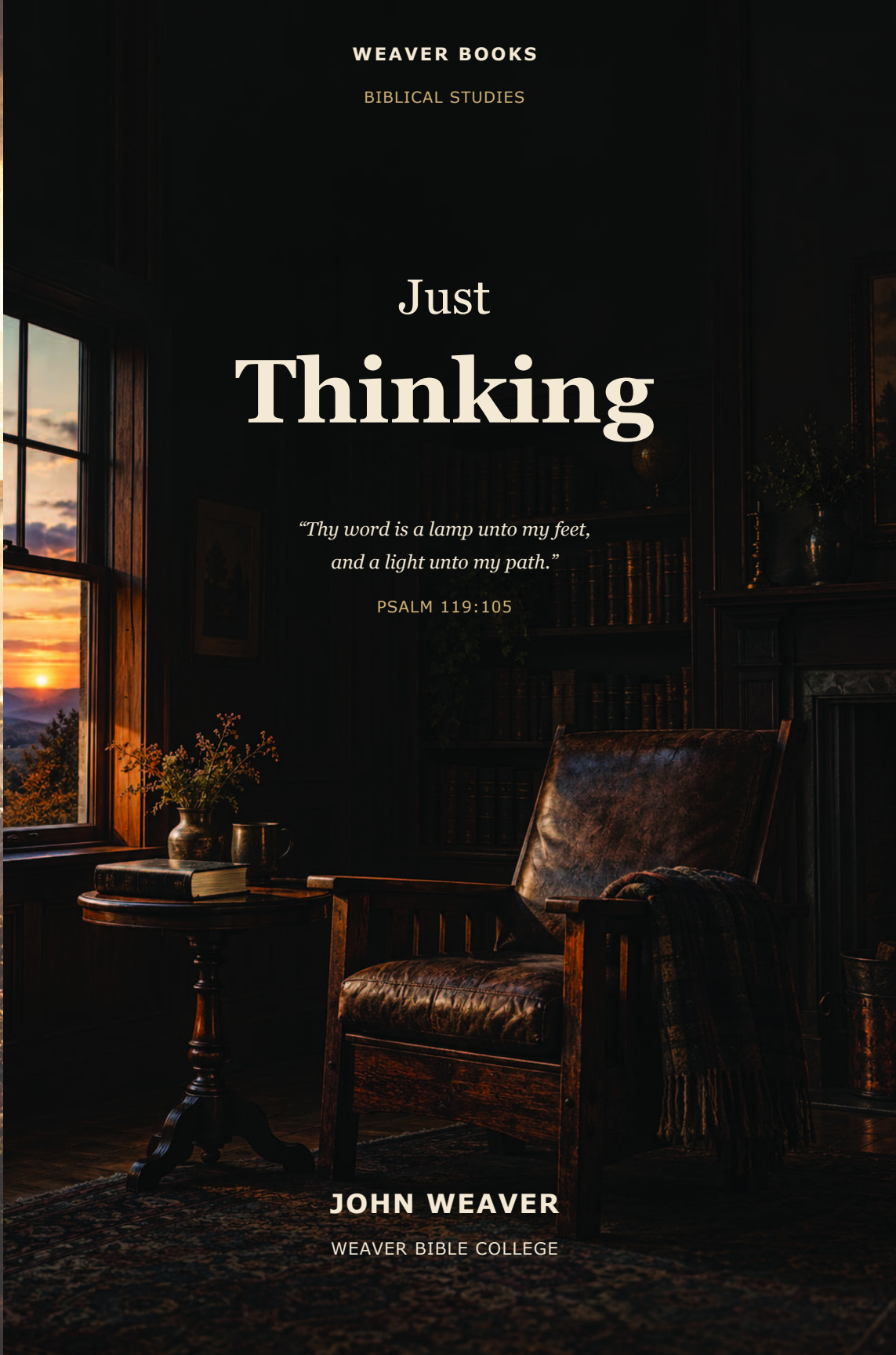
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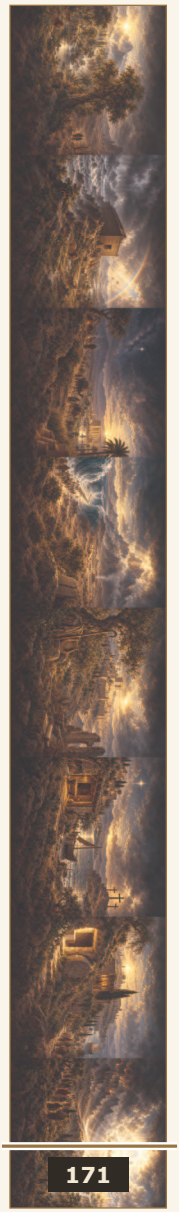
*"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,*
*and a light unto my path."*

PSALM 119:105



**JOHN WEAVER**

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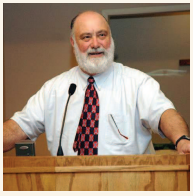
*I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.*

**PSALM 119:15**

Reflection on death and eternity gives urgency to the present life. John Weaver considers the believer's hope, the reality of judgment, conscience, and the wonder of forgiveness. These messages encourage serious thought about what it means to know God and how that knowledge should shape the time entrusted to us.

*"No one is prepared to live until he is prepared to die, since we do not know the time of our death nor the means of our death."*

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.



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CHAPTER 1

# Just Thinking

*Part One of Two*

## Introduction: The Call to Muse

Psalm 143 and verse 5. Psalm 143 verse 5. Notice David said, "I remember the days of old. I meditate on all thy works. I muse on the work of thy hands." Note the phrase, "I muse on the work of thy hands." Let me begin by saying that this message today is actually going to be in two parts. I only have two points, and I'm only going to be able to cover one point today. So it's going to be absolutely necessary that you hear the second point next week. But the title of the message is "Just Thinking." And I think you will see the impact of that just shortly. David said, "I remember the days of old, I meditate on all thy works, I muse on the work of thy hands." Thinking is something that most folks do very little. In fact, we'd much rather be amused than to think. The Hebrew word "muse" literally means to study, to think, to ponder, to meditate, to concentrate upon and commune upon.

Most of you know, especially in Greek, and it's true in English as well, that in Greek if you take the alpha, which is equivalent to our

letter A, and you put it in front of a word, it negates it. Same way with English. So you take the word "muse," and you put the alpha or the A in front of it, and you have "amuse." Thus, when you think about amusement, it means that you do not study, you do not think, you do not ponder, you do not meditate, you do not concentrate. There's usually no deep thinking in amusement parks. I mean, you just sit there and ride or do whatever you want to do. And I hope you know that TV is amusement as well. Most of us, if we watch a TV program, we never think. We just sit there and absorb everything that is there without thought, without meditation, without real concentration upon it. David said, "I muse on the work of thy hands." That is, I really, genuinely think and meditate upon the work of thy hands.

## The Works of God's Hands: Creation, Providence, Redemption

When you think about the work of God's hands, one of the first areas that you think about is creation. This world is indeed the work of God's hands. Psalm 95:5 says, "The sea is His, and He made it, and His hands formed the dry land." Psalm 102:25 says, "Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands." In Psalm 119:73, David said, "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments."

Here is creation, and clearly we could think a lot about creation because it is indeed the work of God's hands. The Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Very obviously, creation is the work of God's hands. But then secondly, providence is also the work of God's hands. It is in God's providence that He marvelously and miraculously supplies all of our needs. He makes the sun to rise upon the just and the unjust, and sends the rain upon the just and the unjust alike. Psalm 37:23 tells us, "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he

delighteth in his way." That is the providence of God in leading, guiding, and directing.

Psalm 139:9–10 says, "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." This shows the providential leadership of God. God's providence sustains us, preserves us, protects us, leads us, and supplies all of our needs. In Psalm 92:4, David says, "For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands." The work of God's hands is not only in creation, but in providence as well.

God is the one who opens doors and closes doors. God is the one who gives us victory and allows us to succeed. So David said, “I will triumph in the works of thy hands.”

Thirdly, there is the work of God in redemption. Without turning there, if you were to read Ephesians chapter 1, verses 1–14—which, by the way, is one sentence in the Greek and the longest sentence in the Greek New Testament—you would find the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in redemption. We could sit here literally all day talking about and meditating upon the work of God’s hands in creation, providence, and redemption. But I want to point out a couple of areas and then concentrate on one where most of us never think or muse.

## God's Work in Truth and Judgment

Another area upon which we do not often muse is the work of God’s hand in truth and judgment. Do you realize that God not only protects His truth, but also preserves it—even from wicked generations? Psalm 12:6–7 says, “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” Now we are talking about God’s Word. Then verse 7 says, “Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.” God is going to protect and preserve His Word. He is going to make sure that His truth is conveyed, and wicked men are not going to destroy it.

One of my favorite stories is about Voltaire, the noted French infidel. Voltaire said that within a hundred years after his death,

Christianity and the Bible would be extinct. Within just a few years after his death, the Bible Society purchased his house, set up printing presses, and printed and distributed millions of Bibles from Voltaire's house. Very obviously, Voltaire is extinct.

I also like Nietzsche, the German philosopher who started "God is Dead." In fact, he wrote, "God is Dead" after Nietzsche was dead and buried. It is "God is Dead"—signed, Nietzsche. Someone slipped out to the graveyard and wrote, "Nietzsche is dead"—signed, God.

God is going to protect His Word. God is going to preserve His Word. We are still talking about the works of God's hands. Psalm 111:7 says, "The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure." So God certainly acts in providence to preserve and protect His Word. God also reveals His truth in providential judgment. Without turning there, you remember that Romans 1:18–20 speaks of the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. When we begin to look at what David says, "I muse on the work of thy hands," we have plenty of areas in which we can muse, concentrate, and think upon.

## The Certainty of Death

But the area that I want to deal with today, and the area that I want to deal with next Sunday, is one in which most of us do very little thinking. It is an area that we do not really want to approach, because it concerns death. The truth of the matter is, we must not only think about our deaths, but we must also think about the deaths of others as well.

We know that we are going to die. We know that others are going to die. There is no escape from that reality. We are told in Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Now I want you to see that the Scriptures speak very pointedly upon this subject. Turn back in your Bibles, first of all, to Job 7:1. Then we will go to Job 14. In Job 7:1, God is talking about man, and notice what He says: "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?"

“Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?” Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? How many of you are going to live forever on this earth and not die? No. Every one of us knows that we are going to die. There is an appointed time. God not only appointed the day of our birth; God also appointed the day of our death.

In Job 14, beginning with verse 1, everyone can identify with this: “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. 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.”

Look at verse 5: “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.” His days are determined. The number of his months is with God. He has appointed our bounds that we cannot pass. God has said to each of us, just as He said to the sea, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.” God has appointed our bounds and the day of our death.

Psalm 90 addresses this issue. David says, “For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.” Since we had company this weekend, I shared many things about our grandchildren when they were little. Why do I no longer have little grandchildren? It is a tale that is told. All our grandchildren are grown. Just thinking about this, where have the last forty-seven years gone? It is now a tale that is told; it passes so quickly.

David continues: “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.” The average life span now is seventy. If we make it to eighty, usually it is trouble and sorrow. I have not seen many eighty-year-olds playing softball, baseball, or basketball and acting like spring chickens. You begin to complain of bursitis, arthritis, and every ache and pain imaginable. In fact, I have discovered muscles in the last few years that I never knew I had. The only reason I discovered them is that they are sore; they hurt. Our life is simply gone so quickly, and it is over. It is like a tale that is told.

And the truth is this: death comes to everyone sooner or later. It does not matter whether you are rich or poor. It does not matter whether you are ignorant or intellectual. It does not matter whether you are young or old, a king or a peasant. Death comes to all.

Now, I want to show you two things. Scripture teaches that sometimes death comes along to us as a peeping tom. Everybody knows what a peeping tom is. A peeping tom, of course, is someone who slips up to your house slowly and stealthily, then looks in your windows, hoping perhaps to see you undressed or something like that. He is a peeping tom. He does not come quickly, and he does not make a lot of noise. He just slips up on you.

Notice what the Bible says in Jeremiah 9:21: “For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.” Notice that death has come up into our windows, like a peeping tom, just slipping up on you and looking in.

But look in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs, chapter 29 and verse 1. Hopefully, many of you can quote this verse. Here is what the Scripture says.

"He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." On the one hand, he talks about death slipping up on you stealthily and slowly. On the other hand, he talks about death coming suddenly, quickly, and violently. It really does not matter if death creeps up on you or if death comes quickly; you are still dead. Death is absolutely sure.

## God's Sovereignty in Death

There is one particular work that we need to muse upon and think upon. This is the thought, the area that most of us really never consider: when God, in His providence, comes for one in death. In Psalm 66, verse 9, the Bible says, talking about God, "Which holdeth our soul in life. And suffereth not our feet to be moved." It is God who holds our soul in life. In Psalm 31, verse 15, David said, "My times are in thy hand."

Think about this. God holds our soul in life, and our times are in God's hand. Since very obviously our soul is in God's hand and our

times are in God's hand, it is God who determines not only when we are born but also when we die. God determines the beginning of our life, and God determines its end.

That is why Scripture says in Job 14, "His days are determined, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." His days are determined; the number of his months are with thee. Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. The days of every person are determined, and the bounds appointed by God cannot be passed.

There is no one who can redeem himself from death. No man. Psalm 49, verse 6, speaks particularly of the wicked, especially the wealthy wicked: "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Ted Kennedy and all of his money could not buy one more day of life, not even another second of life. Wealth cannot redeem a brother from death, nor can it give God a ransom.

What I want us to focus on today is not merely the fact that it is God who comes for us providentially in death. I want you to think deeply, and for a little while, about what we discover immediately after we die. I want this thought to reach deeply into your soul. I have two points.

## The Death of the Sinner

One message I am going to cover this week and one next week. This week, I want you to consider the death of the sinner; next week, the death of the saint.

Let me tell you how this message got started. Someone told me a joke about Ted Kennedy, who had been dead about six months. The individual said, “I’ve got good news concerning Senator Ted Kennedy.” My response was, “Well, what is it?” The person responded, “He’s now been sober for six months.”

Ted Kennedy was known for his drunkenness, his adultery, his whoremongering, and his extreme liberalism. I was told—but do not know this for a fact—that in the biography he had been writing, he was listing all of his illicit relationships. The family, especially after his death, overruled that, and it was being taken out. But Ted

Kennedy was basically against anything and everything that was biblical, holy, righteous, and just.

That joke caused me to think. I went a little further and could not help but wonder: What was Ted Kennedy's response when he was suddenly thrust into the presence of a holy God whom he had violated, sinned against, cursed, and mocked? What was his response when he had to face instantaneously and immediately the sovereign Judge of all the earth?

Have you ever thought about those who die without Christ? What do they discover? You remember in Luke chapter 12—do not turn there—our Lord tells us about the rich farmer. The rich farmer said, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" Then he said, "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

But in Luke 12:20, our Lord said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" God called the man a fool because he had made himself wealthy in this world but was not wealthy toward God. He had taken great pains to become wealthy but had not taken any pains to become godly. What in the world went through that man's mind when he died and faced God?

What will a sinner find when he dies? Think about this. How will he face the God that he ridiculed, denied, disobeyed, and rebelled against? I do not want to be flippant in this message. There are many things that could be said point by point, but there are three basic things that he is going to discover immediately.

Number one is that God is. That is a basic presupposition in Scripture. Nowhere in the Bible does God ever try to prove the existence of God. It simply begins, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The first basic presupposition is that God is. The second is that God has spoken. He is going to find, first of all, that God is, and secondly, that God has spoken, that His Word is absolutely true. The third thing he will find instantaneously is that

he is in an eternity of trouble, suffering, and turmoil, without my enlarging upon any of those things in great detail.

## The Sinner's Discovery: An Angry God

The message today is not meant to be exhaustive. There is no way in the world I can be exhaustive. I want to share some thoughts concerning men and women who died unconverted. What will they instantaneously and immediately face? Upon the death of a sinner, he will face an angry God. Psalm 7:11 says, “God is angry with the wicked every day.” Death does not change the anger of God, nor does it change the nature of God. God is still angry with the wicked. Because of his sins, the sinner will face the righteous anger of God. He will have no standing before God and no one to plead his case.

He will melt away, in one sense of the word, like a snail before the fire. Psalm 76:7 says concerning God, “Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?” Who may stand in His presence once He is angry? The book of Nahum, chapter 1, verses 2 and 3, gives another solemn testimony.

Nahum 1:3 says, “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.” Verse 2 says, “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.

Notice this: God is furious. That right there would be enough to scare the living daylights out of me, to know that I had to face an absolutely holy, righteous, furious God. God will not at all acquit the wicked.

Verse 6 asks, “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.” Can you imagine what a shock it is to a sinner to discover that he must face a righteous, angry, absolutely furious, sovereign, and holy God? He will discover that God is not some senile old man in a rocking chair in heaven who

watched him and winked at his sins very leniently, or smiled at his rebellion. He will find that God is not like that at all. The anger of God will fill him with absolute terror.

How do I know that? Psalm 73:19 says, “How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.” Utterly consumed with terrors. Job 18:11 says, “Terrors shall make him afraid on every side.” Finally, Job 18:14 says, “His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors.” God to the sinner will be the absolute king of terrors—not just death. Death will simply usher him into the presence of that righteous and holy God.

## The Terrors of Remembrance

Now, you've got to ask yourself this question: What kind of terrors will consume the sinner? First of all, I believe there are the terrors of his sins. Think of Luke 16. You remember the rich man who died and said to Abraham concerning Lazarus that he wanted Abraham to send Lazarus, that he might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue; for he was tormented in this flame. Abraham said to the rich man, "Son, remember."

I think, based upon the Word of God, that the sinner is going to understand that God will not at all acquit the wicked. One of the terrors that will strike eternal fear into the hearts of the unsaved is that they will remember, in stinging and striking detail, every sin they ever committed. They will understand its awfulness, its wickedness, and the justice of their punishment. In great, striking detail, every one of those sins will sting their conscience through eternity.

You know what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 56? "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." What makes sin so painful for the unsaved? It stings them like a scorpion because of their sins and wickedness. The horror of dying unsaved is the sting of sin. All those sins the sinner has forgotten will suddenly flood his soul and mind with a thousand stinging stings, like a thousand scorpions smiting him every second. He will understand that each sin merits eternal punishment, and the sinner will have

thousands upon thousands of sins to sting and torment his conscience.

David prayed in Psalm 25 and verse 7, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." What the sinner is going to discover is this: not only does he remember his sins, but God remembers them as well.

Look at Jeremiah 14:10: “Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.”

One of the promises to the righteous is that He will remember our sins and wickedness no more. But to the wicked, God says He remembers their sins. Can you imagine what it must be like for the sinner to stand before a righteous, holy, angry, furious God when He remembers his sins in detail? He knows that God knows every one of those sins, and he understands what God understands: that his sins merit eternal punishment.

Upon a sinner’s death, he is instantaneously thrust into the presence of God, and he understands this. Second, let me emphasize: I believe there is the terror of just remembering—not merely remembering the sins. In Mark 9:44, 46, and 48, our Lord says this three times concerning those who die: “...where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

You can look up just about any commentator, and each one will tell you that the word “worm” refers to man’s conscience. We forget about the word conscience. The Greek word for conscience is “suneidēsis.” “Sun” is a preposition meaning “with,” and “eidēsis” means “to know.” Your conscience is that which you know with. The English word conscience makes the same point: “con” means “with,” and “science” means “to know.” When our Lord says, “where the worm dieth not,” He is speaking of the conscience not dying. John Gill, the Baptist commentator, said on these verses, “By their worm is meant their conscience.”

“For as a worm that is continually gnawing upon the entrails of a man gives him exquisite pain, so the consciences of sinners will be continually flying in their faces, bringing their sins to remembrance,

accusing them, upbraiding them with them, aggravating them, tormenting them for them, filling them with dreadful anguish and misery, with twinging remorses, and severe reflections, and which will never have an end. This will be always the case."

"Conscience will be ever distressing, wracking, and torturing them. It will never cease, nor cease doing this office." The conscience is that part of man that remembers, and it can remember things other than sins. Can you think, just for a moment, of the absolute horror that will pervade the sinner's mind when he remembers every sermon he has ever heard, every Scripture that was ever read, and every prayer that was ever prayed? What must it be like to stand before a righteous, holy, furious God, remembering every sin in detail, and then remembering every sermon, Bible verse, and prayer in exquisite detail—every occasion when you were pleaded with and begged to repent and turn to Christ? Suddenly you realize that all those opportunities you scoffed at and laughed at were refused; you refused to seek God in repentance and faith, to beg Christ for forgiveness, and to ask Him for His gifts. Now you stand eternally condemned with the thought, "What an absolute fool I was."

Can you imagine the horror of remembering—hearing the mother's prayers and the father's instructions? Can you imagine not just remembering the sins and the opportunities, but how the conscience will convict and condemn the sinner who was too busy, even with lawful things? What must it be like for the sinner who died extremely wealthy in this world's goods, but died unsaved?

I was told about a multi-millionaire who died. As one of the pallbearers was helping him to the grave, he turned to another pallbearer and asked, "How much did he leave?" The other pallbearer said, "He left it all."

Look in your Bibles to Luke chapter 14 and verse 16: "Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse."

"The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another

said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

Is it unlawful to buy property? No. How many of you are going to buy property sight unseen? Nobody. This man said, "I bought property and I must needs go see it." Another said, "I bought oxen and I must needs go prove them." How many are going to buy oxen without knowing their condition before you buy them? You would have to be a fool.

Buying property is not unlawful. Buying oxen is not unlawful. Getting married is certainly not unlawful. These people were using lawful things unlawfully. They were using lawful activities to avoid obeying God: "I don't have time. I'm too busy. There's not enough hours in the day." They were using lawful responsibilities to their destruction. Can you imagine the horror that must go through the mind of an individual who remembers his sins and lost opportunities, and also remembers how he spent his life on lawful things while using them unlawfully—too busy to seek the Lord? You know about terror?

## The Terror of Christ's Sovereignty

There is a third area: the terror of fully and finally recognizing the sovereignty of Christ.

Every one of us has heard messages all our lives on the tenderness of Christ: Christ the Lamb of God, Christ the Good Shepherd, Christ the Great Physician, and Christ the Lily of the Valleys. What must it be like for a sinner who has heard these messages about the tenderness of Christ and Christ the Lamb of God, suddenly thrust into His presence, only to find that the Lamb of God is the Lion of the tribe of Judah? What must it be like to discover that the baby he thought of as Christ is now the enthroned, sovereign God who is his Judge?

Do you know why sinners love Christmas? Not just because of money. Who is afraid of a baby? We want to keep Christ in the cradle. We want to keep Christ in the manger. But Christ is not in a cradle, and He is not in a manger. Christ is not on a cross. He is the

enthroned, resurrected, sovereign God of heaven and earth. When sinners die, they will not face a baby. They will not face a lamb. They will face a lion.

John 5:22 says, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” Why? “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” The Father judges no man; He has committed all judgment to the Son so that all men may honor the Son as the sovereign, majestic God of heaven and earth, even as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Philippians 2:9–11 speaks not of Christ’s humiliation, but of His exaltation: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Every sinner will bow before the sovereign Lord Jesus Christ and confess that He is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods, and that they should have loved, worshipped, and honored Him. They did not. It will not save them; it will be to their condemnation. Yet they will still acknowledge and confess. Can you imagine the terror that will fill their souls when they must bow before the One they despised, rejected, and hated, recognizing that He is now their Judge and Sovereign?

I want to share one last thing about what a sinner will find immediately upon his death. He will find only an angry God, terrors, and the sovereignty of Christ. He will also find an angry God who despises him and holds him in the utmost contempt.

## God's Eternal Contempt

Psalm 73 should be enough to make any sinner think. It is the psalm of Asaph. In verse 20, Asaph says, "As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image."

The Hebrew word for "despise" means to scorn, to treat as despicable, vile, and worthless; it means to have contempt for and to despise.

John Gill said of this verse: "Thou shalt despise their image, the image of the earthly man, of sin and of Satan, which is upon both their souls and bodies, which will both be destroyed in hell, or their riches and honour, the vain show in which they have walked, their outward pomp and splendour, which was only a show and an outward appearance, and no solidity in substance, and which will not be esteemed in the great day of account, but despised. The wicked will awake to arise to everlasting shame and contempt."

Psalm 73:20 teaches that when God awakes in judgment, those who have despised God all their lives will be despised by God. This is lex talionis, the law of retribution—the punishment fitting the crime. The crime of those who despise the sovereign God of heaven and earth will be punished with God's eternal detestation and despisement of them.

Think: before their deaths, God caused His sun to shine upon them. He gave them fruitful seasons and rain in due season. He showered them with every physical and material blessing.

He supplied all their needs, yet they rejected Him, refused Him, ignored Him, mocked Him, and despised Him. They continued to despise His riches even though He forbore with them. Let me show you. Turn to Romans chapter 2. Here it is in black and white. Notice verses 4 through 6: "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."

God gave them life, blessings, and everything. What did they do? They despised Him. When they despised Him, He did not instantly smite them down. He forbore with them. He gave them longer and more blessings. When they despised His forbearance, His longsuffering came into play. He still did not smite them down, but continued to bless them. Finally, they were treasuring up wrath to themselves against the day of wrath and the righteous revelation of God. God is going to righteously repay them, rewarding them according to their sins.

Now think with me just for a moment. Please listen. The Bible said, "When thou awakest, O God, thou shalt despise their image." Let us suppose there are no pains or sufferings in judgment and condemnation—no fire, brimstone, or hell; no sting of conscience, remembrance of sin, or remembrance of opportunities. Let us say that nothing happens to the sinner except that God eternally despises them.

To think that a sinner would be eternally hated, abhorred, scorned, despised, treated violently, contemptuously, and worthlessly by a holy, righteous, glorious, sovereign, majestic God of heaven and earth is more than we can even conceive. You must remember God's infinity: God has no limits. You cannot bind God. You must remember God's omnipotence: God is all-powerful. God's hatred, contempt, and despisement for the lost are limitless. His eternity means they will endure forever.

Only God can despise with perfect despisement. Only God can hate with a perfect hatred. How much hatred, how much despisement, how much contempt could a wicked, vile, sinful worm endure? And yet he'll face it for eternity.

You must also remember that God is immutable. He does not change. And so God will throughout eternity cast His disapproval, His contempt, His despisement upon the head and the heads of those who despised Him and His Son. If there were no pains in hell, if there was no hell, if there was nothing else, to be despised by God is a punishment far greater than any mortal can bear.

## Applications: Prepare to Meet God and Warn Others

The first application is this: One of the greatest ploys of sin and Satan is to keep us so busy that we either do not think or do not have time to think. Any normal, rational person knows that he must die, and he must be prepared to die. No one is prepared to live until he is prepared to die, since we do not know the time of our death nor the means of our death.

The wise thing is to prepare to meet our Maker. In Amos 4:12, God said to Israel, "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

You will meet God whether you are prepared or not. Everyone will meet Him, whether we are prepared or not.

The second application is that we should use this message as an encouragement to be witnesses, warning our family and friends. Most of us have never thought or meditated upon what it is like to die without Christ. In Luke 16, the man in hell, lifting up his eyes in torment, said, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus to my brethren, for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Those who are already lost and dead in hell are very missionary-minded.

Abraham said, "If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." And he said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Christ came from the dead, and people still do not believe. He said, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

God has raised His Son from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand. He has preserved and protected His Word. If you will not hear His Word, you too will die lost. When you die, you will discover that God is, that the Bible is the Word of God, and that you will face an angry God, full of terror in your conscience. You will remember every sin and every opportunity. It will strike terror continually through you, and you will be eternally despised by God.

What do sinners understand immediately after their death? They understand they are lost and in for an eternity of pain and suffering. If you are unsaved, you had better seek Christ. Ask God to give you repentance and faith, turn from your sins, and embrace Jesus Christ as He is fully and freely offered in the Gospel. David said, “I muse, I meditate, I think on the work of thy hands,” and one of God's works is His judgment and His providence as He comes for sinners and saints in death.

Let's pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your grace, mercy, and help. O God, awaken us. There are some here, Lord, and some hearing my voice, who may be lost. We know not the day nor the hour of our death, but we know one thing: we must die and meet God. Give us grace to warn our friends and family and encourage them to seek repentance and faith as the free gifts of God,

and salvation as it is only found in Jesus Christ. In Thy name we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

# Just Thinking

*Part Two of Two*

## Introduction and Review

Psalm 143, Psalm 143 and verse 5. And for those who are visiting here today, I'm going to tell you this is the second part of a message that I started last week, which I have entitled, "Just Thinking." I will take just a few moments and review, and then we will take up where we are going to begin today. And let me just say today that I will probably quote most scriptures, I will ask you to turn to some. And the reason I'm going to quote most of them is because the message is rather lengthy. And I just want to make sure that we're able to get all the scriptures in. So Psalm 143 verse 5, David said, "I remember the days of old."

"I meditate on all thy works. I muse on the work of thy hands." Now you remember I told you that the word "muse" means to think, to study, to meditate, to ponder, to concentrate upon. Whenever you take an alpha, which is the first letter in the Greek alphabet, or the "A" in the English, and put it in front of the word, it negates it. So if

the word "muse" means to think, "a-muse" means not to think and not to meditate, not to ponder, not to consider.

And I pointed out we have amusement parks and how TV is nothing but amusement. You can sit there and be like a sponge and never think watching anything and everything. But David said, "I muse on the work of thy hands." And last week, by way of introduction, I pointed out how that creation is the work of God's hands. Certainly there's a lot that you could meditate on creation. Redemption is the work of God's hands. Providence is the work of God's hands. Many areas in which we could think there. However, the one part that I wanted us to consider is the providence of God in the work and in the area of death. That is when He comes for individual saints and sinners in death.

And I took great pains to show you in the scripture where the Bible says that our days are numbered, He's appointed our months, and He's appointed our bounds that we cannot pass. So God's not only ordained the day of our birth, He's also ordained the day of our death. And last week I dealt mainly with the death of the sinner, with the death of the man who dies without Christ. What does he realize when he dies?

What is his first awareness? I was not necessarily talking about the torments of hell or anything like that, but what does he realize? Of course, there are two presuppositions that the Bible clearly teaches. Number one is that God is, because nowhere in the Bible does it try to prove the existence of God. It simply assumes that: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” The second presupposition is that God has spoken. Very obviously, he recognizes that God is and that the Bible is indeed the Word of God.

First, he is going to face an angry God. The Bible says that God is angry with the wicked every day. Death does not change that. God is still the sovereign, righteous, holy God. He is just, and his anger still burns against sin and against sinners. It is just that simple.

Secondly, the sinner would be overcome with terror. There would be the terror of his sins: he would remember each one distinctly and in detail, understanding that each one merited the death penalty, that God knew every sin he had ever committed, and that God is a

holy, just judge. There would also be the terror of remembering all the sermons, all the invitations of the gospel, all the prayers, everything that had ever been prayed, and every time anyone had ever witnessed to him. He would remember those in detail and demonstrate what an absolute fool he was for not seeking God.

He would face God as the judge, especially the Lord Jesus Christ, because God the Father has committed all judgment unto Him. He would view Christ not as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, but as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, now coming in fierce wrath and anger upon his wickedness and sin.

Lastly, he would face an eternity of eternal despisement by God. For the Bible says in Psalm 73 and verse 20, “As a dream when one awakeneth; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.” I dealt with that and showed in detail what it meant to be despised by God.

## Differences in the Death of the Saint

That basically covered the death of the sinner. Today I want us to muse upon the work of God's hands as we consider the death of the saint. Like last week's message, this message cannot be exhaustive. It would take hours, even days, to expound and explain the Scriptures, and still we could not exhaust the teaching of Scripture on these subjects.

Death comes to saint and sinner alike, for the Bible clearly says that the wages of sin is death. The Word of God says it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment. Saints and sinners die alike, but there is indeed a difference in their deaths. That difference is illustrated in Exodus chapter 11, where God put a difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians: “But against any of the children of Israel, not a dog shall move his tongue against man or beast, that you may know that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.”

Saints and sinners die alike, but their deaths certainly are not equal. God places such a difference upon the death of the saints that He says in Psalm 116:15, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” The word “precious” means splendid, honorable,

glorious. Thus, splendid, honorable, glorious is the death of His saints in the eyes of the Lord.

What are some of the differences between the death of the sinner and the death of the saint? First of all, for the child of God, the sting of death has been removed because his sin has been washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ. It is sin that makes death so painful. The sting of death is sin, says the Bible in Romans chapter 7. But 1 John 1:7 says, “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”

We have been cleansed by the blood of Christ. In 1 Peter 1:18–19, the Word of God says, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish.” So, for the child of God, the sting of death has been removed.

Our Lord has taken away our sin. So, for a child of God to die, there is no sting. Secondly, Christ has removed the fear and bondage of death. A child of God should probably say something like this: “I don't want to die, but I'm not afraid to die.” Who wants to die? No one wants to die. But for the child of God, the fear has been taken away.

The Bible says in Hebrews 2:14–15, “For as much 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.” Christ has destroyed not only sin, but also Satan; and in doing so, He has destroyed for us the fear and bondage of death. Death cannot hold the child of God any more than it could hold the Son of God. Our Lord has destroyed the fear of death for the child of God.

Thirdly, Scripture clearly teaches that when we die as believers, we are immediately ushered into the presence of Christ. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:6, “Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we're absent from the Lord.”

“For we walk by faith, not by sight. We're confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” As long as the child of God is in this body, he is absent from the Lord; we are not in His presence. But the apostle Paul says that we are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body. Why? That we might be present with the Lord.

The word “present” is a very interesting word in the Greek. It is the word “endēmeō,” which literally means to be present, to be at home, and to be among one’s own people. If you read the Old Testament, when the Old Testament saints died—men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even Moses and Aaron—you will always find this expression: “and he was gathered unto his own people.” What does that mean? It means he went home.

Death for the child of God is like going home. How many of us are fearful about going home? None of us. How many of us are thankful when we get home? Alice and I travel a lot, and I enjoy traveling, but we are always thankful to be home. That is the way it is for the child of God. Death simply ushers the child of God into the presence of Christ.

Let me show you how firmly the Apostle Paul believed this same truth. In Philippians chapter 1, Paul was in prison and was about to have his head cut off. In fact, that is how Paul died. He was in prison many times. Yet, facing death by beheading, he said, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better”—and you can put in parentheses, “for me.”

“Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” Paul said that, in light of facing an axe and having his head severed from his body, he was in a dilemma and had to make a choice. To depart and be with Christ was far better for him; nevertheless, to abide in the flesh—to continue living—was more needful for them, so he could continue to teach and preach. Here was a desire to depart this life and be with Christ. In John 17:24, Christ, in His high priestly prayer, makes this request to the Father: “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

## What We Will Discover Upon Death

Notice that our Lord prayed that His people would be with Him where He was. Do you think the prayer of Jesus Christ will be unanswered? Of course not. His prayer will be answered because He is indeed the Son of God. Paul said that when we depart this life, we are immediately ushered into the presence of Christ. He had a desire to depart and meet with Christ, which was far better for him. Our Lord has prayed that we would be in His presence.

## Discovery of the Gloriousness of Our Sovereign

What will you and I discover upon our deaths? This message is not exhausted by any stretch of the imagination. I am not even dealing with the joys and lights of heaven. What I want to deal with today are the most provocative thoughts and revealing truths that we will discover immediately upon our death. Remember, when we die, we are immediately ushered into the presence of Jesus Christ. So what will we discover? First of all, we will discover the gloriousness of our sovereign God. Based upon Scripture, I believe we will be absolutely stunned and overwhelmed at the gloriousness of our sovereign God.

Our eyes have not seen, nor have our ears heard the minutest amount of his glory. You remember when the queen of Sheba went to see Solomon? She said in 1 Kings chapter 10 and verse 7, after she had seen all of Solomon's glory—and our Lord acknowledged Solomon's glory—“Consider the lilies of the field,” he said; “even Solomon and all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Solomon had a very glorious reign and a very glorious throne. But when the Queen of Sheba saw it, she said, “Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it, and behold, the half was not told me.” May I say this? We have never even seen nor understood the minutest amount of our Sovereign's glory, much less the half of it.

I believe we will be absolutely so stunned, so overwhelmed. Moses wanted to see the glory of God. In Exodus chapter 33, Moses is talking with the Lord, and he says, “And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.” Notice what God said: “And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious unto whom I will be gracious,

and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me. Thou shalt stand upon a rock, and it shall come to pass while my glory passeth by."

"I will put thee in the cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by. And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen." Moses only saw a minute amount of God's glory. God says, "You can't see me in the flesh and live." It's just that simple. You remember in Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah saw the Lord's glory. He said, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple."

Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord: "Above it stood the seraphim, and each one had six wings. With twain He covered His face, with twain He covered His feet, and with twain He did fly. And He ceased not saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, while the whole earth is full of his glory. And the post of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."

Then Isaiah said, "Woe is me, for I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Woe is me, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." A seraphim had to take a coal from the altar, touch him, and purge him. Notice that Isaiah said, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the glory of God."

Did he see all of it? No. But he saw enough to make him understand what a sinful, wicked wretch he was. Both Ezekiel and the apostle John saw the glory of the Lord, and each fell down as dead. The Lord had to sovereignly lift them up.

It was the hope of the Old Testament saints that they would see God's glory. Job, in all of his suffering, said in Job 19:26, "And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Job was speaking of his resurrected, glorified body. The worms destroyed this body, but there was going to be another one, and he would see God.

Likewise, David said in Psalm 17:15, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, I shall be satisfied when I

awake, in thy likeness." Notice: "I will behold thy face in righteousness."

John 1:18 says, "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Jesus Christ is God incarnate. He has revealed the Father totally, completely, fully. If God the Father appeared on earth, He would appear in and as and through Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ is God.

In John 14, notice what Philip says to Christ: "Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." That will be sufficient—just show us the Father. Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you? And yet thou hast not known me, Philip. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. And how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" What did our Lord say? "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. The Bible says in Colossians 1:15 concerning Christ, "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." In 1 Timothy 3:16, it says, "and without all controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." Jesus Christ is God in the flesh.

Philip saw Him, but we have not seen Him. We have not looked upon Him with our eyes yet. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face, now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known." Right now we see through a glass darkly; in other words, we can make out some things because of the revelation of the Word of God. But then, face to face, we shall know even as we are known. We do not see Him now with our eyes, as Philip did, but the revelation of the Word of God enables us to make out some things concerning Him. Then we shall know fully, totally, and completely.

People have asked, "Pastor, will we know each other in heaven?" My response is this: "You won't be any more stupid there than you are now." Certainly you are going to know each other. We shall know even as we are known. We will know each other fully, totally, and completely.

When we die and leave this veil of sin and sorrow, we will be made completely pure in Jesus Christ. We must remember the blessed

promise that our Lord Himself gave in Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:2, “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.”

Did you hear what I just read? “Beloved, now are we the sons of God. And it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” In other words, we do not totally understand our glorified bodies or what they will be like, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. Why? “For we shall see Him as He is.” Revelation 22 and verse 4 says, “And they shall see His face. And His name shall be in their foreheads.”

Can you muse, think, and ponder for a moment what it will be like to gaze upon the glorious, holy, majestic, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal, infinite, immutable God? Paul sang a hymn of praise to God in 1 Timothy 1:17: “Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory both now and forever. Amen.”

We cannot see Him now, but we shall see Him then, face to face, in all of His splendor and glory. What an overpowering, overwhelming sight and experience it will be when we realize who God really is. We will understand the gloriousness of our Sovereign.

I have heard believers say, “Well, when I get to heaven, the first thing I’m going to do is run up to our Savior and kiss Him.” I have news for you. I believe we will be so overwhelmed, overpowered, and overjoyed that we will probably end up doing as John and Ezekiel did. We will fall at His feet as one dead because of His glory and splendor. I have not seen nor ear heard, not even the minutest amount, of the glory of our Sovereign God. Upon our deaths, we will understand, realize, and recognize the gloriousness of our Sovereign.

## Discovery of the Greatness of Our Sins

Secondly, upon our deaths, I believe, based upon the Word of God, we will discover the greatness of our sins. I am not suggesting by any stretch of the imagination that we will be groaning and moaning over our sins. Certainly, we know that our sins are forgiven and

pardoned; our sins will never, ever condemn us. I am not talking about the condemnation of sin. I am making the point that we will discover the greatness of our sin.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said it like this: “What is this forgiveness of sins? Too often in popular talk, it is supposed that the chief and main thought of the forgiven sinner is that he has escaped from hell.”

Salvation means much more than this, and what it further means is too much kept in the background. Yet I will begin with the rescue from punishment. For if sin be pardoned, the penalty is extinguished. It would not be possible for God to forgive and yet to punish. That would be a forgiveness quite unworthy of God; it would indeed be no forgiveness at all. We are certain that the everlasting punishment of sin declared in Scripture will never happen to the man who is forgiven. When transgression is removed from the soul, the soul stands clear at the bar of God, and there can be no further penalty. “I absolve thee,” says the great Judge, and that carries weight, so that a man who is forgiven is clear of the punishment which he must otherwise have borne. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psalm 32). “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

So if our sins are pardoned, and they are, if our sins are forgiven, and they are, how then will we perceive and discover the greatness of our sin? Please remember, I am not alluding to condemnation at this point. I am talking about discovering the vileness and understanding the wickedness of sin. I believe it is absolutely impossible for us to grasp the greatness and graciousness of our Savior without understanding why He came as our sacrifice and our substitute.

If there was no sin, we would not need a Savior. Why did Jesus Christ come? The answer is to save His people from their sins. Philippians 2 gives a tremendous statement concerning the glory of our Lord and His willingness to lay aside that splendor: “Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus.” “Who being in the form of God,” in other words, He was God, “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” It was not something to be seized and gained.

Our Lord, in all of His splendor and heavenly glory, did not seize and hold on to that and say, “No, no, no, I will not give it up.”

No. He willingly laid aside all that splendor and glory. Look in verse 6: “Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery or something to be seized at to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in likeness of man and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross.” Notice that our Lord willingly laid aside his heavenly splendor and glory and humbled himself.

This passage speaks of the humiliation of Christ. That is when he left glory and became not only man, but a servant, and even went to death on the cross. You say that way meant brother Weaver. The Bible tells us that Christ died for his people. That is true, but you have to ask this question: Why did Christ die for his people? The answer is because of their sin.

Think with me about sin. How little we see and understand the wickedness and vileness of sin. We treat sin so flippantly and lightly that we often countenance and condone it. When God said in Jeremiah 44 and verse 4, speaking about sin, “Oh do not that abominable thing which I hate,” God hates sin. Do we hate sin the way God does? The answer has to be no. In our present state, we pretend to hate sin, yet engage in it. We say we do not wish to sin, yet seek it out. Our sinful natures are inclined to sin and rebellion, even though we are redeemed.

We sin oftentimes without even considering who it is we sin against or who it is we rebel against. We do not understand or grasp the magnitude, evilness, and wickedness of sin in this life. Everyone in this room will recognize that sin destroys homes, lives, families, societies, and nations. Sin brings sorrow and death, yet most of the time we know nothing concerning its foulness and wickedness.

Ralph Venning, an old Puritan, wrote "The Plague of Plagues," a book on Hamartiology, the doctrine of sin. Listen to how he describes sin—a taste of its violence and wickedness:

"God is holy. All holy, only holy, altogether holy, and always holy. So sin is sinful, all sinful, only sinful, altogether sinful, and always

sinful. In my flesh there dwelleth no good thing. As in God there is no evil, so in sin there is no good. God is the chiefest of goods, and sin is the chiefest of evils. And no good can be compared with God for goodness, so no evil can be compared with sin for evil. Sin is contrary to all the names and attributes of God.

"It sets itself in opposition to them all. It deposes the sovereignty of God as much as it lies. It will not that the king of kings should be on the throne and govern this world which he hath made. It was by this instinct that Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I know not the Lord. I recognize no Lord above me. I will not let Israel go.' The voice and language of sin is 'our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us?'

"It was from hints that the Jews of old said, 'we are Lords. We will no more come to thee.' Thus it attempts to dethrone God. It denies God's all sufficiency. If there were not contentment and satisfaction enough to be had in the enjoyment of God, but that vanity and wickedness had more pleasure and profit than he, whose ways are all pleasantness and whose service is the help of man."

Every prodigal who leaves the Father's house says, in effect, it is better to be elsewhere. He challenges the justice of God and dares God to do His worst. He provokes the Lord to jealousy and tempts Him to wrath. He disowns His omniscience: “Pooh,” he says, “God does not see, nor does the Most High regard.” He despises the riches of God's goodness, turns His grace into wantonness, and makes bold with God and sins because grace abounds. In short, sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of His mercy, the jeer of His patience, the slight of His power, and the contempt of His love.

It is also the upbraiding of His providence, the scoff at His promise, and the reproach of His wisdom. It is said of the man of sin, who is made up of sin, “It opposes and exalts itself above all that is called God, and above all that God has called, so that it as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing itself as it were God.”

Now stop and think about this. As awful as you and I can make sin, we still do not understand its ugliness, wickedness, and vileness. We will not truly understand how awful sin was and is until we reach glory. In heaven, we will understand that it was sin that brought the

Son of God from heaven. It was our sin for which He came and died. It was our sin that placed the crown of thorns upon His head, nailed Him to the cross, pierced Him to His side, and caused Him to suffer agony.

Do you realize that the greatest part of our Lord's suffering was not physical, but spiritual? The greatest suffering of our Lord was spiritual, and not physical. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and look at verse 21.

## The Graciousness of Our Savior

I can describe the horrors of crucifixion and show you the physical suffering that our Lord went through. It was horrible. It was bad. But let me show you something far worse. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He,” that is, God the Father, “hath made Him,” that is, God the Son, “to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Have you ever thought for one second what it was like for the sinless Son of God, who never knew sin, never had an inclination toward sin, and never had any desire to sin, to be made sin? All that filth, trash, vileness, and wickedness was dumped upon His holy soul, that He may redeem us from all iniquity.

I believe that when we get to heaven, we will recognize the ugliness and vileness of sin in general, but our sin in particular, when we recognize that Christ died for me, for my sin. Jonathan Edwards said, “Any sin is more or less heinous depending upon the honor and the majesty of the one whom we have offended. Since God is of infinite honor, infinite majesty, and infinite holiness, the slightest sin is of infinite consequence. The slightest sin is nothing less than cosmic treason when we realize against whom we have sinned.”

When we see the greatness and glory of our Sovereign, how can we help but understand the greatness of our sin, which brought Him for our redemption? How can we not understand how it grieved Him, and our rebellion against Him? Thankfully, when we understand the greatness of our sin, it will only heighten our love,

praise, adoration, and worship for such a wonderful, loving, forgiving Lord.

## Discovery of the Graciousness of Our Savior

There is a third thing that we are going to recognize upon our death. Not only the greatness of our Sovereign and the greatness of our sin, but, thirdly, we are going to discover the graciousness of our Savior. Once we understand the glory of our Sovereign, the greatness of our sin, and how we have sinned against Him and hurt Him, we are going to understand that His graciousness is so much better. Isaiah 53:11 says, speaking about Christ, “He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.”

"By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." Two things in this verse really astound me. The first is, "He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." I will be absolutely honest with you: I do not understand how our Lord could be satisfied with such a sinner as I am. But that is what the Bible says. Each redeemed child of God will be a satisfaction for the Son of God.

Look again at verse 11: "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." If we see the glory of our sovereign and understand the greatness of our sins—that it was you and I who hurt Him, sinned against Him, preferred sin above obedience and lust above love—and yet see how He bore our sins and iniquities, then we must recognize His wonderful graciousness. In light of all that, He lovingly, kindly, and graciously pardoned and forgave us.

Certainly, we will better understand Psalm 86:5: "For thou, Lord, art good, ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee." We will understand Psalm 130:4: "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." We will better understand Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The same is said in Hebrews 10:17: "and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." These passages in Hebrews are taken from the covenant in Jeremiah 31:33–34: "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel.

After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts and will be their God and they shall be my people."

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord. For they shall all know Me from the least of them, even to the greatest of them, saith the Lord. And I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more."

Grace is God's unmerited, undeserved, and unearned favor. God kindly and graciously forgave us when He was not obligated to do so. He created us, redeemed us, gave us Christ, regenerated us, converted us, sanctified us, and glorified us—all by His grace.

How can we not recognize His graciousness? Spurgeon wrote, "Besides, beloved, be this always remembered that it is in the application of redemption and the personal pardon of the sinner through the blood of Jesus, that the grace of God is best seen by the sinner. To each one pardon through the Lord Jesus comes not only according to grace, but according to the riches of His grace."

"I can understand that God should forgive you, all of you. I could hear it with full belief. And it would not astonish me, but that He should pardon me. That I should have forgiveness of sins and redemption by the blood, that does astonish me. And I believe that any person under a sense of sin sees more the grace of God in his own salvation than in the salvation of anyone else. He may be quite conscious that he's never been a thief, or a drunkard, or a murderer, and yet when he comes to look at it, he may see reasons why the pardon of sin in his case shouldn't be more remarkable than even in the case of a drunkard, or a thief, or a murderer. There may be elements in his own case which may make him seem to have sinned even more grievously than open transgressors because he sinned against greater light, with less temptation thereto, or with a dire presumption of rebellion against the Most High. That Jesus died is an honorable grace. But that He loved me and gave Himself for me, this is overwhelming grace."

"And makes the heir of heaven say with emphasis, Blessed be God that in Jesus I have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness

of sins according to the riches of His grace." When you and I understand the graciousness of our Savior, we'll probably learn to sing, "Oh, what a Savior. Oh, what a Savior. Oh, hallelujah. His heart was broken on Calvary. His hands were scarred. His side was riven. He gave His life's blood for you and me." We'll learn to sing, "grace, grace, greater than all of our sins."

It will be our song of praise throughout eternity. Stop and think. That grace was given to you. I know that the Apostle Paul said that he was the chief of sinners. But when we see the wickedness and the vileness of our sin and understand it, and we see the graciousness of our Savior in forgiving our sins, we might have a willingness to fight the Apostle Paul for first place. Because we'll recognize what a gracious Savior we truly have. One more thing today. We'll not only discover the gloriousness of our Sovereign, the greatness of our sin, the graciousness of our Savior. But I believe, fourthly, we'll discover the grief of our service.

## Discovery of the Grief of Our Service

What do I mean by that? I mean simply this: I believe that we will be grieved that we have served our Lord so little, loved Him so minutely, sacrificed for Him so infrequently, and given Him such unworthy service. How can we not understand this when we behold His glory, His graciousness, and His goodness? How can we not understand that we should have loved Him with all our heart, mind, soul, body, and being, as He has commanded us? When we see His greatness, glory, and graciousness, can we not understand that He was worthy to be served constantly and continually? Will we not be grieved that we served Him so infrequently and ineffectively? Let me show you.

In Romans 14:10, Paul asks the Roman Christians, “But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?” Then he makes this statement: “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” He is talking about believers, not sinners. Why are you treating your brother so wickedly? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. In other words, we are going to give an account of how we treated each other.

In 2 Corinthians 5:9–10, the apostle says, “Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” I believe the judgment seat of Christ is where we must give an account of our lives and our service. It has nothing to do with our sin and nothing to do with condemnation.

You will remember the parable in which our Lord gave talents to men. When He returned, He called those servants and said, “Give account of thy stewardship.” Here is where we give an account of our stewardship. If you and I were not saved, we would not even be here.

Notice again what the apostle said: “Wherefore we labor,” that is, we are serving Christ, “that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” The word “accepted” literally means well-pleasing. He says that we labor so that we may be well-pleasing unto Christ. Christians should labor that we may please our Lord, and certainly we want to please Him well.

Paul says that everyone will give an account for the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad. The word “bad” in the Greek is phaulos, which literally means worthless or faulty. He is not necessarily talking about our sins here, but whether what we have done is good or worthless. There are plenty of things that you and I do that are not positively sinful, but for all practical purposes, they are absolutely worthless.

They do nothing for the service of Christ or the furtherance of His kingdom. They do nothing for His honor and His glory.

How do you think it would be possible for you and me to understand the gloriousness of our sovereign, the greatness of our sin, and the graciousness of our Savior, and not see the grief of our service? We will be grieved, I believe, that we did not serve Him faithfully, constantly, and continually. How many of us would be pleased right now to give an account to Christ of how we lived this past week? How about the past twenty-four hours?

How many of us will hear the words from His lips that He uttered in Matthew 25:21: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou

hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." What did He say? "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

We have to ask ourselves: Have we used our talents effectively? Have we served Christ faithfully? Have we placed His kingdom and His glory above any and everything else? Have we loved Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, body, and being? Will we be pained to see the expression upon His face when our service, our commitment, and our faithfulness are brought up? I am sure that there will be some regret, some remorse, and even some tears at our lack of service.

You may say, "I didn't think there were going to be any tears in heaven." Revelation 7:17 says, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them into living fountains of waters and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 21:4 says, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

Now here is the question: How can God wipe away tears from our eyes if there are no tears?

Why do you think He is wiping away tears from our eyes? Because we have not loved Him the way He should be loved. We have not served Him the way He should be served. We have not honored Him the way He should be honored. When we die and see His glory, His goodness, and His greatness, how could we not think of our poor, puny lives and how unfaithful we've been, and of how gracious, loving, and kind He's been? When we realize that, it will grieve us. But then there is more grace and more graciousness. Our Lord will wipe away those tears, and there will be no more crying, no more sorrow, and no more death as we enter the eternal state.

## Applications and Conclusion

Now let me make a couple of applications. We should determine in our hearts today that we're going to love Him more, serve Him more, and be more obedient, godly, and holy. We're going to read and

study that Word and find out what God would have us do, so that we may be well pleasing in His sight.

We have to understand that we will give an account for our lives and how we labor for Him. We will stand before Him. Hebrews 6:10 says, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your labor of love, which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister." Isn't it amazing? God graciously and kindly forgets each and every sin, and yet He remembers each and every act of service. Even those who gave a cup of cold water in His name—our Lord remembered them. He forgets our sins, but He remembers our service.

The second application is this: In the present time, we should begin to fill our hearts with all the knowledge of the person and attributes of our glorious Lord, so that we may now have a better grasp of His greatness and His glory.

The more we know Him, the greater our love will be for Him. The greater love we have for Him, the more we will serve Him. Do you know what eternal life is? Do not tell me that eternal life is living forever. If you define eternal life that way, I believe the lost have eternal life, because they are going to live forever in punishment, in hell. Eternal life is not living forever. Although we shall live eternally, our Lord told us exactly what eternal life was in John 17:3: “And this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Eternal life is an intimate relationship with the sovereign God of heaven and earth, through Jesus Christ. He said, “This is eternal life, that they may know Thee.”

Alice and I have been married forty-seven years. I loved her when I married her, but compared to the way I love her today, I did not love her at all when I married her—or at least I did not think I did. The love I have for her now is far greater than when we began. Why? I know her. The more you know someone, the more you love them. This is life eternal, that they may know Thee. If we love our Lord, we should be learning everything about Him that we can, as it is revealed in Scripture.

Have you ever thought of this? In glory, in eternity, we will be forever learning and knowing our gracious, sovereign God, yet never fully comprehending Him.

In glory we will have a perfect mind and perfect understanding. Whatever we learn, we will grasp, know, and understand; we will never forget it. It will be ours. But only God can comprehend God. We are not God, so eternity will be filled with learning and knowing more and more of our gracious, sovereign, and holy God. If you want to get a jump on eternity, you had better start studying now. The more you learn now, the more you will love Him.

What an awakening we will have at our deaths. Our death is nothing more than our passport into glory. When we get there, we shall see Him as He is and understand as we have never understood before: the gloriousness of our Sovereign God, the greatness of our sins, the graciousness of our Savior, and the grief of our service. Therefore, we ought to change now, love Him while we can love Him, serve Him while we can serve Him, and live for His honored glory.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day and recognize how great Thou art, and how sinful, inept, powerless, and often unholy we are. Yet we cry unto Thee, make us holy as Thou art holy. Thou hast commanded us to be so. Help us to love Thee with all our heart, mind, soul, and being; to put Thee first and Thy Word first. Thou didst say, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these things shall be added unto you."

Father, make us more conscious of our lack of service, love, and dedication toward Thee, that we would determine in our hearts today to be Thine and only Thine. We ask for the love of God to be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Give us grace and mercy that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, amen.

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Chapter 2: Just Thinking Part 2 of 2
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