dregs.

The meaning here is that the facts in this case, and the questions which arose in regard to those facts and so perplexed them, were like a bitter cup, a cup of poison, or an intoxicating cup which overpowered their faculties. In their perplexity, they exhausted the cup. They drank it all, even the dregs. They did not merely taste it, but drank it. It was a subject full of perplexity, a subject that wholly overpowered all their faculties and exhausted all their powers.

What he is saying is that Asaph and those with him were so totally perplexed that it was as though they were drinking poison. They were drinking a bitter cup. They could not figure out why they, being righteous and loving God and trying to do what was right, were suffering. And look at George Soros, Bill Gates, Anthony Fauci, and all the rest of them. Why is it, Lord? Why is this happening?

I believe that Barnes's interpretation is correct based upon the following scriptures. Look at verse 13. Asaph says, “Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For

all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me."

He is saying, "God, this taxes my brain. I do not understand this. I cannot comprehend this. Have I cleansed my heart in vain? Have I washed my hands in innocency? Should I not have been guilty and corrupt and vile like they were?" He had been plagued all day long and chastened every morning. When he thought to understand this, it was absolutely too painful for him. Asaph could not understand. By the way, Asaph was a godly man.

He was a singer in the temple; in fact, he was the head of singers. He taught singing and gave praises to God on a regular basis. Evidently, he was suffering. His family was suffering. Maybe all of the Israelites were suffering. He looked around and saw the wicked prospering. He said, "When I thought to know this, it's just too painful for me. I can't grasp this. Can't wrap my mind around it."

How was it resolved? Look in verse 16 again. He said, "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." When he went in to worship God and God opened his eyes, he understood their end. In verse 18 he says, "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. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." When he saw their end, when he saw that God would cast them down in destruction, and that God had put them in a slippery place, he understood. They had one foot in the grave and another foot on the banana peel. In verse 20 he said, "As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image." Wait a minute.

What were the wicked doing to God back in Romans chapter 2? They were despising His goodness, His forbearance, and His

longsuffering. Now God is going to despise them. Those who despise God shall be despised by God. Their despisement was temporary while they were alive; now God's despisement against them will be eternal.

So notice how he contrasts the righteous with the wicked. In verse 21 he says, "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

Then he asks, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart." He continues, "and my portion for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works."

Notice what he said: I have the Lord. I have salvation. They have the world. They have time. I have eternity.

Applications: Avoid Envy and Cultivate Thankfulness

Let me make some applications. First, it is a sin to envy the wicked, and it is extremely foolish for a child of God to do so. It does not matter how many planes, mansions, or cars they have. I read years ago that Arnold Schwarzenegger had seven Humvees, one for each day of the week, each a different color. I am driving a truck with 300,000 miles on it. Why would I envy him? I would not envy him, even if he had twenty cars for each day. The Bible says in Proverbs 3:31, "Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways." Proverbs 23:17 says, "Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long." Let not your heart envy sinners.

You may take the world and have the world, but I'll take the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember that song we used to sing: "I'd rather have Jesus than anything. I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold.

I'd rather have Jesus than riches untold." And that's true. This is what Asaph is saying in Psalm 73.

They have their portion in this life; God is my portion. When you understand Romans chapter 8, where the Bible says that we're heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, that means whatever Jesus Christ inherits, we inherit. We're joint heirs with Him. So God is indeed our portion. That is a fact. But I want you to understand that those who despise God now, in time and history, and die unconverted, shall be despised by God eternally, because God is an eternal God.

The second application is this: This truth should motivate and encourage us to learn to thank God for His great goodness to each of us. God has given us life, health, family, friends, possessions, and ability. Have you ever stopped just to thank God for life, sleep, and rest? When you're young, you think you're going to live forever and can do anything. When you get older, you realize you're not going to live forever, and you become thankful that you can do some things, and sometimes anything. I'm simply pointing out the fact that there is so much for which we need to be thankful. Our day should be full of praise to our Lord.

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ has made us kings and priests unto our Father. We are priests unto Him, and as priests we should have a sacrifice. You say, “But my sacrifice is the Lord Jesus Christ.” That is true, but we also have another sacrifice—not that we are trying to go some other way for salvation. Hebrews 13:15 says, “By him,” that is, by the Lord Jesus Christ, “therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” We are to offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually.

The Bible says, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” You should be able to give thanks for breath, for health and healing, and for anything and everything. We are to offer up praise to our God through the Lord Jesus Christ continually, giving Him thanks.

When I look around, see my own sins, and know my own heart, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, I can

thank Him that He has allowed me to live all these years and allowed me to have my being. Stop and think about the goodness and greatness of God allowing you to have your mind when so many people today are losing their minds. Think about the fact that God is gracious to us every moment. “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” God is good, even to the wicked. They may not acknowledge Him, but we should, and give Him praise continually.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We know, Father, that bad things happen to godly people and good people.

We know that good things happen to bad people. It places them without excuse before Thee, and their failure to repent enhances and increases their condemnation. We should be thankful, Father, for the truth Thou hast shown us. Help us, Lord, to praise Thee for Thy word, knowing Thou hast magnified Thy word above Thy name. Lord, we honor Thee and give Thee the fruit of our lips, acknowledging that all we are, have, ever will be, or ever will have is only by Thy goodness, grace, and mercy. Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. We give Thee praise. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 22: The Sin Every Christian Commits
JW00389 | 2018-12-09 | SermonAudio

Chapter 23: Do You Have a Reservation?
JW01268 | 2012-02-15 | YouTube

Chapter 24: Left Behind
JW01276 | 2012-02-17 | YouTube

Chapter 25: The Other Side of Witnessing
JW01303 | 2012-03-15 | YouTube

Chapter 26: God's Justice As Congregational Necessity
JW00145 | 2023-08-11 | SermonAudio

Chapter 27: We Must Be Turned
JW01342 | 2013-01-07 | YouTube

Chapter 28: Second Opportunities
JW00088 | 2024-07-28 | SermonAudio

Chapter 29: Four Fearful Words
JW01347 | 2013-02-24 | YouTube

Chapter 30: The Martyrdom of Thomas Hawks
JW01375 | 2013-11-01 | YouTube

Chapter 31: You Must Die
JW01410 | 2015-12-03 | YouTube

Chapter 32: Condemning Or Damning Christ
JW01447 | 2016-11-07 | YouTube

Chapter 33: Committing The Sins Of The Jews
JW01451 | 2016-11-18 | YouTube

Chapter 34: Have You Been Under A Fig Tree Lately?
JW01573 | 2020-04-19 | YouTube

Chapter 35: How Much Do You Value Death?
JW01672 | 2022-08-15 | YouTube

Chapter 36: Two Reasons Why You Don't Love The Lord As You Should
JW01677 | 2022-10-09 | YouTube

Chapter 37: Faith, Little Faith, Great Faith
JW01743 | 2024-04-27 | YouTube

Chapter 38: The Scars of Sin
JW01749 | 2024-04-27 | YouTube

Chapter 39: The Displeased Prophet - Jonah Series - Part 4 of 4
JW01770 | 2024-12-01 | YouTube

Chapter 40: The Feeling Is Mutual
JW01780 | 2025-04-23 | YouTube

Chapter 41: Why Good Things Happen to Bad People
JW01806 | 2025-08-13 | YouTube

Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.

A

A New Glorified Body p. 175

A Reservation for the Righteous p. 38

A Savor of Life and Death p. 68

Acceptance Only in Christ p. 337

Application 1: Prepare for Death p. 179

Application 2: Do Not Delay Your Duty p. 180

Application 3: Remain Faithful Despite Death p. 181

Application to America p. 145

Application: Agreeing with the Sanhedrin or with Christ p. 195

Application: Do You Value Death? p. 245

Application: Have You Been Under a Fig Tree Lately? p. 227

Application: Where Is Your Reservation? p. 41

Applications and Call to Repentance p. 55

Applications and Conclusion p. 148, p. 265

Applications: Avoid Envy and Cultivate Thankfulness p. 363

Applications: Faithfulness in Our Witness p. 76

Applications: Fearlessness in Death p. 161

Applications: Mutual Feelings and Eternal Consequences p. 344

Applications: Restoring Saints and Heeding Warnings p. 132

Applications: Walking After Imagination and Pride p. 22

B

Biblical Examples of Condemnation Ministries p. 69

Biblical Examples of God Declaring Death p. 166

Biblical Hatred in the Old and New Testaments p. 329

Biblical Justice as a Congregational Necessity p. 79

Biblical Principle: The Day of Death is Better than Birth p. 233

Biblical Warnings of God's Departure p. 48

Biblical Witnesses to Christ p. 60

C

Characteristics of Little Faith p. 276
Church Discipline for the Good of Others p. 90
Church Discipline: A Case Study from 1 Corinthians 5 p. 89
Committing The Sins Of The Jews p. 197
Conclusion and Call to Obey p. 23
Conclusion and Prayer p. 163
Conclusion: Christ Is King Now p. 213
Conclusion: Death Without Fear p. 182
Conclusion: Give God the Glory p. 285
Conclusion: Praying for Turning Grace p. 113
Conclusion: Pursue Unity and Obedience p. 95
Condemning or Damning Christ p. 183
Condemning Or Damning Christ p. 183
Corporate Accountability and the Threat of Ichabod p. 94

D

Dealing with Sinful Memories and the Flesh p. 295
Death as Transformation and Conformation p. 241
Defining Good and Evil p. 349
Definition and Biblical Terms for Scars p. 288
Degrees of Faith p. 270
Destruction of Military Power p. 145
Divine Forgiveness Through Christ p. 291
Do You Have a Reservation? p. 25

E

Examples of Cursed Reservations p. 35
Exercising the Faith God Has Given p. 284
Explaining 'God Repented' as Anthropomorphism p. 130

F

Faith Illustrated: Touching the Machine p. 274
Faith, Little Faith, and Great Faith p. 269
Faith, Little Faith, Great Faith p. 269
False Witnesses and Jesus' Silence p. 192

First Reason: Goodness Leaves the Wicked Without Excuse p. 354
First Reason: Not Perceiving the Greatness of Our Sin p. 257
Forgiveness Does Not Remove All Consequences p. 293
Forgiving Others as God Forgives p. 294
Four Fearful Words p. 135
Four Implications of Rejecting Christ's Kingship p. 207

G

God Gives the Increase p. 64
God Reserves Wrath for His Enemies p. 29
God Restores and Re-commissions Jonah p. 119
God Targets the Wicked p. 138
God's 'Not Remembering' Explained p. 294
God's Appointed Day of Judgment p. 27
God's Attempts to Gain Attention (Amos 4) p. 16
God's Attitude Toward Those Who Refuse to Hear p. 21
God's Care for All Creation p. 322
God's Compassion and Judgment Through Preachers p. 314
God's Goodness to All Creatures p. 352
God's Nature and Commands Demand Righteousness p. 80
God's Sovereignty and Our Response p. 308
God's Word Always Accomplishes Its Purpose p. 67
God’s Justice As Congregational Necessity p. 79
Great Faith: The Centurion's Example p. 280

H

Have You Been Under a Fig Tree Lately? p. 215
Have You Been Under A Fig Tree Lately? p. 215
Hawkes's Imprisonment and Condemnation p. 159
Historical Context: The Marian Persecutions p. 154
Historical Pattern of Refusing to Hear p. 15
How Much Do You Value Death? p. 231, p. 232
How to Increase Faith p. 283

I

Illegalities and Predetermined Verdict p. 187

Inseparable Truths: Reconciliation and Condemnation p. 66
Introduction and Prayer Requests p. 11
Introduction and Scripture Reading p. 151, p. 183, p. 215, p. 249
Introduction and Text p. 347
Introduction: Faith as God's Gift p. 269
Introduction: Four Fearful Words p. 135
Introduction: God of Second Opportunities p. 115
Introduction: Justice Beyond Civil and Personal Spheres p. 79
Introduction: The Certainty of Death p. 165
Introduction: The Displeased Prophet p. 305
Introduction: The Importance of Reservations p. 25
Introduction: The Jews Crucified Christ p. 197
Introduction: The Meaning of 'Left Behind' p. 45
Introduction: The Mutual Feeling p. 327
Introduction: The Question of Marking Iniquities p. 287
Introduction: The Strange Question of Valuing Death p. 232
Introduction: The Stubbornness of Man p. 98
Introduction: The Two Sides of Witnessing p. 59

J

Jesus as the Messiah: Prophet, Priest, and King p. 200
Jesus' Confession and the Charge of Blasphemy p. 193
Jesus' Testimony of Nathanael p. 222
Jonah Counted Faithful by God p. 116
Judgment Begins at the House of God p. 85

L

Left Behind p. 43
Little Faith in Scripture p. 275
Loving Enemies vs. Hating God's Enemies p. 340

M

Man's Inability to Turn Himself p. 99
Ministries of Reconciliation and Condemnation p. 320
Misconception 1: Desire for the Wicked's Salvation p. 331
Misconception 2: Separating the Sinner from His Sin p. 334

Modern Application: Committing the Same Sin p. 212
Motives for Witnessing: God's Glory vs. Results p. 63

N

Nathanael's Skepticism and the Prophecy of Nazareth p. 220
Nineveh's Repentance and God's Response p. 127
No Fellowship Between Righteous and Wicked p. 330

O

Obedience as the Proof of True Hearing p. 13

P

Paul's Dilemma: To Depart or to Remain p. 240
Paul's Perspective: To Die is Gain p. 234
Paul's Physical Marks for Christ p. 288
Paul's Readiness and Reward p. 237

Q

Quotes from Puritans and Others on the Value of Death p. 244

R

Reason 1: God's Sovereignty Ordains Death p. 168
Reason 2: Death Results from Sin p. 173
Reason 3: Death Prepares for the Eternal State p. 175
Reasons We Devalue Death p. 236
Rejecting the Kingship of God Is Rejecting His Person p. 206
Responsibility vs. Ability p. 103

S

Samson's Unique Calling as a Nazirite p. 45
Samson's Violations of His Vow p. 46
Second Opportunities p. 115
Second Reason: Goodness Increases Condemnation p. 358
Second Reason: Not Perceiving the Graciousness of Our Savior p. 264
Seven Lessons from Jonah p. 324
Seven Nations God Spoke Against p. 140
Step One: Conforming to the Wicked p. 48
Step Three: Confiding in the Wicked p. 53

Step Two: Consorting with the Wicked p. 52
Stigma as Reproach and the Physical Effects of Sin p. 289

T

Testimony Against the Unbelieving p. 73
The Believer's Duty to Restore the Fallen p. 119
The Believer's Struggle and Resolution in Psalm 73 p. 359
The Calling of the First Disciples p. 219
The Changed Charges Before Pilate p. 195
The Church as One Body with One Mind, Mouth, Motive, and Mission p. 81
The Church's Duty to Proclaim and Execute Justice p. 87
The Church's Responsibility to Uphold God's Judgment p. 87
The Command to Be a Witness p. 62
The Consequences of God's Departure p. 54
The Consequences of Neglecting Justice p. 80
The Danger of Bitterness and Anger Toward God p. 306
The Deception of Self-Repentance p. 101
The Declaration of Fact: Salvation Belongs to the Lord p. 111
The Desire of Faith: God's Shining Face p. 109
The Directed Favor: Appeal to God p. 105
The Displeased Prophet p. 305
The Displeased Prophet - Jonah Series - Part 4 of 4 p. 305
The Exaltation of Christ Proves His Kingship p. 202
The Extent of God's Forgiveness p. 292
The Fantasies of the Wicked p. 31
The Feeling Is Mutual p. 327
The Fig Tree and Divine Knowledge p. 223
The Furtherance of the Gospel Through Suffering p. 237
The Goodness of God Increases the Condemnation of the Wicked p. 358
The Gourd and the Worm: A Lesson in Priorities p. 316
The Jews' Declaration: 'We Have No King but Caesar' p. 207
The Ladder of Genesis 28 and Greater Things p. 226
The Law of Sowing and Reaping p. 291
The Martyrdom and the Signal p. 160
The Martyrdom of Thomas Hawks p. 151

The Meaning of 'Counted' (Hegeomai) p. 117
The Meaning of Condemnation p. 184
The Meaning of Martyrdom p. 152
The Necessity of Preaching p. 312
The Necessity of Preaching God's Word p. 121
The Need for Personal, Not Just Circumstantial, Change p. 106
The Old Covenant as a Ministry of Condemnation p. 185
The Other Side of Witnessing p. 59, p. 65
The Outcome of Biblical Justice: Restoration and Forgiveness p. 93
The Overwhelming Flood of Judgment p. 36
The Parable of the Two Debtors p. 256
The Pharisee and the Sinful Woman Contrasted p. 251
The Physical, Mental, and Emotional Consequences of Sin p. 287
The Power of Small Faith p. 271
The Problem of Small Love for God p. 250
The Problem of Wicked Prosperity p. 347
The Prosperity of the Wicked as Fattening for Slaughter p. 32
The Rechabites' Obedience vs. Judah's Disobedience p. 17
The Repeated Need for Turning p. 107
The Reservation for the Righteous p. 38
The Reservation with Death p. 26
The Resurrection Guarantees Both Reservations p. 40
The Root of Enmity in Genesis 3:15 p. 328
The Scars of Sin p. 287
The Second Application p. 180
The Significance of Figs in the Bible p. 216
The Sin Defined: Refusing to Hear God's Word p. 12
The Sin Every Christian Commits p. 11
The Source of Samson's Strength p. 47
The Sting of Death Removed for Believers p. 178
The Unjust Condemnation of Jesus p. 186
The Word 'Damnation' in Scripture p. 186
The World's Hatred vs. God's Opposition p. 136
Thomas Hawkes's Arrest and Trial p. 157

Two Reasons As To Why You Do Not Love The Lord Jesus As You Should p. 249

Two Reasons Why You Don't Love The Lord As You Should p. 249

Two Types of Hearing p. 12

W

We Must Be Turned p. 97, p. 98

Why Good Things Happen to Bad People p. 347

Why Jonah Was Angry p. 309

Y

You Must Die p. 165

Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.

Genesis

Genesis 3:15 p. 207, p. 328

Genesis 6:3 p. 69

Genesis 15 p. 129

Genesis 28 p. 226

Genesis 28:10 p. 226, p. 227

Exodus

Exodus 33:20 p. 176, p. 177

Exodus 34 p. 30, p. 99

Exodus 34:11 p. 49

Leviticus

Leviticus 5:1 p. 193

Leviticus 24 p. 195

Numbers

Numbers 6 p. 45

Numbers 6:24 p. 111

Numbers 16 p. 73

Numbers 17 p. 73

Numbers 17:7-8 p. 60

Numbers 17:8 p. 73, p. 74

Numbers 20 p. 216

Numbers 23 p. 130

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 7:1 p. 49, p. 50

Deuteronomy 17:7 p. 91

Deuteronomy 18 p. 201

Deuteronomy 22 p. 324

Deuteronomy 31 p. 168, p. 169

Deuteronomy 31:14 p. 165, p. 181
Deuteronomy 31:17 p. 48
Deuteronomy 32 p. 168, p. 169
Deuteronomy 32:35 p. 149

Joshua

Joshua 1:1-2 p. 181, p. 182
Joshua 13:1 p. 180, p. 181

Judges

Judges 6 p. 314
Judges 14 p. 51, p. 52
Judges 14:1 p. 48, p. 49
Judges 16 p. 43, p. 46, p. 47, p. 52
Judges 16:1 p. 52
Judges 16:1-21 p. 43
Judges 16:28 p. 47
Judges 16:5 p. 47
Judges 16:6 p. 53, p. 54

1 Samuel

1 Samuel 2:30 p. 343
1 Samuel 8 p. 207, p. 211
1 Samuel 8:4-8 p. 206
1 Samuel 8:7 p. 210, p. 211
1 Samuel 12:12 p. 206
1 Samuel 12:20 p. 206
1 Samuel 15 p. 13
1 Samuel 15:22 p. 13
1 Samuel 15:22-23 p. 14
1 Samuel 25 p. 216, p. 217

1 Kings

1 Kings 11:4 p. 50

2 Kings

2 Kings 8:7-15 p. 310

2 Kings 20 p. 217

2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles 15 p. 48
2 Chronicles 36:15 p. 15, p. 315

Job

Job 7:1 p. 26, p. 168
Job 7:6 p. 171
Job 11 p. 99
Job 14 p. 169
Job 14:5 p. 26, p. 27
Job 21:30 p. 31

Psalm

Psalm 1:1 p. 50
Psalm 4 p. 109, p. 110
Psalm 4:3 p. 51
Psalm 5 p. 110, p. 335, p. 336
Psalm 7 p. 138
Psalm 7:11 p. 334, p. 335
Psalm 10 p. 31, p. 361
Psalm 10:11 p. 31
Psalm 11 p. 336
Psalm 17 p. 358
Psalm 21 p. 29, p. 30, p. 139, p. 341
Psalm 22 p. 81, p. 82
Psalm 23:4 p. 161
Psalm 25 p. 329
Psalm 25:14 p. 54
Psalm 32:1-2 p. 224
Psalm 34 p. 329
Psalm 35 p. 81, p. 82
Psalm 37 p. 30, p. 345
Psalm 37:20 p. 34
Psalm 38 p. 262

Psalm 49 p. 27
Psalm 50 p. 90
Psalm 52:7 p. 33
Psalm 55 p. 138
Psalm 58:3 p. 100, p. 101
Psalm 68 p. 29, p. 30
Psalm 69 p. 342
Psalm 72 p. 359, p. 360
Psalm 73 p. 32, p. 33, p. 343, p. 344, p. 359, p. 360, p. 363, p. 364
Psalm 80 p. 99, p. 103, p. 105, p. 106, p. 107, p. 109, p. 110
Psalm 80:1-19 p. 97
Psalm 80:3 p. 109, p. 111
Psalm 81 p. 344
Psalm 90 p. 170, p. 359, p. 360
Psalm 97 p. 329
Psalm 97:10 p. 343
Psalm 103 p. 292
Psalm 104 p. 323, p. 352
Psalm 104:11-13 p. 352
Psalm 107 p. 353
Psalm 110:3 p. 333
Psalm 115 p. 285
Psalm 115:3 p. 308
Psalm 116 p. 234
Psalm 130 p. 264, p. 265, p. 266, p. 287
Psalm 130:4 p. 291
Psalm 139 p. 342

Proverbs

Proverbs 3:31 p. 363
Proverbs 5 p. 52, p. 289, p. 290
Proverbs 6 p. 337
Proverbs 8 p. 211, p. 212, p. 337
Proverbs 8:36 p. 107
Proverbs 10:16 p. 338, p. 339

Proverbs 10:20 p. 338, p. 339
Proverbs 10:27 p. 170
Proverbs 11:23 p. 338, p. 339
Proverbs 11:28 p. 33
Proverbs 11:4 p. 33
Proverbs 14:12 p. 107
Proverbs 15 p. 228
Proverbs 15:26 p. 339
Proverbs 15:8-9 p. 339
Proverbs 16 p. 36, p. 37
Proverbs 21 p. 344, p. 345
Proverbs 21:27 p. 339
Proverbs 21:4 p. 339
Proverbs 22:13 p. 350, p. 351
Proverbs 23:17 p. 363
Proverbs 29 p. 328, p. 329, p. 330
Proverbs 29:27 p. 327
Proverbs 50 p. 301

Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 6 p. 233
Ecclesiastes 7:1 p. 233
Ecclesiastes 12:11 p. 233

Song Of Solomon

Song Of Solomon 5:6 p. 54, p. 55
Song Of Solomon 6:10 p. 54, p. 55

Isaiah

Isaiah 1 p. 260
Isaiah 1:3 p. 17
Isaiah 5:20 p. 349
Isaiah 11 p. 221
Isaiah 26:3 p. 300, p. 302
Isaiah 38 p. 292
Isaiah 38:1 p. 166

Isaiah 43 p. 293
Isaiah 44 p. 62
Isaiah 45 p. 79, p. 80
Isaiah 46:10 p. 308
Isaiah 53:3 p. 343
Isaiah 53:6 p. 107
Isaiah 55 p. 37
Isaiah 59 p. 112
Isaiah 64 p. 260
Isaiah 65:12 p. 34
Isaiah 65:2 p. 252

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:7 p. 70
Jeremiah 7:25-26 p. 15
Jeremiah 8 p. 102, p. 103
Jeremiah 8:5 p. 103
Jeremiah 11:7 p. 16
Jeremiah 13 p. 11, p. 12
Jeremiah 13:1-11 p. 11
Jeremiah 13:10 p. 14, p. 15
Jeremiah 13:11 p. 22
Jeremiah 13:23 p. 100
Jeremiah 13:7 p. 21, p. 22
Jeremiah 14 p. 15
Jeremiah 16:12 p. 23
Jeremiah 21 p. 140, p. 146
Jeremiah 21:11-14 p. 135
Jeremiah 22 p. 99
Jeremiah 23 p. 121, p. 122, p. 123
Jeremiah 25:3-4 p. 16
Jeremiah 26:4-5 p. 16
Jeremiah 29 p. 16
Jeremiah 31 p. 293
Jeremiah 31:18 p. 113

Jeremiah 35 p. 17, p. 18
Jeremiah 35:13 p. 19
Jeremiah 35:14 p. 20
Jeremiah 35:5-19 p. 18
Jeremiah 36 p. 20, p. 21
Jeremiah 36:20 p. 21
Jeremiah 37 p. 147
Jeremiah 44 p. 265
Jeremiah 50 p. 141
Jeremiah 51:24 p. 142

Lamentations

Lamentations 3 p. 139
Lamentations 4:6 p. 86

Ezekiel

Ezekiel 20:32 p. 51
Ezekiel 24 p. 260, p. 261
Ezekiel 26:1 p. 142
Ezekiel 28:20 p. 142, p. 143
Ezekiel 29:10 p. 143
Ezekiel 30 p. 147
Ezekiel 33:14-15 p. 129
Ezekiel 39 p. 143
Ezekiel 39:3 p. 148

Daniel

Daniel 9 p. 199, p. 200

Hosea

Hosea 1:6 p. 109
Hosea 4:12 p. 319
Hosea 5 p. 54, p. 55
Hosea 5:5 p. 55
Hosea 8:9 p. 100

Amos

Amos 4 p. 16, p. 17

Amos 7:17 p. 166

Jonah

Jonah 1 p. 316

Jonah 2:9 p. 207

Jonah 3:1 p. 116

Jonah 3:1-10 p. 115

Jonah 3:1-2 p. 121

Jonah 4 p. 316

Jonah 4:1-11 p. 305

Micah

Micah 4:1-4 p. 218

Micah 6:8 p. 79

Micah 7 p. 293

Nahum

Nahum 1 p. 30

Nahum 1:1-3 p. 25

Nahum 1:6 p. 37

Nahum 2:13 p. 144, p. 145

Nahum 3:7 p. 129

Habakkuk

Habakkuk 1:1-4 p. 81

Habakkuk 1:13 p. 351

Zephaniah

Zephaniah 2:13 p. 129

Zechariah

Zechariah 3:1 p. 296

Zechariah 4:6 p. 55, p. 56

Zechariah 11:4 p. 34

Matthew

Matthew 2 p. 220
Matthew 2:23 p. 220
Matthew 5 p. 276
Matthew 5:1 p. 276
Matthew 5:22 p. 186
Matthew 5:8 p. 176, p. 177
Matthew 6 p. 269, p. 275, p. 276, p. 277, p. 278
Matthew 6:30 p. 275, p. 276
Matthew 6:6 p. 229
Matthew 8:26 p. 275
Matthew 9:18 p. 274, p. 275
Matthew 10 p. 272, p. 273
Matthew 10:18 p. 74
Matthew 11:27 p. 225
Matthew 13 p. 270
Matthew 14:31 p. 275
Matthew 16 p. 226
Matthew 16:8 p. 275
Matthew 17:19 p. 271, p. 272
Matthew 22:34 p. 188
Matthew 23:14 p. 186
Matthew 24:14 p. 61
Matthew 26:59 p. 189

Mark

Mark 4 p. 270
Mark 6:11 p. 74
Mark 12:40 p. 186
Mark 13:9 p. 74
Mark 14 p. 188, p. 191, p. 195
Mark 14:44 p. 202
Mark 14:53 p. 187
Mark 14:55 p. 189

Mark 14:55-64 p. 183
Mark 14:61 p. 194

Luke

Luke 1 p. 212
Luke 1:68 p. 192
Luke 6:26 p. 137
Luke 6:46 p. 14, p. 304
Luke 6:47-49 p. 14
Luke 7 p. 265
Luke 7:30 p. 75
Luke 7:36-50 p. 249
Luke 7:39 p. 253
Luke 8 p. 270
Luke 11 p. 76
Luke 12 p. 276, p. 277, p. 278
Luke 12:1 p. 276
Luke 12:28 p. 275, p. 276
Luke 17:5 p. 271
Luke 18 p. 252
Luke 19:27 p. 139, p. 140
Luke 20:38 p. 232
Luke 20:47 p. 186
Luke 23 p. 195
Luke 24:39 p. 176
Luke 24:48 p. 62

John

John 1 p. 217, p. 223, p. 226
John 1:43-51 p. 215
John 1:7-8 p. 61
John 2:19 p. 60
John 3:18 p. 67
John 3:18-19 p. 184, p. 185
John 3:36 p. 67

John 4 p. 91, p. 92
John 5 p. 194
John 5:16 p. 198
John 5:22-23 p. 28
John 6 p. 334, p. 335
John 6:44 p. 354, p. 355
John 8:29 p. 300, p. 301
John 10:27 p. 14
John 11 p. 162, p. 179, p. 189
John 14:21 p. 210
John 15 p. 136
John 15:25 p. 199, p. 200
John 15:5 p. 55, p. 56
John 17 p. 203
John 18:1-2 p. 225
John 18:36 p. 197
John 19 p. 206
John 19:11 p. 156, p. 157, p. 198
John 19:14 p. 197, p. 198
John 19:15 p. 207
John 20:30-31 p. 204

Acts

Acts 1 p. 62, p. 63
Acts 1:6 p. 212
Acts 2 p. 202, p. 203
Acts 2:22 p. 199, p. 200
Acts 2:23 p. 198
Acts 2:36 p. 202, p. 203, p. 204
Acts 2:47 p. 64
Acts 3:16 p. 204
Acts 4 p. 188, p. 208
Acts 4:10 p. 198
Acts 4:12 p. 208
Acts 4:26 p. 199, p. 200

Acts 5:29 p. 210
Acts 5:30-31 p. 204, p. 291
Acts 5:31 p. 204
Acts 7:44 p. 60
Acts 7:52 p. 198, p. 199
Acts 10 p. 62, p. 63
Acts 10:38-39 p. 198
Acts 10:42 p. 28
Acts 10:43 p. 61
Acts 14:17 p. 60, p. 61, p. 353
Acts 15 p. 130
Acts 16:23 p. 202
Acts 17 p. 28, p. 40, p. 52, p. 53
Acts 17:30-31 p. 27, p. 28
Acts 17:4 p. 52, p. 53
Acts 24:16 p. 284, p. 285

Romans

Romans 1 p. 205
Romans 1:1-4 p. 61
Romans 1:18 p. 335
Romans 1:3-4 p. 28, p. 205
Romans 1:6 p. 334
Romans 1:9 p. 153
Romans 2 p. 354
Romans 2:4 p. 354, p. 355
Romans 3:1-2 p. 12
Romans 3:10-12 p. 174
Romans 5:10 p. 139
Romans 5:12 p. 173, p. 184
Romans 5:16 p. 184
Romans 5:18 p. 184
Romans 6:23 p. 174, p. 175
Romans 6:6 p. 262
Romans 7:12 p. 80, p. 81

Romans 7:24 p. 262
Romans 8 p. 228, p. 297, p. 299
Romans 8:29 p. 243
Romans 8:6-8 p. 339
Romans 9 p. 39
Romans 9:4-5 p. 12
Romans 10 p. 283
Romans 12 p. 49
Romans 12:1-2 p. 242
Romans 12:2 p. 49
Romans 15 p. 82

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 2 p. 41
1 Corinthians 5 p. 89, p. 91, p. 92
1 Corinthians 5:4-5 p. 91
1 Corinthians 5:7 p. 60
1 Corinthians 6:18 p. 289
1 Corinthians 7:14 p. 158, p. 159
1 Corinthians 15:2 p. 299
1 Corinthians 15:33 p. 50
1 Corinthians 15:40 p. 177
1 Corinthians 15:50 p. 175, p. 176

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 2 p. 321
2 Corinthians 2:14-15 p. 60
2 Corinthians 3:9 p. 185
2 Corinthians 5 p. 176, p. 241
2 Corinthians 5:1 p. 162, p. 163, p. 241
2 Corinthians 7:12 p. 92
2 Corinthians 10:5 p. 300
2 Corinthians 11:23 p. 288
2 Corinthians 12:21 p. 91

Galatians

Galatians 6 p. 288

Galatians 6:1 p. 120

Galatians 6:7-8 p. 291

Ephesians

Ephesians 1 p. 203, p. 265, p. 266

Ephesians 1:3 p. 337, p. 338

Ephesians 1:7 p. 292

Ephesians 2 p. 331, p. 332

Ephesians 2:8-9 p. 270

Ephesians 4:12 p. 82

Ephesians 4:16 p. 82

Ephesians 4:4 p. 82

Ephesians 5:1 p. 80

Philippians

Philippians 1 p. 234

Philippians 1:12-26 p. 231

Philippians 2:5 p. 300

Philippians 3 p. 235

Philippians 3:6 p. 251

Colossians

Colossians 1:10 p. 80

Colossians 1:14 p. 292

Colossians 1:21 p. 139

Colossians 3 p. 250

Colossians 3:15 p. 82

1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 2:10 p. 80

1 Thessalonians 2:5 p. 153

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 1:12-13 p. 117

1 Timothy 4:7 p. 284, p. 285

1 Timothy 5:20 p. 91
1 Timothy 6:17 p. 33

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 2 p. 29
2 Timothy 3:16-17 p. 167, p. 168

Hebrews

Hebrews 2:14-15 p. 162, p. 241
Hebrews 3:5 p. 60
Hebrews 4 p. 228
Hebrews 4:14-15 p. 60
Hebrews 9:27 p. 26, p. 168
Hebrews 10 p. 35, p. 36, p. 185
Hebrews 11 p. 70, p. 273
Hebrews 11:32 p. 273
Hebrews 11:36-38 p. 71
Hebrews 11:37 p. 72
Hebrews 11:6 p. 270
Hebrews 12:1 p. 153
Hebrews 13:15 p. 364
Hebrews 13:5 p. 60, p. 161, p. 162

James

James 1:13-14 p. 19
James 2:10 p. 173
James 4:17 p. 23
James 4:6 p. 139
James 4:7 p. 298
James 5 p. 34, p. 35

1 Peter

1 Peter 1:3 p. 41, p. 42
1 Peter 2:23 p. 331
1 Peter 3 p. 70
1 Peter 4:17 p. 87

1 Peter 5:5 p. 139
1 Peter 5:9 p. 298

2 Peter

2 Peter 2 p. 35, p. 38, p. 70, p. 320

1 John

1 John 1 p. 19, p. 20
1 John 2 p. 210, p. 297
1 John 3 p. 258
1 John 3:2 p. 177
1 John 5:3 p. 210
1 John 5:4 p. 298

Jude

Jude 1 p. 35

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

Your companion study guide

Romans: Sin, Judgment, and Gospel Foundations

Follow the Scripture references, reflect on each lesson, and use the written-response space to apply what you learn.



Scan to open the matching study guide

Downloadable PDF | 8.5 x 11 inches
No sign-in required

studyguides.weaverbiblecollege.com

If you cannot scan the code, visit the address above and search for this book by title.