

Seventeenth Annual

# **TRUTH IN LOVE**

LECTURESHIP

Theme:

## **Modern Applications Of Ancient Texts**

May 16-20, 2007

PAUL SAIN, DIRECTOR

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# INTRODUCTION

A lamp unto our feet and a light unto our way is the Word of God (Psm. 119:105); powerful (Rom. 1:16); makes us complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17); an encouragement when life's storms rage around us (Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 10:13); the perfect law (James 1:25) – which should prompt us (along with the Psalmist) to exclaim “*O how love I thy law*” (Psm. 119:97); I will not forget it (Psm. 119:109, 153), and, it is my delight (Psm. 119:70, 77, 174).

How often have we discovered again (as if for the first time) a “*precious gem*” as we have continued our faithfully reading the Word of God.

Diligent and faithful students of the Bible realize the relevance, pertinence and benefit of truths from select Old Testament passages. While each chapter will examine the phrases more thoroughly, allow me to offer the following collection of phrases for our admonition:

- Jeremiah 6:16* ..... “...ask for the old paths ...  
and walk therein...”
- Jeremiah 10:23* ..... “...it is not in man that  
walketh to direct his steps.”
- Jeremiah 22:29* ..... “O earth, earth, earth,  
hear the word of the Lord.”
- Proverbs 22:6* ..... “Train up a child in  
the way he should go...”
- Deuteronomy 6:4-9* ..... “...thou shalt teach ...  
diligently unto thy children...”
- Numbers 32:23* ..... “...be sure your sin will find  
you out.”
- Isaiah 59:1-2* ..... “...iniquities have separated ...  
you and your God...”
- Proverbs 5:15-20* ..... “...rejoice with the wife of  
thy youth”
- Ecclesiastes 9:9* ..... “Live joyfully with the wife ...  
all the days of the life.”
- Nehemiah 4:6* ..... “So built we the wall... the  
people had a mind to work.”

*Ecclesiastes 9:10* ..... "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"  
*1 Samuel 15:22-23* ..... "...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice...."  
*Genesis 50:22* ..... "...ye thought evil ... God meant it unto good...."  
*Judges 2:10*..... "...generation after them, which knew not the Lord..."  
*Isaiah 55:10-11* " ..... "word goeth forth ... it shall not return ... void...."  
*Ezra 7:10* ..... "...prepared his heart to seek the law ... and to do it...."  
*Amos 3:3* ..... "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"  
*Lamentations 1:12*..... "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?...."  
*Proverbs 23:7*..... "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...."  
*Amos 4:12* ..... "...prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."  
*Ezekiel 3:17-21* ..... "...watchman ... warn ... delivered thy soul...."  
*Joshua 24:15* ..... "...choose you this day ... as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."  
*1 Kings 18:21* ..... "How long halt ye between two opinions?...."  
*Psalms 19:1-6*..... "...heavens declare the glory of God... firmament sheweth his handywork...."  
*Micah 6:8* ..... "...what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do...."  
*Isaiah 53* ..... "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrow...."  
*Leviticus 10:1-2*..... "...offered strange fire...he commanded them not...."  
*Exodus 20:11*..... "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth...."  
*Genesis 6:22*..... "Thus did Noah ... all that God commanded him...."  
*Proverbs 14:12*..... "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man....say of death"  
*Malachi 2:16*..... "For the Lord, the God ... hateth putting away...."  
*Ezekiel 33:7-9* ..... "I have set thee a watchman ... warn them...."

- Joshua 1:6-7*..... “Be strong and of a good courage...  
observe....”
- Esther 4:14* ..... “...who knoweth...for such a time  
as this?”
- 1 Samuel 16:7* ..... “...man looketh on the outward ...  
Lord looketh on the heart....”
- Isaiah 55:8-9*..... “...my thoughts are not your thoughts  
... my ways are not his ways....”
- Song of Solomon 2:16*... “My beloved is mine, and I am his....”
- Proverbs 31*..... “...virtuous woman....”
- Ruth 1:16-17*..... “...whither thou goest, I will go ...  
thy God....”
- Genesis 18:19*..... “I know him, that he will command  
his children....”
- Hosea 4:6* ..... “My people are destroyed for lack  
of knowledge....”
- Psalms 23* ..... “The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not want....”
- Ecclesiastes 12:13* ..... “...Fear God, and keep his command-  
ments: for this is the whole of man.”

In this volume (presented orally at the 17th Annual Truth In Love Lectureship in Pulaski, Tennessee at the East Hill congregation of the Lord’s people) you will find almost fifty precious and powerful passages examined. Though written hundreds and hundreds of years ago, it is astonishing to quickly see the appropriate application to our lives in this twenty first century.

**A Final Exhortation:** While we will not attempt to suggest that our lives are not busy, frantic, filled and overflowing – we will plead for you to **read, study and learn** the Word of God. Do not allow the world’s “*rat race pace*” to shut out the most precious source of help and strength. Do not neglect and miss the opportunity to hear the powerful precepts of Almighty God. Please, allow the Creator of “*all things*” to provide the guidance and instruction that can lead you to a mansion eternal.

The awesome facts and truths which are discussed in this volume are of little value, almost no benefit to YOU unless you hear them, believe them and follow the

way of God. Dear reader, do not allow another to study for you. Another individual cannot believe for you, nor obey in your place. It is YOUR responsibility and if it to be accomplished for YOU, then YOU must do it.

It is our fervent prayer that the messages contained in this book will be the "*spark*" that lights a fire within you that will continue throughout your earthly journey. Neglect the world - but never neglect the Book of all books, the Word of God.

~ Paul Sain  
Director of the Lectureship

# DEDICATION

Lord willing, this annual event will be conducted, valuable lessons will be powerfully presented, visitors will come from many congregations, students from Memphis School of Preaching will be encouraged, fellowship will be enjoyed by those *"of like precious faith,"* materials will be distributed and the lessons from this book will be taught during these five days and hopefully for years to come throughout the world. Brethren, we are blessed to have such grand opportunities to serve in the Kingdom of our Lord.

Throughout the years we have attempted to convey appreciation to many who help make this lecture series possible. The **Truth In Love Lectures** are the result of an excellent team effort. Some have accepted specific ways of involvement and have continued in this work year after year. Some provide physical labor, others give financially, while still others encourage and support in wonderful ways.

The 17th Annual **Truth In Love Lectureship** volume is dedicated to the five faithful elders of the East Hill church of Christ.



Hugh Cooper



Joe Cooper



Johnny Jackson



Kelly Webb



Eldridge Woodard

Their continued support, cooperation, and desire to further the borders of the Kingdom is uplifting and inspiring. Their words of encouragement are always deeply appreciated. Their faithful stand for the truth, opposing error, not turning to the right nor the left reflects the directives of our Father in His Holy Word to the overseers of the Bride of Christ.

The Elders of the Lord's church, at every congregation, are not perfect men. None who have ever walked on this earth, save our Lord and Saviour, have lived a sinless life. Yet, it is possible to be "*blameless*" and "*faithful*."

God's faithful servants – Elders, Pastors, Rulers, Shepherds, Bishops, Overseers, etc. – are to be men of faith, vision, knowledge, courage, prayer. They are to be spiritual men who are seeking to lead people spiritually.

May God help us to appreciate, support and cooperate with our elders who lead this flock. It is our prayer that we will always faithfully serve in whatever capacity – to the glory of our Father.

~ Paul Sain



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***Modern  
Applications  
Of  
Ancient  
Texts***

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# *Psalm 19:1-6*

*This Chapter Written By*

***Kevin D. Beard***

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

**J**esus said, *"No man hath seen God at any time"* (John 1:18), and, *"Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape"* (John 5:37). Paul called God, *"the invisible God"* (Col. 1:15). If God cannot be seen or experienced with the physical senses, how can man know He exists? Many have pondered this apparent quandary and have decided that they cannot know that God does indeed exist. Some take a less

dogmatic stance and proclaim that it simply is not possible to know, while others confidently affirm that they have determined that God does not exist. In either case, without empirical evidence of God's existence, many refuse to believe. On April 12, 1961 the Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man to fly into space. Some time after his historic flight, it began to be reported that Gagarin declared from space, *"I don't see any God up here."* Some have attributed the statement to Soviet leader, Nikita Krushchev, who, in a speech discussing anti-religious propaganda, supposedly said, *"Gagarin flew into space, but didn't see any God there."* Thus, the words became connected with Gagarin and may have been mistakenly attributed to him. Whoever actually made the statement, it shows the kind of attitude many have developed toward evidence of God's existence. If they cannot walk up to God and tap Him on the shoulder they will not believe He exists.

How very different was David's attitude. Though he had never seen God with his physical eyes, he had seen plenty of evidence that pointed to His existence. It may have been early in the morning while watching a beautiful sunrise over the Judean hills that David, by inspiration, penned the following words:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle



for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof (Psm. 19:1-6).

What can man learn of God from looking at God's creation? Can we learn of God's will for mankind? Can we learn of God's loving and merciful nature? Can we learn of God's precious promises for the faithful? No, this information is revealed in **God's Word**. Later in the nineteenth Psalm David sang the praises of the Law of the Lord (Psm. 19:7ff), completing this beautiful picture of how man comes to know of God. But pondering the beauty and the vastness of God's creation certainly has value for the one who seeks to know God. These things teach us many things. David said,

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard (Psm. 19:2-3).

His point was that the vast creation of God's Universe exists to teach mankind about God. No, they do not teach in language that uses words; but their lessons are easily detected, and anyone can learn of God's greatness, if he will simply "*listen*" to what His Universe declares. What can man learn of God from looking at His creation?

**First, man can learn of God's existence.** David was a firm believer in the law that states that every effect must have an adequate, preexisting cause. No,

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David never penned those words, but what he did write testifies of his belief in the truth expressed in them. *"The heavens declare the glory of God."* How did the heavens come to be? David was nothing like the modern-day atheistic evolutionary scientists who reject the idea that an all-powerful, eternal God exists. They want to look for purely naturalistic explanations for the existence of the Universe. Thus, they have concocted many different theories that all bring them back to the same point: if there is no God, then the Universe must have created itself. How preposterous. How can something that does not exist suddenly decide to cause itself to exist? No, David gladly rejoiced in the magnificent power of God when he pondered the existence of the Universe. In David's own words: *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"* (Psm. 14:1). What did David see when he watched a sunrise, or when he gazed at the stars at night? He saw the glory of God and evidence of His workings.

David knew that when something shows evidence of having been designed, there must be one who designed it. In another Psalm, David said,

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well (Psm. 139:14).

The one who by inspiration wrote the book of Hebrews put it this way: *"For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God"* (Heb. 3:4). How does the firmament show the handiwork of God? Consider the Earth and its place in the solar system. Planet Earth is not the largest of the planets,

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yet it is the only planet in our solar system that is designed to support life. At a distance of 93 million miles from the Sun, it is just the right distance to allow for temperatures that are neither too hot nor too cold to support life. With the Earth's tilted axis, rotational speed, and revolutions around the sun, we enjoy the changing of day to night on a regular basis and the changing of the seasons: all factors in the climate and environment on Earth that make life possible. But of course the Earth is not alone in this solar system. There is a moon orbiting our planet and there are seven other planets (now that the "*powers that be*" in astronomy have declassified Pluto as a planet), many of which have a moon or moons of their own. Why is it that none of these is on a collision course with the Earth or with any of the others. And what of all the other heavenly bodies? Why has the Earth existed for thousands of years without colliding into any other major objects? It must be that there is a grand design for the Universe, and the One who designed it all planned for the orderly existence of all the heavenly bodies.

One of the things that elicited David's awe-filled praise was the daily course of the sun. He said,

His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof (Psm. 19:6).

Isn't the consistency of the sun amazing! Day after day the sun makes its course through the sky without variation. Never does it rise in the West and set in the East. Never does it fail to rise or set at all. This consistency has spawned the common saying, "*as*

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*sure as the sun rises.*" Men have known for a long time that the sun's consistency involves more than just traveling along a consistent course. The rotation of the Earth on its axis (which of course produces the perceived effect of the sun's rising and setting) is so precise and constant that it can be calculated to the minute for any day of any year. For example, though this manuscript is being written some time in advance, the time of sunrise and sunset in Pulaski, Tennessee, on May 19, 2007 (the day when the presentation of the lecture will be made) will be 5:41 AM and 7:48 PM, Central Daylight Time, respectively. David believed God was responsible for such a magnificent thing as this.

In other places the Bible speaks of how we can know God exists from looking at what God has done. In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas healed a crippled man (Acts 14:8ff). The people of the city were so amazed by the miracle that they made preparations to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas, supposing them to be gods come down to earth. In his speech to them, Paul said,

Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. 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 (Acts 14:15-17).

Despite the fact that all the nations were walking in their own ways, God still gave them evidence of His existence. The fact that He did good by sending rain and fruitful seasons pointed to His existence. Paul told the Roman Christians,

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

**Second, man can learn of God's greatness.** As David gazed at the night-time sky, he, like us, must have been awestruck by the beauty of the countless stars above him. Maybe he, like so many others, enjoyed looking for the familiar constellations. When David wrote, "*The heavens declare the glory of God,*" do you suppose he realized just how vast the Universe really is? Perhaps not; but that in no way diminished his praise of the God who made it. When we discuss the vastness of the Universe, we must use a new set of measurements that do not apply to the things we interact with on Earth. The "*light year*" is a distance determined by a hypothetical object traveling at the speed of light for one year. The speed of light is accepted as 186,000 miles per second. If an object were traveling at that speed for one year, it would have traveled a distance of approximately 5.87 trillion miles. Astronomers tell us that the closest star to our Sun, a red dwarf star named Proxima Centauri, is 4.22 light years (or 24.8 trillion miles) away. And that is the closest star. Rigel is one of the stars in the familiar constellation Orion. It is a very bright star, 18,000 times brighter than our sun, but it is

around 500 light years away. The light from that star one would see tonight (in 2007) was originally generated only 15 years after Columbus departed on his voyage to the New World and 100 years before the English founded the Jamestown settlement in Virginia. There are millions upon millions of stars in the Universe hundreds and thousands of light years away. Consider just how insignificant one human being is in comparison to the size of the Earth. Our planet is roughly 7,900 miles in diameter and almost 25,000 miles in circumference. But our planet is relatively small and insignificant, itself. Jupiter, the largest planet in our solar system, is more than 11 times the size of Earth, with a diameter of 88,694 miles. But in comparison to the Sun, Jupiter and Earth are both mere dwarfs. With a diameter of 856,000 miles, the sun is nearly 10 times the size of Jupiter and 108 times the size of Earth.

What does all this show us about the greatness of God? **First, it shows us of the greatness of His knowledge and wisdom.** Human beings have designed and built some impressive structures. According to one web site, there are 31 skyscrapers in excess of 1,000 feet tall throughout the world. Think of the engineering marvels in the field of space and aeronautics: the rockets that first took men into space; the Space Shuttle; all of the amazing aircraft in use by the world's military organizations, etc. Those men and women who designed those things are far above the average person in intelligence. Yet as great as those accomplishments are, they pale in comparison to things God has designed and created. Of all those 1,000-foot tall skyscrapers, the oldest still

standing is the Chrysler Building in New York. It was completed in 1930; but how long will it stand? On September 11, 2001, the world learned that these kinds of amazing structures are not indestructible. But what about God's creation? Take a trip to the Smoky Mountains, the Grand Canyon, the Rocky Mountains, Yellowstone Park, or any of the other beauties of nature in this world and you will see evidence of a mind that far exceeds the combined intellect and ingenuity of every human engineer, artist, and craftsman who ever lived.

Think of the intricate interaction of the different parts of the ecosystem of Earth. What engineer could ever have anticipated the multitude of interdependent factors that go together to keep this world operating in such a way that life can continue on it? No mere human being or group of human beings could ever have designed the world in which we live. There are numerous examples that could be given of how men have made major mistakes when trying to improve on nature. By introducing different species of plants or animals into new environments, men have often caused greater problems than the problems they were originally trying to address. They did not know and could not foresee how the new environment would react to the plants or animals they introduced into it. Yet God could and did foresee such things and designed the Earth to function as a giant system of interdependent factors.

**Second, it shows us the greatness of God's existence.** When pondering the scope and size of the Universe, it soon becomes patently clear that God is not bound by time or space. Astronomers continue

to try to develop better methods of searching farther and farther into space. They have not found an end to it. The farther they see, the more they realize how much there is to see. The God who created this vast, seemingly endless Universe surely could not be bound by time or space. Even trying to comprehend the vastness of the Universe is a daunting challenge for the human mind. Finite beings could never design and produce something that is infinite. David also wrote of God's boundless nature:

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or  
whither shall I flee from thy presence? If  
I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if  
I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art  
there. 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. If I say, Surely  
the darkness shall cover me; even the night  
shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness  
hideth not from thee; but the night shineth  
as the day: the darkness and the light are  
both alike to thee (Psm. 139:7-12).

How big is God? There is no way to answer that, because there is no limit to Him. He is everywhere and He controls everything. Looking at His handiwork should remind us of this.

**Third, man can learn of God's power.** The Universe exists. That may be a simple statement when analyzed grammatically; but it is far from simple when analyzed philosophically. How could everything we see and interact with on a daily basis just come into existence out of nothing? Think again



about the great structures men have built. Those skyscrapers that reach a thousand feet into the sky, the bridges that span gorges hundreds of feet high or bodies of water several miles wide, the ancient wonders like the pyramids of Egypt, and all of the other amazing things that men have built all required great effort and many years of planning, designing, and construction to finish. Yet when we compare just one of those structures with the whole Earth, it becomes an insignificant speck. God created everything in the Universe in six days. When He gave the law to Moses, He said,

For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day... (Exod. 20:11).

What kind of power did God have to exert to bring about this great creation? It was merely the power of His word. God spoke and things came into being. *"Let there be light," "Let the earth bring forth grass," "Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven," "Let us make man in our image."* David proclaimed,

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth (Psm. 33:6).

Peter said,

...the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God (2 Peter 3:5, ESV).

The book of Hebrews declares,

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so

that things which are seen were not made  
of things which do appear (Heb. 11:3).

The power of God's word is amazing.

Creating the Universe was a tremendous demonstration of power; but once the Universe was created God still had to control its continued existence. In a city the size of New York there are thousands of people employed who help to maintain the daily operation of the city. From the highest level of government administrators to the garbage collectors, there is a staggering amount of time, energy, and money spent every day just to keep that city in operation. In comparison, it must require an exercise of power that is incomprehensible to human beings to keep the stars and planets in their places and to keep the various systems of Earth operating properly. Thousands of men and women work day and night to maintain the operation of New York City; yet God maintains the operation of the Universe by His own unlimited power. Nehemiah praised God for His great power, noting that God was the One who was responsible for the continued existence of all things:

Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee (Neh. 9:6).

Paul said, "*And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together*" (Col. 1:17, ESV). When we look up into the heavens or around us at the beautiful

world in which we live, we should be awestruck at the power of the God who made all of these things.

David sang the praises of God when he considered the wonders of the Universe. He saw God's greatness on display all around him. As we consider the Universe, let us also be reminded of the existence of God, the greatness of God, and the power of God. Being reminded of those attributes of God should move us to want to know Him better. No matter how much awe the created works of God may inspire within us, we will never know the will of God for us and for all of mankind without the revelation of His word. The same God who demonstrated His great power and excellence in creation has demonstrated His great love in providing the sacrifice for sin that all the world needed. His written word, as powerful as the word by which

### *Kevin D. Beard*



Kevin is a graduate of Memphis School of Preaching (1992) • The Beards have worked with congregations in Newbern, TN and presently preaches for the Fayette, AL congregation (since 1999) • A capable song leader • Has been active in mission work overseas • Author of class material for teens • Kevin's father is also a faithful preacher • Kevin and Jan have four children (Jonathan, Justin, Jeremy, and Emma).



*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Exodus 20:11**

*This Chapter Written By*

**B. J. Clarke**

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

## **Introduction**

**T**he Scriptures clearly and repeatedly affirm that God is the Creator of the world (Gen. 1:1; Jer. 32:17; Heb. 3:4). But how did He do it, and how long did it take Him? Since none of us were present during the creation, how can we possibly know how God created the world and how long it took Him to do so? The question of origins is beyond the range of our empirical investigation. God could ask every one of us the same question He asked Job: *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the world?"* (Job 38:4).

Since no human being was present when God *"laid the foundation of the world,"* a special revelation from the Creator is needed if man is to know anything for certain about his origins. We need the testimony of a reliable eyewitness. We need to hear

from someone who was actually there. Fortunately, we have the testimony of the Creator Himself. We have the Word of God. Concerning how God made the world, His Word informs us:

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth...For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast (Psm. 33:6, 9).

The Hebrews writer recorded that it is,

...through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Heb. 11:3).

According to His own testimony, God spoke the world into existence.

Concerning the length of time it took to create the world, God has revealed the following:

For in six days **the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is**, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it (Exod. 20:8-11, emp. mine [BJC] throughout, unless otherwise indicated).

Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a

perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed (Exod. 31:15-17).

The claim of these passages is not complicated or hard to understand. God created "*heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is*" in six days. The account in Genesis 1 corroborates this truth as Moses provides a day by day description of what God made and when He made it (Gen. 1:1-31).

### **A Closer Look At The Exodus Account Of Creation**

Sometimes we may overlook the fact that the book of Exodus is every bit as decisive in determining the length of the days of creation as is the book of Genesis. We quoted above Exodus 20:8-11 and Exodus 31:15-17. Now, let us take a closer look at the evidence from these passages concerning the length of the days of creation.

There is no doubt that when Exodus 20:9 speaks of man working for six days, and ceasing his work on the seventh day, these days are normal twenty-four hour days. No one argues that the phrase "six days" in Exodus 20:9 refers to vast eons of time. By what reason then should we conclude that two verses later the phrase "six days" should be understood to mean vast epochs of time? The word **yom** is used in reference both to man's activity (Exod. 20:9) and God's activity (Exod. 20:11). Exegetically, there is no reason to give **yom** a different meaning in Exodus 20:11 than its meaning in Exodus 20:9. Nevertheless,

Norman Geisler seeks to counter the force of this by arguing:

The six periods are comparable to a work week. It is true that the creation week is compared with a work week (Exod. 20:11). However, it is not uncommon in the Old Testament to make unit-for-unit rather than minute-for-minute comparisons. For example, God appointed forty years of wandering for forty days of disobedience (Num. 14:34). And in Daniel 9:24-27, 490 days equal 490 years.

In reply, it is not enough to note that the Old Testament sometimes uses numbers figuratively; one must prove that this is the case in the Genesis and Exodus accounts of creation. On the contrary, even a cursory glance at Exodus 20:8-11 shows that the days are to be taken literally. In fact, Niessen points out:

A key word in verse 11 is *for*, because it introduces the rationale or foundation for the previous command. It continues by equating the time period of creation with the time period of man's work week (six days plus one day) and states that God Himself had set the example in Genesis 1. That indeed is the reason why the creation week was 7 days – no more, no less. The passage becomes nonsense if it reads: "Work for six days and rest on the seventh, because God worked for six billion years and is now resting during the seventh billion-year period."



The whole point of Exodus 20:8-11; 31:16-17 is rendered senseless if the days are equal to eons and eons of time.

However, Geisler argues that since the seventh day is definitely longer than twenty-four hours, the other six days are also. He writes:

We know the seventh day is more than twenty-four hours, since, according to Hebrew 4, the seventh day is still going on. For Genesis says "on the seventh day he [God] rested" (2:2), but Hebrews 4:5-10 informs us that God is still in that Sabbath rest into which he entered after he created.

Geisler's argument reflects a misinterpretation of the passage in Hebrews 4. This passage never says that "*the seventh day is still going on.*" It merely affirms that when God rested on the Sabbath His works ceased. Likewise, when we enter our heavenly rest, all of our toils, trials and sufferings will cease.

Furthermore, a proper understanding of what it means to say that God "rested" will alleviate any misunderstandings of the length of the seventh day. Genesis 2:2 reads,

And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.

This passage emphasizes, not once, but twice, that God completed all His creative work. The implications of God having finished His creative work are quite significant. Henry Morris elaborates:

And since the creation was finished, there has been nothing comparable going on in the world since that time. If one wishes to call the developmental processes of the six days evolution, he must at least recognize that such processes have never been in existence since the terminus of that period. But such a position is impossible for the true evolutionist to accept, since he insists that all past history can be explained in terms of present processes, those which are susceptible of scientific study and understanding.

One of the simplest and most powerful arguments for taking the Genesis days of creation as literal days is that Moses authored both Genesis 1 and Exodus 20. The common authorship of both passages is evidence that he had the same time period in mind when he used the word "*day*."

It is important to remember that the issue is not what God could have done in creating the world. If He had so desired, God could have created the world in six million years, but that is not what He said He did. He could have created the Universe in six hundred years, but that is not what He said He did. Certainly, if God is truly God He could have created the world in six seconds flat or 6/10ths of a second, but that is not what He said that He did. He said that He created it all in six days. Why is this so difficult for some people to accept?

As to why God chose to create the universe in six days, John MacArthur offers the following observation:

Again, there is no rational reason, no cosmic reason, no philosophical reason, no mathematical reason, and no scientific reason for seven-day weeks. There is frankly no other explanation for why the 365 days of our solar years were divided into sevens. The year doesn't even divide neatly that way. So why are our calendars ordered by weeks? There is only one reason: God Himself established that order in the pattern of His creation.

Therefore, a straightforward reading of the Scriptures leads us to the irresistible conclusion that God created the world in six days. Period. End of story. For those who believe the Bible, that ought to settle it! And it did settle it for centuries.

### **Should We Believe Darwin Or Moses?**

With the advent and growing acceptance of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, suddenly a tension existed among those who wanted to believe in God and at the same time maintain an aura of intellectual respectability in the scientific community. Those who accepted Darwin's theory of evolution felt compelled to revise their views regarding the age of the earth. After all, millions upon millions of years (some would say billions) would have been required for Darwinian evolution to take place.

Consequently, those who embraced the evolutionary theory, and who still believed in God, had to confront the Biblical declaration that God made the world "*in six days.*" How could they possibly reconcile this statement with the theory of evolution? If they accepted the theory of evolution they would

have to reject the concept that God created the world "*in six days*." A quotation from Charles Hodge demonstrates a desire to synthesize the Scriptures with the allegations of geologists. After noting the plain declaration of Exodus 20:11 that God created the world "*in six days*," Hodge wrote:

[T]he science of geology has come into existence, and has brought to light many facts before unknown as to the various conditions through which this world, and probably the stellar universe, have passed previously to the establishment of the present order. These facts remain in their general character unquestionable, and indicate a process of divinely regulated development consuming vast periods of time.

Like Hodge, many believed that the earth was unquestionably ancient, but they were not prepared to accept the theory of evolution at the expense of dismissing the Bible altogether. There had to be a way to accept the theory of evolution and still believe the Bible. Accordingly, a frantic search commenced to reevaluate the Biblical texts to look for someplace to insert the vast epochs of time needed for evolution. Likewise, fanciful interpretations of plain Scriptural texts began to arise due to a desire to accommodate the so-called evidence of evolution.

### **The Pictorial Day View**

This view (also known as the Revelatory view) argues that God chose six literal twenty-four hour days to depict or reveal to Moses how He created the world. According to this view, the actual creation

may have taken millions of years, but God set aside six twenty-four hour days to reveal the scenes of creation to Moses.

In other words, when Moses was on Mount Sinai for the 40 days in which he received the Law (Exodus 24), the Lord revealed to him in a one week "*Creation Seminar*," how He brought the world and life into existence. On Sunday, He showed Moses how He brought light out of darkness. On Monday, He revealed how He separated the waters; and so on. At the end of the six day course, in this view, God rested from His week of teaching!

This view is based on sheer speculation. Where are the clues in Genesis 1 or Exodus 20 that would lead us to believe that we are reading about the time period during which Moses received this information? It is one thing to claim this and quite another to prove it. Moreover, we don't have to speculate about what "*God could have*" done. In Exodus 20:11, God comes right out and tells us what He did. This passage is a death-knell to the pictorial/revelatory view because it portrays the days as the time frame during which God did His creative work. The passage does not center upon the "*six days*" as days in the life of Moses. After all, God is the one speaking in Exodus 20:11!

### **The Day-Age Theory**

The Day-Age theory argues that the "*days*" of creation are actually long epochs of time and that the word "*day*" is used to refer to a period of time—not a normal twenty four hour day. It is true that our English word "*day*" can be used in a variety of ways. For instance, an elderly person might say "*Back in my*

*day, the price of gasoline was a lot cheaper.*" Obviously, in this example the word "day" refers to a general period of time and not one twenty-four hour day. We also use the word "day" sometimes to refer to the period of daylight between dawn and dusk. A man sitting with his wife on the front porch, in the cool of the evening, may say, "The weatherman said that this was the hottest day of the summer." In this case, the word "day" refers specifically to the time when the sun was up. And, of course, we use the word "day" to refer to the 24-hour period of time that it takes for the earth to rotate on its axis. We hear people say, "I'd like to do more, but there are only 24 hours in a day." Obviously, the word "day" in this instance refers to a solar day.

Which of the above meanings of the word "day" best fits the Genesis and Exodus accounts of creation? One of the fundamental rules of Biblical interpretation is that a text is to be understood literally unless there is compelling evidence within the text to cause us to interpret it otherwise. There is nothing in the Genesis or Exodus accounts which would lead us to conclude that the "days" of creation were anything other than ordinary twenty-four hour days! Those who spell their God with a capital "G" have no trouble accepting that the events reported as having occurred on the sixth day could all have occurred during a normal 24-hour day. The following quotation does an excellent job of emphasizing that interpreting the days of Exodus 20 as being something more than 24 hour days is of recent origin:

It is only since the middle of the nineteenth century that commentators began talking

about long periods of time within Genesis 1 itself. That is truly amazing! The Pentateuch was written by Moses in 1500 B.C. The day-age theory is not mentioned by any serious biblical scholar until the 1800's A.D. For 3300 years this supposed secret lay hidden awaiting the craftiness of nineteenth-century scholarship to unlock its mysteries and reveal them to a waiting world! Something is wrong here. Either God does not know how to express Himself very clearly, or three thousand years' worth of biblical scholars were blind for failing to see this obvious truth, or ... the whole day-age theory is nothing more than a modern contrivance.

## **What About The Apparent Antiquity Of The Earth?**

For many, the antiquity of the earth is the trump card which proves either the gap theory or that the days of creation could not have been twenty-four hour days. After all, has not science proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that the earth is billions of years old? Geisler claims:

Most scientific evidence sets the age of the world at billions of years. The age of the universe is based on the speed of light and the distance of the stars as well as the rate of expansion of the universe. Early rocks have been dated in terms of radioactivity and set at billions of years old. Simply given the rate that salt runs into the sea and the amount of salt there would suggest multimillions of years.

## **How Old Are The Rocks?**

The antiquity of the earth is said to be proven by the various techniques used to measure the ages of the rocks. Probably the vast percentages of people assume that these techniques are unassailably correct. However, the inaccuracy of the various dating methods has been a problem for decades.

For example, Sidney P. Clementson, a British engineer, has analyzed the published studies of rock samples from twelve volcanoes in Russia and ten samples from other places around the world which show ages from 100 million to 10 billion years by typical radioactive dating methods, whereas it is known that these volcanic rocks were formed within the past 200 years!

For the sake of argument, let us grant that the earth appears to be very ancient. Believe it or not, the Christian can even grant that the earth appears to be ancient without sacrificing one shred of faithfulness. How is this possible? Consider the following:

The origin of the world by the creative acts of God would most likely have included creating some things with the appearance of age. The Genesis account of Adam and Eve's creation indicates that they were at the time of their creation mature people who only appeared to have passed through the normal time-consuming processes of growth but who in reality had not. Some of the trees in the Garden of Eden were likely full grown with the appearance of age.

If Jesus could instantaneously turn water into wine, and instantly multiply loaves and fishes



into fully matured food, then why should it be thought impossible for Him to create instantly a fully developed Universe including fully developed human beings?

### **Post-Gap Theory Literal Days View**

A number of expositors have argued that the six days of Genesis 1/Exodus 20 were literal twenty-four hour days, but that a gap of millions or billions of years preceded these days. The gap allegedly occurred between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. Although there are a number of variations regarding this view, the following are the core components: (1) Genesis 1:1 tells of the original creation; (2) A vast amount of undetermined time elapsed after the original creation; (3) For some reason undisclosed in Scripture (some say that it was because of Satan's rebellion and fall), God sent His judgment upon the original creation and the earth became formless and void. Genesis 1:2 is said to be a description of this ruinous event; (4) God reconstructed what He had ruined and re-created the world in six literal days (Gen. 1:3-31). Proponents of the gap theory see this as the perfect way to harmonize the claims that the universe is billions of years old while still maintaining a literal understanding of Genesis 1 and 2.

It is not hard to figure out why this view became so popular. It allows for any length of time between the first and second verses of the Bible. Thus, it allows for the rest of Genesis chapter One to be taken literally, while still acquiescing to the geological claims of the age of the earth.

But is the gap theory as perfect a solution as

its proponents claim? Actually, there are enormous difficulties with the theory. One cannot believe the gap theory and also believe in the rest of what the Bible teaches. Moreover, the gap theory clashes with Exodus 20:11, which affirms that God “made the heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.”

If the ruin-reconstruction theory is true then within the earth there would have been millions of fossilized remains of pre-Adamic creatures. Yet, God said that “all” that is in the earth was created within the six days. Did God somehow forget about the so-called original creation when He spoke the words recorded in Exodus 20:9-11? Or did God just not tell the truth in this passage? Either suggestion is blasphemous.

### Conclusion

God knew what He had created, He knew how long it had taken, and He tells us definitively that He did it all in six days. Despite the efforts of skeptics, the truth of Exodus 20:11 still stands as unassailable!

#### *B. J. Clarke*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# *Genesis 5:1-2*

*This Chapter Written By*

***Barry M. Grider***

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

Often periods of time are reflected upon as a particular age. For example, the “*age of reason*” or the “*Renaissance Age.*” Sometimes a noted period is remembered by a significant person of that era. For example, the “*age of Napoleon*” or the “*age of Washington.*” Former Senator Robert Dole commented at the funeral of former president Richard Nixon, “*the latter part of the 20th century might be regarded as the ‘age of Nixon.’*” On a much larger scale and scope, since Jesus died, arose, and ascended, man has lived during the age of Christ. That is, all authority has been given to Him and all men are amenable to Him unto the end of the age (Matt. 28:18-20).

With this in mind, consider that the Ante-Diluvian period of man, could well be recorded as the “*age of Adam.*”

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In that day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created (Gen. 5:1-2).

Despite sin's entrance into the world, through the promise of Christ (Gen. 3:15), Adam was reconciled to God. Man gradually, not immediately, fell into wickedness and debauchery. While much attention is given to the ungodly deed of Cain, who murdered his own brother, remember he did this because his brother was righteous.

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh (Heb. 11:4).

Where did Abel learn to worship? We know, "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). While man is a being of choice, is it not also true that his environment plays a major role in the formulation of who he is? Who influenced Abel and taught him how to worship? No doubt it was his father, Adam.

Despite sin's corrupting influence, it must have still been a glorious period as the history of man unfolds during the life of Adam. Remember, while Adam did die, he lived 930 years upon the earth (Gen. 5:5). How exciting it must have been for generations of children after Adam to sit upon the knee of the one created from the dust of the

earth, yet in whose nostrils God breathed the breath of life (Gen. 2:7).

So it was that Genesis 5 begins with the history or the story of Adam. Much emphasis is placed throughout the Scriptures of remembering our roots.

For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments (Psm. 78:5-7).

Adam's influence was great, and thus because of his unique position in the history of the world, he was the greatest teacher during his millennial sojourn upon the earth. Adam had a responsibility given to every father that has followed him.

**First, fathers must make known that man is the direct creation of God.** Man did not originate from the slime pit of evolution, but, rather was uniquely created by God. Consider the human body and its marvelous design with all of its various systems. No man made computer could ever be created that would match the marvelous design of man. No wonder the psalmist wrote, "...I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psm. 139:14).

**Second, fathers must make known that man is the dominant creation of God.** God made man to

have dominion over the beasts of the field and all of creation (Gen. 1:28). The earth was made for man, not the other way around. God called on Adam to name all of the animal kingdom (Gen. 2:19). Because man is dominant, you will never see animals putting people in zoos.

**Third, fathers must make known that man is the distinguished creation of God.** Man was given a soul made in God's image. Since man is a being of choice, he can decide whether or not he will follow God's will for his life. Yet, man will live somewhere forever. A soul cannot cease to exist anymore than God Himself can cease to exist. God desires a relationship with man. No doubt Adam preached this to his posterity until his death.

Today, fathers are in a unique position to guide their children in the proper direction. Even as Adam left the garden, he had to rejoice in the cross that appeared in his future. *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"* (1 Cor. 15:22). May this knowledge be proclaimed by godly fathers to all future generations.

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Isaiah 53**

*This Chapter Written By*

**Kevin D. Beard**

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 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. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made

his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth (Isa. 53:3-9).

The Old Testament is filled with prophecies of the coming Messiah. Those prophecies foretold of just about every aspect of His life and mission. Unfortunately, by the time of Jesus, the Jews did not have a proper grasp of the significance of those prophecies. They had the wrong idea completely about the Messiah and what He would come to do. Consequently, when Jesus did come to fulfill all of those prophecies, the people rejected Him and demanded His death. It is interesting and ironic that the very Scriptures they misunderstood told of their misunderstanding and predicted they would reject the One who had come to save them. Perhaps the most detailed prophecy of the whole process of the rejection and execution of the One whom God sent to deliver the people is found in Isaiah 53.

As evidence of the fact that the Jewish people commonly misunderstood the prophecies concerning the Messiah and His mission to die for the sins of the world, consider the Ethiopian nobleman to whom Philip taught the gospel. This man was returning to Ethiopia from Jerusalem, where he had been to worship. As he traveled, he read from the prophet Isaiah, where it was written:

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;  
and like a lamb dumb before his shearer,  
so opened he not his mouth: In his



humiliation his judgment was taken away:  
and who shall declare his generation? for  
his life is taken from the earth (Acts 8:32-  
33).

As it is arranged in our Bibles today, he was reading Isaiah 53:7-8. Philip's first question to this man was, "*Understandest thou what thou readest?*" (Acts 8:30). To which the man replied, "*How can I, except some man should guide me?*" (Acts 8:31).

This fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is one of the most beautiful in all of the Bible's prophetic literature. It is beautiful because of the language and because of the subject matter, for it describes in emotion-filled words the glorious mission of the Lord's Anointed One in saving mankind from sin. That mission would require the suffering and humiliation of the Servant of the Lord, but that humiliation would result in the salvation of the lost. This discussion will not be a verse-by-verse examination of the chapter, but will instead focus on four concepts that will help to crystallize the message of Isaiah's wonderful prophecy of our Savior. The four stanzas of the song of Isaiah 53 can be highlighted by noting the following words: **Victim, Vicarious, Voluntary, and Victorious.**

### **Victim**

The first three verses of this chapter focus on the Lord's servant as a victim. This word very aptly describes the One whom Isaiah foresaw. It is defined as:

1: a living being sacrificed to a deity or in  
the performance of a religious rite 2: one

that is acted on and usu. adversely affected by a force or agent..., as a (1): one that is injured, destroyed, or sacrificed under any of various conditions... (2): one that is subjected to oppression, hardship, or mistreatment...

The sacrifice, injury, and oppression He would endure are discussed throughout the whole chapter.

One aspect of His being a victim was the fact that He was rejected by those whom He came to save. The chapter opens with the words, "*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*" (Isa. 53:1). There is no question about the meaning and application of this statement. John said,

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? (John 12:37-38).

Paul also quoted this passage in reference to the fact that many rejected Jesus' message (Rom. 10:16). Think of the loving heart of Jesus and how it must have broken when for three and a half years He taught and pleaded with the people, only to have them cry out for His crucifixion. Think of the pain He must have felt, hearing the words of rejection from the chief priests together with the scribes and elders:

He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come

down from the cross, and we will believe him (Matt. 27:42).

*"We will believe him,"* they mockingly cried! This was exactly what Jesus wanted; yet He knew they were not serious in their offer to believe Him. He had given them every reason to believe Him; yet they rejected Him and demanded His death.

Another indication of His being a victim is seen in the second verse. He is described as a tender plant growing up out of dry ground. This seems to indicate His humble beginnings. When Jesus left Heaven to be born on earth He did not choose the most powerful or the wealthiest family among the Jews. His mother, Mary, and her husband, Joseph, were poor. According to the Law of Moses, those who were too poor to afford to offer a lamb and a pigeon after the birth of a child were allowed to substitute two pigeons (Lev. 12:6-8). When Joseph and Mary went to the temple to fulfill the law's requirements, they offered the two birds (Luke 2:24), which indicates their poverty. This lowly beginning would set the stage for Jesus' overall poor reception from the people. How could their Messiah come from such humble beginnings? The dry ground out of which He would grow represents the condition of the people at the time of His birth and during His life. Delitzsch called it,

...the miserable character of the external circumstances in the midst of which the birth and growth of the servant had taken place.

According to Hailey, this “dry ground” was “a dry political, religious, and moral desert,” because of Roman political control, a corrupt priesthood, and tradition-bound religion in general. Into this setting of oppression, corruption, and religious misunderstanding, the Messiah came with a spiritual message. That He was to have no physically attractive qualities indicates both the spiritual nature of His mission and the lack of worldly appeal He would have. Jackson noted,

He had no ‘form’ nor ‘comeliness’ that people should desire to follow Him for physical reasons, Too, His Messianic message was not materialistic, popular, etc., so as to attract for the wrong reasons.

So, with no impressive pedigree, no inherited power or wealth, no physical beauty, and a message that emphasized spirituality over worldliness, the Messiah was doomed to be rejected by the people He came to save.

### **Vicarious**

The second stanza of this wonderful song emphasizes the fact that the Servant of God would endure the rejection and punishment He faced so that others could avoid it—this is the meaning of “vicarious.” Isaiah emphasizes the way the Savior would substitute Himself for His people with seven descriptions: (1) He has born our griefs; (2) He has carried our sorrows; (3) He was wounded for our transgressions; (4) He was bruised for our iniquities; (5) the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; (6) we are healed with His stripes; (7) the Lord laid on

Him the iniquity of us all. These seven descriptions of the Savior's suffering focus on the consequences of sin, sin itself, and the penalty for sin.

Because of sin, the human race has been subject to many kinds of difficulties: pain, sickness, sorrow, and death. When Isaiah spoke of the Lord's bearing our griefs and sorrows he spoke of His removing those consequences of sin that bring pain and sorrow to our lives. The terms "*griefs*" and "*sorrows*" also may have reference to sickness. Matthew quoted this passage in connection with Jesus' healing physical maladies while on earth:

When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses (Matt. 8:16-17).

Of course the greatest significance of Jesus' healing was not that people who suffered physically were cured, but that those who suffered spiritually were saved. Jackson pointed out that Jesus' healing,

...was a preview of the ultimate deliverance which the Lord would effect as a result of His death, the benefits of which would be conferred upon obedient believers.

From the beginning, God made it clear that sin has terrible consequences. For violating God's law regarding the tree in the garden, God told Adam and Eve they would surely die (Gen. 2:16-17). Since man

sinned and God is perfectly just, there had to be a punishment meted out for sin. Isaiah 53 shows us that Jesus stepped in to accept that punishment for mankind. He was wounded for our transgressions. The word translated "*wounded*" means, "*to wound (fatally), bore through, pierce, bore.*" This may be a reference to the means by which the Savior died, when His hands and feet were nailed to the cross (see Psm. 22:16) and when a Roman soldier pierced His side (see Zech. 12:10). He suffered terrible punishment because His people sinned.

Isaiah also makes a clear distinction between the suffering Servant and the ones for whom He would die: "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way*" (Isa. 53:6). This stark contrast points out the reason a vicarious death was possible. Like sheep wandering carelessly away from the shepherd, we have turned aside to follow our own ways. Just like the wise man said, following those ways that seem right to us certainly brought us to death (Prov. 14:12). The contrast here could not be stronger. The Lord provided a way of love, blessing, and protection, but we turned aside from it. To satisfy His justice, the sinless Savior took our place. He never turned from the Father's will; yet He suffered as one who did—all so the ones who actually had sinned could be reconciled to the Father.

### **Voluntary**

God's Servant would suffer greatly at the hands of those whom He came to save; yet He would not speak out in His own defense. Isaiah compared Him

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to a lamb being led to the slaughter and a sheep being shorn. In both cases he said the animals remained mute. Similarly, Jesus refused to speak out in His own defense. In at least one of the circumstances involved in His arrest and trial, He literally refused to say anything. Pilate had sent Jesus to Herod after learning that Jesus was from Galilee; but though Herod engaged in a lengthy interrogation, Jesus refused to say anything to him (Luke 23:9). Isaiah's point was not that Jesus would be completely speechless, but that He would offer no defense. The Jewish court engaged in the most unethical practices in trying Jesus: they suborned perjury, looking for witnesses against Jesus. Matthew's record says,

Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days'" (Matt. 26:59-61, NASB).

When the High Priest confronted Jesus with the false testimony against Him, Jesus "*held his peace*" (Matt. 26:63). He did speak at His trial, though. After the High Priest said, "*I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God*" (Matt. 26:63), Jesus responded,

Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64).

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He spoke; but not in order to defend Himself against the patently false charges.

When Jesus appeared before Pilate, the Roman governor who had the legal power to release Him (John 19:10), He spoke with the governor. Again, though, His conversation was not a legal defense. He did not plead His case. He did not accuse the Jewish council of bringing false charges against Him. He did not challenge the flimsy evidence they had submitted. He had no defense lawyer and He refused to say anything to avoid conviction.

*"By oppression and judgment he was taken away"* (Isa. 53:8, ASV). Usually we think of the court systems as a means of ensuring that justice is maintained. The facts of the case are supposed to be considered without prejudice; but that was not the case with the Messiah. By means of unfair judgment and illegal proceedings the rulers of the land brought down the law's full force to send the Savior to the cross. That judgment sent Him to a cruel, oppressive torture and ultimately to a vicious, humiliating death. Isaiah asked,

...and as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? (Isa. 53:8, ASV).

The stroke of that punishment should have been delivered to the ones who delivered it to Jesus. The ones who cried, *"Crucify, crucify Him,"* should have been nailed to crosses, themselves. The Jewish leaders who cast their votes for His death should have been sentenced to die, themselves. The cowardly

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Roman governor who refused to release Jesus even though he knew he was innocent should have been condemned for his own guilt. Yet who among all of those people knew at the time that the One who offered no personal defense was going to die for them?

How does this show the voluntary nature of the Redeemer's death? What man ever stood trial for crimes He did not commit; yet offered no defense? Jesus was more than just an innocent man; He was the Son of God. When Peter tried to defend Him by military force, Jesus reminded the Apostle,

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (Matt. 26:53).

Jesus knew He was innocent. He knew that a fair trial should bring His acquittal. Above all that, He knew that if He so desired, all the powers of Heaven would come immediately to His aid, *"to destroy the world, and set Him free,"* as the familiar hymn says. But there was no defense; there was no call for a fair trial; there was no plea for angelic deliverance. Why? Because He chose to die for the world. Long before these events, Jesus had said,

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:17-18).

A hint of the Father's approval and vindication can be seen in the description of Jesus' death and burial:

His grave was assigned with wicked men,  
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,  
Because He had done no violence, Nor  
was there any deceit in His mouth (Isa.  
53:9, NASB).

A criminal executed for his crime ordinarily would be given no consideration in burial. His shame would normally have been carried to an ignominious grave. But this man was no real criminal. Though He endured tremendous humiliation in His death, it was not deserved, *"Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth."* Therefore, *"He was with a rich man in His death."* Joseph of Arimathea petitioned Pilate for Jesus' body, that he might bury it properly (John 19:38-40). Perhaps it was because Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent that he granted permission for this rich man to bury Jesus' body. The Father had allowed His Son to suffer a humiliating death; but once the terrible deed was done, He saw to it that His body received a proper burial.

### **Victorious**

One who was not familiar with the life and death of Jesus might see the terrible events surrounding His death and wonder, how could this be described as victorious? He was innocent; yet He allowed Himself to be cruelly executed. Isaiah, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was able to look into things that he did not fully comprehend (cf., 1 Peter 1:10-12) and tell us that Jesus' death would be victorious. *"It pleased*

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*the Lord to bruise Him,"* (Isa. 53:10) does not mean that God derived pleasure from sending Jesus to this terrible experience; rather it means that it was the Lord's will that this happen. Jesus had prayed in the garden before His arrest, "*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*" (Matt. 26:39); yet the Father did not deliver Him from drinking that cup. There was no other way.

Though it meant a personal sacrifice for the Son of God, His death would bring victory for the whole human race. In that victory, the Lord promised that,

He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand (Isa. 53:10).

The reference to "*His seed,*" is a reference to those spiritual descendants who would enjoy the benefits of His death. God's people are not those who can trace their physical ancestry back to Abraham; they are the spiritual Israel who through Christ become children of God (Rom. 2:28-29).

How would He prolong His days if He was to become an offering for sin? Jesus died on the cross—the Roman soldier ensured that by thrusting his spear into the Savior's side (John 19:33-34). Joseph and Nicodemus prepared Jesus' body for burial and placed it in a new tomb, where no body had ever yet been laid (John 19:41). But on the first day of the week, just as Jesus Himself had declared, He came out of the tomb. The Father prolonged His days by raising Him from the dead. This resurrection

secured victory over sin and over death. His sacrifice satisfied God's justice and His resurrection destroyed the devil's power of death (Heb. 2:14). Therefore He is counted as a victor and is given the victor's spoils.

### **Conclusion**

Of all the songs ever written, this one may be the sweetest. It is filled with tragedy and suffering; but the purpose of that hardship is the victory over sin and death for all who will take hold of it. Praise be to God for His Suffering Servant who voluntarily became the victim in a vicarious death, all to obtain the victory that only He could win.

#### ***Kevin D. Beard***



Kevin is a graduate of Memphis School of Preaching (1992) • The Beards have worked with congregations in Newbern, TN and presently preaches for the Fayette, AL congregation (since 1999) • A capable song leader • Has been active in mission work overseas • Author of class material for teens • Kevin's father is also a faithful preacher • Kevin and Jan have four children (Jonathan, Justin, Jeremy, and Emma).

*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Joshua 24:15**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Jimmy Clark***

The ancient text for modern application under consideration for this lesson is the following:

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15).

The practical message of such a passage is invaluable. There comes a point in everyone's personal life where a decision to serve or not to serve God is made. That decision has an impact upon the rest of a person's earthly life and upon the ultimate state of man when this life is over. The speech given by Joshua, as recorded in Joshua 24, is a declaration of the Lord God's goodness toward the nation of Israel. The leader of the nation, Joshua, sets forth the exhortation to choose and is proactive in letting the nation know where he and his family stand.

## Exhorting The Nation

Joshua is giving on that day one of, if not the last of, his final exhortations. The previous chapter (Joshua 23) reveals his advanced age at this point of his life.

And it came to pass a long time after that the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age. And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age: And ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you (Josh. 23:1-3).

It is interesting to note that the heart of his message to these leaders of the nation is the work of God in their conquest. Therefore, Joshua exhorts them to hold to God while he states concerning himself, "*behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth:*" (Josh. 23:14). His exhortations call for loving faithfulness to God and shunning the influences of the idolatrous nations.

Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve

them, nor bow yourselves unto them: But cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day (Josh. 23:6-8).

Again, *"Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God"* (Josh. 23:11). No persuasive discourse is of any lasting value if it is not founded upon sound evidence and principles.

Chapter twenty-four of Joshua comes at a time when Joshua again calls the same people (compare Josh. 23:2 with Josh. 24:1) to hear a word from the Lord. The place is Shechem (Josh. 24:1) and it is there that they *"presented themselves before God"* (Josh. 24:1). The exhortation is a lesson in the geographical history of the nation from Abraham's father, Terah, to the time of the settling of the land of Canaan by the Israelites. It is likely that this discourse was not far behind in time from the previous one.

**First, they are reminded of the idolatry of Abraham's family.**

And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods (Josh. 24:2).

This is ultimately to drive home the point of their need to be like Abraham and not like Abraham's fleshly heritage. Joshua will ultimately tell the gathering, *"Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel"* (Josh. 24:23).

**Second, their spiritual heritage is from Abraham as God chose him to fulfill His promises.**

And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac (Josh. 24:3).

The promises of God are seen in this passage with the mentioning of Isaac. While Abraham had more children than just Isaac, God chose Isaac as the progenitor of the nation. It is stated of Isaac,

And I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt (Josh. 24:4).

This points out again the distinction between the work of God with the spiritual heritage in Jacob and the separation of the descendants from Esau or Edom. The spiritual heritage is what God is addressing.

**Third, the Lord God's deliverance of the nation out of Egypt is then brought to mind.**

I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out. And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea. And when they cried unto the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I



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have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season (Josh. 24:5-7).

It is interesting that God mentions the fact that they were eyewitnesses of God's work though they would have been young at the time of the exodus.

**Fourth, they are reminded of their preservation from the threat of the Moabites under king Balak** (cf. Josh. 24:9-10) **by the protection of God.** God turned the curse unto a blessing (cf. Deut. 23:5). All of this was done without human negotiations between Israel and Moab.

**Fifth, they are reminded of the victories over the Amorites and Canaanites of the land, especially of Jericho** (cf. Josh. 24:8, 11). They are told of God's use of the hornet to do battle with the Amorite kings and especially are reminded that victory was not *"with thy sword, nor with thy bow"* (Josh. 24:12).

**Sixth and finally, they were told that the land was a gift from God.**

And I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat (Josh. 24:13).

They were living during a time of restful peace and prosperity. The entire discourse is a repetition of what God had done for them and their ancestors. The practical application for today from this exhortation can be seen in the parallel passages of the New Testament of God's goodness for His people. For example, James wrote,

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17).

### **Emphasizing A Decision**

All great sermons call for a response. Preaching is not just giving the facts to convict the mind but it is also a persuasive means to touch the heart. Peter's sermon recorded by Luke in Acts 2 moved the hearts of the hearers.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (Acts 2:37).

After Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, it is recorded,

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? (Acts 8:36).

When Paul preached the faith in Christ to Felix, the text states, "*And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled,*" (Acts 24:25). The nation of Israel that day was called to make a decision.

Joshua proclaimed,

Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on

the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: (Josh. 24:14-15).

The facts had been given. Their wills were to be challenged. It is clear from the text that some in the nation had embraced some form of idolatry in view of the exhortation "*put away the gods*" (Josh. 24:14). Regardless of the decision made by the nation, Joshua points to their need for a clear break with either the Lord or idolatry. There are several thoughts in Joshua's emphasis for a decision.

**First, man cannot serve both the Lord and idols.**

Jesus Himself gave emphasis as to why this is the case.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

God, by definition, means the supreme object of devotion and service. To serve two objects as God (or more than two as idolatry was prone to have it) is to make one (or more) less than supreme. This is why Jesus said that man cannot serve God and another. Further, the nature of God is such that there can be no rival. To make anything or anyone besides God an object of single-minded affection and devotion is to manifest a lack of appreciation for God as God.

The prohibitions to have no other gods before God and not to make or bow down to any image (cf. Exod. 20:3-5) points to this very fact. There is no God besides the Lord (cf. Isa. 45:21).

**Second, man is given a choice thereby placing responsibility and accountability upon man.** The free moral agency of man is declared throughout the scriptures. The Lord said to Cain, *"If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it"* (Gen. 4:7, NKJV). Moses stated in his great discourse,

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: (Deut. 30:19-20).

**Third, the choice made should be according to the evidence given.** When Joshua proclaimed,

Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord (Josh. 24:13),

he was giving the appropriate response given the evidence from the discourse. All great sermons do this very thing. Paul's proclamation to the Athenians concerning God was,

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: (Acts 17:29-30).

While man is permitted to choose even a wrong choice, the proclamation needs to make clear what is required.

### **Exemplifying Great Leadership**

Joshua's final appeal is seen in his decision to openly declare where his loyalty lies. He states, "*but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*" (Josh. 24:15). This is the same spirit that was true of Abraham, where it is written of him,

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:19).

Joshua like Abraham would not desert the Lord for any reason. Joshua had stood firm with Caleb many years ago on the side of the Lord (cf. Num. 14:5-38) when it was not a popular thing to do. Great leadership often manifests itself when times are difficult.

An additional thought about Joshua's comment is that while he was the leader of the nation, he was predominately the respected leader of his household. Not all leaders can say that their family will follow

their leadership. Eli's family did not follow his leadership (cf. 1 Sam. 2:22-25). It seems that Samuel's sons did not follow his leadership either (cf. 1 Sam. 8:3-5). One of the proving grounds of those who would be elders in a local congregation is,

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

Strong elderships must often take stands that are unpopular with the world and sometimes unpopular with some brethren. They cannot force men to follow their leadership, yet they can step forward and be distinctive in their conduct.

A closing practical thought to this section is seen in the words "*now*" (Josh. 24:14) and "*this day*" (Josh. 24:15). Time was not only swiftly passing for Joshua, but it was also passing for the people of the nation. Days of good influence and leadership would be wasted if the elders, heads, judges, and officers of Israel (cf. Josh. 24:1) delayed taking the right stand for God. Moreover, further idolatrous practice would hinder the nation, as it is written, "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Prov. 14:34). Future generations needed proper guidance. Eternal destinies swayed in the balance of the decision. Delay is dangerous, as it is written,

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; (Eccl. 12:1).

Sin has its deceiving effects in the passing of time. The conscious can become past feeling (cf. Eph. 4:19). Every day is a blessed day for the individual, the family, the church, and the nation that chooses to fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and in truth.

### *Jimmy Clark*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Jeremiah 6:16-17**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Curtis A. Cates***

Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

## **Introduction**

**J**eremiah, the “*Paul*” of the Old Testament and often called the “*weeping prophet*,” enables us to see the tears of Jehovah. He was called by God while still in his minority; “*Ah, Lord Jehovah! Behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child.*” Though but perhaps nineteen or twenty years of age, Jeremiah was addressed by God thus,

Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them [the wicked

peoples]; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah (Jer. 1:5-8).

Jeremiah was raised up as a prophet of God in a very difficult time—the stubborn, impenitent, rebellious, idolatrous nation of Judah. The prophet was shown at the beginning that he would suffer grievously at the hands of God’s own people and the prophet’s own nation. In fact, his life would often be a stake. He would experience a very hard life, but God would stand by him. Having shown the prophet a tree, identified by Jeremiah as the *“rod of an almond tree”* (*“wakeful,” “watchful”*), God observed, *“Thou hast well seen: for I watch over my word to perform it”* (Jer. 1:11-12). The prophet would constitute one way of God watching His people.

Jeremiah’s responsibility would not be easy, for he would have to do some destructive work before the constructive work could begin (in spite of the fact that the destructive work must have been as distasteful and hated by the wicked of that day as it is in our generation). Note Jehovah’s charge to His prophet,

Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant (Jer. 1:9-10).

Dear reader, do you see herein the same negative and positive that are found in Paul’s charge to the evangelist Timothy (2 Tim. 4:2-4), and in Christ’s letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2-3)? (It is surpassing strange, is it not, and ironic indeed that

some so-called “believers” in God abhor His “negative” warnings because they wish not to reform their ways, whereas the avowed atheists abhor His warnings in hope that they might accuse Him of being arbitrary and unjust in His punishing the wicked.) The nation of Judah was going to fall—and, they would not be warned. Does that sound familiar?

How urgent was his message? It was so critically needed that Jeremiah was forbidden the bliss of a wife and family. “*Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters, in this place*” (Jer. 16:2). He was, however, spared seeing his wife and children carried into a foreign land or being killed; for, he was told by God about other families:

They shall die grievous deaths: they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried; they shall be as dung upon the face of the ground; and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the heavens, and for the beasts of the earth (Jer. 16:4).

But someone asks, How came God’s people, the Hebrews, to be in such dire straits?

For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13).

They had departed God for idols, for the “new,” for more “exciting” places to drink; their arrogant, self-willed, “scholarly,” self-sufficient attitudes had closed their ears to God’s pleadings.

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Thus saith Jehovah: Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings. But they say, It is in vain; for we will walk after our own devices, and we will do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart (Jer. 18:11-12).

Someone else inquires, Well, what about the preachers, the priests? Were they not crying out warnings? Oh, no!

The priests said not, Where is Jehovah? And they that handle the law knew me not: the rulers also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit (Jer. 2:8).

What are preachers preaching today, dear reader? Are we re-living those events two and one-half millennia later? What awaits such folly?

Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from Jehovah (Jer. 17:5).

Has man departed from God today?

Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches (Jer. 9:23).

Many in our generation have *“exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever”* (Rom. 1:25). Even some professed believers have abandoned

the ways of God. Yes, man has attempted to run God out of His universe, substituting atheism, skepticism, agnosticism, existentialism, and pluralism. Worship of man (Humanism) has now captivated politics, media, and education. False science and human philosophy have been substituted for divine revelation; an "encounter" for the divine message of the Holy Spirit; human, speculative creeds of denominationalism for Holy Writ; the "social gospel" for "the faith"; entertainment and celebration for reverent worship; and "accepting Jesus" for the obedience of a penitent believer for the remission of sins. How appropriate is the plea of Jeremiah,

Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls (Jer. 6:16)!

### **The Analogy**

The Lord often used illustrations or analogies to teach His will. Christ spoke many things in parables, in which He would move from the known (something with which His hearers were very familiar) to the unknown (some lesson which He wished to teach). He would move from the concrete (something perceived by the five senses) to the abstract (some spiritual lesson). Here in Jeremiah, God used the illustration of travelers journeying toward a particular destination. As they would progress, they would come upon a place where the road would split into two or more possible ways or paths.

It would be very important to stop, examine, and contemplate the alternative ways, for the decision

and the road taken might very well cause them to miss their destination. How helpful—sometimes absolutely necessary in such cases—to have certain signs and/or someone familiar with the ways to set the traveler on the right way leading to the sought destination! Unfortunate indeed would be the case at times that the traveler might choose to reject the critically important advice, someone simply too self-willed, stubborn, and/or prejudiced to accept the right kind of advice—often with costly and drastic results.

### **Stop! Look! And Listen!**

The Israelites were at just such a crossroads spiritually. Once faithful to God, they had abandoned His will. However, even in face of the warning of impending destruction, they persisted in their idolatry, their covetousness, their false dealings, and their immorality (Jer. 6:13). The false prophets gave them false assurance and hope, crying out, "*Peace, peace: when there is no peace*" (Jer. 6:14). The people were brazen in their rebellion and wickedness, "*nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush*"; the only end for them was destruction (Jer. 6:15). AND YET, the loving Father pleaded for them to return to Him!

Our God is amazingly patient, as seen in our text.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

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Jonah spoke of His being "*a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness*" (Jonah 4:2). Our God "*would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim. 2:4), thus His pleading for Israel again to seek the old paths. However, His patience eventually runs out, as it did for Judah.

Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it (Jer. 6:19).

We must not forget both "*the goodness and severity of God*" (Rom. 11:22). Let us not forget the warning of Solomon:

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and prolong his days, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God (Eccl. 8:11-13).

*"Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways, and see"* (Jer. 6:16). "*Stand still,*" as Moses commanded the Israelites (Exod. 14:13)—consider! Do not blindly take just any path, but contemplate upon them as would a traveler, which you are—a traveler destined for one of only two eternal destinies, heaven or hell.

Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

Take great care to find the right way, for your soul's eternal welfare depends upon it. If you think you may have missed the way that leads to eternal bliss in heaven, "*stand still*" and look and inquire to find it! The very fact that one is commanded to "*stop, look, and listen*" shows that there is the right way, and there are wrong ways. Paths stretch out on every hand, in every direction. Only a person very foolish would rush onto a way, headlong and heedlessly. And yet, enter a way, everyone must.

The human being, every living and responsible human being, is without choice relative to the fact that all shall experience life and death (unless, of course, the Lord returns during his or her lifetime) and shall spend eternity somewhere. On the other hand, each person does make a choice as to whether or not he will travel the way that leads to eternal life with God (Josh. 24:15; Acts 2:40; John 14:6; Matt. 7:21-23; et al.). Man is a free moral being, being created in God's image (Gen. 1:26). It is very critical that a person know how to make wise choices. Each travels in the path of his choice.

As noted above, to choose wrong is not only serious but also fatal. One who finds himself or herself in the wrong way must immediately abandon that way of destruction and enter the right way. To



do so is not easy or convenient, but it is critically important. And, the traveler in the right way must ever be cognizant of the very real, often very easy possibility of going back into the world (Rom. 8:12-13; Heb. 2:1-3; 2 Peter 2:20-22; et al.). Since "*the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jer. 10:23), God wishes to lead you on the right path to heaven, dear friend. However, He coerces no one—nor can He! Unfortunately, not everyone is willing to heed His warning and accept His leadership. In spite of God's abundant and ample provisions for the salvation of all men (Heb. 2:9; John 3:16), most people will be lost. Paul and Barnabas said to the Jews to whom they preached the Word,

Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46).

### **Ask For The Old Paths**

Some have contended that "*the old paths*" (plural) indicates that there are many ways to get to heaven, and that one is permitted to choose which path he will travel, the only criteria being honesty and sincerity. But, notice that the old paths constitute "*the good way*" (singular). The tried and tested paths are the "*way*" of truth. There is but one good way to serve God.

Others have contended that "*new*" is superior to "*old*." Those who are clamoring for "*change*" bemoan the existence of the "*old*." They ridicule what they term the "*traditions*," the "*deep roots*" of legalism, the old "*theological foundations*," even what it means to be

"a church." The outcry is "a church for our age" and an "up-to-date faith." We need a new "theology" for a new century. God's "pattern" must be debunked, in order to come with a more powerful "paradigm." There must be constant change for a constantly changing culture; there must be a "new way," a "creative" way. The "Old" way, "the old paths, where is the good way" is an irrelevancy; it is ponderous, and it is dead. This exactly parallels the attitude of the Hebrews of Jeremiah's time, does it not?

Dear reader, does "old" necessarily mean out-of-date? Do "old" and "ancient" mean something is automatically bad? It did not in Jeremiah's time, did it? Was the ten commandments law out-of-date, to be discarded, ineffectual? If so, why did Christ hundreds of years later command the rich young ruler to "keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17)? The ten commandments law was not out-of-date until Christ fulfilled it and nailed it to His cross (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 7:4; Gal. 3:19-29).

The writer remembers the soap which had this motto: "Duz does it all!" Soon, they marketed the new, improved Duz. Have you seen improvements in such products as automobiles, washing machines, radios and computers, flying machines and spacecraft, medical equipment and treatments? Indeed! Now, why did these improvements and changes come about? Would you like to go back to the "good old days" of malaria and polio, of the wash pot and scrub board, of open touring cars and room-size computers, of out-door toilets and no running water? Did not these changes come about because of the need to upgrade, because of their imperfections, because

they did not fully meet the requirements? Question: when do you change tires on your automobile; is it not when they dry rot or wear out? Most do not change them just because of their age or for change sake. But, how different is the Word of God!!!

The Word of God shall never wear out or get out-of-date! It shall never become inadequate! It shall never need changing! Why not? It is because the Word of God is just as powerful to save as it ever was (Rom. 1:16); just as living, active, sharp, piercing, and discerning as in the first century (Heb. 4:12); just as life-giving and nurturing as when Christ withstood the devil (Matt. 4:4); just as powerful to call man to Christ as when written (2 Thess. 2:14); just as eternal and indestructible as when revealed (Matt. 24:35; 1 Peter 1:24-25); just as soul-saving as during apostolic times (James 1:2); just as perfect and able to make man perfect as it was two millennia ago (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It persists as the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11) and sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). Tinker with it, abandon it, substitute for it, add to it, take from it, ridicule it at the cost of your eternal soul; that is the importance of the "*old paths*," dear reader.

What about air, bread, and water? They have been around six thousand years; old – yet perpetually young; ancient – yet persistently necessary. Why? Is it not because the human body has not changed; its needs are the same as when Adam was first created flesh and bone, are they not? Do you want, or will you tolerate someone changing the makeup of the air you breathe, corrupting the bread you eat, polluting the water you drink? Not for a moment!

These elements were and are absolutely necessary for our survival, and change is out of the question.

The Holy Bible is perfect for the spirit of man—which does not change. *“The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul”* (Psm. 19:7).

But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing (James 1:25).

If the Bible needs to be changed, why did its omniscient Author forbid changing His Word?

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you (Deut. 4:2).

Every word of God is tried: He is a shield unto them that take refuge in him. Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Prov. 30:5-6).

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

If the Bible can be changed, why shall we be judged by the Bible? Was the Lord unjust and

inaccurate when He emphatically stated,

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings [words, KJV], hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 20:12).

Beware of the change agents, dear friend, for you will not be judged by the whims of men or by the culture of the day! Do not let them “*doctor*” on the infallible, divinely-revealed, sacred Revelation! Protect it with your very life (Rev. 2:10).

If the Bible can be changed, why does God demand that it be preached, and it alone? “*Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 3). “*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11, KJV). He who preaches another gospel—a perverted one—is accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

### **Where Is The Good Way**

A thing or a way is not necessarily good just because it is old; antiquity does not within itself certify something as good. To inquire for the old paths is to seek out the good, the upright way.

And a highway shall be there, and a way,  
and it shall be called The way of holiness;

the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for the redeemed: the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein (Isa. 35:8).

The good way is the high road of righteousness and purity, and the worldly shall not accidentally, haphazardly stumble onto it. It is the everlasting way, entered deliberately and purposefully; and, it leads to salvation. Those in rebellion to God do not walk His approved, appointed way. Israel had departed the way of truth; they were called upon to restore their original walk, the righteous ways of the ancients. To walk uprightly is ever fresh and refreshing—never out-of-date! Revealed truth is old—yet perpetually young!

The good way is comprised of the inspired traditions.

So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours (2 Thess. 2:15).

It is the "*apostles' doctrine*" (Acts 2:42; Matt. 19:28; John 16:13; Matt. 16:18-19; 18:18; et al.). There are countless religions and practices which are humanly devised and have been anciently practiced; there is only one which was revealed by the apostles and which adheres to the written Word. All others shall be rejected (Matt. 15:9, 13; 7:21-23). The acceptable "*old paths, where is the good way*" lies not in "*theological*" liberalism (atheism), or existentialism, or denominationalism, or Catholicism, et al.; it is able to be traveled only by those who return to "*the ancient order of things*"—first century Christianity. The

old Jerusalem gospel must be sought out, believed, preached, and practiced (Col. 3:17). Like the Hebrews of Jeremiah's day, many do not like the idea of returning to God's Word—but we must. *"Behold, the word of Jehovah is become unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it"* (Jer. 6:10). God speaks today through His Son (Heb. 1:1-3), through His apostles, through the written Word. Sadly, most people are like the Athenians and the sojourners in Athens; being unsatisfied with the old, ancient, proven, tried and true, blessed way of Christ (John 14:6), moderns have *"spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing"* (Acts 17:21). Like Paul, we plead *"that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us"* (Acts 17:27).

### **Discriminate**

The *"good way"* is marked out, it is understandable and recognizable to all who diligently, objectively, and honestly seek to find it (John 8:32; 17:17). As in Micah's time, we must *"Hear, ye peoples, all of you: hearken, O earth, and all that therein is"* (Micah 1:2). God has always demanded mankind to reason, to discriminate. *"Come now, and let us reason together, said Jehovah"* (Isa. 1:18). In other words, one can know which way is good and acceptable; it is able to be discovered. However, sincere and diligent and intelligent comparison of the various ways is a must.

Now these [the Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness

of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).

Did not Paul command us to "*prove all things; hold fast that which is good*" (1 Thess. 5:21)?

The command is this: Examine the various religions and systems of morality and ethics in light of the sacred Revelation. Examine them without prejudice and with a critical eye; lay them beside the religion of the New Testament—genuine, true Christianity. Compare them with the church of the New Testament. Compare their time of beginning, their places of origin, their conditions of membership, their organization, their creeds, their acts of worship, their missions, their standards of morality and ethics with the characteristics of the one church you can read about in the New Testament. Realize that all false religions shall be rooted up come judgment day (Matt. 15:13). Realize that the sole authority in religion is the "*apostles' doctrine,*" "*the faith,*" "*the gospel of Christ,*" the law of Christ (Acts 2:42; Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 9:21). Woe to those who teach and practice a perverted "*gospel*" (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; Matt. 7:21-23; 4:4; et al.)! The very fact that there is the good way shows that there are bad ways, that lead to destruction. Unfortunately, men are continually devising new ways, as was the case in Jeremiah's day.

So, you are at the crossroads, and the path diverges. You shall take one of the ways to your eternal destiny. Which shall it be, friend? Only one leads to the everlasting home in heaven with God. And, believe me, God does "*discern between*



*the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not*" (Mal. 3:18). One will not be able to hide behind the smokescreen that the way is vague and indiscernible and unknowable!

### **Walk Therein**

Simply to "*know*" about, to recognize the old paths, the good way, is not enough. Very sad but true is the fact that Christ shall at the last day come "*rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus*" (2 Thess. 1:6-9). There must be the practiced result of the honest seeking of the good way. Many can answer all the questions relative to the identity of the righteous road to heaven; however, they are unwilling to pay the price to walk in that way — separation from the world and from its wicked, soul-damning, destructive, God-rejecting, Satan-obeying schemes and works. To walk in the good way is not just a theoretical question; it demands a reformation of life. For example, just to consent that Christ is the only begotten Son of God gets one to the demon stage (James 2:19), but where is the repentance, the confession of Christ's deity, the contacting of the blood of Christ in baptism for remission of sins (Luke 13:3, 5; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5; John 19:34; Col. 2:11-13; et al.), the crucifixion of the works of the flesh and the continual walk in the works of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-24; Rev. 2:10)? What good is knowledge, when it does not set you upright, bring about forgiveness of sins, put you on the strait and narrow way, and lead you to the eternal abode of your immortal soul?

What good was the rich man's knowledge of God and His will—when he refused to practice what he knew (Luke 16:19-31)? Resolve to act—TODAY! Enter the good way; love it, practice it, proceed in it, and persevere in it! NEVER DEPART FROM IT (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Beautiful it is to see people return to the "*old paths*" of New Testament Christianity. That, dear reader, is the plea of faithful churches of Christ. Congregations of the church the Lord established nearly two thousand years ago plead for a return to the law of Christ, as opposed to the doctrines and commandments of men (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:8). What could be wrong with the plea to "*Speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent*"? What is the problem with setting our determination to "*Do Bible things in Bible ways, and call Bible things by Bible names*"? Is it not the case that such was the very nature of Jeremiah's command to Israel to "*Seek the old paths*"? Christ asked, and appropriately so, "*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46). Question: If the pure, unadulterated seed of the kingdom, the Work of God (Luke 8:11), is sown today, what will it produce? Does one have to remind you that seed in the animal and plant kingdoms bring forth "*after their kind*" (Gen. 1)? Indeed not! Since Christ was using the analogy of the seed in the plant kingdom to illustrate the nature of the seed in the spiritual kingdom, would it make sense to have the spiritual Seed (the holy Scriptures) to bring forth other than "*after its kind*"? Another question: Because it is true that there are hundreds of religious bodies, denominations, churches today,

all teaching contradictory doctrines and carrying on different practices from one another, did the planted Word of God produce all these different, contradictory products? You know, dear reader, that it takes a denomination's teaching to produce that denomination. True, or false? Now, are all those hundreds of denominations' teachings in the New Testament? If so, our God is not a God of order but of confusion (cf., 1 Cor. 14:33). If so, our God is a God of contradiction, for He would have violated His own law that seed produce only after their own kind. NEVER in the history of the world has the gospel of Christ, the Truth, the Word produced even one denomination. In every place where the pure Word is believed, planted, and practiced, it produces the Lord's church, the one about which you can read in the New Testament. Let us return beyond the maze of contradictory doctrines, practices, and churches of men to the one body (Eph. 4:4), the first century church. That is to walk in the old paths.

### **Ye Shall Find Rest For Your Souls**

Shall the Lord reward the hard work of seeking, asking, discerning, sacrificing and determining to walk in the old paths? My, Yes! We shall be blessed with spiritual peace—rest. Christ's yoke is easy and His burdens light, for God remembers sin against us no more (Matt. 11:28-30; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:12). What would forgiveness of sins mean to you—never having to face those sins again? And, this inward peace and joy is but a foretaste of eternal rest in heaven; our soul's deepest longings are fulfilled! In what other way is this possible, than the good way?

Think about that hope that is anchored beyond the veil at the mercy seat of God's throne.

And we desire that each one of you may show the same diligence unto the fullness of hope even to the end: that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Heb. 6:11-12; cf., Col. 1:27; 3:4).

At the end of the way, the cost, pains, and sacrifices will seem as nothing. Yes, to see men, women, boys, and girls (who have reached accountable age) walking in New Testament Christianity, teaching others the old Jerusalem gospel, is precious indeed (Matt. 5:13-16).

### **We Will Not Walk Therein**

Just think; the nation of Judah was marching headlong into Babylonian Captivity. Countless ones of them would be killed by sword and by famine. The warning was clear, the offer of mercy explicit, if they would return to the ways of God. God's warnings of destruction are always accompanied by offers of mercy if the people will repent and return to Him in loving obedience (See Jonah 4:2). Can you imagine—the Hebrews refused God's plea! But, was that an isolated case? No, that seems to be the history of mankind—and even of God's own people. *"But they said, we will not walk therein."*

The world's only hope is the preaching and the walking in the old paths. However, the good way of Christ and His Word is often spurned and even ridiculed. The atheistic, Humanistic, new age, situation ethics, agnostic, heretical theories of the day have so infiltrated and permeated even so-

called "*theology*" today that God and His way are ridiculed. Adherents thereto are termed "*legalists*," "*right-wingers*," "*religious terrorists*," "*cultists*," "*Bible-bangers*," etc., and those who defend the old Jerusalem gospel and "*seek the old paths*" are accused of having the "*Old Paths Mentality*." That accusation comes often in a condescending, hateful way. It got so bad for Jeremiah that the enemies of God said,

Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah....Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words (Jer. 18:18).

Have you ever seen that attitude in supposedly religious folks?

Friend, wrong has always been wrong, and right, right. There never comes a time when sin is not sin, even though times do change, and have changed. God's law on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, for example, does not change with culture. What was Jeremiah's attitude toward sin? He preached against it. Was sin still sin in Christ's day? Did He preach against it? What about in Paul's day? What did Paul do? Now, what about today? Is sin still sin? Must we preach against it? What is our attitude toward the preacher, dear friend, when he preaches against sin? Does one criticize the preacher? If so SHAME on HIM! Does he ridicule him for preaching too much Bible, too much of what God says about sin? Question: Have such any care for the old paths—or, are they just "*playing church*"? The Israelites were "*playing*" at religion, and they were destroyed.

The rebellious do not travel the good way; it is they who ridicule the old paths. Sin hardens

people against God and His way (compare Pharaoh's rebellion against God's command). The nation of Judah was "*backsliding children*," and no amount of warning changed their plunge into destruction (Jer. 3:14). What did the Lord observe about the Jews of His day? "*Ye would not*" (Matt. 23:37). Sadly, when God's people refused to walk in His way the prophets preached what the people wanted to hear. Is that what is happening today? The spirit of rejection of the old paths is alive and well today, even at times in the Lord's church. The preachers (as the prophets of Jeremiah's time) have often imbibed this spirit of rejection (cf., 2 Tim. 4:2-4); the people,

...having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables.

Very regretfully, countless preachers hold up their dampened finger, test the wind, and go with the winds of change and perversion. They are unlike the preacher Micaiah, who refused to "*sell out*" at any cost (1 Kings 22). Even in the face of death, his attitude was, "*As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak*" (Jer. 22:14). Well, what a contrast—many will "*speak smooth things*" and scratch "*itching ears*" for a mess of pottage (a big salary), a little popularity, to be able to maintain friendship with the rebellious and compromising crowd, and to be able to stay with certain congregations. How unlike the apostle Paul, who wrote,

...but even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who

proveth our hearts (1 Thess. 2:4).

For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10).

Whom are we trying to please?

Now, no one who faithfully contends for the faith believes in being mean, vicious, and unloving. There is no room for a vindictive, mean, bitter spirit in servants of Christ, but rather *"speaking truth in love"* (Eph. 4:15). An unloving spirit will do much more harm than good and is far from the spirit of Christ. Rudeness has no place in a person's life, much less in the pulpit. However, *"contending for the faith once delivered"* (Jude 3) and being *"set for the defense of the gospel"* (Phil. 1:16) does not constitute nor is it tantamount to being unloving, mean, and legalistic, as some automatically charge; such a charge is to judge unrighteously and to violate Matthew 7:1-5 and John 7:24.

When some *"turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables,"* to which fables might people turn in our day? Such would certainly include error on: (1) the inspiration of the Scriptures, (2) whether one can know the truth (agnosticism), (3) whether we can understand the Bible alike, (4) whether the church can be restored, (5) whether worship must be in God's prescribed, authorized way, (6) whether God authorized mechanical instrumental music in Christian worship, (7) whether Christians may fellowship the denominations, (8) grace, law, faith, works, love, versus grace alone, (9) baptism for the remission of sins, or not necessary for salvation,

(10) whether women can have dominion over the men in the church, (11) whether we can “*absolve*” each other of sins, (12) whether Christ is now in heaven reigning, or shall reign on earth, (13) changing the mission of the Lord’s church into the “*social gospel*,” entertainment, and celebration, (14) raising money for the church in unauthorized ways, (15) preachers being called “*reverend*,” “*pastor*,” etc., (16) having been “*encountered*” and being “*enabled*,” led directly by the Holy Spirit separate from the Word, and (17) having ecumenical meetings with the denominations. Other departures from the Word could be added. Sadly, they refuse to walk in the “*old paths*.”

## Conclusion

The Lord had set watchmen (such as Jeremiah) over His people. Notice the next verse after our text, Jeremiah 6:17,

And I set watchmen over you, saying,  
Hearken to the sound of the trumpet; but  
they said, We will not hearken.

Thus, evil would come upon them (Jer. 6:19).

It is a very serious thing not to listen to God, not to heed the warnings of faithful gospel preachers, and to reject the message. Destruction came to Judah “*because they have not harkened unto my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it.*”

## The Last Mile Of The Way

Johnson Oatman, Jr.

If I walk in the pathway of duty,  
If I work till the close of the day,



I shall see the great King in His beauty  
When I've gone the last mile of the way.  
If for Christ I proclaim the glad story,  
If I seek for His sheep gone astray,  
I am sure He will show me His glory  
When I've gone the last mile of the way.  
Here the dearest of ties we must sever,  
Tears of sorrow are seen ev'ry day;  
But no sickness, no sighing forever  
When I've gone the last mile of the way.  
And if here I have earnestly striven  
And have tried all His will to obey,  
'Twill enhance all the rapture of heaven  
When I've gone the last mile of the way.  
When I've gone the last mile of the way,  
I will rest at the close of the day,  
And I know there are joys that await me  
When I've gone the last mile of the way.

### *Curtis A. Cates*



Brother Cates has been faithfully preaching the gospel for almost fifty years. Holds various degrees from respected universities. Served as Director of the Memphis School of Preaching (1982-2007). Author of various superb volumes. Mission work in Singapore, Malaysia, and Russia. Annette and Curtis have two sons (both are faithful gospel preachers) and four grandchildren.



*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Genesis 6:22**

*This Chapter Written By*

**Perry B. Cotham**

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

Some 1656 years from creation, when the population of the earth increased, and wickedness of man was great in the earth, *“and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gen. 6:5). So God proposed to destroy man from *“the face of the earth”* (v. 7). *“But Noah found grace (favor, ASV) in the eyes of the Lord”* (v. 8). God told Noah to build an ark for the saving of him and his family. He gave to Noah the dimensions of the ark and the kind of wood to use in the building of it. This Noah did. The Bible says: *“Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he”* (Gen. 6:22).

The writer of Hebrews explains this in a little fuller wording:

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and

became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Heb. 11:7).

Hence, Noah is one of the best known characters of the Bible. His name is associated with the greatest catastrophe in the history of the world. The flood made Noah immortal. By faithful obedience to God, Noah saved the human race from extinction. There are many lessons for us to learn today from the story of Noah, the ark, and the flood. We will note some of them.

### **The World In Sin**

Noah lived in a time when the world was sunken in iniquity. The earth was "*filled with violence*" (Gen. 6:13). But Noah was a righteous man, "*a preacher of righteousness*" (2 Peter 2:5). He was told to make an ark out of gopher wood, and told how to make the ark. God said He would bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh (Gen. 6:14-17). But Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives, eight souls, would be spared from the flood, as they would come into the ark and be saved. So Noah built the ark. He did **all** that God commanded him.

Violence is always the accompaniment of moral corruption. The crimes of violence which at present are in our nation, especially with the young people, shocks us. Many thousands are forgetting God and failing to obey His word. We can expect worse things, unless there is a revival of true religion in obedience to God's will.

To many people, nothing is wrong. We realize that it is always difficult at times to live a godly life

in a world of wickedness, but it can be done. It is always right to do right, and it is always wrong to do wrong. Those who stand for the right and who live their lives according to God's inspired Word, will always have God's approval. Noah lived against the wickedness of his age, and he had a godly family.

One cause of the increase of wickedness back in Noah's day was that good people married wicked people: *"the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose"* (Gen. 6:2). The same is true today. Good people should marry good people. As the home goes, so goes the nation, so goes the world. The home is the primary unit of society. With crime and violence and immorality sweeping our nation today, we desperately need more good, righteous homes.

### **God's Decree For Destruction**

There was no sudden decree in God's pronouncement of doom on the sinful world. Noah had been preaching righteousness, but the Lord declared: *"My Spirit shall not strive with man forever ... yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years"* (Gen. 6:3, ASV). God gave them time to repent. One hundred and twenty years were the days of respite given the people after God said He would destroy them. God is a gracious God; so, as Noah prepared the ark, he warned the people of their doom unless they repented. But repentance did not come. We do not know how long it took Noah to build the ark. Some think that the one hundred and twenty years was the period required for building the ark. But this we cannot say.

Peter, in his reference to this, refers to Noah's preaching (2 Peter 2:5). He also refers to the people being warned in his statements in 1 Peter 3:19-20:

By which [Spirit, Christ] also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison [of sin]; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein [that is, in the ark] few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

The words "*when*" and "*while*" are adverbs of time; they explain when the preaching to the souls in sin was done. This does not mean that the people were given another chance to repent after their death, being in Hades, the realm of the disembodied souls. No one has ever had that opportunity, or will have it (compare the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Hades, Luke 16:19-31; no "*second chance*" here).

Peter also added, "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us*" (1 Peter 3:21). As the ark was on the water, and by means of the water, the people inside were carried over to a new world cleansed and purified by means of water, so does baptism into Christ save us. We are buried with Christ in baptism and arise to walk in newness of life (cf. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17). Some declare today that being baptized (Acts 8:26-39) has nothing to do with one's salvation. But such is not true. Too, Peter declared that baptism is not taking a bath to put away the filth of the flesh. It is "*the answer of a good conscience toward God*" (1 Peter 3:21). The resurrected Christ, through His inspired apostles, commands it (Matt. 28:19-20). Baptism saves us.

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## **Noah And Family Enter The Ark**

Seven days before the rains began, Noah and his family, and the animals, as commanded by the Lord, all entered into the ark (Gen. 7:1-9). After they entered, God shut the door (v. 16); so all were safe inside the ark. Finally, the rains came. *"And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights"* (v. 12). *"And the ark went upon the face of the waters"* (v. 18). All that were outside the ark drowned (vs. 22-23), as God said they would.

In the lives of men and women the hour comes when the pleadings and warnings of God give way to His righteous punishments (cf. Rom. 2:3-11; 2 Thess. 2:9-12). Noah was commanded by the Lord to build an ark in order to save himself, his family, and all others who were willing to be saved from the great flood which was to come upon the earth. But they would not enter into the ark. They ignored Noah's pleadings. And they were all drowned. All outside the ark perished!

## **Noah's Obedient Faith**

Another lesson of importance that needs to be learned from this story is that Noah built the ark *"by faith,"* but it was an obedient faith, and not just *"faith only."* James tells us that *"by works"* of obedience, *"a man is justified, and not by faith only"* (James 2:24). The sinner is *"justified by faith"* (Rom. 5:1), but it is by an obedient faith. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. If Noah had just *"believed"* and not obeyed, he would have drowned along with all the others. In what Noah did, he followed faithfully the directions given him by the Lord. He did as God commanded

him. He obeyed. And he and his family were saved from the flood, by the grace of God.

God has made clear to the world in the Bible, His word, His plan to save the world from sin, by His Son, Jesus Christ.

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 (John 3:16).

Jesus died for all; He tasted *death for every man*" (Heb. 2:9). God is "*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Peter 3:9). God wants "*all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim. 2:4). We are saved "*by grace,*" "*through faith,*" and "*it is the gift of God*" (Eph. 2:8). But it must be a working, obedient faith that leads one to truly repent of his sins, confess the name of Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:26-39; 22:16). When Paul preached the gospel in the wicked city of Corinth, Luke records that "*many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized*" (Acts 18:8). Thus, they were saved.

As salvation was in the ark in Noah's day, so salvation from sin today is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). To be "*in Christ*" is to be in His church (Matt. 16:18), the saved are added to the church (Acts 2:47), when they are saved. Christ is the head of the church, which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23), and He is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). Christ is "*the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*" (Heb. 5:9). There is no salvation in any other. Peter declared concerning Christ:



Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Hence, we can say that in Christ, in His church, is the "*ark of safety*" for all mankind today, and in no other place. Noah and his family had to be in the ark. Yet man often acts as if he knows what to do to be saved from sin. In the world today there are those who will not obey the Lord's plan of salvation-how sad! Some are being taught to "*pray the sinner's prayer*" to be saved, or that baptism has nothing to do with one's forgiveness of sins, or that man-made religious bodies are as good as the church that Jesus built. But all must be "*in Christ*" to be saved.

Another lesson of obedience from Noah is that he used only gopher wood in building the ark because God told him to use gopher wood. If he had used some other kind of wood in addition to gopher wood, it would have been wrong. For example, today some want to use in our public worship, in addition to the singing, mechanical instruments of music. They say that God does not tell us not to use these instruments in connection with the singing of "*psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). This is true. And God did not tell Noah not to use all the other kinds of wood with the gopher wood, and name many of them. That would have been ridiculous. When God said "*gopher wood*" that automatically eliminated all the other kinds of wood. God specified "*gopher*" wood. Every verse in the New Testament says "*sing*", every example is that of

singing. So the law of exclusion eliminates mechanical instruments in addition to singing spiritual songs. (Just here we mention that men in giving to us the NIV Bible put the words "*make music*" in Ephesians 5:19. Maybe they wanted to please the denominations in the many instruments of making mechanical instruments of music with their singing. We cannot endorse that translation. It is wrong.)

We can imagine that the people scoffed at Noah as he toiled away at his gigantic task. But the flood came just as God, through Noah, said it would. Noah was a faithful preacher. He only saved seven besides himself. He saved his family, and that is more than some Christians today are doing. He also saved the world. When the ark was finished, Noah went into it with his family, "*and the Lord shut him in*" (Gen. 7:16). It was God who closed the door, and Noah and his family remained alive.

### **Judgment Day Is Coming**

After the flood God promised that He would never again destroy the earth by a flood (9:11, 15). But when we read the New Testament we know that a judgment day is coming. Christ said that when He comes again the conditions will be "*as in the days that were before the flood*" (Matt. 24:37-39). Peter also wrote that some will say of the second coming of Christ,

Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation (2 Peter 3:4).

But they overlook the story of Noah and the flood

(2 Peter 3:5-9). Then Peter went on to say: *"But the day of the Lord will come..."* (v. 10).

## Conclusion

Where will we be on judgment day? Where will we spend eternity after this earthly life? As accountable people, are we in the Lord's church?

These are some of the modern-day lessons we can learn from this ancient story of the Bible. After the ark was completed and God was ready to send the flood, He said to Noah and his family, *"Come thou and all thy house into the ark"* (7:1). The great invitation today is, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt. 11:28).

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come...  
And whosoever will, let him take the water  
of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

### *Perry Cotham*



A faithful preacher of the gospel for over **70 years** all around the world! A zealous, enthusiastic worker in the kingdom of God. Full-time evangelistic work for the last few decades. Frequently travels to foreign countries to preach and deliver Bibles. Author of various tracts and books. A regular speaker on lectureships throughout the brotherhood. Theresa (deceased) and Perry have three children.

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **1 Samuel 15:22-23**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Stan Stevenson***

**I**t is an honor to have a part in this year's Truth In Love lectures. We are indebted to the elders of the East Hill church, to Paul Sain and Brandon Britton, and to their good wives, and to all the members of this congregation who work together to put on this lectureship each year.

The assignment for this lecture is, 1 Samuel 15:22-23, which reads,

And Samuel said, 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 as] 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.

## **An Overview**

God had instructed Saul, through Samuel, to "smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have,

and spare them not..." (1 Sam. 15:1-3). Saul gathered the fighting men and went out and laid in wait (1 Sam. 15:4-5). Before beginning the assault on the Amalekites, Saul showed kindness to the Kenites by allowing them to escape from among the Amalekites and avoid being destroyed with them (1 Sam. 15:6). Saul and his army then began carrying out their commission, only they spared the king, Agag, and the best of the flocks and herds (1 Sam. 15:7-9). The word of the Lord came to Samuel informing him of the Lord's displeasure with Saul as king of Israel, which greatly grieved Samuel (1 Sam. 15:10, 11). Samuel went to Saul and his army at which time Saul proclaimed his faithfulness in carrying out the word of the Lord (1 Sam. 15:12, 13). If such were true, then Samuel asked the meaning of the sounds of the sheep and oxen (1 Sam. 15:14). Saul defended their actions on the grounds that the people had spared the best of the flocks and herds in order to use them for sacrifices to the Lord (1 Sam. 15:15). Samuel reminded Saul that when he was young, he had been humble and had been exalted by the Lord to be king over His people; He had been the one to command Saul to destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:17, 18). Saul defends his actions as being in harmony with the Lord's will, but blames the people for the sparing of the flocks and the herds (1 Sam. 15:20). It is at this point that Samuel speaks the words of our text.

### **Some Observations**

Since the theme of this year's lectureship is "Modern Applications of Ancient Texts," it is in

order to make some observations that will help us apply the text for our day.

**First, in looking at the assigned verses, we observe that we cannot substitute sacrifice for obedience.** Samuel said,

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 (1 Sam. 15:22).

We need to understand that attending assemblies, or doing anything else the Lord has commanded, is not a substitute for obeying God in our daily walk of life. How many will attend the Sunday morning assembly, participate in every part of the worship, yet they are unfaithful. Isaiah described that very thing when he wrote,

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: [but] Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah 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. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: 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 putrifying sores: they have

not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country [is] desolate, your cities [are] burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and [it is] desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, [and] we should have been like unto Gomorrah. Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose [is] the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the d: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; [it is] iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear [them]. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed,



judge the fatherless, plead for the widow  
(1:2-17).

Worship is but one aspect of our service to God. It is an avenue by which we can approach God and pour out our heart's adoration. But, worship that comes from one whose heart is set on doing evil is unacceptable to God.

The sacrifice of the wicked [is] an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright [is] his delight (Prov. 15:8).

The sacrifice of the wicked [is] abomination: how much more, [when] he bringeth it with a wicked mind? (Prov. 21:27).

He that killeth an ox [is as if] he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, [as if] he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, [as if he offered] swine's blood; he that burneth incense, [as if] he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations (Isa. 66:3).

These verses, and others, show that worship is not and can not be a substitute for faithful living. Worship is but one part of faithfulness to God. He that does not live faithfully cannot worship faithfully. Outward displays of a supposed spirituality are not a substitute for a sincere obedience of faith.

**Second, we observe that grace is not a license for sin.** Burnt offerings and sacrifices were ordained of God as a means of obtaining forgiveness for sin (Lev. 3-7). They had to be offered by faith, but they

were the means whereby the sins of the people could be forgiven in view of the coming Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). But, those sacrifices were not to be abused by becoming an excuse, or license for sin. Though God has made provisions for a man to obtain forgiveness for his sins, he ought to strive to avoid the sin from the beginning. In his first epistle, John stated that if one says he has no sin, he is deceived and void of the truth (1 John 1:8), and if one says he has not sinned, he lies and the word of God is not in him (1 John 1:10). But, that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us and cleanse us (1 John 1:9). But, John goes on to say, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not..." (1 John 2:1a). Even though we can be forgiven of our sins, and even though Jesus is the propitiation for our sins and our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1b, 2), John says we should not sin at all. One should strive to avoid reasoning, when tempted, "Well, I can go ahead and yield to this temptation because, after all, I can get forgiveness for the sin." Such is an abuse of the principle of grace. We are surely thankful for God's grace, but it must not become an encouragement toward sin.

**In the third place, we observe the unseemly character of sin. Samuel told king Saul that rebellion was as witchcraft and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry.** One of the challenges that we face is to see our sins as God sees them. Man's wisdom tends toward a rationalization for sin. Some may think sin is justified under certain conditions. They may think that anyone, under the same conditions, would have

done the same thing and that, somehow, justifies the sin. And, we are sure that our sins are not as bad as the sins that others commit. We would never think of practicing witchcraft, yet when one rebels against God's will, in heaven they are viewed as the same. We would never think of putting an idol somewhere in our homes, yet when one is stubborn to do God's will it is the same as idolatry. We have substituted our will for God's will. By failing to utterly destroy the Amalekites, and instead, sparing the king and the best of the flocks and herds, Saul had substituted his own will and wisdom for what God had plainly told him. It may be difficult and painful to face the reality of the nature of our sins. But, such is necessary. We are told that if we confess our sins, God will forgive (1 John 1:9). The word "confess" means "to say the same thing as another, i.e. to agree with, assent" (Thayer, 446). So, in obtaining forgiveness I come to see my sin as God does and agree with what He says about the nature of my sin. We must let God tell us the nature of our deeds, whether good or bad.

**In the fourth place, we observe that partial obedience is disobedience.** Saul had been commanded to destroy the Amalekites. He had certainly destroyed all of them save one, the king. Likewise, he had been told to destroy the ox, sheep, camel and ass. He had destroyed all, save the best to be used for sacrifice. Yet, God described what Saul did as being disobedience. Jesus said, "...man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). James said, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend

in one [point], he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). It is not a matter of doing most of what God says, we are obligated to obey all that He says. Failure to do so is sin. Since none of us obeys the will of God in every instance, we are thankful for the provisions of His grace for forgiveness. But, we must not do as Saul and deceive ourselves into thinking that when we have done most of what God says, that is sufficient to please Him.

### **Additional Observations From The Context**

**(1) Unforgiven sin, inevitably, will be punished** (1 Sam. 15:2-3). When the Israelites came through the Red Sea, the first nation they encountered on their journey toward Canaan was the Amalekites (Exod. 17). A battle ensued at Rephidim and the Israelites ultimately prevailed. Bible students will remember that this is the battle where Aaron and Hur helped hold up the hands of Moses so that the Israelites might prevail in the battle. We learn in Deuteronomy 25 that Amalek came up behind Israel and smote the feeble as they journeyed toward Canaan and were faint and weary. Though it has been many years since the battle took place, God has not forgotten the sins of Amalek. There are only two things that can be done with sin. Either it must be punished, or it must be forgiven. Since Amalek did not seek forgiveness for their sins, they will now be punished. Sin, if not forgiven, will be punished.

**(2) Our sins, when known, grieve those who love us and are interested in our salvation** (1 Sam. 15:11). Many mates, parents, children and others are

grieving even now because of the sins of those they love.

**(3) The instructions that one must obey to please God are plain** (1 Sam. 15:3). There are things in the Bible that are hard to understand (2 Peter 3:16). But, the things that one must do to be saved are not hard to understand. The challenge is not in understanding, but in accepting and obeying.

**(4) Leadership must set the example and resist any influence against obeying God** (1 Sam. 15:9, 15). Whether or not Saul was using the people as his scapegoat, or not, he was the king. He should have resisted any suggestion or action that disobeyed the plain commands of God. And, he certainly should not have lead the people in disobeying God. Those in positions of leadership (parents, husbands, elders, deacons, preachers, and teachers) should be models of faithfulness to God.

**(5) No one is unexpendable** (1 Sam. 15:26-28). Every member of the body of Christ is important (1 Cor. 12), but no member is so important that the life of the church depends on that one person.

## Conclusion

While we should not study the Old Testament to the neglect of the New, there are so many great and profitable lessons to be gleaned from a study of the Old Testament. I am sure that we have not exhausted the text of the lessons that we might learn. But, it is my prayer that these lessons will serve to help us as we strive to learn and to do the will of God.

### *Stan Stevenson*



A native Tennessean (Lincoln County) • Grew up in Huntsville, AL • Received a BA degree from Southern Christian University and is near completion of a MA from Freed-Hardeman University • Began preaching in 1977, full-time in 1983 • Local work in Tennessee and Alabama • Presently working with the Rome congregation in Smith County, TN • Julie and Stan have two boys and a girl.

*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Jeremiah 10:23**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Curtis A. Cates***

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

## **Introduction**

**T**he last days of God's people, the kingdom of Judah, were a time of profound sadness to Him. The righteous, persecuted prophet of God cries out thus:

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! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! For they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongue, as it were their bow, for falsehood; and they are grown strong in the land, but not for truth: for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith Jehovah (Jer. 9:1-3).

In fact, *“through deceit they refuse to know me, saith Jehovah”* (9:6). Jeremiah would *“take up a weeping and wailing”* for the mountains [which would be deforested by the enemy, for the pastures [which would be burned up], for the birds, beasts, and cattle [which would be gone], and for Jerusalem [which would be deserted and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon] (9:10-11). Why would the people be taken into captivity?

Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein, but have walked after the stubbornness of their own heart...

In Jeremiah’s day, as in our day, most people [even God’s own nation] thought themselves to be very *“wise,”* wise enough to direct their own steps and lives. Listen:

Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who exerciseth loving-kindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah (9:23-24).

God’s people were fascinated by and attracted to the philosophies and idolatry of the world. God warned,

O house of Israel, Thus saith Jehovah, Learn not the way of the nations, and be not



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dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the nations are dismayed at them (10:2).

Observe the non-sensical folly of worshipping the stars in the practice of astrology, as well as making a "god," an idol, from a tree and then having to carry it around and even nail it up to keep it from falling over (10:3-5). Notice the fact that *"they are together brutish and foolish: the instruction of idols! It is but a stock"* (10:8). The idol is made of silver and gold by *"skillful men,"* and clothed in fancy, rich-appearing blue and purple clothing (10:9). Can you imagine God's people's thinking that these concoctions of men [however skillful] would save them from Nebuchadnezzar?

Now, look at the great contrast between the above described gods of astrology and gods of their own making, and Jehovah. *"There is none like thee, O Jehovah; thou art great, and thy name is great in might"* (10:6). How great? 1. All should fear before God. 2. No king or wise man is *"like unto thee."* 3. God is the one *"true God," "the living God, and an everlasting King."* 4. *"At his wrath the earth trembleth, and the nations are not able to abide his indignation."* 5. God, not the nations, made the heavens and the earth, and before Him the nations perish. 6. God created by His wisdom, and His majesty rules in His universe. 7. Compared to Him, *"Every man is become brutish and without knowledge"* (10:6-16).

What would be the result of listening to men instead of to the Lord? The enemy in the north country was already making "a great commotion" in preparation for making *"the cities of Judah a desolation, a dwelling-place of jackals"* (10:17-22). God would *"sling*

*out the inhabitants of the land at this time,"* into the Babylonian Captivity. This is the background of the powerful declaration of Jeremiah,

O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (10:23).

### **The Way Of Man – A Walk**

This life is often called a way; it is a walk. Isaiah wrote *"And a highway shall be there, and a way..."* (Isa. 35:8), for example. Christ spoke of two ways of life, one broad and wide and leading to eternal ruin and the other strait and narrow and leading to eternal life (Matt. 7:13-14). Paul described the Ephesian Christians as once having *"walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air [Satan],"* whereas now they were saved, walking *"with Christ," "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them"* (Eph. 2:1-10).

Christ spoke plainly about walking in light versus walking in darkness. For example,

I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12).

He compared this to walking in the physical light of day, versus walking in physical darkness of night (John 11:9-10). Notice also His description of His being with the disciples: *"The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?"* some asked the Lord.

Jesus therefore said unto them, Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye

have the light, that darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light (John 12:34-36).

It is clear, then, that the term "*walk*" is used to mean all of the activities of an individual's life. Each person has free-will and thus must determine whether he or she will walk in the way of himself or herself [the ways of the world] or in the way of Jehovah [revealed in His Word].

### **The Way Of Man – Not In Himself**

From creation, mankind has asked, "*Where did I originate?*" "*What is my purpose here?*" "*Where am I going?*" The very fact that man can contemplate these questions shows the "*great gulf*" that exists between human beings and animals. The brutes of the earth cannot question their origins, purpose, or destiny. It is very revealing, though, that even with this Godlike quality, mankind is totally inadequate to answer the questions regarding these eternal verities. Most people struggle through life alone, not knowing the meaning and purpose of life.

Job asked, "*Where then cometh wisdom?*" The question was answered in the most ancient book in the Bible, and the answer has not changed: "*Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding*" (Job 28:28).

### **Wisdom Not In Philosophy**

Paul records that mankind, when they knew God, refused to acknowledge Him as God (Rom. 1:18-

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27). They rejected the revelation and inspiration of God in His Word. They turned to human philosophy (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:8). They *"became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."* They eventually digressed into abject idolatry. Man apart from God and His revelation is perverted in mind, and the result is perverted religion (Matt. 15:13; Gal. 1:6-9; et al.).

### **Wisdom Not In False Science**

God is not opposed to true science, for He created the physical world, with the laws of nature. However, Paul stated in Romans 1 that the other place where man turned, in addition to human speculation and imagination, was science falsely so-called; Paul called it *"nature."* They worshipped and served the creature instead of God, and they could not understand nature itself; they could not even understand themselves, eventuating into sexual perversion also. Man becomes like his *"god."* If he makes Jehovah God the object of his affections, he becomes upright, just, ethical, moral, and good. If man makes nature, or gold, or the planets, or the flesh his god, he becomes evil and perverted (1:28-32). Atheism, Humanism, evolution, pluralism, et al., have had a most detrimental influence upon today's generation — as in the days of Judah; we must return to God!

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; But the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov. 14:12).

The man that God would destroy [actually that person destroys himself (Acts 13:46)] is the one who trusts in his wickedness, in his riches, but who "*makes not God his strength*" (Psm. 52:5, 7).

## **Wisdom Possessed, Given Only In And By God**

True wisdom is revealed only in prepositional revelation, the Holy Scriptures (Heb. 1:1-3). Flesh and blood cannot reveal the truth (Matt. 16:16-17). Those who obey God's commandments and fear God have wisdom (Psm. 111:10). One must humble himself or herself before God (Matt. 5:3; 18:3-4); only then will that person listen to God (Luke 8:18). The story of the Bible is God seeking man (Luke 19:10); man cannot by searching find out God; God must reveal Himself through His Word. God's Word is truth (John 17:17), not the speculations of man. Only that truth can make us free (John 8:32). Satan tries to blind our hearts from the truth, as he did with Eve (Gen. 3:1-5) and with the nation of Judah (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Some have refused to hear the truth (2 Thess. 2:10-13).

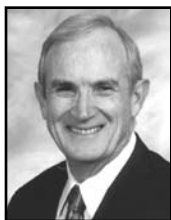
## **Conclusion**

King Ahab learned the hard way that "*the way of man is not in himself.*" Wanting to war against Benhadad, king of Syria, he asked his 400 prophets if he should go up. They said, "*Go up.*" Then, he called the prophet of God, Micaiah, whose attitude was, "*As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak.*" The true prophet [under the threat of death by Ahab, king of Israel] warned him not

to go up, that he would be killed. It was not what the king, Ahab, wanted to hear. Micaiah was smitten upon the cheek, thrown into the prison, and fed with bread and water of affliction. However, Ahab was killed in battle, as the prophet of God had warned. Ahab thought he could *"do it his way"* and hide from God. No, *"it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps."*

Christ, the Way, the Truth, the Life invites all to come--His way (John 14:1-6; Matt. 11:28-30). *"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). Woe unto that person – or nation – whose way is not the Lord's way!

### ***Curtis A. Cates***



Brother Cates has been faithfully preaching the gospel for almost fifty years. Holds various degrees from respected universities. Served as Director of the Memphis School of Preaching (1982-2007). Author of various superb volumes. Mission work in Singapore, Malaysia, and Russia. Annette and Curtis have two sons (both are faithful gospel preachers) and four grandchildren.

*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# *Micah 6:8*

*This Chapter Written By*

*Robert R. Taylor, Jr.*

He hath shewed 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?

## **Introduction**

**T**ime spent in Old Testament studies is a wise and profitable investment. We are told in Romans 15:4,

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

This would be true of the writings of major and minor prophets generally and of Micah particularly. Likewise, it would be inclusive of this assigned text in Micah.

It has been stated so frequently that the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

Micah is one of the dozen minor prophets of the Old Testament. He was a contemporary with

Isaiah prophesying in rural Palestine while Isaiah prophesied in Jerusalem. Micah 4:1-3 and 5:2 are perhaps the most familiar passages in this book. But Micah 6:8 would run these two a close third.

### Micah 6:8

This richly rewarding question reads,

He hath shewed 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?

*"He hath shewed thee, O man..."*. The antecedent of *"He"* is the Lord. Such is a rousing refutation of Deism which many of the colonial leaders of America imbibed and propagated. They claimed He was Creator but stepped out of the picture allowing the Universe to wind down with no intervention from Him whatsoever. He is not an aloof God but one near by, one cognizant of man and what man needs to be and do.

Man has not been left alone to chart his own path on planet earth void of any divine supervision. God has shown what man is to do and be. It has been made crystal clear and marked out in understandable fashion.

Here is **individual** regulation—not group demands. *"Thee"* is a singular pronoun. *"O man"* again is singular in reception and application. What is forthcoming is to be done individually. It cannot be done by proxy. Another cannot do these requirements and have them accrue to the one who does nothing. In **no** dispensation has this been God's



way of operation with man.

This applies to **every** man. Micah was no ancient Calvinist. He knew that every man is included. He also knew that man was active—not passive. Heaven mandated; man's duty was obligatory. It was a divine/human arrangement. It was not 100% divine and 0% human as current Calvinism stresses.

But what has the Lord shown or exhibited to man?

*"What is good..."*. God and good are of close kin. There is but one letter of difference—an extra o. The Psalmist of 119 affirmed in an earlier era, *"Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes"* (v. 68). God's very essence is goodness. He is goodness personified.

He showed Adam and Eve what was good. They forsook His counsel. He showed Cain and Abel what was good. One was submissive — Abel. One was rebellious — Cain. He showed Noah and his family what was good. They were submissive. He showed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob what was good. They did not always measure up to that standard of goodness. Abraham and Isaac both lied about their real relationships with Sarah and Rebekah. Jacob was an earlier deceiver and supplanter making a marvelous transformation in later life. He showed Israel in the wilderness what was good. Frequently, they preferred the way of evil, rebellion and rejection. He showed Saul the way of goodness. The first Israelite monarch chose the realm of rebellion. He showed David the way of goodness. During one period of his life the renowned king lusted, committed adultery, sought to cover his flagrant failure to do good and finally

committed cold-blooded murder of a totally selfless and innocent man – Uriah the Hittite. He showed Israel and Judah the good way when they were divided. Israel was pernicious persistently; Judah was more than she was pious.

God has shewed us what is good under the gospel. Far too frequently though we prefer the bad over the good and the worthless over the worthwhile. Our flawed condition is not overlooked by the Eye that **sees** all, the Ear that **hears** all and the Mind that **knows** all.

*“And what doth the Lord require of thee...”*. Were Deism true, which it is not, there would be no requirements forthcoming from Heaven to man below. The Lord would not care what man does or does not do. But He does care; He does make requirements. He is an obedience-demanding God.

Here we not only have a refutation of Deism which presents an Absent Landlord but also a refutation of cold, cruel and calloused Calvinism. Calvinism has created a God minus any and all requirements for man. Did Calvin, and even Augustine before him, study the Old Testament with such little profit? The Decalogue is brimmed full of negative (8) and positive (2) requirements. We are told there were 613 laws in the Mosaic Economy. Most of them (60%) were negatives and the rest (40%) were positives.

Likewise, the New Testament is filled with rules, regulations, charges and directives. I have counted personally over 2,200 of such in the New Testament with about 75% of them in the positive category and 25% in the negative realm. Deity is still in the

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requiring business for a surety. Commandments are still compatible with Christianity for a surety.

*"But to do justly..."*. The opposite of just is unjust. Cain was unjust in the slaying of Abel (Gen. 4). Noah's peers were unjust. Evil was their major (Gen. 6). Just behavior was not their cup of tea at all. Sodom's citizens were unjust and immoral. They attempted to rape the two angels who came to Lot as humans (Gen. 19). The Pharaoh of the oppression was unjust (Exod. 1-14). Nadab and Abihu were unjust (Lev. 10:1-2). Righteousness was not in their make-up. Korah, Abiram, Dathan and Balaam were an unjust quartet of men (Num. 16:22-24). Hophni and Phinehas, sinful sons of Eli, were unjust. Saul was unjust toward David in the last chapters of 1 Samuel. In later life Solomon was unjust in the heavy burdens he imposed on helpless, hapless and hopeless Israel (1 Kings 12). Ahab and Jezebel were unjust toward Naboth (1 Kings 21). Most kings of Judah and all monarchs of Israel were unjust. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah received unjust treatment at the hands of apostate Judah. Nebuchadnezzar was unjust toward the three Hebrew children—Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah — in Daniel 3.

In the New Testament we read of unjust men. Herod the Great was unjust toward the innocents of Bethlehem in Matthew 2. His life overflowed with a multitude of unjust acts. Herod Antipas was unjust toward John the Baptist in Matthew 14 and Mark 6. The Pharisees and Sadducees were unjust with Jesus and later with His apostles. For almost 300 years the evil Roman Empire was unjust with the Christians. Islam is currently unjust with the non-Islamic world

in general and with America in particular. To them we are infidels worthy of death.

The opposite of the foregoing would be just people – just in motive and mission, in attitude and action, in language and life.

Noah was a just man in his evil era (Gen. 6:9). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in late life were just men (Gen. 12-49). Joseph was just in the phenomenal treatment he gave his brothers who had wronged him to such a great extent (Gen. 37-50). Job was just though Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu failed to sense that in the afflicted patriarch in the land of Uz (Job 3-37). Hezekiah and Josiah were just monarchs. So were Jehovah's prophets—His servants. Cornelius was a just man per Acts 10:22. Elders, as per Titus 1:8, are to be just men. Elders who wish to suppress unwanted truths from being proclaimed from the pulpit are not just men. Sheep need **just** shepherds.

To do justly means to do righteously. To do righteously is to do what is right—mentally, vocally and in actions. This is needed for all who seek God's approval.

*"And to love mercy..."*. Mercy is lovingkindness. In the KJV all verses of Psalm 136 end with *"for his mercy endureth for ever."* The ASV ends all 26 verses with, *"his lovingkindness endures for ever."*

Mercy is compassion. It is insensitive concern for others. It is felt and expressed sympathy. It is tender regard in the treatment of others. It is tender loving care for others. It is the Golden Rule in admirable action in what we say and what we do. It is empathy—putting ourselves in another's shoes

and acting according and responsibly.

In one of the nine beautiful beatitudes composing the preface of the Galilean Sermon on the Mount, Jesus captured mercy in a marvelous manner. He said, "*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy*" (Matt. 5:7). James has a strong and stiff warning about the absence of mercy by stating,

For he shall have judgment without mercy,  
that shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth  
against judgment (James 2:13).

The man in Jesus' parable who needed mercy when reckoning day came received it but failed miserably in extending it for an insignificant debt owed him (Matt. 18:23-35). He prized mercy when extended to him and despised it when he should have tendered it to a fellow debtor.

Paul delineated Jehovah as "*the Father of mercies*" in 2 Corinthians 1:3. Christ's earthly ministry was filled with merciful manifestations and countless cases of compassion on so many occasions. Truly, He is the Messiah of mercy. The Third Member of the Godhead is merciful. The gospel of Christ is mercy-oriented. Our prayers are permeated with requests for the Lord to be merciful to us. The need for mercy is stated with beauty and brevity in Hebrews 4:16 wherein we read,

Let us therefore come boldly unto the  
throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy,  
and find grace to help in time of need.

Minus Heaven's extended mercy there would be no forgiveness for our offenses committed against Him.

Love, on our part, is what triggers an extension of mercy. In its absence there will be no mercy manifested, no compassion conveyed.

Judah needed to love mercy in Micah's era. We desperately need it in our era. It would work wonders among those who bite and devour those with whom they disagree (cf. Gal. 5:15).

*"And to walk humbly with thy God?"* Walking is indicative of activity and is of frequent occurrence in Holy Writ—both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Enoch and his great grandson Noah walked **with** God as per Genesis 5:21-24 and 6:9. Enoch did so for 300 or more years. Noah may have greatly exceeded this number since he was 600 at the time of the flood and lived up to the ripe old age of 950 (Gen. 9:29). Walking **with God** alludes to closeness of companionship, the finest of fellowship and the comfort of camaraderie. Enoch and Noah could not walk with characters of corruption and travel with truth (God) simultaneously.

In Genesis 17:1 when 99 years old, Jehovah appeared to Abram, later to be Abraham, with the clear charge stated, *"I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."* This means Abraham was ever before the Lord's inspection; the eye of the Lord was constantly upon him. He could not escape the Eye that sees all and the Ear that hears all. Recognition of this salient fact should be a definite deterrent in the committing of sin. *"No one knows what goes on behind closed doors"* is widely accepted by the lascivious masses today. It may be sung in a lyric and practiced by a fornicating couple but it is

not true. The couple committing said act know what is transpiring and so does the All-Knowing and All-Seeing God. Nothing escapes His attention (Heb. 4:13).

In one of his farewell speeches to Israel upon a Moabite mountain right before his decease Moses told the younger Israelite generation,

Ye shall walk **after** the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him (Deut. 13:4).

Walking **after** God means He is our model and standard, the One we seek seriously and sincerely to emulate. There is no walking **with**, **before** and **after** Him minus fearing Him, keeping His commandments, obeying His voice, serving Him and cleaving tenaciously to Him.

Paul counseled Colossians in a New Testament epistle to "*walk in the Lord*" (2:6). This richly suggest a spiritual relationship with Him. Eloquent expressions such as "*in the Lord*," "*in Christ*," "*in Jesus Christ*" and "*in Christ Jesus*" are found some 169 times just in the Pauline writings as per the count some have made. In hearing, faith, repentance and confession we are coming **unto**, in the direction of, the Lord. In immersion we are coming **into** Him and His church (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13). Subsequent to that we are **in** the Lord. What good, great and glorious company we are permitted to begin and then sustain for a lifetime! Those outside Christ do not have an inkling of an idea what being in Christ really entails and confers. It is a spiritual blessing and all such

blessings are in Christ as per Ephesians 1:3.

Micah commanded a walk with God in humility. Pride, arrogance and inflated ego prevent such a walk. Paul adds a reinforcement in Ephesians 4 wherein we read,

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,  
beseech you that ye walk worthy of the  
vocation wherewith ye are called. With all  
lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering,  
forbearing one another in love... (vs. 1-2).

Walking **humbly with** God means we are going the same direction as is He. Amos says two cannot walk together unless they be agreed (3:3). A future destination has to be the common goal of the walk. Heaven, where God is, is the ultimate for every walker with God.

Walking **humbly with** God means we enjoy being in His company. We are comfortable with Him and He with us. A man and woman in love enjoy being in each other's company both prior to marriage and subsequent to marriage.

Walking **humbly with** God means we are traveling with truth. John rejoiced in finding children of the elect lady "*walking in truth*" (2 John 4). The well beloved Gaius is commended by the aged apostle of love, John, because he walked "*in the truth*" (3 John 4).

Walking **humbly with** God means we keep the rules. He is the Rule Maker. We keep the commandments. He is the Commandment Maker. We keep the Word. He is the Word Revealer. "*We know that we know Him, if we keep his commandments*" (1 John 2:3). Jeff Walling once said we know God



but **not** by keeping His rules. B. J. Clarke heard that speech and quoted 1 John 2:3 to him with the request that Walling reply. With arrogance he said, *"I do not have to answer that"* and walked off. It would have been more honest in Walling if he had said, *"I do not know how to answer that and stay with my statement."* Walling did not get up to bat in that speech made before pliable youth. Shame on brethren who use him a single time.

### Conclusion

Micah 6:8 is very relevant in our time. Its principles are amply found in the gospel of Christ. God still requires that we do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Him.

#### ***Robert R. Taylor, Jr.***



A graduate of Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb and George Peabody College for Teachers. Preaching since 1949. Author of various excellent volumes. Involved in radio, television and prison works. Annually speaks in about a dozen meetings and two dozen lectureships. For over thirty years he has worked with the Ripley, TN church. Irene and Robert have two children and four precious grandchildren.



*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# ***Nehemiah 4:6***

*This Chapter Written By*

***Tony Lawrence***

So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work (Neh. 4:6).

## **Introduction**

**I**t is an honor and privilege to speak on the Truth In Love Lectures hosted by the faithful East Hill congregation. It is a special honor to be asked to comment on some of the great passages from God's Divine Will.

When one considers the depth of the wisdom found within the Sacred Scriptures he is humbled by how practical and valuable these texts can be. The church needs, yea must have a steady feeding of the Word of God in order to be able to address the problems that will arise. In order for the church to reach the potential that it must achieve and reflect the wisdom of God it must follow that wisdom found within the Words of God.

This lesson will survey the meaning of Nehemiah's record of the people of God. Specifically,

this lesson will address: The Concern, The Challenge, and The Completion. In the final aspect several applications of this great text will be observed.

### **The Concern**

The opening chapter of Nehemiah's record reveals his deep concern for the people of God and the city.

That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire (Neh. 1:2-3).

Immediately he wept and mourned, and for days he fasted and prayed (1:4). Nehemiah did not blame God but took responsibility on behalf of the people. God's people had sinned and suffered the consequence of their sins. God had warned them that if they chose this path it would result in their being scattered. Nehemiah recalled that God also promised them an opportunity for restoration (Cf. Lev. 26:33-42). He knew that God's people were suffering shame and humiliation but he knew that things could get better. It was Nehemiah's prayer that it would.

The concern was evident in Nehemiah's face. Even King Artaxerxes was able to discern the distress

that was plaguing Nehemiah. When Nehemiah revealed to the King his concern and desire to do something about it, the king granted his request to return to Jerusalem. The King so valued the service of Nehemiah that he not only permitted him to go but provided the means for him to accomplish his work. The King's concern was that his faithful cupbearer would be returning to him after his mission was completed.

In chapter 2:17, Nehemiah used some words that reflect the substance of his concern, "*...let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach*" (Neh. 2:17). The children of Israel had become an embarrassment. As Solomon observed, "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Prov. 14:34). Further, Jeremiah described the purpose of their captivity,

And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them (Jer. 24:9).

In order for the stigma of their sins to be taken away there had to be a restoration of the people and the rebuilding of the city.

## **The Challenges**

Every great work will be met with challenges. In the case of Nehemiah these challenges came from several directions and some with great intensity. Two men of note were deeply disturbed that someone would seek the benefit of the children of Israel.

When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel (Neh. 2:10).

These two men joined by Geshem the Arab set out to discourage and frustrate the work of Nehemiah and the children of Israel. Thus began a number of tactics by these men to challenge the work.

The first method they used was that of ridicule and sarcastic statements made about their character and quality of the work they would produce. Nehemiah described the reaction to the plan by saying,

...they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king (Neh. 2:19).

Later on they continue this ridicule,

...What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall (Neh. 4:2-3).

However, instead of this ridicule prompting them to become discouraged, it only solidified the minds of the people to work (vs. 6).

The second challenge created by the enemies of the restoration was a threat of attack.

And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it (Neh. 4:8).

One might think this would be successful in thwarting them from their work but they again arose to the challenge by taking the matter to God in prayer and posting men to stand watch.

The third challenge the children of Israel faced was removing the rubbish. What was the cause of this rubbish? Perhaps it was the remnants of the fallen wall, or perhaps it was debris that had accumulated during the intervening years.

And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall (Neh. 4:10).

In order to address this and the second challenge, the men pulled double duty,

They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon (Neh. 4:17).

They saw the need for the workers to continue the work while at the same time being vigilant for the threats.

A fourth challenge arose which frustrated the continuing of the work, but it was not from the

outside enemies but from among God's people themselves.

And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews (Neh. 5:1).

The source of this outcry was that the wealthy Jews had taken advantage of their poorer brethren by means of usury. When rebuked for this the wealthy had nothing to say. Nehemiah then commanded them to stop the usury and the men did as they had promised. With this matter resolved the people could continue the work on the wall.

The fifth challenge arose with an attempt to distract Nehemiah from his leadership. It was an offer to have a discussion. Nehemiah promptly refused.

That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner (Neh. 6:2-4).

Nehemiah knew that there could be no good purpose to come from such a meeting. His refusal was two-fold. He knew that their intents were to do him "*mischief*" (harm-NKJV). In addition the work would cease. They repeated this four times and he refused four times.



The sixth challenge was a follow up to the previous one. Being unable to get Nehemiah to come to Ono, Sanballat chose to write an "open letter" and spread a false rumor. The veracity of this rumor was verified by Geshem. The rumor was that they intended to rebel and to appoint Nehemiah king. Along with this was a threat that also these things would be reported to the King. Again they admonished Nehemiah that he needed to come to them to "take counsel." The faith and wisdom of Nehemiah led him to refuse to participate.

Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands (Neh. 6:8-9).

The seventh and final challenge was a treacherous attempt to get Nehemiah to do something wrong in order to destroy his credibility. The plan was to suggest to Nehemiah that he should shut himself in the Temple to avoid being killed. Nehemiah rejected this saying,

And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in (Neh. 6:11).

There are several possible reasons he would not do such the thing. He was not afraid of man, but of God. To have hidden in the Temple would have been an act of disbelief. More likely, however, is the fact that

for him to do so would have been unlawful. Serving as a cupbearer for Artaxeres would have meant that he would have been a eunuch. Most scholars believe that Nehemiah would have also been from the tribe of Judah. As either a eunuch, or from another tribe than Levi, Nehemiah would have sinned to enter the Temple (cf. Num. 18:4, 7; Deut. 23:1).

These seven challenges were all potential hindrances in accomplishing the great work of rebuilding the walls and removing the reproach of the people. In each case the temptation was met with faith in God. Nehemiah and the people remained focused on the task at hand and continued the work.

### **The Completion**

Nehemiah states in very basic terms,

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God (Neh. 6:15-16).

The walls were finished. The people had a mind to work and did not let discouragements get in their way.

### **Conclusions**

There are so many applications of this great message that are needed in the church today and the

first of these being the need for concern. Whenever and wherever the Lord's church has something "broken" the brethren ought to have a concern that it is fixed. It is a reproach upon the people of God when things are in a state of disrepair.

The church will also face many challenges in attempting to be what God wants the church to be. There will be those who will seek to hinder the repair out of their own selfish interests. They will employ some of the same sorts of tactics as those discussed in Nehemiah's account. Sadly, as Nehemiah encountered, some of the frustrations came from God's own people. As Paul observed,

(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things)  
(Phil. 3:18-19).

In each of these challenges, the people of God must follow the wise direction of Nehemiah by keeping the goal firmly fixed in mind.

The walls were completed in a record time for several reasons. It is specifically stated "*this work was wrought of our God*" (Neh. 6:16). God has promised to be with those who are doing His will. "...and, lo, I am with you *always, even unto the end of the world. Amen*" (Matt. 28:20). It also required a people who had a "*mind to work.*" Some people foolishly think that God's work can and will flourish with no effort on man's part, however, as the account of Nehemiah shows, God uses man's work to

accomplish His will. God desires that man be diligent in His service. May the number of those who have this mind increase!

### *Tony Lawrence*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Ecclesiastes 9:10**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Tony Lawrence***

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest (Eccl. 9:10).

## **Introduction**

**S**olomon was a man endued by God with such remarkable wisdom. His insight was unparalleled among men. Scripture records,

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt (1 Kings 4:29-30).

His inspired wisdom is recorded in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. In this "*Wisdom Literature*" are addressed numerous practical challenges that man must face every day. One of these great challenges is work.

Six times in the book of Proverbs Solomon addresses the “*sluggard*” (Prov. 6:6, 9; 10:26; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16). Solomon has some very colorful things to say about the “*slothful man.*” “*He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster*” (Prov. 18:9). “*The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour*” (Prov. 21:25). Thus, there is great emphasis upon one having a good work ethic.

The passage for consideration in this lecture involves one of urgency of work. There is a limited time for man to accomplish his work and Solomon urges man to employ his energy and urgency. There are three facets of this verse that this lesson will explore: the searching for a worthy task, the strength or ability which one must apply, and the need for a speedy action.

### Searching

“*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do...*” is the way Solomon begins the verse. However, in order to “*find*” one must “*seek*” (Matt. 7:7-8). Solomon stated the fundamental purpose of his pursuit in the book of Ecclesiastes,

And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith (Eccl. 1:13).

Man must be inquisitive for worthy things which need doing. This searching most certainly involves tasks that one must do in order to be pleasing to God. Penitent souls asked John the Baptist, “*what*

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*shall we do?"* (Luke 3:10-14). The Jews on Pentecost asked Peter and the rest of the Apostles what they must do (Acts 2:37). Paul would tell the Athenians that God made man to search for Him.

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us (Acts 17:27).

In addition to searching for what one must do in regards to salvation there are other areas where man must investigate. Man is called upon to look for and meet the needs of his fellow man.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (Phil. 2:4).

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

Occasionally one may pretend that he does not know of those needing help. Jesus was very clear that one need not look far to see these opportunities to help one's fellow man. When asked "*And who is my neighbour?"*" Jesus responded with a parable which illustrated just how practical this matter can be (Luke 10:29-37). His admonition was "*Go, and do thou likewise.*" In the picture of the judgment scene found in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus stressed that what one does for "*the least of these my brethren*" was done for Him.

This searching also brings responsibility. Once

man sees an opportunity he then incurs an obligation. *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin* (James 4:17). Thus, one must look for opportunities to please God and then faithfully act upon those opportunities.

## Strength

Solomon's second thought in this passage is that one must use his strength in any worthwhile effort. It is likely that the quote attributed to the British Lord Chesterfield was derived from this passage, *"Anything worth doing, is worth doing well."* One must put diligence and effort into that which he does. In this context, Solomon is emphasizing the need for one to use strength, power, and effort to accomplish a good task.

One might protest that he simply does not have the ability or much power. Yet, one is not solely dependent upon his own strength. Paul told the Ephesians *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"* (Eph. 6:10). And again, Paul would tell the Philippians, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Phil. 4:13). To the church at Philadelphia John records the words of Jesus:

I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name (Rev. 3:8).

God does not judge a man for the amount of his strength but whether or not he uses it to the best of his own ability. The parable of the talents shows



that the man who had been given two talents and developed two more received the same commendation as the man given five talents and developed five more. The man given one talent was not condemned for his lack of ability, but for his failure to use the ability he had (Matt. 25:14-30). The one talent man proclaimed he was "*afraid*" and thus did not act. God expects that one face the work with confidence.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7).

### **Speedily**

The third emphasis in the verse is that of promptness or speed. One must do what he can while the opportunity is available. The time will come when one will not be able to do what he might want to do. Jesus said,

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work (John 9:4).

Opportunities only last for a certain amount of time, and often once gone never appear again. Such is why Paul said one must redeem the time (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). Solomon would say later in the book of Ecclesiastes that the young should

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them (Eccl. 12:1).

Five of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, learned

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afterward the seriousness of not working while there was opportunity. They had adequate time to purchase oil before theirs ran out. The five wise virgins had made such preparation. Solomon in the Proverbs admonished going to the ant to learn this lesson:

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man (Prov. 6:6-11).

Too often men want to put off work believing that there will still be plenty of time to complete the task. Jesus said,

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest (John 4:35).

The wise man is able to see not only the opportunity but also the need to act promptly.

## **Conclusion**

In the Lord's church today there must be a greater emphasis given to searching for opportunities to serve God. The world is so self-absorbed in itself that it does not think about the needs of others. The church, however, must be ever vigilant to seek

opportunities to teach and serve. Many missed opportunities may never present themselves again. Many may not search because they know if they find them then they must act.

Often man looks at his own feeble abilities and feels as if he is inadequate and unable to accomplish the task. Moses protested to God that he was not able to speak to Pharaoh. God reminded him,

And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say (Exo. 4:10-12).

God has the ability to give man whatever strength he needs. Man has but to put forth his own effort and God will provide the rest. The church must see that it can do God's will. The Gospel can be carried to the whole world!

The urgency with which one approaches the work of God is more serious than is being exhibited by many. Millions of people are dying never having heard the Gospel of Christ. Once they leave this life their fate is sealed. God expects the church to be the "*pillar and ground of the Truth*" (1 Tim. 3:15). Paul praised the Thessalonians,

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but

also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing (1 Thess. 1:8).

Could the same be said of the church where we serve today? The church must never lose sight of its mission. Man is lost, and it is the role of the church to fulfill the mission of Christ to seek and save the lost.

Solomon urged man to seek opportunities, strongly work, and that speedily. Man will be judged by what he does in the body (2 Cor. 5:10), but man's time on earth is short and precious. Hence, one must do what he can now.

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Ezra 7:10**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Tony Lawrence***

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments (Ezra 7:10).

## **Introduction**

**E**zra was a great servant of God who served as a priest, scribe, and co-worker with Nehemiah. At a time when the people of God needed strong spiritual leadership Ezra was an effective leader. Chapters 7-10 of the book of Ezra reveal a man of true dedication. He knew God's law well and imparted it to the people. He communicated a genuine sadness and concern for their sins. In response to his genuine leadership the people responded with repentance and rededication to the Lord.

The verse for this lesson presents in capsule form the mission of Ezra. It shows a man who prepared his heart, proclaimed God's Word, and practiced it in his own life. One can see such great character in the life of Ezra and these are worthy of one imitating him.

## Preparation

Ezra was such a wise individual in that he understood the significance of the heart. Jesus taught,

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things (Matt. 12:35).

If he were going to teach the Truth, he was going to have to first prepare the heart. As Jesus continued,

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man (Matt. 15:18).

It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of one's heart in preparing to serve God.

And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices (Mark 12:33).

The heart must be prepared to receive whatever commands come from God. One must be prepared to let the word have "*free course*" in his life (2 Thess. 3:1).

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 (Prov. 3:5-6).

One must be willing to seek God's will and follow it wherever it leads.

## Practice

The second thing Ezra intended was to do that which he learned. What a wise and noble intent that is! Far too many think that knowing the truth alone is enough. Jesus gave the parable of the wise and foolish builders in which he stated that the one who heard and did not do was a foolish man (Matt. 7:21-27). In addition James says,

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain (James 1:22-26).

James continued on by saying,

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin (James 4:17).

Everyone should have the intent of practicing that which they learn, just as Ezra did. As Jesus stated, *"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"* (John 13:17).

## Proclamation

Finally, Ezra determined that it was not enough for him to know and do God's will, he must teach it to others also. Such should be the ambition of every child of God. The writer of Hebrews said, "*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers...*" (Heb. 5:12). Paul instructed Timothy,

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).

It was not just anything that Ezra intended to teach; it was "*statutes and judgments.*" These were the directions of the Lord by which one could live and please God.

Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord (Lev. 18:5).

The teaching and obedience of these statutes and judgments were tied to their being able to dwell in the land.

Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you (Deut. 4:1).

Ezra did not want the people to again be cast from the promised land. It was essential that the people learn what God expected from them. As Ezra would observe in later chapters, the people had intermarried



with the pagan people of the land (Ezra 9:1-4). God had forbidden this (Deut. 7:1-ff) and Ezra was going to have to teach the people what they must do to correct this. There was "*hope in Israel*" if the people would "*let it be done according to the law*" (Ezra 10:2-3).

## Conclusion

Ezra stands out in the post-exilic period as a man of character and conviction. He saw clearly that the people of God had suffered the consequences of neglecting their faith. He wanted to participate in turning the nation around. Before he could be an effective teacher he had to first prepare himself by learning God's law. But it is not enough to just know it though, one must practice that which he intends to preach.

Thou therefore which teachest another,  
teachest thou not thyself? thou that  
preachest a man should not steal, dost  
thou steal? (Rom. 2:21).

And finally he had to let the people know that which he had learned.

The Lord's church today needs men of character like Ezra. Men must study to learn (2 Tim. 2:15) God's will, men who will be determined to live daily that which they learn, and spread the message of God (1 Peter 4:11). When men of courage, character and conviction arise they can have a profound impact on God's people!

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Ecclesiastes 12:13**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Dave Miller***

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

**I**magine polling the entire human race in order to get opinions as to the central purpose of human existence. If we could ask all human beings on the planet—*“Why are we alive? Why do we exist? Why are we here on this planet?”*—imagine what answers we would receive.

Most of the over six billion people on Earth would be unable to provide the definitive answer to this question. Most people are wandering aimlessly through a maze of conflicting, confusing motivations and objectives. Most have immediate goals that they are frantically attempting to achieve: securing food; amassing wealth; pursuing a career; making friends; getting married; having children. These goals serve to define temporarily a slice of a person’s existence, providing momentary cohesion to life until the next immediate goal comes into view.

In this way, the vast majority of the human race

operates on a daily basis unable to “*see the forest for the trees.*” Most people never discover the broader perspective that enables them to scan the horizon of human existence with the breadth and depth available from the Bible. Most people live day-to-day, year-to-year, with perhaps a few vague intentions in mind before life comes to an end. But the immediate concerns of coping with life on a daily basis crowd out any broader or higher sense of the meaning of life.

Within churches of Christ, the flurry of excitement generated by the scramble for the sensational and the faddish, the pursuit in religion of the momentary, that which gratifies, that which changes, has facilitated a loss of perspective. The shift to emotion and the preoccupation with pleasing self have seriously obscured awareness of spiritual reality. Those caught up in the process of change are unable to see the foundational premise of human existence—what life is all about.

One day, a scribe asked Jesus a question: “*Which is the first commandment of all?*” Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 which required people to love God with their entire being. He then added Leviticus 19:18 to His answer, which required people to love their fellowman as well. He concluded that no other commandment is greater than these and that on these two commands hang all the Law and the Prophets (Mark 12:28-31; Matt. 22:36-40). What a stunning moment! To have the Son of God, who co-authored the Old Testament, to summarize its entirety, to capsule Old Testament religion, into one command! One might have expected Him to point

to one of the Ten Commandments. But He did not do so. He cut through all individual regulations and responsibilities of mankind to pinpoint the number one concern, the ultimate task of every human being: to lovingly obey God.

Moses offered the same summary to the people of his day:

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good? (Deut. 10:12-13).

Observe that God issued five directives in Moses' remarks that are synonymous with each other:

Fear God

Walk in His ways

Love Him

Serve God with heart and soul

Keep His commandments

This same call to heartfelt obedience was reiterated by Moses over and over again to the people:

See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments (Deut. 30:15-16).

After urging the people to set their hearts on all of God's words and to command their children to be

careful to observe all the words of God's law, he added: *"For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life"* (Deut. 32:46-47).

This burning focus upon strict loving obedience to God's rules is repeatedly shown to take precedence even over sincere human attempts to be religious and worshipful toward God—when those attempts are not conformed to divine specifications. When Saul held up the noble purpose of *"sacrifice offered to God"* as justification for adjusting God's instructions, Samuel pronounced judgment sentence upon him with these solemn words—words that ring down the corridors of time to our day:

Has 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 heed than the fat of rams (1 Sam. 15:22).

When Uzzah attempted to steady the ark of the covenant to prevent it from toppling, God struck him dead though he stood beside the mercy seat—the focal point of forgiveness under the Mosaic economy (2 Sam. 6:7). Why? What was more important to God than even good intentions? David articulated the answer: *"...the Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order"* (1 Chron. 15:13). (The liberal element in the church today does not even think there is a *"proper order"*)! When King Uzziah entered the temple to burn incense to God, he lost His place of honor with God and was struck with leprosy. Why? After all, at least he was involving himself in religious ritual—worship to God. Why would God not be pleased? Because

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he did not obey according to the rules (2 Chron. 26:16-19).

The Old Testament prophets emphasized the same crucial concept. Micah worded it this way:

He has shown you, O man, what is good;  
and what does the Lord require of you but  
to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk  
humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

Jeremiah summarized God's perspective from the very beginning of His relationship with the nation of Israel:

But this is what I commanded them, saying,  
'Obey My voice, and I will be your God,  
and you shall be My people. And walk in  
all the ways that I have commanded you,  
that it may be well with you' (Jer. 7:23).

Habakkuk put it this way: *"the just shall live by his faith"* (Hab. 2:4). That is, the righteous person is one who lives, functions, and survives by being faithfully and lovingly obedient to God. Amos worded it even more succinctly: *"For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: 'Seek Me and live'"* (Amos 5:4).

With the arrival of the New Testament, this stress on obedience remained the same. Jesus said, *"If you love Me, keep My commandments"* and *"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you"* (John 14:15; 15:14). After all, Jesus Himself described His role and purpose on this Earth to be one of complete submission and total obedience to God. He said,

For I have come down from heaven, not  
to do My own will, but the will of Him  
who sent Me'; 'for I always do those things

that please Him'; 'I have finished the work which You have given Me to do' (John 6:38; 8:29; 17:4).

The Hebrew writer summarized Jesus' earthly existence:

[T]hough He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9).

Peter summarized the only avenue through which God's favor might be secured:

[I]n every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him (Acts 10:35).

Paul distinguished between the only two approaches in life: sin that results in death or obedience that results in righteousness (Rom. 6:16; cf. 2:6-10). No wonder Peter declared in sweeping fashion that the human soul is purified by "*obeying the truth*" (1 Peter 1:22). And no wonder Paul warned that eternal vengeance will be inflicted against "*those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Thess. 1:8).

The primacy of obedience is further seen in the biblical allusion to "*glorifying*" God. To "*glorify*" means to show honor or respect. Showing honor or respect to God, by definition, means to conform precisely to His directions. That's why Jesus said He had glorified God on the Earth (John 17:4). He had done everything God told Him to do. When Paul cautioned Corinthian Christians against using their



bodies for sexual sin, he gave as his rationale, *"for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body"* (1 Cor. 6:20). In other words, use your body for its intended purpose—to obey God. The formula *"to God be the glory"* means let everything in life be focused on pleasing Him (Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Eph. 3:21). Peter gave as the ultimate objective of Christian ministry, *"that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 4:11). When we refrain from disobedience and, in living the Christian life, become the objects of suffering, we are to *"glorify God"* (1 Peter 4:16; cf. 2:9-12).

But isn't all this emphasis on obedience rather negative, restrictive, legalistic, and spiritually stifling?

True, we humans do not generally regard rules and regulations as positive phenomena. We usually perceive them negatively (Deut. 30:11). In reality, God's laws are very desirable and tasteful (Psm. 19:10; 119:103). As the Israelites were engaged in their final encampment on the plains of Moab prior to entrance into the Promised Land, Moses articulated the critical principle: *"the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes ... for our good always"* (Deut. 6:24; cf. 10:13).

You see, God is not asking us to do anything that's harmful to us. He's not restricting us and exerting His authority in our lives in order to make us unhappy. Quite the opposite! Our compliance with His wishes will make us happy (John 13:17; James 1:25). Our obedience *"will be righteousness for us"* (Deut. 6:25; cf. Rom. 6:16; 1 John 3:7). Our submission will bring us genuine friendship with

Jesus (John 15:14). Our obedience will enable us to enjoy eternal salvation and exaltation (Heb. 5:9; James 4:10). If we will do God's will, we will be wise (Matt. 24:45-46; 7:24). Indeed, God's words are our life (Deut. 32:47; cf. 8:3; Psm. 119:93). Only through the instrumentality of the words of God can we possibly bring "*every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*" (2 Cor. 10:5). "*Therefore we make it our aim... to be well pleasing to Him*" (2 Cor. 5:9). "*Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Cor. 10:31).

### **The Meaning & Purpose Of Life**

The book of Ecclesiastes was written by a man about whom God said,

[T]here has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you (1 Kings 3:12).

God bestowed upon him "*a wise and understanding heart.*" With this kind of unprecedented insight into the human condition, Solomon wrote the twelve chapter treatise of Ecclesiastes in order to scan the parameters of human existence and achievement. Using three catch phrases, he surveyed virtually every possible pursuit that human beings can devote themselves to in this life. He declared life "*under the sun*" (i.e., undertaken apart from God) to be "*vanity*" (i.e., futile and meaningless) and a "*chasing after the wind.*"

What are people after? What does the average person want out of life? Whatever answers are given to these two questions, they probably all boil down

essentially to—happiness. People want to be happy, contented, satisfied, and fulfilled. How might this singular objective be achieved? Solomon surveyed at least nine pursuits by which he (and so many people on the planet) sought to find happiness:

1. Labor/work/career: 2:4-6,17-23; 3:9; 4:4; 5:18; 6:7
2. Possessions: 2:7; 6:2
3. Money: 2:8; 5:8-17; 6:2; 1 Kings 9:28; 10:10, 14, 21
4. Education/knowledge/wisdom: 1:13-18; 2:12-16,21,26; 7:11-12,19,23-25; 8:1; 1 Kings 4:30-34; 10:24
5. Political power: 4:13-16; 8:2-8
6. Youthfulness: 11:9-12:7
7. Pleasure, entertainment, physical stimulation: 2:1-11
8. Sexual pleasure: 7:26; 1 Kings 11:1ff.
9. Notoriety, fame, popularity: 4:15-16; 1 Kings 10:1

The French have an expression which they use to pinpoint the essence of purpose: *raison d'être*. The expression means "*reason for being*." After surveying all of the pursuits to which people apply themselves in this life—pursuits which he, himself, had enacted in his own life—Solomon articulated the *raison d'être* for every person who ever lives on this Earth. He said, in essence, I have seen it all, I have done it all, I have acquired it all; I have fully immersed myself in everything this old life has to offer to the human race, and here is my conclusion:

Fear God and keep His commandments,  
for this is the whole duty of man (Eccl.  
12:13).

The word “*duty*” is not in the Hebrew and, literally rendered, says “*This is man’s all.*”

Solomon was not telling us what we do; he was telling us who we are. In other words, you and I are on this planet taking up space and breathing God’s air for one reason and one reason alone. We are alive and here, we exist, for the sole purpose of obeying God. This one grand reason for being is our entire essence. Life was designed and intended by God to be centered on Him by rendering obedience to Him. All human effort expended apart from that single, all-encompassing directive is meaningless, futile, vain—a mere chasing after the wind.

### **Conclusion**

The entire Bible may be boiled down to two bottom-line themes. The complete message of the Bible may be distilled into two points that thread through all sixty-six books, condensed into two words: grace and obedience. “*Grace*” refers to the incredible efforts that God has orchestrated to make it possible for human beings to be forgiven of sin and permitted to live eternally with Him. He so loved the world that He gave His only Son to atone for the sins of humanity. Here is the most important thing in the entire world!

The second key point of the Bible is the essentiality of human obedience—correct response to God. As a matter of fact, the bulk of the contents of the Bible expound upon this theme. Most of the

information in the Bible details how human beings have responded to the instructions of God. Sadly, the Bible reports to us that most people have chosen not to obey God's will. May God bless us with the fortitude to be among the few who are so determined to get to heaven that we will remain faithful and obedient to Him.

### *Dave Miller*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Jeremiah 22:29**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Curtis A. Cates***

O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.

## **Introduction**

**D**uring the last days of the Southern Kingdom of God's people, Judah, God had three "preachers": Daniel, in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Ezekiel the priest, among the captives by the River Chebar in Babylon; and Jeremiah, in the homeland in Judah. Jeremiah was sounding the alarm and giving the urgent warning of impending doom if Judah continued in its rebellion against her God.

Rather than persist in evil, Jeremiah pleaded on behalf of God,

Execute ye justice and righteousness, and deliver him that is robbed out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence, to the sojourner, the fatherless, nor the widow; neither shed innocent blood in this place... (Jer. 22:3).

God's people needed very keenly to realize that the

One Who raised them up as a nation could bring the nation down and turn their beautiful forests and cities into a desolation and a wilderness; this He would do by the armies of His "*battle axe*," Nebuchadnezzar (22:4-7); Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the very house of God, the temple, if they would not repent.

When the heathen nations would see the desolation of Jerusalem, they would ask,

Wherefore hath Jehovah done thus unto this great city? Because they forsook the covenant of Jehovah their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them (22:8-9).

The nation of Judah [as God's offspring individually as His spiritual children, and as His chosen physical kingdom] was accountable to the Creator. God was to be the object of their worship, His covenant their sacred guide, and His kingdom [of Judah] their sphere of ethical, moral, Godly service.

Josiah, one of the "*royal reformers*" and king of Judah, had been recently killed; King Shallum [Jehoahaz], who followed King Josiah, had been taken captive to Egypt (22:10-12). The Lord told Jeremiah not to weep for Josiah but to "*weep sore*" for Shallum.

Josiah had lived his religion;

And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left (2 Kings 22:2).



He sought to learn God's law, was tender in heart, and was alarmed at the wickedness of the people (22:8-13). He made a covenant to do His will with all his heart and led the people to do likewise (23:3). Josiah restored the true religion and destroyed the idolatrous high places and practices (23:4-20), including at Bethel [according to the prophecy of the young prophet (1 Kings 13:2)].

And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to Jehovah with his whole heart...neither after him arose there any more like him (23:25).

But, inasmuch as God realized that the reformation of Josiah was only "*skin-deep*" and temporary,

Jehovah turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah....And Jehovah said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city which I have chosen, even Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there (23:26-27).

What happened to Josiah, this great man of God?

In his days Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and Pharaoh-necho slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him (23:29).

Inasmuch as the books of 1 and 2 Kings are a "*history*" and the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles are a "*commentary*" on that history [and thus more

"full"], we note that Josiah is described also in 2 Chronicles. Jehovah stated to Josiah that because of his tender and humble heart of obedience, his reign would be one of peace and that Josiah's eyes would not,

...see all the evil [punishment] that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof (2 Chron. 34:23-28).

The nation would not be destroyed in Josiah's lifetime. [Regretfully, after Josiah's death the people departed again from God (35:33).

Pharaoh-necoh pleaded for Josiah to retreat, since his battle was not against Josiah, but "*Josiah would not turn his face from him*"; consequently, the king of Egypt's archers attacked Josiah. Brought to Jerusalem, Josiah

died, and was buried in the sepulchers of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah (35:20-25).

But, God told Jeremiah not to weep "*for the dead,*" for Josiah (Jer. 22:10). He had died as a righteous king.

On the other hand, Jeremiah was to "*weep sore for him that goeth away*" (22:10-12). Shallum [Jehoahaz], son of Josiah, was made king following his father and reigned three months. "*And the king of Egypt deposed him,*" made Eliakim [Shallum's brother] king, and "*changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Neco took Joahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt*" (2 Chron. 26:1-4). God told Jeremiah,

...in the place whither they have led him captive, there shall he die, and he shall see this land no more (Jer. 22:12).

2 Kings records, "...he took Jehoahaz away; and he came to Egypt, and died there" (23:34). Yes indeed, Jeremiah was to mourn over Shallum.

Jeremiah's revelation now moved to God's attitude toward the next king, Jehoiakim [another son of Josiah]; "he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah his God" (2 Chron. 36:5); Jehoiakim also "taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh" (2 Kings 23:35). This king worked the people "without wages" to build his own house and chambers, lived extravagantly upon riches gained unjustly, greedily, and unethically, all of which was unlike Josiah his father—who was very blessed by God. Josiah had "known" God; he met the needs of the poor and oppressed, whereas Jehoiakim was self-centered and covetous, "and for shedding innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it" (Jer. 22:13-17).

### Jehoiakim

reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah his God. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:5-6).

For some reason, it seems that Nebuchadnezzar did not fulfill his intentions to take Jehoiakim to Babylon; evidently he was killed at Jerusalem. Jehoiakim would "be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jer. 22:18-19).

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The "*burial of an ass*" was no burial at all, just being dragged out beyond the places of human population and left on top of the ground—extreme dishonor for a king!

Jeremiah was called by God to speak concerning the desolations that were impending, even being hastened by Judah's sins. Those gods and/or nations in whom they trusted were destroyed. God had pleaded for them to trust in and obey Him during their prosperity; their prideful, rebellious response had been, "*I will not hear.*" From their youth, God's people had habitually refused His loving, merciful pleadings. They did not need God; they were self-secure and "*at ease in Zion*"; their false lovers could save them! But, utter destruction would come as the pains of childbirth—and the result would be shame, humiliation, death, and captivity (22:20-23). Their political allies, other nations, would likewise be destroyed/captured by Nebuchadnezzar; God had provided security in Jerusalem as a bird in its nest in a cedar tree, but they early had begun to jeopardize that protection, rejecting God's Word and trusting other gods and nations. Now, God's long-suffering was at an end! God's Spirit does not always strive with man (Gen. 6:3; 2 Peter 3:9; Eccl. 8:11-13).

### **Historical Background**

Jehovah showed great displeasure with the next king of Judah, Coniah [also identified as Jechoniah and Jehoiachin], which is revealed to Jeremiah in chapter twenty-two, verses twenty-four through thirty, containing the pronouncement upon the earth [that is the subject of this study]. Following the

reign of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin [son of Jehoiakim] ascended to the throne (2 Kings 24:6). Jehoiachin [Coniah] likewise *“did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah”* (2 Chron. 36:9).

### **Authority Plucked from Coniah**

Jehoiachin [Coniah, Jechoniah], just as sure as God lives [cf. Heb. 6:13-18], would be plucked from his kingship over Judah. He was of the tribe of Judah, a descendant of King David, one of the seed royal [also in the lineage of Christ, the Son of God, *“according to the flesh”* (Matt. 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38)] and thus was the *“signet upon [God’s] right hand”* (Jer. 22:24). A signet was a seal upon a ring used to show authority in stamping official documents; Jehoiachin was God’s officially appointed king over Judah, having authority delegated by God over His people as king, which authority is shown by his being God’s *“signet”* upon God’s right hand [often used to designate one’s *“strong”* hand]. With that authority went great responsibility of leading God’s people aright. However, as noted above, Jehoiachin [Coniah] was evil and, unlike Josiah, led God’s people astray. Thus, God would pluck him out of his position – get rid of him as king!

As God often used good people to punish evil, God would use Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon to punish His own people when they went into apostasy as a nation. His word to Coniah was,

I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them of whom thou art afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and

into the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. But to the land whereunto their soul longeth to return, thither shall they not return (22:25-27).

The book of 2 Kings reads,

And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon; and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the chief men of the land, carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon....And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's father's brother, king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah (24:15-17).

Coniah would not return to his homeland.

### **God's Proclamation To The Earth**

God's declaration to the earth, which is addressed in triplicate for emphasis, has far-reaching implications—especially as regards the reign of Christ over His kingdom. Notice the words of the Lord:

Is this man Coniah a despised broken vessel? Is he a vessel wherein none delighteth? Wherefore [why] are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into the land which they know not? (22:28).

A vessel is a container, which might be used to carry water from the spring to the house, for example. But, if it develops a leak or a crack, it is useless. These rhetorical questions carried their own answers: Coniah had lost all respect by God; he had become

despised and useless because of his iniquity. Why were *"they cast out, he and his seed."* Now, make a note of that!

*"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord"* (22:29). Something very momentous is about to be said, and it pertains specifically to the *"earth."* The astute Bible student will not miss that. Jehovah is Ruler of heaven and earth, which He created (Gen. 1:1). Not only would the land of Judah soon be desolate [both of Coniah and his seed and of her people], but would also be forever deprived of anyone to rule on David's throne on earth. Notice:

thus saith Jehovah, Write ye this man (Coniah) childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah (Jer. 22:30).

### **Not Possible For Christ To Reign On Earth**

Coniah had children, offspring (1 Chron. 3:17; Matt. 1:12; et al.), but nevertheless God decreed him *"childless."* In what sense was Coniah without an heir? God makes it very clear: no more would one of his descendants reign upon David's throne and prosper on the earth, *"ruling in Judah,"* in Jerusalem.

With Coniah (Jechoniah, Jehoiachin), the tree of authority, kingship on the throne of David on earth was cut down; nothing was left but the stump. Someone might respond, *"Was not Mattaniah (Zedekiah) king of Judah?"* But, we must remember that Mattaniah was Coniah's uncle, not his descendant,

and that he was a mere vassal, placed upon the "throne" by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:17).

For six hundred years, the people of God had no king who was of the tribe of Judah, reigning in Jerusalem; in fact, according to God's decree, such was not possible. It no doubt seemed that the "stump" had dried up and died. And yet, notice Daniel's prophecy concerning Christ, the only begotten, virgin-born Son of God:

And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit... (Isa. 11:1).

Born of the virgin (Isa. 7:14), Christ would reign on David's throne and upon his kingdom, with righteousness (9:6-7). Jeremiah prophesied,

Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch [a Shoot coming forth from the old stump], and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness (Jer. 23:5-6).

Very clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures is the fact that Christ would be born of the virgin Mary, spring from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14), a descendant of Coniah; He would fulfill His personal ministry, be crucified, and be raised bodily from the dead; He would then ascend to heaven to receive His kingdom and reign at David's throne at the right hand of God (Acts 2:29-36; cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-13).



Daniel's clear prophecy was,

I saw in the night visions, and behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man (Christ, Acts 1:9-11), and he came even to the ancient days (God, Psa. 90:2), and they (the angels, Psa. 24:7-10) brought him (Christ) near before him [God]. And there was given him (Christ) dominion, and glory, and a kingdom (the church/kingdom, Matt. 16:18-19; et al.), that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

Christ did indeed ascend to heaven with the clouds (Acts 1:9-11) and assume the kingship upon David's throne, in heaven, at the right hand of His Father (2:29-36). Whereas premillennialism teaches that Christ is king only in promise and right, the Bible teaches that Christ is now King in full authority and reality; the promise of His sitting on David's throne has been fulfilled; He is king in act and fact.

Though Christ was of the seed of Coniah (Matt. 1; Luke 3), He would be forever forbidden to rule in Judah, in Jerusalem. Interestingly, in this connection, the prophet Zechariah stated that "*The Branch*" would reign as king and serve as priest at the same time (Zech. 6:12-13). But, the Hebrews writer stated clearly that Christ, if He were here on earth, could "*not be a priest at all*" (Heb. 8:4). Therefore, He could never reign as king on earth! Down goes premillennialism of its own weight.

## Christ Is Now Reigning—In Heaven

Christ would reign on David's throne while David is dead (2 Sam. 7:13-14); David's body is still in the grave (Acts 2:29). Christ shall reign (having begun His reign on the Pentecost of Acts 2) until His second coming, at which time His last enemy [death] is destroyed, His reign is turned back to God, and His kingdom is delivered to God. Note that it will be given up at that time, not assumed as per the so-called thousand-year reign, premillennial heresy (1 Cor. 15:20-27).

*"But,"* someone objects, *"is David's throne in heaven? I thought it was on earth and, therefore, is to be on earth."* David's throne is in heaven. One should remember that *"throne"* in the Greek means kingly power, royalty, power, authority; it has no reference to a physical chair and ruling over a physical kingdom, as relates to Christ.

Please observe that *"Solomon sat upon the throne of David his father"* (1 Kings 2:12), whereas 1 Chronicles 29:23 states, *"Then Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah as king instead of David his father."* Thus, David's throne [authority] is the Lord's throne [authority], delegated to him by God. In other words, Solomon sat on David's throne and the Lord's throne at the same time. Interestingly, the Psalmist wrote, *"Jehovah is in his holy temple; Jehovah, his throne is in heaven"* (Psa. 11:4). Thus, God's throne, Solomon's throne, and David's throne are all one throne; and, Christ is now reigning on David's throne—in heaven. If Christ is not now reigning on David's throne, the tabernacle of David (the church/kingdom) has not been set up, and the Gentiles are hopelessly lost (Acts 15:13-18);

no Gentile can be saved!

Christ has the Key (authority) of David (Rev. 3:7; cf. Isa. 22:22), and He *"sat down with my father in his throne"* (Rev. 3:21). He has all authority in heaven and earth—NOW (Matt. 28:18), and *"He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,"* having received the throne and scepter of righteousness, anointed of the Father (Heb. 1:1-9).

### Conclusion

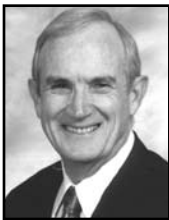
*"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."* When God's speaks, it is imperative that everyone listen! Judah, God's own chosen people, had every opportunity to listen and thus to be blessed by God as a great nation; they refused and departed to other gods. Their rebellion brought countless warnings and pleas for them to return to God; they refused and went unretreavably further into sin and rebellion. Finally, God's message was, *"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord"*—I am going to remove your kings, take away their scepter (and their very kingship) from my physical nation on earth; I again shall personally assume the authority (as before you cried out for a King like the surrounding idolatrous nations); and I shall destroy Judah and carry you into captivity by the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

Premillennialism constitutes the fruits of some of the wildest dreams ever to be experienced by the mind of man. That Christ is now reigning on David's throne in heaven is abundantly evidenced in Holy Writ. Woe unto that person who does not submit to Christ's authority as king now, and who does not

glorify God through Christ in His kingdom, now (Col. 1:13-14; Eph. 21).

*"Hear the word of the Lord."* Hear His Word as accountable human beings. Hear His Word as the Lord's church/kingdom. Hear His Word in our families. Hear His Word in our nation. Let us not wait too late, as did Judah!

### *Curtis A. Cates*



Brother Cates has been faithfully preaching the gospel for almost fifty years. Holds various degrees from respected universities. Served as Director of the Memphis School of Preaching (1982-2007). Author of various superb volumes. Mission work in Singapore, Malaysia, and Russia. Annette and Curtis have two sons (both are faithful gospel preachers) and four grandchildren.

*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Proverbs 23:7**

*This Chapter Written By*

**Cliff Goodwin**

**I**n so many ways, life is lived “*from the inside out.*” The Scriptures clearly teach that man is a dual-faceted being (cf. Eccl. 12:7; James 2:26). The outer man consists of flesh and blood, with all the attendant drives, desires and needs; this is the physical facet of man. The inner man involves the mind, including the intellect, emotions, will and conscience. While there are drives and perhaps even impulses originating in the body, the decisions of whether or not to act on those drives, and how to act on them, are made in the mind. Life really is lived from the inside out.

Attempts may be successful for a time at masking the inner man (genuine motives, feelings, etc.). Solomon warned of those whose hypocrisy cloaked their ulterior motives.

Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words (Prov. 23:6-8).

A covetous man with wicked motives may invite one to be his dinner guest. His feigned hospitality, however, does not change his greed. He does not share such a meal because he sincerely wants to do so, but because of his ulterior motives and hidden plans. Often such meals are designed to persuade the guest to commit certain deeds or to become involved in certain schemes. The hospitality may be perceived as genuine, but "*as [the host] thinketh in his heart, so is he!*" One commentator said of the word "*thinketh*" in Proverbs 23:7, "*The Hebrew verb is found here only, and probably means, 'as he is all along in his heart, so is he at last in act'*" (Cook 64). While man may not see the true person until character is manifested in action, God knows a person's character all along. He looks on the heart of the individual (1 Sam. 16:7), and He sees man as he really is—from the inside out.

Solomon's inspired warning is congruent to warnings given by Christ during His earthly ministry.

Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known (Luke 12:1-2).

Hypocrisy is the sin of feigning one attitude by outward actions, while all the while harboring another attitude in the heart. Hence, the hypocrite is one who "*plays the part.*" He wants to be viewed by others as pious, faithful and true; therefore he "*puts on a good show,*" pretending to be something that he is not. Jesus made it clear, however, that the hidden things of the heart will one day be made

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known. Paul intimated the same concept when he wrote, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after," (1 Tim. 5:24).

From somewhat of a different angle, Christ also warned that the heart of a person would dictate his speech.

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Matt. 12:34-37).

Indeed, that which abounds in the heart of a person will ultimately come out in his speech. A person's interests, attitudes, likes and dislikes are soon known from his own mouth. How important it is then, that one guards carefully his thoughts and contemplations. In fact, various sins of the tongue find their origin and/or motive in the heart. Lying, false witnessing, gossip, backbiting, cursing and vulgarity all bespeak a heart problem or problems.

Finally, Christ also taught that even sinful actions emanate ultimately from the heart.

And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications,

murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man (Mark 7:20-23).

Actions are ultimately dictated by attitudes and decisions; attitudes reside in the heart, and decisions are made in the heart. It is no wonder the wise man penned, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life,*" (Prov. 4:23). As goes the heart of man, so goes the life of man; as goes the life of man, so goes the destiny of man!

Man can neither afford to dwell on evil thoughts nor to incubate and cultivate wrong attitudes. These things must be closely monitored in every person's life. Both introspection and circumspection are needed, as well as a healthy dose of self-honesty. The Bible speaks of those who deceive themselves (Gal. 6:3; James 1:22; 1 John 1:8), and such self-deception must be avoided. One must be honest with himself regarding his personal thoughts and attitudes. He must honestly evaluate whether or not they are in harmony with the word of God. Finally, he must work continuously and strenuously to make all necessary changes. It has been said that the battle for the soul is fought on the battlefield of the mind (or heart), and there is so much truth in this statement. The apostle Paul wrote,

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 (Rom. 12:2).



## Thoughts/Attitudes Toward Oneself

Self-esteem, self-image and self-denial are all crucial concepts in this present study. The Bible clearly sets forth principles that lay the foundation for healthy self-esteem. First, man was created in the image of the eternal and Almighty God (Gen. 1:26-27). He was created a little lower than the angels (Psm. 8:5), not a little higher than the apes! He was endowed with both an immortal soul and the volition to determine that soul's destiny. Man was created a noble creature (cf. Eccl. 7:29). Second, man is of such value to God that He did not withhold His only begotten Son when man needed Him most (Rom. 8:32). Both the Father and the Son love man more than he can fully comprehend (Eph. 3:19; cf. 1 John 4:9-10, 14). Since God has deemed man worth saving—even at such awful cost—man must certainly esteem himself accordingly. Third, the Savior taught that man must have appropriate love and regard for himself. "...*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,*" (Matt. 22:39). There is a sense in which one must have the proper love for himself in order to properly love those around him.

Maintaining the proper self-esteem must be balanced with the proper attitude toward others. One's self-image must not become inflated—a condition in which one perceives himself superior to his fellow-man. Such an unscriptural self-image is one in which a person becomes increasingly more important, while others become increasingly insignificant. Paul warned against this kind of self-image when he wrote,

For I say, through the grace given unto me,  
to every man that is among you, not to

think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (Rom. 12:3).

Every human being possesses intrinsic value and worth, but this entitles no one to diminish the importance or needs of his fellow-man. In fact, Paul instructed the Philippians to have essentially the opposite mindset.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:3-5).

The cross of Jesus Christ helps greatly to bring all the foregoing into focus. The cross definitely demonstrates the worth of every single human being (and the self-esteem that should naturally follow). The cross is a perpetual reminder that one must be mindful of the needs of others, even as Christ came seeking the good of others (cf. Matt. 20:28). Even further, in fact, the cross is a portrait of self-denial. Jesus spoke of voluntary self-denial when He said the following.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what

shall a man give in exchange for his soul?  
(Matt. 16:24-26).

The basis of practical Christianity is found in total surrender—one must give himself wholly unto Christ. Paul described this conversion and its continuing effects,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

One thus united with Christ sets his affections on things above, not on things of this earth (cf. Col. 3:1-4; 2:12). In Christ, self-denial will pay eternal dividends!

### **Thoughts/Attitudes Toward Material Possessions**

For some, the greatest temptations always seem to involve money. The wisdom of Paul's inspired words all too often goes unheeded.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced

themselves through with many sorrows (1  
Tim. 6:6-10).

Improper attitudes toward money have resulted, and will continue to result, in all manner of sins. Money itself is spiritually neutral; it is an inanimate, lifeless object. When viewed accurately and used appropriately, it makes for a wonderful tool. When esteemed too highly and handled wrongly, it makes for a miserable master.

A number of warnings are found in the Scriptures regarding one's trusting in riches. A man known in modern times as "*the rich young ruler*" is recorded as running to Jesus and asking, "*Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*" (Mark 10:17). The fullness of Christ's response saddened the young man, and he went away grieved (Mark 10:18-22). He had great possessions which he was unwilling to give up in order to follow Jesus; he made a choice, and sadly, it was the wrong choice. Jesus used that opportunity to teach His disciples a great spiritual lesson, "*Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!*" (Mark 10:24b). Earlier Jesus had spoken of the "*deceitfulness of riches*" (Mark 4:19), indicating that man may be deceived by such. Indeed, material possessions seem to have a way of lulling a person into a false sense of security.

The rich fool fell prey to this attitude after being blessed by God with a bumper crop. He would say to his soul, "*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,*" (Luke 12:19). This pitiable man felt secure for years to come, yet in reality, his soul was not even secure

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for that very night (Luke 12:20). Though riches may cause one to feel secure in his own mind, and to be highly esteemed in the minds of others, they do nothing for one's relationship with God unless used properly. Paul also warned against trusting in riches, citing this very concept.

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; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

What matters in God's eyes is that one is "*rich in good works.*" Obviously, the more one has, materially speaking, the more ability and opportunity he should have to do good (cf. Gal. 6:10; James 4:17). As the maxim goes, "*With more blessing comes more responsibility.*" As a closing comment on trusting in riches, one should note Paul's apt description, "*uncertain riches*" (1 Tim. 6:17). The nature of material possessions is such, that, they can be here today and gone tomorrow (cf. Prov. 23:5)! Thus, the accurate conclusion is clearly seen: material possessions are to be used as tools in service to God; they are not to be trusted in as a pseudo-savior.

The attitude of trusting in riches has a "*spiritual cousin*" that is also very dangerous. This is the attitude of making riches a priority. It is evident from even a casual observance of some lives, that money is

obviously the most important thing to those people. The vast majority of their attention, time and energy is spent trying to make more money. The cause of Christ has definitely suffered because of this attitude within the ranks of the church. While there is nothing wrong with working hard and earning a comfortable living for one's family, this must always be kept in proper perspective, and proper priorities must be maintained. Money must not be allowed to become the most important thing in a person's (or a family's) life—because it isn't! The most important thing is bring right with God (cf. Matt. 16:26)!

The psalmist wrote, "*...if riches increase, set not your heart upon them,*" (Psm. 62:10). Too many through the centuries have set their hearts upon riches, and they are now suffering in torments (cf. Luke 16:23). Christ instructed His disciples as to where their hearts should be set.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:19-21).

Christ's servant, the apostle Paul, also taught concerning material priorities versus spiritual.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your

affections on things above, not on things  
on the earth (Col. 3:1-2).

The child of God cannot afford to lose his spiritual perspective. Money is necessary for making a living, but it is not the most important thing in life. Misplaced priorities carry a much higher cost.

A final word must be written concerning covetousness, or greed. It is no surprise that one who trusts in riches would make them a priority in his life. Further, it should be no surprise that one who has set his heart upon riches would want more and more of the same. The tendency often found in man goes something like this: the more one has, the more one wants. Once again, this fact is probably connected to the *"deceitfulness of riches"* Christ mentioned in His earthly ministry (Mark 4:19). Many view material possessions as a source of satisfaction and contentment. The covetous man thinks that the more he has, the happier he will be. Ironically, however, riches fail to make good on any perceived promise of satisfaction. The wise man wrote, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity," (Eccl. 5:10). Greedy people grasp for more and more, trying to fill some kind of hole in their lives. All the while, the hole only gets deeper and deeper, regardless of how many material possessions they throw in it. People must realize that there are some holes only God can fill. The words of Christ ever ring true,

Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for  
a man's life consisteth not in the abundance

of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15).

## **Thoughts/Attitudes Toward The Opposite Sex**

God created the genders, creating with male and female the natural relationship between the two. He instilled in man the attraction to woman, and vice-versa. The natural sex drive in both man and woman is likewise God-given. Nonetheless, He did not create man and woman as lowly animals, disposed to act thoughtlessly on every desire or appetite. Instead, He endowed them with souls and with the rationale to choose between right and wrong. He furnished them with His Divine revelation, the absolute standard to be followed in determining right and wrong. Thus man and woman were created to govern themselves, their desires and their actions in accordance with God's will, and they are accountable unto God for their decisions (Rom. 14:12).

Men and women who understand these things view sex and sexuality very differently from those in the world. They do not look upon members of the opposite sex as mere objects on which they can gratify their every whim or lust. In fact, godly men and women respect each other as fellow-human beings, created in the image of the Almighty God. They understand that the sexual relationship is God's wedding gift to every married couple, and that outside the realm of marriage, sexual activity is both sinful and hurtful. The Hebrews author at once exalted the beauty of sex in marriage and condemned the sin of sex outside of marriage, when he wrote,



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*"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,"* (Heb. 13:4).

As with virtually every other aspect of life, man's thoughts and attitudes regarding sex and sexuality are critically important. Though sex is commonly thought of as an act, there are definitely sexual issues and considerations that must be dealt with in the mind. Perhaps chief among these is the matter of lust. Jesus spoke of illicit desires and imaginations when He said,

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:28).

It is sinful for a man to lust sexually after a woman who is not his wife. He has no scriptural right even of imagination, if he is not married to that woman. The same applies to women as well. One must remember, *"as he thinketh in his heart, so is he!"*

There is often an unmistakable connection between lust and the eyes—especially regarding the male gender. The apostle John wrote concerning *"the lust of the eyes,"* clearly identifying such with the world, and not with God (1 John 2:15-17). The eyes constitute a gateway to the mind. For this reason, illicit desires can be readily formed and even fueled by a man's seeing and watching that which is immodest, indecent or even obscene! Christian men and women must echo the sentiments of the psalmist—and mean it! *"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes,"* (Psm. 101:3a). In fact, it is even possible for a man to look too long at a woman who

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is properly clothed and decent. Job, the righteous patriarch, said, "*I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?*" (Job 31:1). In every way, men and women must take the utmost care to guard their thoughts regarding the opposite sex. One of the most important ways of doing this is by directing the eyes only where they should go.

### **Conclusion**

The Bible makes it expressly clear that all men and women will one day be judged (Heb. 9:27). On that day, the deeds committed in the body will be judged (2 Cor. 5:10). The words spoken by the tongue will be judged (Matt. 12:36-37). And, yes, even the thoughts harbored in the heart will be judged as well (cf. Prov. 24:9; Eccl. 12:14). As one lives upon the earth, it may very well be the thoughts and attitudes that are found to be most important; for ultimately they produce our words and shape our deeds (cf. Prov. 4:23). Only the pure in heart shall see God (Matt. 5:8), for as a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7).

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Joshua 1:5-9**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Perry B. Cotham***

**I**n Joshua 1:5-9, we read that the Lord spoke to Joshua after Moses had died *"on Nebo's lonely mountain,"* and said,

...as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage...be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to the law,... that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest...Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Joshua has often been called the greatest warrior of the Old Testament. Bible scholars tell us that when our Savior was born of the virgin Mary, He was given the name of Joshua, the same word as Jesus. The angel said to Joseph, in announcing the birth of Christ, *"and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins"* (Matt. 1:21).

Joshua was obedient to God's will. He always left

nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses. He led the children of Israel across the Jordan River and conquered the land of Canaan for them, and then settled the tribes. His good life contains many fine lessons today for all of us, but especially for gospel preachers. Let us note a few of them.

### **The Courage Of Joshua**

The first appearance of Joshua in Israel's history was when he commanded the battle against the Amalekites at Rephidim. In that battle, when the Amalekites withstood the Israelites as they entered the peninsula of Mount Sinai, Joshua did the fighting, while Moses, his weary hands upheld by Aaron and Hur, did the praying on the hilltop (Exod. 17:8-13). Of all the men of Israel, it was the young man, Joshua, who was chosen by Moses to lead in this battle. We, as Christians, are in a spiritual battle today, and we need good strong leaders (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-18).

The next appearance of Joshua was when he went up with the twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan. When they returned from their survey after a forty days' journey, the spies brought back as a sample of the fruitfulness of the land a cluster of grapes, so large that it had to be carried on the shoulders of two men. All agreed, too, that it was a good productive land, one that flowed "*with milk and honey.*"

But ten of the spies advised against attempting to conquer the land. They said all the people they saw were giants. In their sight, the twelve Hebrew spies were as "*little grasshoppers.*" They said to the people, "*We cannot take the land.*"

When the congregation heard this, they lifted up their voices and murmured against Moses and said, *"Let us make a captain, and let us return unto Egypt."* But two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, dissented from the majority, declaring that they could conquer the land. So enraged though were the people at the report of Joshua and Caleb that they took up stones to stone Joshua and Caleb. But the glory of the Lord appeared at the tabernacle and God sentenced the people to forty years of wandering in the wilderness because of their lack of faith and lack of courage. Of all the host of those who were adults when they left Egypt only two Joshua and Caleb, were permitted to enter the promised land, Canaan (Num. 13 and 14). The writer of Hebrews makes reference to this and applies it to Christians who lack faith (see Heb. 3:12-19; 4:1, 11; 1 Cor. 10:1-12 is Paul's comment).

In many congregations of God's people today many have the inferiority "*grasshopper*" complex. Whenever a great work is to be done about ten out of twelve are timid and afraid and see themselves as grasshoppers. Often about two out of twelve are strong enough and bold enough to march forward against sin and false doctrines in the name of the Lord. They need to remember what God said to Joshua: *"Be strong, and of a good courage."* Over and over again that word is spoken to Joshua, and by him to the people. *"Yes, we can go in and conquer the land,"* said Joshua. *"Come on, let us do it; God will bless us."* But the people said, *"No, we can't."* Many churches could do more in mission work, in teaching, locally and abroad, **IF THEY REALLY TRIED, AND WANTED TO DO IT!** What is needed by

all-preachers, deacons, Bible school teachers, elders and members—is that courage of Joshua, a courage that is born of unfaltering faith in God and His word. We can go against sin and wickedness and religious errors. God will bless us. Let us get rid of *“the grasshopper complex.”* There is a poem that says that a person wins who thinks he can. (Just here I would like to speak of the East Hill church of Christ. The church is growing; they are working and doing things, because they think they can.)

### **Joshua, Sound In The Faith**

God said to Joshua for him to be strong and very courageous,

that thou mayest observe to do according  
to all the law...turn not from it to the right  
hand or to the left.

Joshua was not to be an extremist on either side, to the right or to the left. Preachers are to preach the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), all of the truth, and nothing but the truth. This was Paul's dying charge to the young evangelist, Timothy: *“Preach the word”* (2 Tim. 4:1-5; cf. 2:2).

There is a real danger to the church today in getting away from the basic fundamental principles of New Testament Christianity. In the past one hundred to one hundred and fifty years ago good Bible teaching and preaching was done in our nation, and the Lord's church grew *“by leaps and bounds.”* Now it is different. Even among some so-called *“university professors”* there has been abandonment of Biblical teaching for a more ecumenical view of

the church. They have adopted liberal teaching and practices, rejecting Biblical teaching such as baptism for the remission of sins, a cappella singing, male leadership in the church, the Lord's Supper each Lord's day, and scriptural warnings against sexual immorality and apostasy. They have been influenced by the false teaching of others. This is harming the minds of many of our young people.

This departure from the faith is a new movement to many people, but it is the same old digression from the faith as has happened in the past. If some of the great preachers of the past, who did so much to establish good faithful "*churches of Christ*" (Rom. 16:16), knew what is being said and done today in some places they would "*turn over in their graves.*"

Joshua took God at His word and won the victory in conquering the land. The first great city to be taken was Jericho. But he and his people marched around the city as the Lord told them to do, and the walls came tumbling down (Josh. 6:1-27).

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down,  
after they were compassed about seven  
days (Heb. 11:30).

Joshua believed in God. We think of him as a leader on the field of battle. Once he needed more time to win a victory. He asked that the sun stand still, and the sun stood still and the day was lengthened one whole day (Josh. 10:12-14). And he won the battle!

## **Joshua, A Man Of Devotion**

Joshua was a man of devotion. He had fellowship with God. He was taken by Moses to Mount Sinai,

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and was in attendance upon Moses as his minister when he wrote the law on the tables of stone (Exod. 24:13). There he heard and saw the majesty of God. Too, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joshua as he commenced the conquest of Canaan (Josh. 5:13-15). Back of Joshua's heroic achievements was a deep acquaintance with God. This, too, must be part of our lives, as we work for the Lord, for the victory of truth and righteousness.

### Joshua's Closing Days

Joshua did his work for the future of his people, the Israelites. When he came to the end of his life and realized his race was nearly run, he called for the leaders of the people. Then he told them he was going the way of all the earth, and exhorted them to hold fast to their faith in God: "*Cleave unto the Lord your God*" (Josh. 23:8-10). Not only did he choose God for himself, but he called upon others to choose God. He assembled the people at Shechem (between Mount Boal and Mount Gerizim), all the tribes and their leaders, and told them what great things God had done for Israel in the past. He then called on them to decide whether they were going to serve God or serve the gods of the people on the other side of the flood (the river, ASV; that is the Euphrates), or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell. Then he said, "*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve.*"

### Conclusion

Whom will you serve? Choose you **this day, today**, whom you will serve.

The world needs men like Joshua who will



serve the Lord. There are plenty of "gods" whom you can serve aside from the true God. Among these are pleasures, business, money, power. But what are these compared to the true God. Will you serve God or work for others?

Joshua died, "*being an hundred and ten years old*" (Josh. 24:29). Jesus, Joshua's successor is leading His own today into the Promised Land of Heaven.

### **The Bridge Builder**

An old man going on a lone highway,  
Came at the evening cold and gray  
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.

The old man crossed in the twilight dim,  
The sullen stream had no fear for him,  
But he stopped when safe on the other side  
And building a bridge to stem the tide.

*"Old man" said a fellow pilgrim near,  
"You are wasting your strength with building here;  
Your journey will end with the ending day,  
You never again will pass this way;  
You've crossed the chasm deep and wide,  
Why build you this bridge at eventide?"*

The builder lifted his old grey head,  
*"Good friend, in the path I have come,"* he said,  
*"There followeth after me today  
A youth whose feet must pass this way.*

*This chasm which has been as naught to me  
To that fair-headed youth might a pitfall be,  
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him."*

~ Will Allen Dromgoole

### *Perry Cotham*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Hosea 4:6**

*This Chapter Written By*

***David Sain***

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

**H**osea lived in Israel, the Northern Kingdom. He lived and prophesied during the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel, while four successive kings – Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah- were ruling in Judah. He was contemporary with Amos of the Northern Kingdom and Isaiah of the Southern Kingdom.

His work as a prophet spanned about forty years, from about 755 B.C. to about 715 B.C. The book of Hosea, the first book of "*minor prophecies*," was written sometime during that time frame.

While someone like Jonah could be described as a "*foreign missionary*," Hosea, in a sense, could be described as the "*home missionary*." He was called by Jehovah to reveal to his own countrymen, the

people of Israel, the Lord's displeasure over their unfaithfulness, and then let them know of the consequences that would befall them because of such.

Hosea prophesied for God during the fading years of the Northern Kingdom. It was a time of swift moral and spiritual decline. Worship of false gods was mixed with worship of the one true God.

What a tragedy! What a sad situation! Imagine Hosea, a man with passion for his people, revealing impending national doom because the one who chose them is now going to reject them. And why? Because they had forgotten the law of their God, and they had rejected knowledge.

Get the picture clearly in your mind. In chapter four, verse six, Hosea declared that the corruption of the nation is the result of their not knowing Jehovah, the very one who chose them to be His people.

### **The Context**

Each of the Old Testament prophets pointed out sins that changed their relationship with God, and called for judgment. No one in that day could have charged God with not making His laws plain to His people, and no one could have charged Him with not letting them know when their behavior was unacceptable to Him. Hosea, too, identified and denounced the sinful behavior of Israel which left them guilty before God.

In the first part of chapter four, the people were brought face to face with their sinful condition, and the judgment that would result therefrom. Let us look closely at what God said through Hosea.

## Verse One

Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

From this verse, observe the following points:

- The prophet did not appeal to his audience for their attention on a personal basis, but upon the basis that his message was from God. This is reminiscent of numerous places in the Old Testament when a similar pronouncement was made (e.g., 1 Sam. 15:1). And the charge to *"hear the word of the Lord"* is desperately needed today as much as it has ever been. Feeble, mortal man needs Divine instruction, guidance, and admonition. And man needs to be willing to humble himself before the Lord and receive the word with meekness (James 1:21).

- The prophet informed them that the Lord had a controversy with them. In the New American Standard, this reads, "the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land." The New King James Versions says, *"the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land."* The word *"controversy"* carries the idea of having a disagreement, and God wanted them to know that their behavior put them "against" the Lord rather than *"in harmony"* with Him. Of all controversies in which men can be involved, this has to be the worst. Controversies between men can be awful, but those pale in comparison to having God say, *"I have a controversy with you."*

- The reasons for the Lord's charges against the people are identified. First, there was no truth

or mercy in the land. There was no truthfulness in word or deed, no conscience nor devotion to doing that which was right. Consequently, there could be no confidence in promises and oaths. There was no mercy - no compassion. In dealing with one another, they had no sense of justice and compassion. Second, there was no knowledge of the Lord. And this fact alone would explain the deplorable condition of the people, for the knowledge of God is essential to the well-being of any people. The knowledge of God is a necessity of our moral nature, and it is the foundation of morality and true religion. Where God is unknown, where men live without God in their lives, they lose their moral compass and end up in a condemned condition. When man rejects the knowledge of God, he begins a journey into a wretched existence.

### **Verse Two**

By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood (Hosea 4:2).

- Picture the scene. Nothing but evil, and that continually. Cursing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery filled the land.

- There was profanity, and people could not be trusted to speak the truth.

- There was disregard for the sanctity of life that resulted in the taking of human life. (The phrase, "*blood toucheth blood*" is considered to be an expression that means an abundance of killing, like that which would take place in massacres, wars, etc.)

- There was dishonesty, with no compunction about taking what another had.
- There was a lack of self control, resulting in immoral sexual indulgence. And, in such a sensual world, the sanctity of marriage (as God intended) gets overshadowed by the pursuit of "*the pleasures of sin for a season*" (Heb. 11:25).

### **Verses Three, Four And Five**

Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.

Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother (Hosea 4:3-5).

- These words are sobering, for they are the judgment of the Almighty God upon the very people who belonged to Him.
- This judgment indicated that they were to be deprived materially and spiritually. He said that everyone that dwelled there would languish, like a dying man whose life is ebbing away as he lies in a hospital bed.
- They would be deprived of physical sustenance. He said that their food provisions (beasts of the field, fowls of the air, and fishes of the sea) would be taken away.

- They would be deprived spiritually, with the announcement that no man would strive with them or reprove them. In other words, the need for correction would be removed. Think about the rebellious sinner reaching a point that God gives him over to a reprobate mind (cf. Rom. 1:19-28).

- This judgment included both priests and the people. It indicates that conditions would become so bad that God's priests and the mighty nation of God would fall and go down into ruin both day and night. And, if we are right in determining when all of this happened, Hosea lived long enough to see the fulfillment of this. Ultimately, the nation fell at the hands of the Assyrians when they overthrew the Northern Kingdom.

### Verse 6

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children (Hosea 4:6).

- This well-known scripture suggests four important things about the lack of knowledge (and, in context, that obviously refers to a lack of knowledge of God).

1. **It is destructive.** God said His people were destroyed for a lack of knowledge.

Knowledge of God is life to the soul, but a lack of knowledge destroys the soul in that it keeps the soul from growing (2 Peter 3:17-18). Just as the lack of moisture can destroy the vegetable crop, so



the lack of knowledge can destroy the soul. Just as the lack of air can cause the death of human life, so the lack of knowledge can cause the death of the soul.

Ignorance has a destructive effect upon the present and the future. A man can be ignorant of astronomy, or geology, or some other subject without it having much of an effect upon his life. However, to be ignorant of God robs one of that which is essential to genuine happiness and fulfillment, and leads to spiritual misdirection and a futile physical existence. Man's true enjoyment and fulfillment is in the knowledge and love of his creator.

Furthermore, to be ignorant of God robs one of future happiness. As we all know, our earthly existence is temporary and brief, and we are headed into an eternal realm - in heaven or in hell. And our eternal abode is determined by our lives on earth. If one lives in ignorance of God, he will live in ignorance of God's amazing scheme of redemption, which provides the only hope that one has of being found righteous at the day of judgment (Rom. 6:23).

**2. It is wilful.** It is not just an act of negligence. It is deliberate. God said that they had rejected knowledge, indicating a choice that they made. The revelation of God had been abundant in the lives of these people. They deliberately rejected that which they had seen and heard. They were "*willingly ignorant*" of Him (cf. 2 Peter 3:5).

**3. It is unnecessary.** As noted in the previous point, Israel had abundant means and opportunities to know God. They possessed the law of God, but

neglected to look into it, and forsook it.

Because God has revealed Himself in His creation (Psm. 19:1), and because God has revealed Himself in His Word, man can know God. Now it is a fact that all of us are ignorant about various things, but, assuming that we have normal learning capabilities, that is by choice. We have the ability to know things, and we choose what we know and we choose to remain ignorant about certain things. If we are ignorant of God, it is because we choose to be that way, either by choosing not to learn or by wilfully rejecting what we have seen and heard. Regretably, many people today are like Israel, choosing to live in ignorance of God.

**4. It brings rejection from God.** He said, "*I will also reject thee,*" (carrying the idea of utter rejection). This is reminiscent of that which Jesus taught, as recorded in Matthew 10:32-33.

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.

We have long understood that Jesus meant His denying one before the Father would be an utter denial - denying that He any knowledge at all of one who would deny Him before men.

Furthermore, God, in His sovereign authority, declared through Hosea that He not only would reject the people of Israel but that He would also forget their children.

## Analysis

A careful and thoughtful study of this powerful section of inspired scripture leads to some conclusions that have a practical lesson for the church in the twenty-first century. Consider the following progression of thought.

1. After exposing the depraved condition of His people in the Northern Kingdom, God announced that He rejected them – a sobering and severe pronouncement. What caused Him to make that judgment? What brought about such an extreme measure?

Verse six answer these questions:

- a. He said they *“are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”*
- b. He said they *“rejected knowledge.”*
- c. He said they forgot *“the law of their God.”*

2. That leads one to ponder how they ever reached such a depraved condition. What caused them to forget their God? What brought them to a lack of knowledge? What brought them to a point that they would reject knowledge?

3. Their lack of knowledge was not because knowledge of God was impossible or unavailable. It was, as observed earlier, a choice they made. But what caused them to make such a choice? Why did they not see the need to know God, and why did they not have a desire for such knowledge?

4. A study of the broader context, i.e., of the whole book, provides a plausible answer to these questions. By the time of Hosea many of the beliefs and practices of Canaanite religions were actually

integrated with the worship of Jehovah. Israel reached a point where their worship consisted of a mixture of worshipping the gods of the Canaanite and worshipping one true God. They had conformed to the heathen world around them and embraced their sinful behavior. They got caught up in the sin of idolatry, which began with the Northern Kingdom's first king, Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:25-33; 14:1-16). And many sins (fornication, drunkenness, etc) grew out of their idolatry. No wonder Hosea charged Israel with harlotry and whoredom (Hosea 4:15, 18). In their unfaithfulness to God, they were guilty of spiritual adultery!

5. In such a condition, where they mentally set aside the law of God and chose to engage in the practices of their heathen neighbors, it is no wonder that they would have developed an attitude of no longer needing a knowledge of God.

6. The progression of their apostasy can be summarized as:

- a. Conforming to the religions around them and the culture of their day.
- b. In their compromised condition, they forgot their God and His law.
- c. They rejected the knowledge of God and were no longer faithful to Him.
- d. Israel fell away from God, and He rejected them.
- e. They were destroyed at the hands of the Assyrians.

## **Conclusion**

The church is spiritual Israel (Rom.), and the

story of fleshly Israel should be a sobering lesson for the church. Just like them, we live in a land of false religions, immorality, and all sorts of ungodly influences.

We must see the danger of conforming to religions around us, as Israel did.

We must see the danger of conforming to the culture of our day, as Israel did.

We must see the danger of forgetting our God and His law, as Israel did.

We must see the danger of rejecting the knowledge of God, as Israel did.

We must see the danger of being rejected by God, as Israel was.

We must see the danger of being destroyed for lack of knowledge, as Israel was.

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2).

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Judges 2:10**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Billy Hayes***

And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

**T**he Book of Judges provides a seamless segway from the leadership of the children of Israel by Joshua to the beginning of the United Kingdom of Israel. In the time period of Joshua, the children of God were engaged in conquering the land of Canaan. The initial battles are over. These battles recorded in Joshua are most decisively won by the One who gives Israel her power. As the book of Judges unfolds, the children of God are now in Canaan and are beginning to make themselves "*comfortable.*" This will prove to be a very disastrous position in which Israel will place herself. This book, known as Judges, is a book of the failures of mankind. Because of the unwillingness or inability to follow the commands of God, Israel is cohabitating the land of Canaan. Their complete disregard for God will clearly be seen throughout

history and it will be encapsulated in the first two chapters. The most disturbing pattern given in this book of God's Word is as follows:

1. Israel turns away from God and His blessings.
2. Israel is oppressed and chastised by an enemy.
3. Israel begs God to save the nation.
4. Israel's deliverer is sent.
5. Israel follows God for a time until the process repeats itself.

The cycle can more concisely be stated as: sin, servitude, supplication, salvation, and sin.

The greatest problem to mankind, most especially this nation of Israel, has never been stated any clearer than Judges 2:10, which states

And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

This verse has been my assigned topic and is one of the most powerful commentaries on the depths to which man can sink. To notice the severity of verse ten, notice these verses:

And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye



shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the Lord. And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash (Judg. 2:1-9).

Judges 2:11-13 completes the picture of rebellion and self-centeredness of the children of God. Notice the following:

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: And 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. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

### **The Nature Of Man - Freedom Giver**

In order to understand the Bible correctly, and most especially this verse, one must understand the principle player involved. The principle player is God. To study God as a complete being is to study God in complete uniformity. He is omniscient (all-knowing), omni-benevolent (all-loving), omnipresent (always everywhere), omni-just (all fair in justice) and omni-truthful (all promises will come true). This is not seen any more plainly than in Genesis chapter three. In this chapter of the Holy Writ, Satan tempts Mother Eve with the fruit. This fact is not in question. However, Satan's method is noteworthy.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:4-5).

Satan states the following:

1. God does not know all "Ye shall not..."
2. God is not always truthful "For God doth know..."
3. God is not just "Ye shall be as gods...." (gods are not punished)
4. God is not love "Why hold one tree from them?"

The nature of God has been under attack and has been challenged by Satan from page one of the Bible

and continues that way even today. The book of Judges is no different. If Satan can ever prove God wrong or place Him in a situation in which He has no alternative but to contradict His nature, then Satan is the victor and God is a liar. This, however, can never happen because of the justice, lovingness and truthfulness of the nature of God. The oppression, the cries of Israel and the deliverers all satisfy the nature of God. I am learning more about the nature of God while my wife and I rear a three-year-old girl and a three-month-old girl. These children are not corrected and disciplined because we receive a pleasure from this; it is because the children need correction in order to please God and grow to be lovely Christian ladies. Just as our home is under attack because we strive to serve God, the nation of Israel had lost the battle with Satan and Judges 2:10 certainly proves that fact. Israel did not know God or His actions of help given unto them. (As the most important statement of this section). GOD'S NATURE NEVER CHANGED. The people changed, not God. God never changes.

### **The Nature Of Man - Freedom Of Choice**

A study of the nature of God is meaningless without a study of the nature of mankind. Adolph Hitler wrote a thesis on the nature of man entitled "*Mien Kampf*". In this glaring look at human beings, Hitler observed this key idea: The bigger the lie the more easily it will be believed. Satan's temptations rest in this fact of the human psyche. Notice once again Genesis chapter three. After Satan blatantly asked a "*loaded*" question only for the

purpose of temptation, Mother Eve stated directly the Command of God. This should have been the end of the conversation. Why was it not the end? Simply, the Devil is very persistent. He also is crafty, cunning and convincing. Satan began to impede the thought process of Eve by simply offering her an alternative to truth. *"You will not die; you'll be like a god."* However, at this point, neither God nor Satan had forced Adam and Eve to choose righteousness or wickedness. Eve used her own freedom of will (given by God) to believe Satan and turn her back on God. The irony of this account is that God only wanted Eve to desire to serve Him, but she desired that forbidden fruit.

How does all of this relate to Judges 2:10? The nature of God and mankind are never changing. That is to say, a race of people seeking after their OWN LUST OR DESIRES will never be pleasing to God. Because of the lustfulness of Israel (not driving the inhabitants COMPLETELY OUT of the land) and the failure to obey God's commands on marriage (Deut. 7:1-4), then the unfortunate commentary on the state of the nation of Israel was penned in Judges 2:10. Notice that verse once again:

And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel (Judg. 2:10).

If this nation does not worship God, to what do they turn? They turned to the gods of the land; Baal and Ashtaroth. Can the lustfulness of Israel be seen? How do they know about these gods? Marriage! The

marriage of strange (unauthorized) women coupled with the allowance of these ladies to continue to practice a pagan worship equals certain despair for the children of God and true worship unto God.

### **What Is The Problem?**

The problem seems, on the surface, as an easy problem to pin point. I would submit that Judges 2:10 is more complex than it appears. This is due to the fact that the Word of God gives this account to us without a great deal of detail. The details are not instrumental in the fact; however, it would help the readers to understand the grandness of this problem. The problem in its most simplified form is the nation of Israel disregarded God and His protection toward them. This seems to be a key issue of a greater problem. Notice Judges 2:7, which states,

And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel.

This Israelite nation followed God while she was led by strong and concerned leaders. It could be the fact that leaders arose to power who had a complete lack of respect or trust in the Almighty. It is also likely that the family unit in Israel was collapsing from the head down. One other scenario is possible, and that is God had been rejected by a group of people (the children) who had not seen the works of God firsthand.

What does all this mean? All this points to the fact that, to this generation, God was replaceable.

After all, they did find other gods to which they placed their allegiance. Notice Judges 2:11-13,

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: And 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. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

No one lives on an island.

Their surroundings did affect the attitude of this nation. When they, as a people, thought of themselves as "*smarter*" than God, they refused to listen to His "archaic and outdated" laws. As they intermarried with strangers of this land (Judg, 1), they were introduced to Baal and Ashtaroth as acceptable alternatives. Did this happen to every person in the nation? Praise be unto God, No. There were some who continued to do the Will of God. However, as a general rule, the majority of this nation was corrupted.

### **Who Is At Fault?**

God's laws have ALWAYS been, and always will be, for the benefit and protection of mankind (2 Peter 1:3). God has even explained that Christians today must reflect and meditate on the Old Law and learn from the mistakes of the previous children of God. Notice Romans 15:4,

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

By definition, laws that keep man FROM sin, cannot be sinful (Psa. 119:111). The law cannot be blamed, for it is from God. Sin is ushered in by man, who is tempted by the Adversary of God (James 2:13:15). Someone or some group is at fault, but which one?

Notice first the leadership of the nation. If it is the fact that the leadership of the nation of Israel failed to carry out its responsibility, then they were responsible for the decline of the nation. These leaders had a grand purpose given by God and they were required to complete that purpose. At times I wonder if King David had this period of time in his mind, as he through inspiration wrote,

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good (Psa. 14:1)?

If it is a fact that the leadership compromised, then they were fools and led a nation of fools. This statement seems harsh; however, God defined the term "fool" according to Psalm 14:1.

Next notice the leadership of the home. If the leadership of these Jewish homes had shirked their duty, then they were responsible for killing the zeal and respect toward God. The fathers of the home, which comprise the nation of Israel, had a duty of grave importance given by God – to rear and train

their household after the pattern given in the Old Testament law. Notice the following:

Train up a child in the way he should go:  
and when he is old, he will not depart  
from it (Prov. 22:6).

The fathers had a responsibility to train.

Notice next the lads of Israel. Their duty (given by God) was to accept the training and learn about God. In the nation of Israel, if a child was obstinate and unruly, he was to be "*stoned with stones.*" The responsibility placed upon a child seemed to be great; however, it needed to be pointed out that they were to learn about God. This is the most serious topic to be studied. It is greater in importance than any other subject that could, can or ever will be studied.

### **Applications To Christianity**

Notice, one final time, the entirety of the text:

And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after



them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: And 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. And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth (Judges 2:6-13).

I cannot distinguish who is at fault, however I do know a few of the following ideas:

1. Every person is subject unto the authority of God.
2. Mankind cannot trust his own judgment.
3. It is the destiny of mankind to die.

In this application, let us focus completely on the phrase "*there arose a generation...*" Has this generation arisen because of a failure of leadership? In America, we definitely have a problem in leadership. It seems to be very difficult to be in a position of leadership in the United States of America. The job held by these men and women in authority tears and pulls apart the integrity and character of these people. For anyone of conviction and faithfulness, this must be a difficult place in which to be placed. But what can I do? I am only one person; how can I help? The power of prayer is an untapped resource we as children of God, do not use as frequently as we ought. God has approved our leaders (Rom. 13; Dan. 4) and as that is the fact, we MUST, MUST, MUST petition God on their behalf. We should also make

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good informed decisions when we exercise our rights as Americans to vote. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 states,

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Please note this fact: We will be judged on works done in this life. Can I vote for a person that completely oppresses God and stand justified before God on judgment day?

Just as leadership is definitely a key in a strong nation, it is also a huge part of the local congregation. If congregational leadership is void, will a generation arise that does not know God? The fact that elders are required shows the vast wisdom of God. In order to preserve the autonomy of each congregation, Eldership is most important. Prayer for these leaders is as important, if not even more important than, for the leaders of our nation. Prayer and support for a sound Eldership is not only proper, but also our duty. The men of the Eldership of the Lord's church have an outstanding responsibility to perform and we, as Christians, need to find ways to show them that we appreciate them. Cards, notes and kind words given to them will certainly showcase our love for God and His church.

*"There arose a generation..."*. Ignorance could be the fault of the parents today of the generation it is raising. Parents have and have always had a difficult task. Notice the Old Testament command:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deut. 6:6-9).

Our commands are just as important today. Notice the New Testament command:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4).

How can we, as parents, sit by idly and make statements like *"I do not want to force my child to 'go to church' or 'my child will make his own choice about religion"* and not think we will be held responsible in judgment before God? God speaks to this attitude through the pen of Jeremiah:

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jer. 10:23).

I love baseball. I love the New York Yankees. My three-year-old daughter, Emma, also likes the

Yankees. Why? How does she know about the Yankees, Derrick Jeter, A-Rod or even baseball at all? These things are important to her dad. She wants to do the things that are important to me. Even more important than baseball, I love God and His church. Do my children know more about baseball or God? Emma knows more about God. It is my duty as a father to teach and save my family. I MUST TAKE THIS DUTY VERY SERIOUSLY. I can only imagine loosing my soul and the souls of my family for all eternity and having one statement repeated to me for endless ages; *"Why did you not tell me of the importance of God?"* What can my answer be? God must be important to me and that fact must be proven and shown to my family.

*"There arose a nation that knew not God..."*. Is this lack of knowledge due to an attitude of rejection? Do you realize many people believe that people do not have a desire for the Gospel? Why? These people have rejected God and all the wholesome things for which He stands. Our biggest problems in society stem from the fact that the entirety of America is a generation that does not know God nor the things He provides.

With a rogue society of hate and selfishness, the rejection of God is nothing more than a fruit of that wicked, ruthless tree. If we as Christians will sow the Seed of God, it is probable that many people will look for an alternative to the wickedness that is so prevalent in our world today.

### **Worship Idols?**

According to Judges 2:11-13, the nation of Israel turned to idols. The temptation they had to follow

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these idols was because of short-term benefits, good feelings, convenience or “*easy rules.*” However, these benefits were a false feeling. Please note the following chart:

**WORSHIPPING GOD**

Long-range benefits  
 Gratification postponed  
 Morality required  
 High ethical standards demanded  
 Neighbors’ sins disapproved  
 Unseen God worshipped  
 Unselfishness expected  
 Business relations hindered  
 Strict religious practices  
     Maintained  
 Changed life demanded  
 Ethical stand expected  
 Concern for others taught

**WORSHIPPING IDOLS**

Short-range benefits  
 Self-gratification immediate  
 Sensuality approved  
 Low ethical standards tolerated  
 Neighbors’ sins approved  
 Visible idols worshipped  
 Selfishness condoned  
 Business relations improved  
 Religious practices loosely  
     regulated  
 Changed life not demanded  
 Compromise and cooperation  
     practiced  
 No concern for others expected

The nation of Israel is not alone in this unfortunate ideal. We, in America, do the exact same thing by putting money in a position superior to God. When will we put away our foolish pride, as a nation, and accept the direction and Gospel of God? If we continue this wicked lifestyle, we will be destroyed.

**Do I Know God?**

Do I know God or do I just know of God? I can know of God by simply reading of Him. I can read of His character, His purpose, and His accomplishments without ever knowing Him. I can do the exact same thing with George Washington.

The fact of the matter is that no matter how much I can know about George Washington, I can never know him. God is not that way. I can know God if I am willing.

### *Billy Hayes*

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Isaiah 55:10-11**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Robert R. Taylor, Jr.***

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and 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 whereto I sent it.

## **Introduction**

**I**t continues to be an annual delight to come to beautiful Pulaski, Tennessee, and to East Hill for this spring lectureship. My gratitude is expressed to Paul, Brandon, the elders and all precious people at East Hill for the invitation to speak twice and write a couple of chapters for the book that will be a classic volume in analyzing and applying great texts. Textual studies get to the very heart of Biblical content. The Bible is composed of texts!

## The Prophet Isaiah

He, along with Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel constitute the major prophets of the Old Testament. The latter three were contemporaries. Isaiah came earlier. In his own words he prophesied, *"in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah..."* (Isa. 1:1). This quartet of kings reigned over Judah from Jerusalem.

Remarkable commendations have been laid at the feet of this marvelous man, this powerful prophet. He has been called the *"Messianic Prophet,"* the *"Dean of the Prophets,"* the *"Premier Prophet"* and the *"Statesman Prophet."* He walked and talked with and to kings yet never lost his touch with the common people. His morals and ethics were of the highest Hebrew order. His dedication to truth and right were rare in his day. His reverence for God and His word was evident to every Israelite beholder. His prophetic concepts of the coming Christ were crystal clear to every intelligent Hebrew auditor and reader of his prophetic message. Philip, in Acts 8:33ff, could take a text from Isaiah 53:7-8 and proclaim an excellent sermon to the eager African student and searcher.

Isaiah was both a forth teller and foreteller. He spoke of both past and present in his forth telling role. He predicted with accuracy the future whether it be Babylon's destruction, the coming of Cyrus or the mission of the mighty Messiah. He believed **in** the Messiah **before** He came. Strangely, Jews of later ages who claimed to revere Isaiah so much, reject the very Christ who fulfilled Isaiah's pristine prophecies about this saving Son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the mighty Messiah. Infidelic Jews today



will not march to the side of Isaiah and agree that He is "*wonderful peace*" (Isa. 9:6). Modern Jews who claim great respect for Isaiah still reject Him of whom Isaiah wrote so brilliantly and beautifully.

### **Isaiah 55:10**

This holy Hebrew prophet wrote,

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth the bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.

Rain and snow descend from heaven. They do not descend higher; that would be of no benefit to a parched earth. They come down to planet earth. Recall there are three heavens mentioned in the Bible—not the popular seven many have accepted. (1) There is the heaven where clouds are situated, where birds soar and where planes fly from destination to destination. This is the heaven from whence comes needed moisture in the form of warm rains and cold snow. (2) The second heaven is the realm where moon, sun and stars galore have their fixed orbits of space presence and amazing operations. (3) The third heaven is God's residing realm. From His headquarters in the third heaven He sends orders for the sun to warm earth and for the moon to be ruler of the night. Likewise, from His headquarters in the third heaven He sends orders for the clouds to send rain and snow to the barren earth below. Rain may fall on one day. We do not see it the next day ascending back to the clouds that dispensed it

in the first place. The same is true with snow. The snowflakes do not ascend up to the clouds shortly after they have fallen. Both fall toward and then into the earth to provide life-sustaining moisture. Their liquid purpose is stated. They water the earth. They enable the earth to bring forth needed plants which bud, blossom and produce needed food for animals and men.

The sower sows with hope firmly fixed in mind that rain will fall and make successful his sowing efforts. It would be futile on his part to sow precious seed upon earth that would never receive a drop of moisture from clouds above. He sows in hope. Sowing is not the end but the means to an end—producing a rich and expected harvest a few months later.

I grew up on a farm in northwest Tennessee. In the spring we would sow or plant. We did so in hope that rain would come, water the soil and an expected harvest would come during the summer and the fall. Sometimes there would be an extended drought. No fruitbearing would materialize. Such was disappointing for our living was at stake. Our sustenance was tied to the soil and what we had sown. But when water came and soil produced, we had food for growing appetites! My farming background has helped me to appreciate even more Paul's assessment of God's generous goodness in his sermon at Lystra of Lycaonia,

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 (Acts 14:17).

However, Isaiah is not talking just about rain, snow, a watered earth, a sower and an eater as verse 11 in this context will excellently exhibit.

### Isaiah 55:11

This precious passage, frequently quoted or read, informs us,

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 whereunto I sent it.

We have religious leaders, in mass, who demean, downgrade and disrespect the Word of God saying it is a "*dead letter*." How could an irreverent religionist ever exegete this valiant verse and do it with Scriptural accuracy? There is no way he could without vacating his avowed antagonism toward God's all-powerful and ever profitable word!

Sadly, but surely, some of our brethren have espoused enough Calvinism into their religious bloodstream that they would have Herculean trouble handling correctly this verse. They trust and value their own words far more than they do God's word. This is why the Lord has a mighty hard task getting His say into their bland speeches. What they spew forth is hardly worthy of **sermon** designation. There is an abundance of man talk in what they say and little Bible talk. I used to get a little paper put out by a rank liberal which called itself, "*Bible Talk*." It was mostly talk with very little Bible injected.

This passage is in the kingly company of John 6:63 wherein Jesus stated that His spoken words "*are*

*spirit, and they are life.*" It is in the kindred company of Romans 1:16-17 wherein Paul stated,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Power in this valiant verse derives from a term from which we obtain dynamite, dynamo and dynamic. This hardly sounds like a *"dead letter."* This is in perfect company with Hebrews 4:12 wherein it is stated,

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In kindred language James wrote,

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures...Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls (1:18, 21).

Paul told Timothy to *"Preach the word"* in 2 Timothy 4:2. His son in the gospel was not to go forth with a *"dead letter."* He was to go forth wielding

the Sword of the Spirit as Paul expressed in military might in Ephesians 6:17. A sword is not a "*dead letter*."

Isaiah did not believe God's word was a "*dead letter*." He knew, and knew well, that it was powerful. Cogent was its stately synonym.

It had a stated purpose when it left God's mouth. Negatively stated, it would not return to Him void or empty. Man's word is often characterized in this fashion—void and empty. God's word is never characterized in this finite fashion. Eloquent and excellently, God said it would accomplish what pleased Him.

It did so in creation in Genesis 1. Day one He (second person as we see in John 1:1-3 and Col. 1:15-17) spoke the universe into existence and made light. Day two He spoke atmospheric conditions into functioning existence or made the great expanse above planet earth. Day three He caused dry land to appear, brought the waters together and made the plant world of botany. Day four He made sun, moon and stars galore. The sun was to rule the day and the moon to rule the night. He made air life and water life on day five. Day six He made land animals and the first human couple—Adam and Eve. Subsequent to what He made each of these days He pronounced it good and in the aggregate on day six declared it "*very good*" (Gen. 1:31). The Psalmist captured in eloquent beauty all of this in a pithy declaration, "*For he spake, and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast*" (Psm. 33:9). In creation His word did not return to Him void or empty.

God spoke words in the Abrahamic promises of

Genesis 12:1-3. The land promise was fulfilled. The people promise was fulfilled. The Person promise (the Messiah) of verse 3 was fulfilled precisely. None of these rich, comprehensive promises returned to Him void or empty.

The scheme of human redemption was foreshadowed in the Old Testament. It reached perfection in the New Testament. Its ultimate will be heaven at last. None of it fell to the ground void of fulfillment. Neither will the heavenly promise return to Him void or empty. He is a promise-making and promise-keeping God.

Specifically, we have hundreds of Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah. Jesus fulfilled them all. None of them returned to God the Father void or empty.

In the New Testament Jesus clothed His apostles and disciples with a message divine in design and potent in its proclamation. In Acts, the epistles and Revelation they went forth and preached its pristine principles. It accomplished what pleased Deity in heaven. It still does the same regardless of what the lifeless, "*dead letter*" proponents say to the contrary.

God linked prosperity with His sent Word. When believed and obeyed by Old Testament saints, prosperity was the expected and executed order of the day. There were no barren days to such submissive saints of the most High God.

The same was sublimely true in the New Testament. Jesus issued invitations for men to follow Him and they left former occupations of fishing and tax collecting by way of rapid acceptance of His

authoritative call (Matt. 4; Mark 1; Luke 5).

Throughout Acts the word of God was preached with force and finality. Sincere souls by the masses responded in the breathtaking beauty of submission. On Pentecost 3,000 responded (Acts 2). The number soon grew to 5,000 (Acts 4:4). A man of high governmental rank from Ethiopia obeyed in Acts 8 and then went on his way with abiding joy of heart. So did a chief persecutor in Acts 9, 22, 26 by the name of Saul who became the peerless Paul. So did a well respected centurion in Acts 10-11 by the name of Cornelius. So did a business woman and a pagan jailor in Acts 16. So did Thessalonians, Bereans, Athenians, Corinthians and Ephesians in Acts 17-19. Such was the prosperity of God's word in Romans 10:18 and Colossians 1:23 that the gospel had gone to the ends of the earth and every creature under heaven had heard it. Not all had obeyed it by any means but all had access to its saving power. "*So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed*" says it so well not only in Ephesus in Acts 19:20 but world-wide as well.

## Conclusion

We are seed sowers. "*The seed is the word of God*" (Luke 8:11). For an even dozen years I wrote manuscripts and extended outlines for brother V.E. Howard and **The International Gospel Hour** (1974-1986). Very frequently, brother Howard would tell me that we are sowing seed in this work. Winford Claiborne and David Sain are doing the same—sowing seed of the Word of God. In Ripley we have a very successful jail ministry we conduct each Tuesday

night. We have recently baptized five of the inmates into Christ. I often tell my fellow workers in this venture of faith that we are seed sowers.

Let us sow the word of God, live by it and defend it when it is under attack. It will not return to God void. It will accomplish that which pleases Him and prosper in the thing whereto He sent it. We can be as sure of this as that day follows night and night follows day.

### ***Robert R. Taylor, Jr.***



A graduate of Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb and George Peabody College for Teachers. Preaching since 1949. Author of various excellent volumes. Involved in radio, television and prison works. Annually speaks in about a dozen meetings and two dozen lectureships. For over thirty years he has worked with the Ripley, TN church. Irene and Robert have two children and four precious grandchildren.



*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# *Psalm 23*

*This Chapter Written By*

*David Sain*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

**T**his part of the Bible is named by multitudes as their favorite part of the Word of God. There are people who have little, if any, regard for the Lord and His Word, who are familiar with at least the first part of this psalm.

I have been present for numerous funerals during which the preacher has read this psalm,

with the notation that the deceased had said it was "*my favorite chapter in the Bible.*" And the beautiful language of this psalm, and the message of it, makes it easy to understand how and why it is loved so much.

This psalm, as a whole, provides peace and calm assurance for the one who puts complete trust in the Lord. In fact, based upon what I have heard people say about various texts of the Bible, there are few texts that rival this one in providing comfort and inspiration to the child of God.

Although some highly regarded commentators disagree, I am one who sees this psalm as having two metaphors. I think it portrays the Lord (1) as the Shepherd, in verses one through four, and (2) as a gracious and generous Host, in verses five and six. It is from that viewpoint that I write the following analysis, with comments and appropriate points regarding each phrase or sentence.

## **Analysis Of Psalm 23**

### **The Lord Is My shepherd...**

The imagery of shepherds is common in both the Old and New Testaments. It is a metaphor that was used by Jesus as He taught His disciples about His relationship to them and their relationship to Him. He said that He is the shepherd and His disciples are like a flock of sheep who follow Him (John 10:11-29).

A good shepherd is one who leads, one who shows the way to go - our Lord has shown us the way to go.

A good shepherd watches over the sheep, being responsible for the welfare of the sheep - our Lord faithfully watches over us.

A good shepherd provides the food and nourishment which the sheep need - our Lord has provided the Word, which is the food and nourishment for our souls.

A good shepherd protects the flock from all that would be harmful and shields them from approaching danger - our Lord provides security for His disciples.

A good shepherd knows his sheep, and the sheep know their shepherd - the Lord knows every one of His disciples and all of His faithful disciples hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:3-5).

### **...I Shall Not Want.**

What security and reassurance is found in this simple declaration. A faithful shepherd sees to it that all the needs of his sheep are provided.

### **He Maketh Me To Lie Down In Green Pastures...**

Those who know sheep tell us that sheep do not lie down unless certain conditions exist. First, they will not lie down unless they are free from fear, and second, they will not lie down when they are hungry. So, the scene described here implies that the sheep feel safe and they are well-fed.

Shepherds also tell us that the presence of the shepherd in the field with the sheep puts them at ease. The presence of their master and protector causes them to feel secure and lie down.

Similarly, in the Christian's life, there is no

substitute for the keen awareness that Jesus, the Master and Protector is nearby. It makes all the difference.

**...He Leadeth Me Beside The Still Waters.**

Finding water for a flock of sheep is one of the daily responsibilities for the shepherd. It is his responsibility to know where the best water sources are, and to lead his flock to those spots.

The text here suggests the sheep arriving at a place where they can be peaceful and calm, and undisturbed. The spiritual application is that here we see a picture of the inner peace that one attains when he is in fellowship with God. If one is led by the Master, he will have a stillness regardless of what happens (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).

**He Restoreth My Soul...**

The shepherd will take care of a sheep that is weak, injured, or in distress. This harmonizes with the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15. There the shepherd left the ninety-nine that were safe and went to find the one that was lost.

Likewise, the child of God can be sure that the Lord will strengthen when one is weak and discouraged. And He will rebuke the one who is astray, and bring him back to safety. Consider the encompassing power of the Word of God to accomplish these things (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

**...He Leadeth Me In The Paths Of Righteousness For His Name's Sake.**

Just as a good shepherd leads the sheep in the

direction that is best for them, the Lord leads us in the paths of righteousness because that is what is best. The One who created us knows, in His infinite wisdom, that which is best. And, He leads us through His Word into the paths of righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Psm. 119:172).

And all of this is done "for his names sake." We are His people, and the care that He provides for us is for his glory; our very existence is for His glory (Isa. 43:7).

**Yea, Though I Walk Through The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death, I Will Fear No Evil: For Thou Art With Me...**

The wording in this verse suggests that there might be an occasion when the shepherd might be required to lead his sheep through some dangerous path, but the presence of the shepherd assures safety for the vulnerable sheep.

We do not get through a normal life on earth without passing through some difficult times, including the presence of death. However, the soul that places trust in the Lord will make it through such times without fear because of assurances from the Lord (e.g., Rom. 8:28-39).

This Scripture gives the child of God confidence in the Lord's presence, and Divine providence in time of distress or danger, regardless of what may happen.

**...Thy Rod And Thy Staff They Comfort Me.**

The shepherd used a rod (a short club) for defending himself and his sheep. It could also be

used to discipline and correct a wayward sheep. The reader's attention is directed to the corrective and disciplinary power of the Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Another thing that the Shepherd carried was a staff (a long pole) that had a crook or hook on one end. It had various usages. It provided something for the Shepherd to lean upon, and it could also be useful in climbing. And it could also be used in guiding a sheep gently through a gate, or along some new or dangerous path. He would use it by laying the stick against the sheep and pressing and thereby guiding the sheep in the way he wants it to go. Again, the reader's attention is directed to the amazing Word of God which guides us in the way the Lord wants us to go (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

In this metaphor, this phrase assures us that we have security as the Lord's sheep, through the protection and discipline, and guidance that He provides.

In the final two verses, the metaphor changes. A gracious and generous host provides a feast before an honored guest. The three phrases of this verse suggest blessings and abundance.

### **Thou Preparest A Table Before Me In The Presence Of Mine Enemies...**

Notwithstanding the fact that the guest has enemies who would wish him nothing but harm and misfortune, he is treated royally.

It is a fact that enemies of the Lord's people cannot prevent the Lord from blessing His people.

**...Thou Anointest My Head With Oil...**

In ancient days, this would be an honor given to distinguished people.

**...My Cup Runneth Over...**

This phrase indicates consciousness that one is abundantly blessed. (How sad – how wrong it is to be abundantly blessed and not be conscious of it.)

**Surely Goodness And Mercy Shall Follow Me All The Days Of My Life...**

This phrase indicates that, because of the present blessings, one has confidence in the Lord's presence and providential care for the rest of one's earthly existence.

**...And I Will Dwell In The House Of The Lord For Ever.**

With such comfort, with such blessings, with such assurance, one can have confidence in eternal life. Consider the confidence that the apostle Paul had as he neared death.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 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 also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

**Conclusion**

Dear reader, hear the voice of the Shepherd and follow Him. Follow Him through the good times

and follow Him through the bad. Follow Him with trust and faithful service. Follow Him all the days of your life. Follow Him to life and immortality.

### *David Sain*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# ***Proverbs 22:6 & Deuteronomy 6:4f***

*This Chapter Written By*

***Barry M. Grider***

Train up a child in the way he should go:  
and when he is old, he will not depart  
from it (Prov. 22:6).

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one  
Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God  
with all thine heart, and with all thy soul,  
and with all thy might. And these words,  
which I command thee this day, shall be  
in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them  
diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk  
of them when thou sittest in thine house,  
and when thou walkest by the way, and  
when thou liest down, and when thou risest  
up (Deut. 6:4-7).

## **Introduction**

**T**he passages in the title of this manuscript are key to our understanding of the role of parents in a godly home. Many in our society are not fit for the awesome responsibility of parenting. For just a few years God places in our hands precious little ones who, as they grow, are to be guided according to

the teachings of Christ and molded in His image. Therefore, parenting is not for the fainthearted, immature, and careless. Yet, homes are falling apart because of parents who either neglect or totally abandon their position in the home.

Just as it is a natural desire for a man to be drawn to a woman and a woman to a man, and this often results in matrimony, it is also natural for a married couple to desire children. Paul wrote, while speaking of a debauched and degenerate society, that there are those "*without natural affection*" (Rom. 1:31). Could there be anything more unnatural than children born into a home where they are unloved and unwanted? After all, the psalmist penned, "*Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward*" (Psm. 127:3). Sometimes we hear about the cost of children. However, children do not make a rich man poor, but a poor man rich. These children ought to receive our very best, for they come from the God of heaven as His special gifts to us.

What God brings to us comes with a great responsibility. Remember these words,

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing,  
and obtaineth favour of the Lord (Prov.  
18:22).

As the text declares a wife is a good thing and has been given to the husband by God.

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken  
from man, made he a woman, and brought  
her unto the man (Gen. 2:22).

What is so special about this relationship between a man and a woman? Primarily because the woman provided companionship for the man who was previously alone (Gen. 2:18). Yet there is another reason. Marriage is for the procreation of the human race.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Gen. 1:27-28).

Even the physical design of the male and female are testimony that one was made for the other. *"And Adam knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord"* (Gen. 4:1). Through the sacredness of marriage (Heb. 13:4), children are to be born. The psalmist continues, *"Happy is the man who hath his quiver full of them"* (Psm. 127:5). What does a godly wife and children mean to the life of a husband/father? They are his life. Jenny Lind, the Swedish nightingale, sang, *"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."* These were the same *"magic"* words quoted by Dorothy (Judy Garland) in *The Wizard of Oz*. So often, as a boy, I remember our beloved brother James Watkins concluding a gospel meeting with these words, *"I'm ready to go to Paradise."* He was speaking of home, where he could be with his family. As Christians we should all long for our heavenly home. At the same time, when I am away from my wife and children,

I long for my earthly home, as well.

Since this role of parenting is so vitally important and comes with so much responsibility, when do we begin preparing for this role? In reality it begins early in life. Parents should consider the training they are giving their children, for such training will likely affect the parenting received by their grandchildren. Young people should be sober minded and filled with purity (1 Tim. 3:12; Titus 2:6). Remember sex is not about keeping it safe, but, rather, keeping it sacred. Begin praying early in life for the right mate and also for the welfare of your children, if the Lord so blesses.

### **A Formula For Success**

The formula for success in the home begins with the following passage.

Train up a child in the way he should go:  
and when he is old, he will not depart  
from it (Prov. 6:22).

Unfortunately, many good parents have punished themselves when their children became rebellious and unfaithful. Often it is stated by such parents, *"I did not do my job as a parent correctly."* Often this statement is derived from a faulty interpretation of Proverbs 6:22. A good parent, whose child has gone astray, perhaps has forgotten that the child must be willing to accept the training and teaching given. All of us are beings of choice. Shame on children who have received good, positive training from their parents, only to neglect and forsake that which they were blessed to receive.

However, it could be that parents have failed

in their responsibility to their children. The text declares to train, not simply to teach, a child in the correct way. This training is to be done according to the natural bent of a child's personality. Every child is different. Therefore, when considering the training given, parents must study their children's personality and makeup. Many parents have failed because they try to pour every child into a certain mold. Harsh disciplinary action is often the result of this. Every wise parent should remember Paul's admonition,

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Under the Mosaic covenant God gave special instructions to the fathers of households. These principles continue to guide godly parents today. Listen to the Lord's instructions,

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deut. 6:4-9).

What do these passages teach us concerning parenting? First, love is a priority. If we are to properly love our children we must understand the love of God. After all, *"We love him, because he first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). God loves us as His own children (1 John 3:1). Unless we comprehend His love for us, it will be difficult for us to shower our children with love.

This love must be demonstrated. I have often stated that when my life is over, I would pray my children could say, "The man you saw in the pulpit is the same man we saw at home." How can we demonstrate the love of God to our children?

We must love in conversation. The wise man exclaimed, *"The heart of the righteous studieth to answer..."* (Prov. 15:28). This is especially important at home. Many children have been scarred for life because of hurtful or harmful words. Our words must be loving. Fill your days with the phrase *"I love you."* Our words must be encouraging. Many youth have no confidence in themselves because parents never give a word of praise. One little boy was struggling in school and brought home a report card filled with bad grades. Obviously the parents had to address the situation, but the mother was mindful that the boy did receive an "A" in writing. The first thing she said to her son was, *"you are probably going to grow up and be a writer."* This mom understood the power of encouragement. Our words must show our interest. Open up dialogue with your children by being interested in those things that interest them. We must love by showing consideration. It is easy to brush off a child and think his feelings are not

important. Here is where patience is the key. Most of the time when a child spills a glass of milk he cannot help doing so. A child should not be punished for this. One little boy said, *"Grownups are always talking about what they did and what they knew when they were 10, but never think what it was like to be 10."*

## **"Children Learn What They Live"**

Dorothy Law Nolte

- If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
- If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
- If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.
- If a child lives with pity, he learns to feel sorry for himself.
- If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.
- If a child lives with jealousy, he learns what envy is.
- If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.
- If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.
- If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.
- If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.
- If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.
- If a child lives with acceptance, he learns to love.
- If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
- If a child lives with recognition,  
    he learns that it is good to have a goal.
- If a child lives with sharing,  
    he learns about generosity.
- If a child lives with honesty and fairness,  
    he learns what truth and justice are.

Love is demonstrated by our commitment. Children need to know their parents are committed to each other. More than anything this provides real security. You will create fond memories for your children when they see you embrace your spouse or when you refuse to allow your children to show disrespect to the other parent. Our children will

know we are committed when we are there for them. Psychologists are now saying what Bible believers have known all along. Quantity is just as important as quality time when rearing a child. Paul warns we must be, *"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil"* (Eph. 5:16). It takes time to learn memory verses, play basketball, learn manners, bicycle together, talk to each other, etc. However, it is the most important time you will ever spend. Commitment means parents care about their children's character. Discipline must be enforced. Why does the Lord discipline? He loves us! *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"* (Heb. 12:6). God understands that discipline helps mold our character.

For they [earthly parents] verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (v. 12).

What is proper discipline? Proper discipline is not being inconsistent nor is it venting our frustrations. Discipline is for the good of the child. Sometimes parents must say "NO"! Sometimes parents must take away privileges. Sometimes parents must spank (Prov. 19:18; 23:13). This is another demonstration of love for our children.

We must love our children in conversation. That is love speaking. We must love our children through consideration. That is love showing. We must love our children through our commitment. That is love staying.

Likewise, parents should not forget to bring



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laughter into the household. A happy home is under consideration in Deuteronomy 6. Home is to be a foretaste of heaven above.

Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD;  
that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt  
eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt  
thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy  
wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides  
of thine house: thy children like olive plants  
round about thy table (Psm. 128:1-3).

Thackeray said, "*Laughter is like a window in the home, it lets the sunshine in.*" There are times when parents need to lighten up and just enjoy their children. Our Lord loved children so much He allowed them to sit in his lap as He embraced them. Children never forget the good times we spend together. Charles Francis Adams, the great American diplomat, kept a journal. On one day he recorded, "*Went fishing with my son today – day wasted.*" His son also kept a journal and recorded "*Went fishing with my father today – the greatest day of my life.*"

A home will only be successful if it is built upon the Lord (Psm. 127:1; Matt. 7:24-25). Everything in the household should center upon Him (Deut. 6:9-10). If we are really conscience of the Lord's presence, how will we behave in the home? Would we not say "*I love you*" or "*How can I help*" more often? Would we not be mindful to keep cool when we are upset? Would we not turn the television off and talk more? Would we be sure not to discipline when we are angry? Would we not speak of Him more often?

## Conclusion

Surely all of us would like to leave a legacy of good behind. We can do so through our children. By understanding and putting into practice the passages we have considered, our children will grow to adulthood healthy, happy, secure, and with a knowledge of God. They in turn will build homes that bless the nation. Blessings will be poured out in abundance. Jehovah has promised,

O that there were such an heart in them,  
that they would fear me, and keep all my  
commandment always, that it might be well  
with them and with their children for ever  
(Deut. 5:29).

Finally, because these principles have been followed, heaven will be our home for eternity. This is the ultimate blessing!

### *Barry Grider*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Genesis 18:19**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Bobby Liddell***

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

## **Introduction**

**G**od, who created man, also gave to man a mind like none other of His created beings (Gen. 1-3). God, the Father, who knows the very secrets of the hearts of all men (Psm. 44:21), knew the way Abraham would conduct himself in commanding "*his children and his household after him.*" God understood, not only from His infinite knowledge (omniscience), but also from Abraham's obedient, faithful life in the past.

What does this mean to us? As God knew Abraham; thus, could confidently speak concerning him and his actions, God knows our hearts (knowing even what is hidden in our innermost thoughts). With such unlimited, immeasurable comprehension,

were He to tell of our future actions, what would He say about us? Could God just as confidently affirm our righteousness; that is, that we, and our children and households, would do "*justice and judgment*"? Could He do so based upon our lives of faithfulness, righteously meeting our responsibilities in the past? Would He, consequently, promise that we, like Abraham, certainly would be the rich recipients of His loving favor and marvelous blessings?

What led to the statement from God, as recorded in Genesis 18:19, that gives us such joy and hope? When three men (two angels and the Lord, all in human form) appeared to Abram in the plains of Mamre (Gen. 18:1), they apprised him that Sarah would have a son, even though

Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women (v. 11; cf. 11:30).

Of note are these points: (1) Abraham was ready and eager to show hospitality to the strangers who came his way (cf. Heb. 13:2); and, (2) he once again demonstrated his great faith, this time upon receipt of the promise of a son:

And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb (Rom. 4:19; cf. Heb. 11:11-12).

As the two angels, who were heavenly beings in appearance as men, went to fulfill their divinely appointed destructive work on the cities of the plain,

specifically Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:20ff), Abraham "*stood yet before the Lord*" (v. 22), and pleaded for the sparing of Sodom (poorly chosen home of his nephew Lot and his family [13:1-13]) – if there were just ten righteous souls there (18:23-33). It is in this context that our text appears. Notice verses 16-18 which lead to the great testimony of the Lord, about Abraham, that is found in verse 19.

And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? (vs. 16-18).

Now, read carefully the passage from which our study comes (which I have put in bold text):

**For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:19).**

What does something said thirty-nine centuries ago mean to us today? What modern applications, which the wise will incorporate in their lives (cf. Rom. 15:4), arise from this splendid statement made by deity? How can we benefit, now and eternally, by our study of Genesis 18:19? How can we make proper and effective use, as God intended, of its profound truths? How can we apply what we learn to our homes?

Let us begin by considering how Abraham came to be the man of whom such a marvelous comment could be made. Abraham focused on God the Father, and His will. He had great faith in the Father, and demonstrated his faith by actions. Because of his faithfulness, he came to be called the "*Father of the Faithful.*"

### **Focus On The Father**

When God the Father called this great man, who was seventy-five years old at the time of his departure from Haran (Gen. 12:1-4), his name was not Abraham, for at that time he was known as Abram (which meant exalted father). Later, God changed Abram's name to Abraham (father of multitudes), because He said, "*a father of many nations have I made thee*" (17:5). Abram was born the son of Terah, and brother to Nahor and Haran (father of Lot), and lived in Ur of the Chaldees (11:27ff). His call came from God, about 1921 B.C. (according to commonly accepted chronology), instructing him to leave his home and family and to go to another land of which God, in His directions, said only this, "*I will shew thee.*"

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3).

God's call to Abram was a challenging, separating, yet promising call. Of course, any call from God is supremely important to the one whom He calls (cf. 2 Thess. 2:14). Instead of his focusing on his earthly family, whom he surely loved as dearly as we all do our families, and on the pleasant, but temporal, associations of his home and homeland, Abram looked to what was more important—to what was eternal (cf. Matt. 10:37). His choice, by his free will; that is, his decision to hear and heed God's call (cf. Psa. 95:7; Jer. 22:5; Mal. 2:2; Heb. 3:7, 15; 4:7), and to obey the will of the Father, would have an everlasting impact!

We must remember that Abram could have rejected God's call (cf. Jer. 29:19ff; Matt. 20:16). Initially, Jonah fled, and went the other way, when the Father gave him instructions to go preach repentance to Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-3). Likewise, at the first, Pharaoh would not heed God's call to "*Let my people go.*"

And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go (Exod. 5:1-2).

The Israelites, whom God delivered from Pharaoh and Egyptian bondage, were called out of the rigors of slavery to enter the promised land, but they "*rebelled against the commandment of the Lord.*"

Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe: And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out. And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us. Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God (Deut. 1:21-26).

As a result, their *"carcasses fell in the wilderness."*

While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief (Heb. 3:15-19).

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Heb. 4:11).

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So, one may refuse to hear the Word of God (Matt. 13:15). Or, one may hear, but refuse to heed what God says (Jer. 44:16-17). In either case, he must remember there is a price to pay (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

The call came from God, but the choice was Abram's. Did Abram not love his family? Surely, he did. Was he looking for an opportunity to leave them? There is absolutely no indication such ever entered his mind. Did his family want him to go away from them? Again, there is nothing recorded that would show such a desire, or demonstrate such an attitude. Why, then, would he go from them, especially as his departure was described in this way: *"he went out, not knowing whither he went."*

Most people would consider such a decision as ill-advised, rash, or reckless. Some would say Abram did wrong, and acted irresponsibly and inconsiderately, by leaving to go to who knew where. No doubt, there were tender ties, and plaintive pleadings by those precious in his and Sarai's families, and which would tempt them to stay. What made them go? We could simply say, *"God said so,"* and that would be true; however, that is but half the story. Also important is Abram's response, and his response came as it did because of his properly focusing on the Father.

### **Faith In The Father**

Abram's focus was on the Father, and on His call, and his faith in the Father moved him to act. The Holy Scripture's inspired record of Abram's response to God's challenging call informs us of this:

So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came (Gen. 12:4-5).

As is true of the rest of the members of what has been termed, "*The Hall of Fame of the Faithful*"; that is, Hebrews 11, we would do well to pay close attention to the action verbs associated with Abram's faithful answer to God's call. There is no indication, anywhere, that Abram argued with God, or that he tried to change God's will concerning his important journey. Nowhere does the Bible show that Abram attempted to modify, add to, subtract from, substitute for, or change in any way what God instructed him to do as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3 (cf. Rev. 22:18-19). How could Abram respond so positively and completely? Paul wrote, by inspiration (if he is the writer of Hebrews, as I believe) that Abraham acted "*by faith*":

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a

city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:8-10).

Abraham had the faith to go. *"When he was called to go,"* he *"obeyed; and he went out."* Notice, again, that he did not even know where he was going! We might more readily understand his compliance were we to read that God gave him detailed information of all that was expected of him, and of all that would happen to him; thus, assuring him of every step of the way, or, at least, had told him where he was going! There was no such information given. Abraham acted by faith. This does not mean that he acted without God's instruction, nor that he went without hearing God say go (cf. Heb. 11:17-19). Faith comes by one's hearing God's Word: *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). Where there is no such word, there is no faith. Therefore, we cannot act, based upon our wills, not God's, and accurately portray ourselves as doing so by faith.

Not only did Abraham have the faith to go; that is, to leave his home and journey to the land of Canaan, but he also had the faith to stay. *"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise...dwelling in tabernacles (tents)."* Some, standing at the fork of the road, choose the right way, and begin the journey of faith that will culminate in crossing the river of death and entering the land of promised rest—Heaven (cf. Matt. 7:13-14). While beginning is important, finishing is equally important (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6-8). Sadly, some turn back. They remember their previous associations and the pleasures of their former sins (Heb. 3:13; 11:25), and go back, as Peter wrote:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Abraham had the faith to go, the faith to stay, and the faith not to go back. Suppose, once he had come into Canaan and had stayed for a while, that he said he was tired of living in tents, and he was going back home. How would that have influenced his family, and all since? Instead, "*Abraham believed God*" (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23), and the exemplary faith of Abraham has inspired countless souls, and has often been the subject of inspired teaching.

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness (Rom. 4:9).

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised (Rom. 4:12).

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4:13).

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all (Rom. 4:16).

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7).

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed (Gal. 3:8).

So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (Gal. 3:9).

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:14).

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went (Heb. 11:8).

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son (Heb. 11:17).

## Father Of The Faithful

Abraham focused on the Father, and on His will, and he acted by faith in doing what God said for him to do. Thus, he has been styled, "*The Father of the Faithful*" (cf. Rom. 4:11ff). *Those who follow his good example, will act by faith in doing what God commands. Have we learned from, and imitated, his faith? Could what was said of him, in our text, be said of us? Look, again, at Genesis 18:19.*

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Our proper conduct toward the great blessing and responsibility of rearing children begins even before they are born (as with Abraham). For example, consider the child born to Manoah, whose wife was barren, but an angel promised she would bear a son (Samson), who would be a Nazarite from the womb, and who would deliver Israel from the Philistine oppression. The angel instructed the wife of Manoah concerning her conduct while bearing the child, in preparation for the child's future work in delivering Israel (Judg. 13:3-5).

What a great blessing bestowed by our loving, merciful God! To be promised a child (a son) was the best news they possibly could receive. To the barren, a child would be born! Is there any wonder that the Holy Spirit revealed the blessings children bring as an heritage of the Lord, and as arrows in the hand of a mighty man?

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate (Psm. 127).

Manoah asked, "*How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?*" (Judg. 13:6-12). He realized what some parents today seem not to know. Training children is primarily and ultimately the responsibility of parents. While the church, the school, and Christian colleges may help, they do not bear the responsibility as do parents. Rearing children is the God-given duty of parents. Though some would like to be relieved of the care required, and put their responsibility off on others, they sin in so doing and the child suffers by their unnatural neglect of parental duty.

Parents need instruction—from someone who knows. Who knows better than God? Some have declared they wished children came with an instruction manual. This statement indicates two problems. First, it shows the almost universal ignorance of the fact that there is an instruction manual for rearing children. It is the Bible. Second, it also reveals the underlying problem that most people do not read instruction manuals anyway—except as a last resort. So, there is little wonder that most

have neglected the greatest information for being good parents ever given; that is, the Word of God. If we want to know the how, we have to acquaint ourselves with the perfect prescription for parenting, the inspired Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Before children are born, parents should be making plans for them. We must be concerned about how to rear the child as God would have us to do. The most important goal of child rearing is not, *"How can we insure our child becomes a successful businessman?"* Nor should our main concern be about grooming him for political office. Nor should we petition the Lord for information on how to prepare our child for the best college. Parents must seek the Lord's direction on how to train their children to *"keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment"*; that is, to do the will and the work of the Lord.

God did not say of Abraham that He was confident Abraham's, or Sarah's, parents (Grandma and Grandpa) would direct Abraham's home in the way it should go. Nor did He affirm the government would do well in funding child care to take the place of Abraham in formulating the personality and attitudes of the child. Neither did He commend what good things the neighbors would do if Abraham abdicated his position of responsibility. God trusted that Abraham would do his best in fulfilling his duty, out of a heart directed by faith and filled with gratitude to the God who blessed him so. In doing so, he would insure further and future blessings.

Some parents are so busy climbing the corporate ladder, chasing elusive pleasure, pushing their children to be popular, worldly, materialistic over-



achievers like themselves, and, generally, pursuing the fulfillment of worldly lusts, they do not even consider the importance of leading their home to "*do justice and judgment.*" On the other hand, some are so lazy, unconcerned, and uninvolved that they do not know, or do not care, what goes on in, or with, their homes and children. Neither do they care to hear the instruction on proper parenthood, especially fatherhood, IF the answer is from God the Father.

Fathers are to be, like Abraham, the heads of their homes, and, as such, have responsibility to train their children. Some years ago, in the Memphis newspaper, a woman spoke of her seven sons (as I recall) who were all named Jimmy. The reporter asked about this unusual and confusing situation of seven same-named siblings to which the woman responded, They all have different last names. There were seven sons born to the immoral woman by seven different fathers, none of whom was around. Not one of them was interested enough in his offspring, his duty, his soul, or the will of the Heavenly Father to take the time and put forth the effort required in training his child, or even to be present.

For some, in modern society, child rearing is just a burden that cramps their profligate, wicked, worldly lifestyles. All need to know that fathers are required by law (God's law) to take their role in the proper upbringing of their children. For those who break the law, there will be sure and certain punishment. The law (Gal. 6:2) states:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord:  
for this is right. Honour thy father and  
mother; (which is the first commandment

with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4).

So important is the role of father in the home that God gave, through Moses, these no-nonsense commands for father and son by His divine direction. Note these commandments, statutes, and judgments were to be taught diligently everywhere and always. Likewise, when their sons asked the meaning of these things, their fathers were to be ready to give answer.

Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine

house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth. Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah. Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, To cast out all thine enemies

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from before thee, as the Lord hath spoken. And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the Lord shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us (Deut. 6:1-5).

There is no doubt that Abraham was a father, and head of the home, whom God could trust to lead his home in the right way. In addition, Zacharias and Elisabeth (who also was barren), were selected by God to bring into the world, and to prepare for life, a precious child. Zacharias and Elisabeth were noted for their righteous living and keeping God's commandments and ordinances.

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were

both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:5-17).

How we need parents like these today! Godly parents will pray before they become parents. They will pray for the child, that he might be born healthy;

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for themselves, that they might be the parents they ought to be; and, for the future of the child, that somewhere other Christian parents are rearing a godly mate for him. In their prayers, they will pledge themselves to do all they can to bring the child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Such prayers will be frequent and fervent, and will not end with the birth of the child. We need not God to speak to us directly, as he did to Abraham. Nor should we expect an answer to be delivered by the angel of the Lord, as in Manoah's and Zacharias' case, but we can, with the full backing of Holy Writ, expect an answer from God. Nor, do we pray for God to operate miraculously, but we can, with all confidence in God's precious promises, expect God to operate through His providence in answering our prayers (James 5:16). The same God Who said, Ask, also promised He would hear and answer (Matt. 7:7; James 4:2).

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (1 John 5:14-15).

While parents and prospective parents may make promises to God concerning their child, too often these promises are not kept. However, God is a keeper of promises (cf. Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:19), as evidenced by the fact that He kept His promise to Abraham.

Though parents may (and must) do their part faithfully, the truth is that children still have free will. A child may grow up and refuse his father's

instruction (Prov. 1:8; 4:1; 13:1, et al.). Still, parents must keep in mind their role as the parents. God did not state His knowledge that the children would direct Abraham properly. Far too many are allowing their children to be the parents and to direct the home by their disobedience. As one said, concerning the discipline of children, A pat on the back, placed low enough, hard enough, and often enough will do a world of good in training a child.

Parents must properly discipline their children. God promised Eli He would remove the priesthood from his house, and He did (1 Kings 2:27), because Eli did not discipline his children. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not (1 Sam. 3:13). Hopefully, later in life, when the child has left the home of his parents, he will conduct himself as he ought, and will be grateful for the proper training and restraining he received, but, sadly, this is not always the case (cf. Luke 15:11-32).

Even so, accountable children are responsible for their own sins.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him (Ezek. 18:20).

## Conclusion

We should rejoice in the statement made by God about Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 18:19.

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Our gratitude for Abraham's focus on the Father, and faith in His Word should manifest itself in our wanting to be like him who has been called, "*The Father of the Faithful*." His actions demonstrate this truth: there is vital importance in commanding our children and household in the way that is right. There are dire consequences if this is not done; however, there are blessed results if it is. Dare any think God, Who created man and woman equipped for marriage and childbirth, has left no instruction for the proper conduct of the home and for the rearing of children within it? Let us heed His word, and rejoice in the happiness that will bring now and forever more.

### ***Bobby Liddell***



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# ***Proverbs 5:15-21***

*This Chapter Written By*

***Cliff Goodwin***

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.

**I**t would be both dishonest and unhealthy for one to assert that God did not create men and women as sexual beings. In creating them male and female (Matt. 19:4), He instilled in them natural sex drives as well as the capacity for sexual expression and fulfillment. This is why the genders are anatomically compatible—a fact that cannot be said of homosexual

unions, as the apostle Paul pointed out.

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet (Rom. 1:26-27).

In order to have a view of human sexuality that is both Biblical and healthy, one must understand and accept the fact that God created sex! In the minds of some this very thought is taboo. It is not taboo, it is true! He created the institution of marriage (Gen. 2:18-25) and endowed that highest of human relationships with the gift of sex (cf. Heb. 13:4).

As a king endowed with wisdom from God (1 Kings 4:29-31), Solomon was intent on conveying vital truth to his son regarding sexuality and marriage. Such inspired wisdom is still needed desperately today, and fathers and mothers ought to be instructing their children in these Biblical precepts. Homes would be stronger, lives would be purer, and people would be happier, if only the Divine wisdom regarding marital love were put into practice. In Proverbs 5:15-21, Solomon discusses the three ideas of faithfulness, fascination and foolishness.

### **Faithfulness (Prov. 5:15-17)**

Solomon viewed marital sex as a gift from God when he admonished his pupil, his son,

Drink waters out of thine own cistern,  
and running waters out of thine own well  
(v. 15).

What Solomon was stressing here was the concept of faithfulness. He instructed his son not to go outside the bounds of marriage for sexual expression and fulfillment. The waters of sexual fulfillment must flow at home, and husband and wife both must drink only from that pure fountain. The following is a helpful illustration of faithfulness in marriage, set in contrast to marital infidelity.

The commitment of marriage is like the banks of the river that keep the river from becoming a swamp. God's holy law confines the waters within the banks, and this produces power and depth. Extramarital and premarital affairs don't satisfy because they're shallow, and it doesn't take much to stir up shallow water. A man and woman pledged to each other in marriage can experience the growing satisfaction that comes with love, commitment, depth, and purity (Wiersbe 408).

It is the opinion of this author that verses sixteen and seventeen are preferably rendered in the American Standard Version,

Should thy springs be dispersed abroad,  
and streams of water in the streets? Let  
them be for thyself alone, and not for  
strangers with thee.

Even from this translation, however, Solomon's exact meaning is difficult to discern. He could be referring

to the fact that a man who seeks sexual fulfillment with an immoral woman is choosing to "*drink water out of the streets, or gutters,*" instead of enjoying the pure waters of home (Wiersbe 408). In this way, he is bound to share the source of his fulfillment with other men. Though the specifics of Solomon's statement might be somewhat unclear, the major point, or lesson, is unmistakable: husbands and wives must be faithful, forsaking all others! Pure water was a precious commodity in ancient Palestine. How foolish it would be to spurn pure waters in favor of the polluted.

A word of caution should be given here regarding spousal neglect. In keeping with Solomon's figure above, it is possible for a wife to "*send her husband out into the streets,*" looking for sexual fulfillment. Husbands can do the same to their wives. It is so important that spouses remember their conjugal duty. Paul the apostle wrote:

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (1 Cor. 7:2-5).

When a woman agrees to become a man's wife, she is accepting the responsibility of being that man's only source of sexual expression and fulfillment. Out of all the people in the world, there are no acceptable substitutes or alternatives. If that husband is ever to find the happiness that comes from sexual fulfillment, it must be from that woman—his wife. All of the foregoing is equally true for a man who agrees to become a woman's husband. What a weighty, lifelong responsibility spouses have to each other! In a very real sense, spouses help determine both the happiness and, perhaps, the holiness of each other.

### **Fascination (Prov. 5:18-19)**

In order for marital love to be what God intended for it to be, the actions of faithfulness must be coupled with an attitude of fascination. In other words, spouses should appreciate what they have in marriage. All too often it is the case that husbands and wives allow themselves to grow dissatisfied with each other and with their God-ordained marriage. Such a lapse in attitude is dangerous indeed. The "*grass on the other side*" may always seem "*greener*," but in actuality, nothing or no one can improve on what the Almighty has given. Solomon elsewhere wrote, "*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord*," (Prov. 18:22). When one finds himself unhappy or dissatisfied with the blessings of God, the problem is neither with God nor with the blessings; the problem is with the attitude of the murmurer.

Solomon counseled his son, "*Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth*," (v. 18). In

this context, the “*fountain*” is still referring to sexual love in marriage. This fountain has already been, and continues to be, blessed by God. He blessed sexual love when He created it and ordained it within the realm of marriage. In fact, the marital bed is described as “*undefiled*” (Heb. 13:4). However, God’s blessing is not the only thing needed to protect, nurture and enhance the sexual relationship in marriage. Also needed are the respect and appreciation of both spouses involved. When a husband keeps himself only for his wife, reserving his sexual interest and efforts to be expended only on her, he demonstrates both respect and appreciation for that aspect of their relationship.

Every husband must choose to “*rejoice with the wife of [his] youth.*” Such phraseology is very interesting. Typically speaking, most men and women enter into their first marriage while young—early in their adult lives. Such unions are expected by God to last a lifetime (cf. Matt. 19:4-6). However, when spouses allow themselves to lose their “*fascination*” for each other, not respecting and appreciating what they have been given from God, one or both may go “*looking*” elsewhere. God’s attitude toward such unfaithfulness is clearly revealed by Malachi.

...the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal

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treacherously against the wife of his youth.  
 For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that  
 he hateth putting away... (Mal. 2:14-16).

When one reads of the "*wife (or husband) of one's youth*," it would be helpful to understand that phraseology as "*one's first and rightful spouse*" (cf. Prov. 2:17). When young men and women first marry, they are indeed "*fascinated*" with each other in so many ways—sexually, emotionally, etc. Instead of growing "*tired*" of each other and allowing their devotion to wane, husbands and wives must work together not only to maintain, but also to enhance, such fascination for each other.

Sexuality in marriage can be exhilarating and passionate—and it should be. As with virtually all situations and relationships, it will be what one makes of it. Solomon further instructed his son,

Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant  
 roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times;  
 and be thou ravished always with her love  
 (v. 19).

It is in this verse that the fascination of sexual love in marriage is most vividly seen. The "*hind*" and "*roe*" were animals (perhaps the antelope and gazelle) that were used as symbols of beauty (Keil and Delitzsch 127). In this way, they often entered into the erotic poetry of the ancient East (Hunt 63). Each husband is to retreat to the bosom of his own wife; she is to be the object of his affections, and none other. In the arms of his wife, a man should always feel welcomed and should always find satisfaction. To her must he go in order to slake his sexual thirst, for this is

entailed in the meaning of “*satisfy*” (Webster 411).

However, there seems to be here a progression in Solomon’s words—or at least an intensification. He first writes, “*let her breasts satisfy thee at all times,*” and then follows with “*be thou ravished always with her love.*” This is obviously parallelism—so common to Hebrew poetry and proverbs. Sexual love in marriage is to be not only satisfying, but intoxicating!

[T]he word translated ‘ravished’ also means ‘intoxicated’ or ‘infatuated.’ The adulterer watches the river turn into a sewer, but the faithful husband sees the water become wine! (Wiersbe 408).

Husbands and wives who devote themselves to each other, and who work at this aspect of their marriage, can enjoy all the pleasure and passion, all the fascination and fulfillment, God has in store for them.

### **Foolishness (Prov. 5:20-21)**

In light of all that God has provided for man within the bounds of holy matrimony, how foolish it is for a spouse to go outside that relationship for sexual expression and fulfillment! Solomon powerfully makes this point by asking two rhetorical questions that are essentially parallel.

And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? (v. 20).

The adulterer seeks passion and pleasure with a strange woman—a woman to whom he has no right—



while spurning what could be the "intoxicating" love of his wife at home. Fornication and adultery never satisfy on the same plane as marital love. There will always be an innate shallowness in these sins, for they lack the love, commitment and respect that husbands and wives share. When a man holds his wife, he is holding his help meet (Gen. 2:18). When he holds anyone else, he is holding a stranger.

The foolishness of sexual sin is brought into even sharper relief, when one remembers that God sees all things. "*For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings,*" (v. 21). Fornicators, adulterers and adulteresses may think their sin is hidden—and from men's eyes it may be—but nothing is hidden from God.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13).

In pondering the goings of man, God knows where man is going, and He certainly knows where man has been. One can be sure that his sins "*will find him out*" (Num. 32:23). It is not only foolish, but also shameful, for a man to forsake his wife's bed for the bed of another (cf. Heb. 13:4). The apostle Paul added,

For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret (Eph. 5:12).

Whatever sinful pleasures fornication and adultery afford, they are ultimately overshadowed by disappointment and detriment (cf. Heb. 11:25). One

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is spiritually shortsighted indeed, who exchanges his spiritual well-being for momentary pleasure. Wiersbe expresses the ultimate disappointment of sexual sin in the following ways (407-409). First, sexual sin goes from sweetness to bitterness. Initially the passion, excitement and spontaneity may seem overwhelming, but the bitter results are sure to follow. Solomon wrote,

For the lips of a strange woman drop  
as an honeycomb, and her mouth is  
smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as  
wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword  
(Prov. 5:3-4).

Second, sexual sin goes from gain to loss. The adulterer thinks that his life is so much better and richer now that he has found his illicit partner. What he doesn't realize is that such a relationship makes him a pauper—both spiritually and, quite possibly, financially!

Remove thy way far from her [the strange  
woman, CG], and come not nigh the door  
of her house: Lest thou give thine honor  
unto others, and thy years unto the cruel:  
Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth;  
and thy labors be in the house of a stranger  
(Prov. 5:8-10).

Third, sexual sin goes from purity to pollution. The purity of marital love has already been discussed earlier; yet the adulterer chooses tepid water out of the gutter instead of pure, refreshing waters out of his own marital fount (Prov. 5:16-17). Finally, sexual sin goes from freedom to bondage. The adulterer

sometimes boasts of the freedom he feels when he is with his forbidden partner. This pitiable soul is blinded to the actual truth of his enslaved state. Jesus clearly taught, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin,*" (John 8:34). Solomon warned his son,

His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray (Prov. 5:22-23).

### Conclusion

Satan majors in distorting, counterfeiting and abusing the wonderful blessings of God. He perhaps has done no worse to any earthly blessing, than what he has done to human sexuality. His wiles have resulted in the distortion of human sexuality, resulting in such sins as homosexuality and lesbianism (cf. Jude 7; Rom. 1:26). He has counterfeited marital love with the cheap imitations of premarital and extramarital sex, duping the fornicator into believing that he can have outside of marriage what God has placed only within marriage (cf. 1 Thess. 4:3-7; Heb. 13:4). He has even persuaded husbands and wives to abuse "*God's wedding gift*" by withholding from each other the conjugal right of marriage (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3-5). In a world where Satan has done so much to misrepresent and misuse human sexuality, the refreshing guidance of God's word is sorely needed. Through miraculous inspiration and providential preservation, God has delivered to us "*A Healthy Celebration of Erotic Love*" in Solomon's words to his own son.

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Isaiah 59:1-2**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Don Walker***

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.

## **Introduction**

**G**od promised Adam and Eve

in the day that thou eatest thereof [of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:17).

It is tragic that the book of beginnings, the Book of Genesis, had to take into consideration the entrance of sin. It would have been paradise for all, had man never transgressed the commandments of God. But, sin has abounded. In Romans 5:12 Paul wrote,

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.

In considering the language of the inspired writers we consider the meaning of death. In a literal, yet simple definition, death is separation. In the physical realm we are separated from our temporal bodies when we die. In the spiritual realm, when we die spiritually, we separate ourselves from God. Ultimately, for those who experience the second death (Rev. 20:14), it will mean separation from God in eternity.

That sin has abounded in our world throughout time is undeniable. In Romans chapter one after providing the thesis for the book, Romans 1:16, 17, Paul then declares the Gentiles to be sinners (Rom. 1:18-32). In chapter two he then declares that the Jews were sinners. In the third chapter we find these interesting statements.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one (3:10).

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one (3:12).

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (3:23).

Both the Jew and the Gentile stood as sinners in need of God's mercy and God's grace. In Genesis 6

Go saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6:5).

Then toward the end of God's Word, John the Apostle wrote, "...the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). When we read the books and passages

in between, we see wickedness abounded then and abounds today. As far as the majority of men are concerned, "*There is no fear of God before their eyes*" (Rom. 3:18), and there is no respect for His Word or His Commandments. With this attitude being so prevalent, it is no wonder then, sin abounds more and more.

Because of man's sin he stands alienated from his God. Notice Paul's description of this condition that man finds himself when he sins. Paul says the were,

...dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:1-3).

Again Paul wrote in that very same chapter these powerful words.

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (Eph. 2:11-12).

Being "*without Christ...having no hope and without God in the world*" must not be taken as a possessive

statement. It rather stands as a statement of location. To be "*without Christ*" and "*without God*" is to be outside of Christ and God. It is the thought of separation. It is in this condition that we find ourselves in a position of the greatest need. It is a need that can only be met by a merciful, gracious and loving God. Yet the sin we have committed separates us from our God.

It is not that God cannot hear, nor is it that He does not have the strength. Isaiah wrote,

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 (Isa. 59:1-2).

It is the case God chooses not to hear or to save. We must also notice, it is not God does not desire to save us. When he wrote to Timothy Paul said that God would "*have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim. 2:4). In 2 Peter we find these encouraging words.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

When we also consider what God has done for man by showing His love for us and sending His Son to die on the cross (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16), we can not successfully say, our separation from God is because God desires it. There is another problem altogether,



and that is, man's sin. It is that sin that separates us from God.

## **Sin - A Prominent Subject In God's Word**

Just as sure as the Bible proclaims God to be love (1 John 4:8-9), and speaks often of that love from the beginning to the end, it proclaims that man is a sinner (Rom. 3:23), and speaks often of that fact from the beginning to the end. The Bible teaches us everything we need to know about every subject it covers and this is certainly true concerning sin.

In God's word we learn, man commits sins of omission and commission (James 4:17; 1 John 3:4). In God's Word we learn, we sin in action, in speech and in thought. In God's Word we read of "*mighty sins*" (Amos 5:12), "*sins through ignorance*" (Lev. 4:2) and "*presumptuous sins*" (Psa. 19:14).

There are numerous contexts in God's Word meant to warn us which list the transgressions of men. The works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21), those things we are to mortify (Col. 3:5-7), the sins of the Gentiles (Rom. 1:18-32), the description of the perilous times of the last days (2 Tim. 3:1-9), and those that shall inhabit the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8) are but a few of the warnings that enumerate specific sins for our considerations and warnings.

The Bible teaches us the process by which sin comes about. James wrote,

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But

every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:13-15).

There are two points made by James which we wish to highlight here. One point we have already noticed and another that is introduced here.

First notice that James tells us, when sin is "*finished, [it] bringeth forth death*" or that separation of which we have already noticed. Secondly, he speaks of temptation or that enticement to do evil. Every sin committed, began with either the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Some sins are the result of one of these, or as we see in the case of Eve, her transgression came about from all three of these. Moses recorded of Eve's transgression these words.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof (Gen. 3:6).

Notice the three areas of temptation. She

saw that the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh), and it was pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes), and a tree to be desired to make one wise (the pride of life).

A study of the temptation of Jesus, which is recorded by Matthew in chapter four, will also reveal that Jesus was tempted in these three areas. That is the point of the Hebrew writer when he said that Jesus,

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*"was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).*

## **Man And Sin**

Brother Ken Hope once preached a sermon on this topic and he developed three points. We would like to borrow these three points for this section of our study. Later we will look at another point - God and Sin - and we again will borrow the three points he developed. We have, thus far, noticed the prevalence of sin in man's life. Because we have dealt with this relationship indirectly at least, we will submit these points with brief comments.

First, we see man commits sin. From beginning to end, the Scriptures speak of the fact that man is a sinner. It is significant to note at this time, sin is committed by man and not inherited. Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of Heaven was made up of those that were like little children (Matt. 18:3; 19:14). Is He saying, unless we become as little sinners we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God? That of course, would be ridiculous. No, we must understand, sin is committed and it is man that commits sin.

Secondly, far too often man tries to conceal his sin. In Genesis 3 after Adam and Eve sinned, God called unto Adam and we learn that Adam hid himself (Gen. 9-10). It was his shame that caused Adam to conceal himself. He was trying to hide it. Men try different ways to hide the transgressions he commits. There are those who have tried to deny the sin after it has been committed. There are those who will commit the sin in secret so others will not know. Again there are those who will, when

confronted with their sin, try to divert the attention. That is what Adam did when he responded,

The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat (Gen. 3:12).

Too often men try to conceal their sin.

Finally, man should confess his sin. Before man can experience the forgiveness of sin he must recognize the sin that is in his life. But that alone is not enough. A confession of that which has been committed is also necessary. When an alien sinner repents and confesses Christ it is an acknowledgement of sin that has been committed. For the child of God who transgresses, John wrote,

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Each one of these points emphasizes, man's sin separates between him and his God. As we continue our study we will see exactly why this is the fact.

### **God And Sin**

Just as we noticed three points under the heading of "*Man and Sin*" we wish to develop three points under this heading.

First, concerning "*God and Sin*" we must understand, God defines sin. It is true, men have often set out to establish their own system of righteousness. In our humanistic world, man has tried to exalt himself to the place of God and has tried to define right and wrong by redefining sin. Yet, sin remains a transgression of God's law and

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it is He that has the right to define what sin is and He alone. God has defined sin in His word. In 1 John 3:4, by inspiration John wrote, "...*sin is the transgression of the law.*" That law would be the laws and commandments of God. When we do that which God has commanded us not to do, we do sin. In James 4:17 James wrote, "*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*" We learn also, when we fail to do what God commands us it is sin. In short, when we go against the Word of God which has been delivered for yours and my benefit, then we do sin and jeopardize our standing with God, for sin separates us from our God.

Secondly, God detests sin. It is this point that best explains why our sins separate between us and God. God detests sins. It goes against His very nature. It is like darkness trying to exist where a very bright light is shining. The two just can not exist together. John wrote,

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

Habakkuk proclaimed, of Jehovah,

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity (Hab. 1:13).

God's holiness demands a complete and total separation from sin. He cannot associate with that which is so totally against His nature. Sin separates us from God. Yet, it is not only that God can not associate with sin. God hates sin. He detests it. It really is difficult if not impossible to express this

thought strong enough. We are called to *"hate the evil"* in Amos 5:15. In Romans 12 we are told to *"Abhor that which is evil"* (Rom. 12:9). Again in 1 Peter 3:11 we learn, the one that will love life and see good days, he must *"eschew evil."* The reason for this is we are to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). To maintain this holiness we must work to avoid sin in our lives. We must learn to detest sin the way our God detests sin. Because it is this sin, God so detests, that separates us from God.

Thirdly, man is without excuse and cannot claim that he is unaware of how God feels for sin because God denounces it. Our God has not kept silent concerning the sin man commits. In fact, in His Word, our God leaves no question where sin stands in the large scheme of things. The battle between God and Satan is proclaimed clearly and the rewards for the victor are stated. It is the souls of men that God and Satan both desire. When men die in their sins, separated from their God, then Satan wins. When men die to (separate from) sin, then the chasm is closed and God wins. In the overall setting it is only when God wins in our lives that we are victorious. If we allow Satan to win in our lives, then we are the great loser.

Now we can see why the devil is the great tempter (Matt. 4:3), and deceiver of the world (Rev. 12:9). Because when we give into temptation it leads to sin. And God has revealed what sin does to us and how it affects our relationship with Him. He does not send us mixed signals in His Word concerning sin. It is denounced in no uncertain terms. The reason for this is because of His strong desire to fellowship His creation and sin separates between us and God.

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## What Is The Answer?

There is a multiplicity of passages that we could turn to and find the answer to this question. But such an in-depth approach to this question is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, we will turn our attention to a context that we have mentioned earlier. That would be Ephesians chapter two.

In verses 1-3 we saw the condition when men were separated from God. Its focus was upon man and his sin. But notice verses 4 and 5.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;).

Paul tells us, when we are separated from our God because of our sin we need not feel as if all is lost. God loves us, is merciful to us and is willing to save us by His grace. Another great contrast exists in this marvelous chapter. After showing that outside of Christ and God there is no hope, he then introduces what happens when we accept God's grace (on God's terms), and find ourselves no longer "*without Christ*".

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached

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peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:13-18).

In Christ Jesus, we are no longer bound by our transgressions. In Christ, by His blood we are freed from sin and alive unto God. Paul put it this way in Romans 6:17-18.

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

### **Conclusion**

Man was created to have fellowship with God. However, man has destroyed that fellowship when he transgresses the commandments of God. That sin causes a separation that man cannot deal with by himself. But God loves us and has commended that love to us in His Son Jesus Christ.

May we ever strive to view sin as our God does, and never take for granted the tremendous blessings that come from our being cleansed from sin as we all study our Bibles more and more.



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Numbers 32:23**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Don Walker***

But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.

## **Opening Comments**

**I** consider it a great honor and privilege to be invited to participate in this year's Truth In Love Lectures. Our admiration for Brother and Sister Sain is only outweighed by our love for them and their work. It is from the depths of my heart that I express appreciation for this invitation to participate with you in this work.

## **Introduction**

The request was that they not be required to go over Jordon, but rather they desired their inheritance to be "*the country which the Lord smote before the congregation of Israel*" on the back side of Jordan. The children of Reuben and the children of Gad were ranchers. This was the motivation behind their going and speaking with Moses, with Eleazar

the priest and with the princes of the congregation. The land was a land for cattle, and they had cattle. Moses' response was one that reminded them of their responsibility to go to war. "*Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?*" were the words of Moses. He was concerned that the children of Israel would become discouraged as their fathers had earlier. Moses reminded them that the discouragement of their fathers had kept them from entering the Promised Land and it was that lack of faith that had stirred up the anger of the Lord. Moses continued,

And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord toward Israel. For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.

In short their answer was we will make provision for our cattle and for our little ones and then we will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land. We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance. For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward. Moses accepted their plans and closed with a warning.

But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out (Num. 32:1-23).

If they failed to keep their word, it would be considered sin!

### **The First Sins**

In the King James Version of the Bible, the first time we see the word “*sin*” is in Genesis 4:7, even though we see the first sin committed in chapter 3.

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door (Gen. 4:7).

These are the words spoken to Cain after he had murdered his righteous brother Abel. Yet, as we mentioned before, this was not the first sin. In Genesis 3, we see sin for the first time. It was a horrible event that changed God’s creation drastically. Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and so did Adam (Gen. 3:6). With this transgression, the great enemy, death, was ushered in (Rom. 5:12). *“Be sure your sin will find you out.”*

### **Man’s Propensity To Sin**

From that point on, sin would reign in this world. In Genesis 6 during the days of Noah

every imagination of the thoughts of his [man’s] heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6:5).

When we consider the Divine truth concerning man, *“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he”* (Prov. 23:7) we understand it to be an iniquity and transgression. Yet in the very verse that proclaims the source of their sin we find these words - *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth”* (Gen.

6:5). *"Be sure your sin will find you out."*

From the beginning to the end of God's Word we see the transgressions of men and the stench rising up to heaven. Concerning the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah we read these words of Jehovah.

Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know (Gen. 18:20-21).

When addressing the sins committed by God's people while in captivity, specifically their taking wives of the heathen, the context reads,

And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens (Ezra 9:5-6).

Even in the New Testament we see the same great calamity. In the days of James, men had been wronged and transgressed against. James wrote,

Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth (James 5:4).

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In the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, we read this which was spoken to the saints concerning "*Babylon the great.*"

Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities (Rev. 18:4-5).

From the beginning of God's Word to the end and in all places in between we are warned, "*Be sure your sin will find you out.*"

Through the days of the Old Testament and at the words of the prophets we learn that sin was compounded upon the earth and even among the people of God. Isaiah the prophet said, "*...they add sin to sin*" (Isa. 30:1). In chapter 1:5 he wrote, of the people, "*ye will revolt more and more.*" Again in 5:18 he proclaims a woe upon those "*that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope.*" Hosea wrote, "*And now they sin more and more*" (Hosea 13:2). When Jonah was told to go to Nineveh to preach it was because "*their wickedness is come up before me*" (Jonah 1:2). Yet the problem is not one that is regulated to just the Old Testament. Paul told Timothy, "*But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*" (2 Tim. 3:13). Again in Romans 1, Paul spoke of the wickedness of the Gentiles and said of them, "*...not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*" (Rom. 1:32). Sin has been a plague on man from the beginning and far too often he fails to realize the certainty of "*...your sin will find you out.*"

## Our Sin Is Known

At this point the fact that man's sin being magnified has been stressed. In doing so, we have also seen that our sin is known. In John 3:19 Jesus said, "*Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*" Men try to hide their sin and their iniquity, but to no avail. It is far too often the case that when men commit sin, instead of confessing as they should, they try to conceal it. Even if it is possible to hide our transgressions from men here on earth, we dare not be so foolish to think that it is hidden from God. David admitted this very fact. He wrote, "*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*" (Psa. 51:4). Brother Johnny Ramsey used to say, "*The worst thing about sin is that Heaven knows it.*" It is true the very God that we offend when we transgress His law (1 John 3:4), is present when we sin. It may be that we deceive ourselves concerning the harsh calamity of sin and downplay its effect because we believe we have committed it in secret. But as Brother Ken Hope once said, "*Every secret sin on earth is a scandal in heaven.*"

In Moses' Psalm, written shortly before his death, after he heard he would not be able to enter into the Promised Land, he spoke of the hardships of this life, and as a matter of fact he recorded,

Thou hast set our iniquities before  
thee, our secret sins in the light of thy  
countenance (Psm. 90:8).

Our sins, no matter how few people may know about it here on earth if any do, God always knows.

## Your Sin Will Find You

It is a Divine truth that our sins are known. Yet, our passage proclaims, *"Be sure your sin will find you out."* Moses has the foresight that so few in this world have. He realized there were consequences to his actions and sin that provided pleasure only did so for a season (Heb. 11:25). The high price for low living will have to be paid some time or another. If we continue in sin it will be impossible to out run the consequences. Hosea the prophet proclaimed, *"For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind"* (Hos. 8:7). In Job 4:8 we read,

Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

In the New Testament Paul makes the same observation. He said,

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption (Gal. 6:7-8).

*"Be sure your sin will find you out."*

It remains true - *"The wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23). *"The way of the transgressors is hard"* (Prov. 13:15). For the vast majority who will never obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they will see first hand the result of the sin in their lives. For those that obeyed the Gospel and once were faithful, but later fell away and went back into the world, the wages will be exacted from them as they dwell in a devil's hell in eternity. *"Be sure your sin will find you out."*

## Sin Is Damaging

Even if we are wise enough to turn to our Lord and accept the grace of His payment for our transgressions, it does not mean that there will be no damage done because of our transgressions. How many are there in the Lord's church today that have been cleansed from their sin to go on and live a faithful life, only to be shackled with the consequences of sins committed in the past? The pleasures of sin are brief, and far too often the consequences last a lifetime. Families are scarred by divorce, gambling, drunkenness, and all kinds of transgressions. In many cases the sins are committed, repented of, confessed and washed away while the residual effects ripple through the families for years and even generations. *"Be sure your sin will find you out."*

King David was cleansed from his sin, but a reminder was ever present as he considered the long term effects his transgressions had on his family (2 Sam. 11 & 12). The Apostle Paul had to live with the heinous crimes he committed against the people of God, even after he had been cleansed from all iniquity (1 Tim. 1:12-15). Each one of us knows someone or many who act as if sin will have no long lasting effect. They live their lives with intentions to depart from sin some time in the future and then they will give themselves over to serve God. This approach is filled with potholes and dangers. First we are not certain that tomorrow will come. The graveyards, we are confident, are filled with those who were robbed of their reward by procrastination because they intended to make their peace with God - *"Later!"*



Secondly, to approach service to God as something that can be done later as opposed to now, is to forget the nature of sin and how it works on the hearts of men to harden them to the life giving words of God. In Jeremiah 49:8 we learn of the "*calamity of Esau.*" The Hebrew writer spoke of Esau's selling his birthright and afterward,

...when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears (Heb. 12:16-17).

Sin persisted in, can harden our hearts to the point of no return. Though you and I don't know when people have so hardened their hearts, we do know it happens and that God knows. "*Be sure your sin will find you out.*"

### **Conclusion**

Since in the beginning of time when the first sin was committed to this very moment in time, sin has reigned in the minds of men and women. Men have tried to hide their sins, yet to no avail. They have tried to avoid the destruction, yet to no avail. And, they have forgotten, if they ever bothered to learn in the first place, that the wages of sin is "*death,*" yet to no avail. "*Be sure your sin will find you out.*" May we all develop a healthy disdain for sin and flee from it, as we study our Bible more and more.

### *Don Walker*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# *Leviticus 10:1-2*

*This Chapter Written By*

*Dave Miller*

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

**T**he incident described in these verses, which occurred while the Israelites were encamped at Mt. Sinai, has much to teach us. We learn about the nature, character, and attitude of God. We learn what it means for both us and God to be holy. We learn about worship. In fact, Leviticus is extremely relevant to our day, even as Peter declared:

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in

all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy' (1 Peter 1:13-16).

Peter called upon Christians to live the Christian life, justifying his admonition by quoting Leviticus 11:45 (cf. 19:2; 20:7,26). In fact, he deliberately spotlighted the concept of holiness—the key concept in Leviticus. Forms of the word are used some 150 times. Here is a book that pertained to the worship responsibilities of the Levites and constituted a manual for the priests. Yet the central theme of the book is timeless: God is holy; those who wish to enter into fellowship with Him (chapters 1-16), and remain there (chapters 17-27), must be holy (i.e., set apart or separated for divine purposes).

### **Separateness**

What does it mean to be "*holy*," i.e., "*set apart*"? Our English term holiness is intended to embody the Hebrew notion of apartness or separateness. To be holy means to embrace divinely specified patterns of behavior. A holy relationship with the holy God entails conscious, purposeful commitment to His directives. Being holy consists of eager concern for doing things just the way God wants them done. Leviticus essentially teaches that we must live life with a keen sense of God's presence and influence, to the extent that we will conform our behavior to His directions. Forgiveness is available when we make mistakes ("*blood*" is used over 80 times in the book); but the burning focus of our daily living is to please God, honor Him, and show Him to be holy by living holy lives ourselves, i.e., acting in harmony with His will. Professor of Old Testament and Semitic

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Languages Thomas McComiskey insightfully observed:

The holy God came to man in redeeming love within the context of regulations and proscriptions that were designed to maintain the purity of holiness that characterized God's essential nature (in R. Harris, et al. [1980], **Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament** [Chicago, IL: Moody Press], 2:788).

That this principle remains intact today is seen in the fact that the New Testament alludes to Leviticus some 90 times.

### **Nadab And Abihu**

In chapter 10 of this great book, two of Aaron's four sons were given a pattern by God pertaining to the proper offering of incense. The pattern for this act of worship entailed the right persons, at the right place and the right time, using the right censers, the right incense, and the right fire (Lev. 10:1-2). In what might seem to be a rather minor deviation from the divine pattern, these two men utilized the wrong fire—identified as "*strange*" (KJV/ASV), "*profane*" (NKJV), "*unholy*" (RSV), or "*unauthorized*" (NIV). In other words, they made use of fire from some unspecified source that differed from the one authorized by God. While some have postulated that the mistake which the boys made involved the incense that was specially blended for the occasion (Ex. 30:34), that would mean that they were guilty of offering "*strange incense*" (Exod. 30:9), rather than strange fire. Others have suggested that the problem lay in the time of day (Exod. 30:7-8), or the prideful

attitude of the boys, or even in the fact that the boys may have been drinking (Lev. 10:9). However, every time this incident is mentioned elsewhere, it is always described in the same terms: "*strange fire*" (Num. 3:4; 26:61). Hence, they were guilty of "*will worship*" (Col. 2:23), i.e., asserting their own will in place of God's.

The matter is clearly clarified by God Himself when Moses, no doubt still observing the smoldering bodies of his two nephews, turned to his brother and repeated the words that had been spoken to him on an earlier occasion by God:

By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified (Lev. 10:3, NKJV).

Powerful, penetrating words! Failure to comply with God's specifications creates two impassible barriers between oneself and God. First, when a person deviates from God's pattern, he or she fails to show God as holy. Incredible! We can actually cast a bad reflection on God by our own behavior? That is correct! When people who claim to be religious and in love with God and Christ invent their own worship practices (e.g., praise teams, instrumental music, and lighting candles), they not only do that for which they have no approval from God, they also cast reflection upon Him by failing to act in harmony with His holiness. In effect, they declare Him to be unholy. They fail to show Him to be distinct, separate, and unique.

Second, when a person adjusts God's worship instructions (though complying with many others), he

or she fails to glorify God. The word “*glorify*” has as its root meaning the idea of respect and honor. Who would want to be guilty of showing disrespect to God? Who would dare to dishonor God? Yet, when people worship Him in accordance with their own humanly-devised worship activities, they do just that. They fail to glorify Him—which, by definition, can be

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# *Malachi 2:16*

*This Chapter Written By*

***Bobby Liddell***

For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

## **The Wedding Day**

**I**n order to understand why God hates putting away (Mal. 2:16), let us begin by thinking of the day when man and woman become one. The wedding day, when a man and woman pledge themselves to each other, *"in the sight of God and these witnesses,"* is a wonderful day! It is a day of rejoicing for parents, family, and friends, who love the bride and bridegroom, who are so hopeful for them, and who are thankful God has answered their prayers and has, in His good providence, blessed the bride and groom with each other. It is a day of rejoicing, for it is a day which holds such great promise. It is a day of new beginning, for it is the beginning of a new home with its yet unseen blessings, a new day

with a future filled with love and happiness along with challenges.

On their wedding day, bride and groom begin their walk together through life, side by side, hand in hand, facing whatever comes – together. It is the dawn of a new togetherness: working together, laughing together, weeping together, growing together, loving together, worshipping together, rearing a family together, growing old together, and living eternally together with their Lord in Heaven – always together. Because of love, they have chosen to give themselves to each other, and in obedience to God’s plan, which He established in the beginning, they are leaving father and mother to come together as one, to cleave to one another in marriage.

From their wedding day forward, and as long as they both shall live, they are promising, before witnesses and before God, to live with one another as husband and wife, and to live for one another, keeping themselves from all others. Their love will make each one of them a better person, for each will be the other’s best friend, companion, confidant, sweetheart, supporter, comforter, and helpmate throughout life. With their wedding vows, they promise to be faithful to each other, to love, nurture, cherish, and encourage each other with the same care and concern they give themselves.

Marriage, as God intended, will bring them happiness and fulfillment, and a lifetime with never a day without love. With that love, growing ever stronger, deeper, and lovely, they will wipe away the tears that come with life. With compassionate care, they will face the pain that comes with living.

With comfort, they will overcome the sorrows life brings. With rejoicing, they will share the victories of faithful living. And, when one falls, the other will be there with an outstretched hand, an encouraging word, and a ready smile to lift the love of that one's life, that they might walk the way together, again.

They promise to help each other become all our Lord has intended them to be in marriage, and to let no man put asunder what God has joined together. The groom vows to take the bride to be his wife, his partner in marriage and in life, to cherish, to honor, to protect, and to walk with her through life wherever it may lead, whatever may come. He lovingly promises to be faithful and true to her as long as they both shall live.

The bride solemnly vows to take the groom to be her husband, to offer to him all that she is and all that she has, in love and in joy, to comfort, to hold close, to believe in, and to prize above all others. She lovingly promises to remain faithful to him all the days of her life.

The groom pledges with giving a ring, *"I take you to be my wife, from this day forward and forevermore, and I promise to love you and to be true to you as long as I live."* The bride promises with giving a ring, *"I take you to be my husband, from this day forward and forevermore, and I promise to love you and to be true to you as long as I live."*

Loved ones of the bride and groom pray, thanking God for them, and for blessing them with each other. They beseech God to keep them always in His care, to bless them, to provide for their needs, to protect them from all who would do them harm,

and to keep them safe as they walk with one another and with God.

Shall this sacred union be dissolved without consequence? Does God take lightly one who would leave his mate for another? Does God approve divorce for *“any cause”*?

As Malachi, by inspiration declared, the Lord has been witness, witnessing the marriage contract, the sacred vows, the covenant they have made. Contrary to all God commands, and all God intended, there were those in Malachi’s day (as there are today) who were ready to break their solemn vows, and to put away the wives of their youth.

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously (Mal. 2:14-16).

God hates putting away! All God has said, and has done, from the beginning of creation, shows His desire that marriage be ended only by death.

## **What Constitutes Marriage?**

To know why divorce is so hated by God, let us consider what is that bond that is broken by putting away. What is marriage? In God approved marriage, one man and one woman, both of whom are eligible to marry according to God's law, mutually consent and agree to enter into a life-long monogamous relationship, as husband and wife, in accordance with the law of God and the laws of the land.

What is not marriage? God ordained marriage is not outdated, temporary, burdensome, or inconvenient. The true concept of marriage is not fluid, living, and changing from one age, society, or culture to the next. It is not a trial relationship, nor a trivial commitment. Nor are the benefits of marriage to be enjoyed while the act of marriage is treated as optional—without eternal consequences.

## **Marriage At The Beginning**

When Jesus, God in the flesh (John 1:14; Matt. 27:54), was challenged by the Pharisees concerning marriage laws, He responded by pointing them to God's immutable law, as God said from the beginning of man's creation.

Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Matt. 19:4-6).

Beginning with Adam and Eve (Gen. 1-2), God gave commandment concerning marriage. When we ask, "*What constitutes marriage?*" we need to ask God, not man, for God planned and instituted marriage. Since God ordained marriage, He has the power to determine and to declare what constitutes this divinely given institution. Thus, a God-approved marriage is one built upon the foundation of God's inspired and revealed truth. Likewise, He alone has the power to determine when a marriage bond may be broken.

### **Male And Female**

God's law for the parties involved in a marriage was and is: one man and one woman, "*male and female*" (Matt. 19:4). One man and one woman, both eligible to marry according to God's Word, leave father and mother, come together in holy matrimony, in agreement with the law of God and the laws of the land, and cleave (stick to each other as though they were glued together) to one another for life. Meeting these God-given requirements, "*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled*" (Heb. 13:4). However, for those who reject God's will, verse four continues, "*but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*" This is His plan now, and has been His plan throughout the ages. It was His plan from the beginning, and He has not changed it. Though all in the world were to accept and follow another plan (cf. Gal. 1:6-10), the divine standard by which we are to live, and by which we will be judged, would not be changed by one jot or one tittle (cf. Matt. 5:18; John 12:48). Note the inspired record (Gen. 1:1-24).

One man, one woman, joined together for life is God's plan for marriage (Gen. 1:27). God does not condone any other arrangement! He does not condone, and He will not excuse or tolerate putting away the mate of one's youth (without scriptural cause [Matt. 19:9]), to marry another. God hates divorce!

### **Leave And Cleave**

Though Adam and Eve had no earthly parents, from the beginning, God made this pronouncement:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Gen. 1:24; Matt. 19:5).

Marriage requires leaving and cleaving. The most important human relationship prior to one's marriage is the child-parent relationship, yet marriage takes precedence over it. Marriage means a union without the interference of parents, though parents may well have good intentions.

Husband and wife cleave to one another in love. True marital love is ready to sacrifice for the other. This kind of love makes service so much easier, and an attitude of readiness to serve is a godly attitude (Matt. 20:26-28). It must also be a life-long attitude (Rom. 7:1-4). Remember, God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), and gives only one exception for divorce and remarriage (Matt. 19:9).

Contrary to what many think should be done today, the first marriage was not, and every God-approved marriage since then has not been, a "*trial*

*arrangement.*" Living together without benefit of marriage, though practiced by millions in America today, is sinful and hurtful. Choosing to live together (even as in "*common law marriage*") is not all that constitutes marriage. Many are sexually active, living with another without marriage, and proud of it. While many cite living together as the preferred alternative to the so-called archaic idea of marriage, the facts show married people live longer, have more sex, and also find sex more satisfying. Married people experience less depression, have lower rates of alcohol and substance abuse, have higher incomes and savings, and have children who are better equipped emotionally, psychologically, and educationally, and who are less likely to be in poverty, or to become involved in criminal behavior. God's way for marriage is still the best way.

### **Two Become One**

God created Adam and Eve to be different from each other, and men and women are different in many ways—such as physically, sexually, and emotionally. Yet, in marriage, the male and female wonderfully complement each other, each supplying what the other lacks, all according to God's wonderful purpose. In marriage, as God planned, there is companionship (cf. Sol. 4:9-10; 8:1-2). God said it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). Adam needed someone he did not have, and though Adam looked, he found no suitable companion among the animals (Gen. 2:19-20). So, God created a helper suitable for man. God did not create a slave, nor did He give to man a master, but a suitable helper.



As God's love, the love in marriage is a giving love: "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*" (Eph. 5:25; cf. John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). It is a love that will be extended to no other, but keeps itself only unto the spouse. In it, two become one (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31). Becoming one requires a man and a woman, not two men, not two women, not one man and more than one woman, not one woman and more than one man, not man or woman with a beast, nor any other combination of any other persons or things. Only in man's immoral, distorted, depraved lust of the flesh can such a thing as a "*homosexual marriage,*" an "*innocent affair,*" or "*consenting adults*" engaging in multiple relationships be imagined. God ordained marriage allows the most intimate of relationships. Outside of marriage, this relationship is sinful, but within marriage, it is as God ordained; thus, it is right, good, and without shame.

The woman, the wife, is to be man's companion for life, as he is to be hers. They are to work together as best friends, helping each other with the tremendous task of successfully navigating their course through the rocky seas of life. Anyone who has been married for long knows it takes both husband and wife, working as one, to accomplish this. According to God's plan, married life provides each one with the fulfillment needed to enjoy life. Without each other, life is not the "*good*" life God intended marriage to be, but with each other, they have friendship, love, comfort, strength, joy, help, encouragement, intimacy, and satisfaction. Man and woman are not alone, and that is good.

Adam's response, when God brought Eve to him, was one of joy:

This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man (Gen. 2:23).

With Eve, he found a co-worker. With her, he could have the tender, personal, human relationship he could not have with the animals. They could be one. Marriage, God's way, promises joy. Newlyweds enter this relationship with great anticipation of "*living happily ever after.*" While, in reality, there will be disappointments, and real life does not measure up to fairy tale expectations, still there are real joys and true happiness in God's plan. However, marriage according to any other plan will have disastrous consequences.

### **What God Has Joined Together**

Some believe man and woman are not married until they have had their first sexual relationship. If this were true, (1) the still (according to this false view) unmarried man and woman would, after their marriage ceremony in which they were pronounced husband and wife, leave for their honeymoon, check into their room as an unmarried couple, and do all a man and a woman do to prepare for the physical relationship while still not married. To be plain, they would have to commit immorality and initiate fornication in order to become husband and wife! (2) Some marry who, because of age or physical inability, cannot engage in the sexual act. Others marry with mutual consent to forego the sexual act. Does this

mean they are not married? If so, they sin by living together as though they were married. (3) Joseph and Mary were married, but did not engage in the physical union for many months; that is, until after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:24-25). Were they married for those months? Certainly.

On the other hand, some believe man and woman are married, in God's eyes, by the simple fact of their engaging in the sexual act. If such were the case, there would be no such thing as fornication between a man and woman. Instead, it would be marriage. However, Jesus told the woman at the well,

Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly (John 4:16-18).

Why would Jesus say the current partner of the woman was not her husband? Because engaging in the sex act does not constitute marriage. Paul wrote by inspiration:

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (1 Cor. 7:2).

If fornication (in the sense of one's having sex with one not his/her spouse) equals marriage, then God's law on divorce and remarriage would be absolutely meaningless (Matt. 19:9). Every time one committed

fornication, he would be married to the one then his current partner.

Others refer to 1 Corinthians 6:16 as proof that engaging in the sex act makes the two married. There is a great distinction in one's joining himself, by his action, to a harlot, as this verse depicts, and two being joined together by the action of God when they are married in accordance with His will (Matt. 19:6). Again, the physical relationship of marriage is a blessing enjoyed by husband and wife, but it is not what constitutes marriage.

While considering what God joins together, let us consider the laws of the land. Of course, we should keep the requirements of civil law as long as doing so does not cause us to disobey God's law (Acts 5:29; Rom. 13:1-ff; 1 Peter 2:13-ff). However, the laws of the land are not the ultimate authority; God's law is. Keeping civil law does not, by itself, constitute having a God approved marriage. Herod "*married*" Herodias (Mark 6:17), but she still was Philip's wife (Matt. 14:3). According to the law of the land, he could do so, but John said, "*It is not lawful for thee to have her*" (Matt. 14:4; Mark 6:18). Their "*marriage*" was legal, but it was not "*lawful*" according to God's law. If civil law accepts homosexual marriage, it is still sin. If civil law approves divorce and remarriage for virtually any cause, there is still only one scriptural cause (Matt. 19:9). If government recognizes living together (without marriage) as legal and approved, God still does not (Heb. 13:4).

What constitutes marriage? When a man and a woman agree to enter into the contract of marriage, both of them being eligible, according to God's law, to

marry, and they do so in agreement with the law of God and the law of the land, they are, in fact, married when so pronounced by the one duly recognized by civil law to perform such a marriage. Consequently, they are joined together by God. They then have the right to all the blessings God has placed within the bounds of the marital relationship. None other has such right.

### **Marriage Requires Great Commitment**

One of the problems which results in divorce is a lack of commitment to marriage. What would you give to have a happy, God-approved marriage—a great marriage? Would you give a million dollars if you had it? Would you give all your worldly possessions? Would you give yourself? Would you give your time, energy, and ability? Now, to the point at hand, would you make a great commitment to your marriage? Marriage requires great commitment.

Perhaps, another question should be, "*What would you give up?*" Some might need to give up selfish, self-centered, self-serving attitudes (Matt. 7:12; Phil. 2:21), and begin to be servants (Matt. 20:26-28). Others might have to give up love of the world (1 John 2:15-17), to know the love of God and spouse. Some may well need to give up pride that keeps them from saying, "*I'm sorry,*" and/or, "*I have sinned,*" thus, keeping them from beginning anew to work toward a godly, joy filled marriage. Perhaps, others need to quit feeling sorry for themselves, and crying, "*Poor me,*" but should rise up from self-pity, and get busy being constructive. All must give up sin, any sin, for sin is the undoing of happiness in

the home, and in every other relationship (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Isa. 59:1-2). Considering the importance of having a happy, God centered marriage, to have it, what would you give, or what would you give up? What commitment will you make? Remember, God hates divorce!

Men and women need instruction and encouragement to make such a great commitment. All who would enter marriage need to hear and heed God's law, which restricts who may marry and limits certain blessings to within the bounds of God-ordained marriage. The sad truth is that we live in a world that is growing in wickedness. Our nation is rapidly sinking into the abyss of immorality. Godless atheism, humanism, and the false theory of organic evolution increasingly hold sway. They make man just a "higher" animal, leaving little wonder as to why so many feel justified in behaving like animals. In spite of all this, there is hope in Christ for all who will live "*soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*" (Titus 2:11-12).

### **Why Should One Commit To Purity In Marriage?**

God commands purity in every way (1 John 3:3), and to insure sexual purity, God restricted sex to husband and wife in the marriage bond (Gen. 2:24; 4:1). There are no other parties for whom sex is permitted, and no other relationships wherein sex is permitted—period. Some mistakenly believe the human body is intended for unbridled sexual pleasure, but, "*The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord*" (1 Cor. 6:13). In order to insure sexual

purity while providing for sexual fulfillment, God's Word reveals:

Nevertheless to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (1 Cor. 7:2).

God condemns all other sexual activity as sinful. Note the following list. Homosexuality (Lev. 20:13; 23:17-18; 1 Kings 22:46; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:8-10). Bestiality (Lev. 18:23; 20:15-16). Incest (Lev. 18:7-17). Rape (Deut. 25:25, et al.). Pre-marital sexual activity (1 Cor. 7:1-2). Extra-marital sexual activity (Matt. 19:18; John 8:3; Rom. 13:9; Exo. 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Pro. 6:32). Sexual activity in an adulterous "marriage" (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12). (Please note: [1] God's law applies to all men, not to Christians only; [2] An adulterous "marriage" is a continuing state of adultery; thus, it is a continuing state of sinfulness from which one must remove himself in repentance.)

Physical fulfillment within the God-ordained relationship of marriage is a beautiful expression of love, fulfilling the needs of both spouses (1 Cor. 7:2-4), providing intimacy, security, and safety, and bringing the two ever closer together as they grow in this facet of married life.

One also makes a commitment to one's spouse to be true to her/him – to leave all others and cleave to her/him. Sex outside God-ordained marriage is impure and sinful, and the wise will not participate in it. Sexual sins are works of the flesh, and will keep one out of the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). *"Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"* (Heb.

13:4). Plainly put, sexual impurity will cause one to be lost (Rev. 21:8).

### **How Should One Maintain Such Purity?**

One should make preparation for marriage by preparing financially, emotionally, and socially, but, especially by preserving one's virginity for one's mate, and presenting oneself pure and undefiled to one's marriage partner. God's word for "*safe sex*" is "*marriage.*" We need to learn this great lesson, and teach it to others as well. We must make the commitment to keep ourselves pure before marriage.

Joseph was enticed by his master's wife to lie with her, but he said, "*How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" and fled (Gen. 39:9-12). Joseph and Mary were betrothed (in a bond that committed them to marriage), and entered marriage pure (Matt. 1:18-25). Solomon's bride (in the greatest work on love and marriage—The Song of Songs) cautioned her friends not to stir up his physical desires before marriage (Song of Solomon 2:7).

One must take care not to allow oneself to look upon another to lust after her/him (Matt. 5:28; 2 Pet. 2:14). Thus, the wise person will not look upon naked, nearly naked, or otherwise immodestly attired members of the opposite sex (outside marriage; Gen. 2:25). Pornography, whether in the printed media, on television, in movies, or on the Internet will not be the fare of the faithful:

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes:  
I hate the work of them that turn aside; it  
shall not cleave to me (Psa. 101:3).



How many popular shows/movies are there which do not depict marital infidelity as normal, fulfilling, fun, and the reason for the participants to be congratulated, and for onlookers to envy? Should those who would commit themselves to purity watch them? Certainly, not.

One must take care to avoid the company of evil companions who would encourage him to do wrong (1 Cor. 15:33; Prov. 4:14-15). The “majority” is a dangerous group to follow (Matt. 7:13-14). “*Everybody’s doing it*” is insufficient reason to put oneself in danger of the physical, spiritual, and eternal consequences of sin.

One must take care to avoid the places where sexual impurity takes place. Read Proverbs 7:6-23. Married people must avoid flirting with co-workers, spending too much time alone with, salaciously confiding in, allowing thoughts of immorality with, and/or becoming physically attracted to one not his/her mate. Christian people are not immune to the temptations of Satan to become sexually impure – we must take care as to the things to which we listen, at which we look, and for which we long (1 Cor. 10:12)!

We must be careful to resist seduction. Jesus instructed His disciples to pray, “*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*” (Matt. 5:13). Through Paul, God commanded the Corinthians to: “*Flee fornication*” (1 Cor. 6:18; cf. 2 Tim. 2:22). Through James, God revealed that man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed, and when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death (James 1:12-15). Again, James wrote:

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Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

We must be courageous to rebuke sin. Sin is sin regardless of what one says or does to make it appear otherwise (Rom. 6:23; 14:23; James 4:17; 1 John 3:4; 5:17). Wrong is wrong regardless of how much pleasure it brings, who says it is okay, how much one thinks he should engage in it, or who engages in it. Though the world minimizes sin and calls evil good, we must rebuke sin (Isa. 5:20; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:13).

We must be consistent to our commitment to remain pure in marriage.

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints (Eph. 5:3).

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor (1 Thess. 4:3-4).

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5).

Failure to be consistent will bring reproach upon the Lord and His church, and will close doors that may never reopen.

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## What If This Commitment Is Not Maintained?

There are many tragedies related to the failure to keep one's commitment to sexual purity in marriage; such as, the guilt of having to tell the one to whom you are married of your transgression, and broken health, hearts, and homes. However, the greatest tragedy is the loss of one's soul. Jesus asked:

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:26).

Is illicit sexual pleasure worth one's soul? Is it worth your soul?

Husband and wife must make this great commitment to one another in order to have a great marriage, but marriage can never be all it should be without Christ. In Christ is where real rejoicing is, for in Christ is where one has reason to rejoice, because in Christ is where one has redemption (Phil. 4:4; Gal. 3:26-ff). To work diligently, yet without heeding Divine direction, will produce results which fall far short of accomplishing what God wants in marriage. This principle stands: *"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it"* (Psa. 127:1). *"He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind"* (Prov. 11:29). Is your marriage happy? Have you made and kept proper commitment to your marriage? If not, you are the troubler. Friend, sin is the problem and Christ is the solution. One need not think he can continue in sin and be blessed by God. It will never happen (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

Failure to keep one's commitment to the purity of marriage robs one, for it: steals holiness, robs one

of health (spiritually and physically), destroys homes, brings a heavy burden of guilt, promises happiness, but, in the end, delivers only emptiness, guilt, and sorrow, blocks the way to Heaven, and condemns one to Hell.

What if one has forsaken his commitment to be pure in marriage and true to his marriage vows? He has sinned (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Does this mean for him there is no hope? No. He can be forgiven:

And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11).

He must repent, seeking forgiveness as God has ordained. Nothing less will do—if you want to have a happy, healthy home now, and a home with God eternally, as God intended “*from the beginning*” (John 14:1-4).

### **Divorce And Remarriage**

Satan would take from the home all that is pleasant, healthy, and upright, and change the dream into a horrible nightmare. He would hollow out the heart of the home and leave only an ugly, empty shell. Whether he enters like a thief in the night, like a brazen invader, or as a welcomed guest, the devil would rob the home, taking from it all that is of real and lasting importance. If he could, he would set up his residence in the home, bar Christ from entering, keep the Bible out, or at least keep it dusty and unopened, and fill the home with fermenting, sordid sinfulness until it exploded into shattered pieces. Satan loves divorce, but God hates putting away!

The only way by which a scriptural marriage might be ended without sin is the death of one of the marriage partners (Rom. 7:1-4). May a scriptural marriage be ended without death? Yes, but if so, not without sin. The same Creator who made male and female and established marriage and the home has given the only exception allowing divorce and remarriage.

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Matt. 19:9).

The innocent spouse may put away (divorce) the spouse guilty of fornication and remarry; however, the guilty spouse has forfeited his/her right to remarry. The guilty one may be forgiven by God upon repentance and, if he lives faithfully, enter into Heaven after while. The innocent one also may forgive the truly penitent offender, receive him/her back, and continue in the marriage.

### **Attacks On Marriage**

How do you suppose Satan would attack God's pattern concerning divorce and remarriage? He could confuse and cloud the minds of men and women to the point they believed one could divorce at will, for any reason, and marry again as many times as one wants. He could work to convince men that the law of God (Matt. 19:9) was not part of the New Covenant. He could help men believe that the guilty may remarry with God's approval. He could persuade

men to listen to the teachings of men instead of to the teaching from Heaven (cf. Matt. 11:30). He could promote the false idea that the world (those outside Christ; that is, not Christians) was not amenable to the law of Christ, or that one may "*repent*" or "*be baptized*" and stay in an adulterous relationship. The sad fact is that all these devilish departures in doctrine have already been accomplished. Many homes have been torn asunder because of divorce. Every time, the reason was sin! Remember, God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), and gives only one exception for divorce and remarriage (Matt. 19:9).

God's pattern for the home is based on the permanence of marriage. All who would enter marriage and start a new home need to hear and heed God's law.

### **Happiness And Holiness**

We might sum up the purpose of the home in these words: happiness, helpfulness, and holiness. These are all ugly words to Satan. The home should bring happiness to all its members, and it will if each member will live with proper consideration for God and for each other. The attitude which will pervade the home will be one of seeking the good of the other which will result in happiness for all (Matt. 7:12). Likewise, the home should be known for its helpfulness for each other and for those outside the home. A godly home is a neighbor in time of distress (Luke 10:30-ff), a comfort in time of sorrow, a friend in time of trouble, and a help in time of need (Matt. 25:31-46). Most important is the home's holiness. It will be a blessing to the home, to the community, to the nation, and to the world. It will

help the church, strengthening and encouraging the Lord's people (Phile. 2). We can probably think of many such homes and recall the positive influences they have had. Yes, the home has a purpose, but most have missed it—and Satan would destroy it.

### **Contentment Or Covetousness?**

In the home is a wealth of what really matters, but the purpose of the home is not to accumulate wealth. A home's worth is not determined by its material possessions (Matt. 6:19-21). The home is not built with things (Matt. 6:33). It is not to be a convention of the covetous, but of the content. Jesus spake:

Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15).

Covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5), and it is the driving force of far too many homes. Paul wrote to the brethren at Philippi concerning his needs and their satisfying of them:

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content (Phil. 4:11).

Contentment brings blessing, and it should be the goal of every home. Again, Paul wrote: "*And having food and raiment let us be therewith content*" (1 Tim. 6:8). And, if Paul wrote Hebrews, he penned, for the third time, the need for contentment:

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such

things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee (Heb. 13:5).

What is contentment? Contentment is a state of having sufficient or enough; that is, of having need of no more. *"But godliness with contentment is great gain"* (1 Tim. 6:6). One who is satisfied (in the proper sense) with what he has, who does not feel the need to have more, is content (v. 8). One can never be content if he seeks riches (v. 9), loves money (v. 10), or trusts in uncertain riches (v. 17). Contentment and inordinate seeking of things, loving of money, or trusting in material possessions are mutually exclusive. Satan has used the lure of things to destroy the contentment of the home. By so doing, he has taken a big step in destroying the home.

Everyone wants contentment, because with contentment comes a serenity of the soul, but very few have either. Why? Satan has painted a tantalizing picture of the ideal American home. To contrive this fantasy, he has skillfully brought in the brilliant hues of material prosperity, highlighted the alluring aspects of possessions, incorporated the seductive colors of inordinate desire, and accentuated their appeal with the brilliance of gold and silver. On the devil's canvas, he has portrayed a scene, which seems, to the unwary, to be an accurate representation of all that is good and right in life. It is the sum of what man should grasp, greedily clutching it to his bosom, smiling with satisfaction. The image whispers the deceptive, destructive message of covetousness; that is, satisfaction according to Satan.

Most, in our society, have looked upon Satan's



cunningly fraudulent portrayal and have accepted it as the depiction of their primary, if not their only, goal in life. With covetousness as the driving motive, real contentment, though sought diligently, never can be found. When things occupy the chief seat in one's heart, he ignores that which is really important, because the glitter of the world blinds him. There is the pressure to have what neighbors have, no, to have better than our neighbors have. Instead of "*keeping up with the Jones,*" we have to outdo the Jones. Our Savior knew this temptation to man and, in spite of the world's embracing the illusory invention of Satan, our Lord clearly condemned it. He plainly said one cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

What indicates our homes have lost the sorely needed aspect of contentment? Too many are so intent on making a living; they have no time to make a life. Satisfaction, according to God's Word, does not come with more money, bigger houses, nicer cars, faster boats, better clothes, more expensive vacations, bigger televisions, or earlier retirement. Why then do so many live to work? It is true we should work to have what we need to live (2 Thess. 3:10), but bringing home more money to fill a house with more things is not the purpose of the home. It is another of Satan's lies with which he would destroy the home. Too many homes have been built following Satan's plans.

### **Conclusion**

God hates divorce! We must look to the Designer of the home to learn what constitutes marriage and what commitment marriage requires. We must build

our marriages upon holiness. Only then will we have real happiness. We all owe it to our spouses, our children, and to ourselves to become, and to continue, as faithful children of God (Rev. 2:10). Nothing is more important than every person in the home helping each other get to Heaven.

Failure to understand God's pattern for marriage and the home will destroy both. Rejection of God's will concerning divorce and remarriage may well result in our losing our souls. Such failure of what God intended brings a burden of guilt that is far too heavy to bear, and in the end, robs us of that which is most dear. God hates divorce!

### ***Bobby Liddell***



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Proverbs 14:12**

*This Chapter Written By*

**Robert Hatfield**

Solomon's proverbs numbered 3,000 and his songs were 1,005 (1 Kings 4:32). The manifestation of God's gift of wisdom in Solomon's life is clearly seen throughout the book of Proverbs. Solomon's wisdom was well-known: "*there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon*" (1 Kings 4:34). Even today men look to Solomon's inspired wisdom and can easily find modern applications.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov. 14:12).

This Biblical gem is certainly applicable to Christians and non-Christians alike. All people are subject to stumbling across the wrong path, which leads to eternal death. From this verse, man can learn of his need for divine authority; he can learn of his ability to *know* the right way and wrong way; he can note the standard by which obedience is measured, and he can clearly see the Christian's responsibility to the right way.

## Man Needs Authority

Webster defines authority as, "*the right or power to command or give ultimate decisions.*" The word author yields an even clearer understanding: "*one that originates or creates.*" According to Webster, the one who creates is the one who has the ability to rule over that creation. Certainly the parallel is clear:

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24).

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1).

O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker (Psm. 95:1-6).

As the Creator, or Author, God has the right to establish reign over His creation. The Bible explains the process by which God passed His authority to His son, Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2; John 3:35; 17:1-2; Eph. 1:19-23, et al). God continues to exercise His authority today through His written word, which was recorded by inspired men who were guided by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16). It is noteworthy that the Holy Spirit and Jesus operated under God's

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authority; they did not create an authority of their own, but came to do God's will (John 6:38). These inspired, written words are those which comprise the Bible.

The Bible is all-sufficient for religious guidance today. Paul said the Bible profits man in every way to fully equip the man of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In God's recorded word, man can find "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). The Bible is *the* authority – direct from God – under which we serve.

If you believe that God is your creator, and the Bible says he is (Gen. 1:26-27). If you believe that in him we live and move and have our being, and the Bible says that we do (Acts 17:22-31). Then you must believe that God has created you and is sustaining you (cf. Psm. 3:5) for a specific purpose. Is not this purpose to be pleasing unto God (cf. Prov. 16:7, a general rule is herein stated)? (Music, 769).

To be created by God is to be subject to His divine authority. When Israel turned from God and had no king to establish reign, the Bible says, "*every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 21:25). Without God's authority, chaos and confusion prevail. God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33), thus He has given to man His authority and the means by which man may understand and obey His authority.

### **There Is A Right Way**

Solomon mentioned a way:

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of

death (Prov. 14:12).

The fact that Solomon noted a way leading to death implies that there is a way which leads to life. Some ways may seem right, but the true, right way is the one which is directed by God's authority.

Christianity is the only way from earth to heaven for any of us who live between Calvary and Christ's second coming (Taylor, 199).

Jesus admonished his followers to enter in at the strait gate (Matt. 7:13-14). The broad gate is much wider than the strait gate, for God's laws have narrowed down the strait gate; only those who walk in God's paths are allowed to enter the strait gate.

*Man can KNOW the right way.* It is not the case that God has hidden His way from man. God, who desires all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9), has made His will attainable to man.

The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain (Prov. 15:19).

I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me (Psm. 119:30).

Solomon could plainly see the way God would have him to go, and David, having clearly seen the way, chose the way of truth.

*Additionally, man can KNOW that he is travelling the right way which leads to a reward!* Why do some people question whether or not they are on the road to heaven? The Bible teaches that one can

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know for sure that he or she is pleasing to God. Man can know that he is on the road to heaven, because the road to heaven is the righteous road. Solomon wrote, "*in the way of righteousness is life*" (Prov. 12:28). In this passage, the Hebrew word translated "*way*" literally refers to a well-trodden road. The right path is a sure path. It is a way in which one may be confident toward the final end. It is this well-trodden way that Solomon said is plain and clear (cf. Prov. 15:19), and it leads to eternal life in heaven! Paul was able to confidently await his heavenly reward because he knew he had travelled the road of righteousness in fighting the good fight, finishing the course, and keeping the faith (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Furthermore, Paul stated that all who are obedient to God will receive that crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8). There *is* a right way, man can know that way, and can confidently follow that way to heaven eternal.

### **There Is A Wrong Way**

Solomon specifically mentions the wrong way in Proverbs 14:12. The wrong way disregards God's authority. Sometimes God's authority is disregarded by men who make slight amendments to the sacred laws, while other times men may altogether discard God's way.

*Man can KNOW the wrong way.* The wrong way is the direct opposite of the right way. Those who travel the wrong pathway reject the authority. To reject God's authority (the Word of God) is to reject God, and to act outside the realm of that which is authorized by God is to be rejected by God. To know the right way is, by implication, to know the wrong way. For example, when God specifically

commands New Testament Christians to sing from the heart (Matt. 26:30; Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15; James 5:13), that specific command automatically rules out any other type of singing that may be done (i.e. music with instrumental accompaniment). When God says that singing in worship is to be done to each other (meaning every person in the assembly is to sing, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), that specific command does not authorize choirs, praise teams, etc. There are times when God specifically mentions sinful activities in which his people should have no part. Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven things the Lord hates. John noted, "*sin is the transgression of the law*" (1 John 3:4), thus anything that is not in keeping with the law of God – His standard of authority – is sin against God and puts one on the wrong path.

*Man can KNOW that he is travelling on the wrong way which leads to eternal death.* Solomonsaid, "*...the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Prov. 14:12). Jesus said the broad way leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13). Satan is successfully deceiving many people who live in sin!

Why do people walk the wrong path when the right path is so easily attainable? Some are ignorant of the truth; that is, they simply have not been instructed unto righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:17 notes that the scriptures are profitable for "*instruction in righteousness.*" It is important to remember that those who walk down the wrong path due to ignorance are still walking down a path which leads to death! Furthermore, some people walk down the wrong path because they have forgotten God, having been



lured to the wrong path by the deceitful devil. These people show a lack for God's supreme authority. For example, Nadab and Abihu died because they offered strange fire to God (Num. 26:61). They had rejected God's direct authority. Uzzah (2 Sam. 6) undoubtedly had the best of intentions when he reached out his hand to stabilize the ark, but he rejected God's specific authority and God struck him dead. The wicked people of Noah's day corrupted God's way on the earth (Gen. 6:12) and were punished. Finally, some reject the right way because they are following the multitudes. God specifically forbids following the crowds in order to justify sin:

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil;  
neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline  
after many to wrest judgment (Exod. 23:2).

There is no excuse for one to follow the path which leads to death, for God's Word plainly shows the pathway to righteousness.

## **Obedience Is Not Measured By What Seems Right**

God expects obedience, and only those who do His Will can inherit eternal life (Matt. 7:21). There is no other standard than the Bible by which one can measure obedience.

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not  
in himself: it is not in man that walketh to  
direct his steps (Jer. 10:23).

There are many ways by which man may be deceived to following the wrong path (as mentioned in the previous point). Many are allured by man-made denominations, and even some Christians hear from

the pulpit and in classes a “*relaxed*” form of doctrine. Claiming to teach the Bible, many teachers in this day are accustomed to “*sugar coating*” the word of God in an effort to make themselves and their listeners more comfortable. Paul warned of this day (2 Tim. 4:3). Biblical students, teachers, and preachers must be sure to rightly divide (or handle aright) the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand (Prov. 19:21).

**Satan’s allurements neither hide nor void God’s authority.** While deceptions of the devil may decrease man’s willingness to obey God’s Will, they do not decrease man’s ability to know God’s Will. Jehovah God is in the position of authority; He reigns over His creation! God’s Word stands forever (1 Pet. 4:11; Gal. 1:6-9; Mat. 7:21-23; 15:9-13; John 12:48). Obedience is *not* a matter of what *seems* right to man, rather it *is* a matter of what has been absolutely defined as righteous by God’s authority.

## **The Christian’s Responsibility To The Right Way**

Christians are called by Jesus Christ to show forth the way of righteousness. The Lord commanded, “*Let your light so shine before men...*” (Matt. 5:16). Christians have a responsibility to God’s authority!

**To follow the right way, Christians must humble themselves.** Paul described Jesus as one who humbled himself:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient

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unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8).

Following the Lord's example, Christians must be willing to humble themselves in order to serve God. Paul admonished the elders at Ephesus to serve the Lord "*with all humility*" (Acts 20:19). Serving God with humility involves putting away selfish desires and submitting wholly to the Will of God. Peter wrote that Christians should humble themselves under God's mighty hand (1 Peter 5:6-7). "*God giveth grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God*" (James 4:6b-7a). Christians are to put on "*humbleness of mind*" (Col. 3:12). Humility will allow for proper service rendered to God and for proper evangelism to the lost.

**To follow the right way, Christians must evangelize.** Christians are not to think more highly of themselves than anyone else (Rom. 12:3). All people need to hear how to get on the right path. The duty of a Christian is to teach as many as possible how to get on that path. Christians will do this by letting their lights shine to others through a righteous influence (Matt. 5:16), as well as through individual Bible studies, and teaching and preaching the gospel message (Mark 16:15-16). The destiny of souls is at stake (Matt. 16:26; James 5:19-20)! Those souls who are not on the right track must be taught the truth and exhorted to choose righteousness!

**To follow the right way, Christians must trust in God.** Solomon wrote, "*whoso trusteth in the Lord happy is he*" (Prov. 16:20). To trust in God is to make God's way your way (cf. Prov. 3:5-6). The Bible says that fools seek their own way (Prov. 12:15; 26:12; 28:26). When prayers are lifted up to God, those who trust Him

are confident in the fact that God hears and answers their prayers. Confidence in the final destination of the right path is a direct result of trust in the One who promised the reward. Christians must trust God in order to lead righteous lives.

### Conclusion

Solomon's words are timeless and life's choices are crucial. Satan makes it easy to be deceived, yet God has provided the righteous way that leads to life. Solomon exhorted those of his time and exhorts us today to know the truth:

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Ezekiel 3:17-21**

*This Chapter Written By*

***B. J. Clarke***

## **Introduction**

One of the classic texts of Old Testament Scripture is Ezekiel 3:17-21. The text is a record of a charge given to Ezekiel by the word of the Lord:

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his

righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezek. 3:17-21).

In the preceding verses God tells Ezekiel that He is sending him to preach to a hard-headed, obstinate, rebellious people (Ezek. 3:1-10). Essentially, God says to Ezekiel, *"You can preach your heart out to them, but they are not going to listen. Nevertheless, preach your heart out to them anyway so that they will know that a prophet has been among them."*

After hearing these words, *"the spirit"* lifted Ezekiel up and took him away (3:11-14). Ezekiel came to the captives at the river Chebar and was absolutely *"astonished"* at what he saw; he was so astonished that he sat in their midst for seven days (3:15). It was at the end of this seven days that the Lord gave Ezekiel the Divine charge contained in our assigned text.

### **"I Have Made Thee A Watchman"**

When God said, *"I have made thee a watchman"* Ezekiel had no difficulty comprehending the concept. In Ezekiel's time, watchmen were a visible part of daily living.

Watchmen were stationed on city walls, hilltops, or specially designed watchtowers. A watchman was to be on the alert for approaching enemies and warn the city's people of any impending attack. This gave city dwellers outside the walls an opportunity to

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seek protection and gave the people time to secure the gates and man the defenses.

Historically, watchmen were by no means new to the time of Ezekiel. As David awaited news concerning the condition of Absalom, he

sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone. And the watchman cried and told the king... (2 Sam. 18:24-25).

Another example is recorded in the book of 2 Kings. As Jehu approached Jezreel with every intention of killing King Joram, *"there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company"* (2 Kings 9:17). The king dispatched a messenger to determine the identity of this company and their intent (2 Kings 9:17). The watchman continued to watch and informed the king that the first messenger *"came to them, but he cometh not again"* (2 Kings 9:18). A second messenger was sent and the watchman continued to watch. He informed the king that the second messenger had not returned either, and went on to add that the driving of the chariot *"is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously"* (2 Kings 9:20).

Upon hearing this, the king immediately made ready his chariot and, along with Ahaziah, king of Judah, went out to meet Jehu (2 Kings 9:21). He asked Jehu if he was coming in peace at which point Jehu's reply alerted the king that his life was in danger. He tried to flee and warn Ahaziah that they had driven into a trap, but Jehu shot Joram to

death with an arrow (2 Kings 9:23-24).

In the context of our subject it is important to note that Joram's death was in no way shape or form the fault of his watchman. The watchman had done his job to inform Joram of the approaching chariot. The watchman had not been asleep at his post. He had diligently carried out his duty to inform the king of everything that he saw. Thus, the watchman was not accountable for the king's death!

From a spiritual perspective, God often employed the imagery of a watchman to describe His prophets. Consider the following passages:

Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion (Isa. 52:8).

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, (Isa. 62:6).

Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken (Jer. 6:17).

### **The Responsibility Of The Watchman To God**

It would indeed be a rich study to explore all that the Old Testament reveals concerning the responsibility of the spiritual watchman to God. However, for the sake of time and space we must confine our comments in this chapter to the responsibilities of a watchman which God enjoined upon Ezekiel.



1. Ezekiel was responsible to the One Who had made him a watchman. The word *"therefore"* in Ezekiel 3:17 is significant because it provides the reason for the charge which follows. God tells Ezekiel, *"hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me"* (3:17). Why should Ezekiel obey this commandment? Essentially, God says, *"I am the One Who has made you a watchman. You are under my authority; therefore, hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me."*

2. Ezekiel's responsibility was to listen to God's words of warning and to convey those words to God's people. Matthew Henry explains,

He must not, as other watchmen, look round to spy danger and gain intelligence, but he must look up to God, and further he need not look.

God emphasizes to Ezekiel, *"give them warning from me"* (3:17). One commentator has noted that the unusual thing about the use of the image of the watchman in Ezekiel *"is that God is both the one who appoints the protective watchman and the one against whom the people must be protected."*

### **The Accountability Of The Watchman**

Of course, as noted above, the watchman is ultimately accountable to God for how he carries out his duties. Consequently, the watchman is accountable to declare God's warnings wherever, whenever and to whomever God directs. To whom did God send His watchman?

1. The watchman was accountable to the wicked. God told Ezekiel:

When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezek. 3:18-19).

God tells the wicked *"Thou shalt surely die"* and thus the watchman's task is truly a matter of life or death. The watchman must warn the wicked man of his impending death. The purpose of the warning is *"to save his life."* Incidentally, this shows that the watchman's message was a balanced one: *"if you continue in sin you will die, but there is hope. You may save your life by changing your ways!"*

Whether the watchman sounded the warning was also a matter of life and death—his own! God made it crystal clear to Ezekiel: if you do not warn the wicked, if you do not speak to warn him to depart from his wicked way, then the same wicked man will die in his iniquity; *"but his blood will I require at thine hand"* (3:18). It is important to observe that the watchman would not be lost because the wicked man died in his sins. Rather, the watchman would be lost because he failed to discharge his duty to send forth a warning to the wicked man who died in his sins.

This principle is further substantiated in Ezekiel 33 wherein God instructed Ezekiel to speak to the people and remind them of the crucial significance of the watchman:

Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand (Ezek. 33:1-6).

As long as the sentry sounded out the warning he was not accountable for any deaths that might occur during a military invasion. Spiritually speaking, the principle was the same. Thus God told Ezekiel, *"Yet if thou warn the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul"* (3:19; cf. 33:9).

2. The watchman was accountable to the righteous. God told Ezekiel:

Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he

shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezek. 3:20-21).

At first glance it might appear curious that the watchman would be expected to warn the righteous. After all, if a man is righteous why would he need to be warned? The answer is that, according to God, it is possible for a righteous man to turn away from his righteousness, and commit iniquity (3:20; 33:13, 18). God also reveals that if a righteous man turns from righteousness to wickedness "*he shall even die thereby*" (33:18; cf. 3:20).

Numerous commentators with a Calvinistic, once saved always saved predisposition, have insisted that this must be a reference only to physical death because, according to their theology, once a man is righteous he can never so sin as to die spiritually. However, their argument is one of desperation more than one of proper interpretation. We have already explored the teaching of Ezekiel 3 and Ezekiel 33 on this matter. Additionally, consider the following words from Ezekiel 18:

But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall

not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die (Ezek. 18:24-26).

The denominational quibble is that if a man falls away he was never truly saved in the first place. However, this passage teaches that a righteous man may turn away from his righteousness and commit iniquity. The passage does not say that he was only pretending to be righteous and that he had never truly left his iniquity in the first place. Furthermore, were Adam and Eve righteous when God made them or did He make unrighteous human beings and place them in the Garden of Eden? Of course, Adam and Eve were righteous when God made them! Did Adam and Eve become unrighteous? Of course they did! Did they die spiritually when they sinned? Absolutely (Rom. 5:12)! The assumption that a righteous man cannot become unrighteous is just that—an assumption without any scriptural foundation.

But is the death experienced by the righteous man who became unrighteous merely a physical death? It is obviously more than a physical death because the righteous man is going to die physically whether he turns to wickedness or not. All men are going to die physically, whether they be righteous or wicked (Heb. 9:27). If the reference to death in Ezekiel 3, 18 and 33 is only a reference to physical

death, then how is the righteous man, who never turns back to wickedness, any better off than the righteous man who turns to wickedness, since both are going to die physically?

The Scriptural fact of the matter is that when a righteous man turns to wickedness, and dies physically in that condition, he also dies spiritually. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) and the second death is the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8). Therefore, every effort must be expended by the watchman to warn him either, not to pursue such a path, or to turn back to the right path.

But what if the watchman fails to warn the righteous man who has become wicked of the peril of his way? Again, God warns the watchman,

...because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand (3:20).

Hence, we have two spiritual deaths rather than just one. On the other hand, God said to Ezekiel,

...if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul (3:21).

In such a case, both the watchman and the warned enjoy spiritual life rather than death.

Thus we have seen four different scenarios in these verses from Ezekiel 3:17-21. (1) We have seen

the case of a wicked person who does not repent because the watchman has given no warning; (2) We have seen the case of a wicked person who does not repent although the watchman has given him/her warning; (3) We have seen the case of a righteous man turning away from his righteousness and never receiving a warning from the watchman and (4) We have seen the case of a righteous man who remains righteous because he is strengthened by the warnings of the watchman.

Noticeably absent from the above list of cases is the case of a wicked man who turns from his wickedness because he has been warned by the watchman. The absence of such a case in Ezekiel 3:17-21 does not mean that wicked men will never heed the warnings of a watchman and turn from their wickedness. In fact, Ezekiel 18:21 depicts a wicked man turning from all his sins and doing that which is lawful and right; consequently, *"he shall surely live, he shall not die."* Apparently, the reason such is not depicted in Ezekiel 3:17-21 is due to the hardness of heart possessed by these particular hearers of Ezekiel's message (3:7-9).

### **Does God Expect New Testament Christians To Be Watchmen?**

The Old Testament was written for our learning (Rom. 15:4) but not for our law (Rom. 7:1-4). We live under the New Testament today (Heb. 9:15-17). Are there any passages in the New Testament which enjoin watchfulness upon God's followers today?

In his farewell statements to the Ephesian elders, the apostle Paul expressed a principle similar to the

one found in Ezekiel. He told them:

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27).

Paul had been a faithful watchman. He had issued every warning God gave him to give. Hence, after warning the elders of coming apostasy even among them, he said,

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:31).

He told the Colossians that he preached Christ *"warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus"* (Col. 1:28). Hence, preachers are watchmen in the sense that they warn their hearers. Paul's example makes it clear that preachers can be faithful watchmen and compassionate at the same time. Paul warned with tears (Acts 20:31; Phil. 3:18); so must we combine our warnings with genuine love for the souls of all men, both righteous and wicked!

We have seen that elders and preachers are to be watchmen, but what about members in general? The New Testament, which applies to all Christians, commands us to strengthen the saved (Heb. 3:13). We are also commanded to warn the wayward.

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. Bear ye



one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ (Gal. 6:1-2).

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20).

The sum of these verses is that: (1) It is our responsibility to seek to restore one who has been overtaken in a fault; (2) It is our responsibility to seek to convert the sinner from the error of his way.

Could language be any plainer? If we have any respect for the Bible at all, then we will recognize that warning the wanderer is not optional—it is mandatory! No matter the excuse, if we wish to honor God's will, we must sound the warning!

### **Conclusion**

Brother W. A. Bradfield often said that there are two primary reasons why we do not seek the lost more than we do: (1) We do not really believe that they are lost; (2) We do not really believe that we will be lost if we fail to seek the lost. This is certainly true regarding why more effort is not expended to warn righteous men and women who have turned away from their righteousness. Grasping the significance of the first three words of James 5:20, "*let him know,*" is critical to possessing the proper motivation to carry out our duties as watchmen. What should we know? We should know that if we convert a sinner from the error of his way we are saving a soul from death!

Thus, warning the wicked is still, centuries after Ezekiel, a matter of life and death, spiritual life and death! Heaven and hell are real! We need to come to grips with the fact that if our erring brethren are not restored, they are going to suffer the pain of everlasting punishment in the lake of fire! Moreover, if we do not obey the mandate from God to warn these brethren, then we are going to suffer eternal torment as well! When we fully appreciate this fact, then we will be sufficiently motivated faithfully discharge the duties of a watchman!

### *B. J. Clarke*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Amos 3:3**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Don Walker***

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

## **Introduction**

**T**he Prophet Amos was from the southern Kingdom, but was called to prophesy to The Northern Kingdom. He proclaimed,

I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel (Amos 7:14-15).

He may not have been a prophet, but prophesy he did. Brother Johnny Ramsey once said concerning this great prophet (who was one of his favorite), "*Amos would not have lasted but about half way through Bible class in a lot of congregations.*" In considering who this great man was, we are reminded of the prophet Elijah or even the one who went before the Lord, John the baptizer. He was well suited to deal with God's wayward rebellious people.

His preparation for service was unique. He did not attend a college or a prophet school. As mentioned earlier, he was a "*herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit*". He was an herdsman of an ugly and difficult sheep which provided very fine wool. He also tended a sycamore fruit which necessitated each piece of fruit to be pierced before it would ripen. The difficulties associated with his work well suited him to deal with God's wayward rebellious people of the Northern Kingdom, Israel.

Concerning the context of our statement, it is the first of many questions that lead's to Amos proclaiming to be consistent he could do nothing but prophesy against them. The great Jehovah had called him to the task, the lion had roared, and in his words he said, "*Who can but prophesy?*" He had no other course of action to pursue. It is interesting to contrast Amos with Jonah on this point. Where we see Jonah trying to run the opposite direction and even after that showing great reluctance and dismay at fulfilling the task, Amos heard the roar and he jumped full head into the task at hand. Thank God for men like Amos! We have too many Jonah's and not enough Amos' in the Lords church. We are not necessarily speaking of those who will speak false doctrine per se, but rather those that will not preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20, 27). They will not teach error, but when it comes to the controversial they will sit silent while their brethren go out to battle. Like Epaphroditus they may be a "*brother*" and even a "*companion in labor*", but unlike this faithful brother they can not be described as a "*fellowsoldier*" (Phil. 2:25). The Lord's church needs

men to stand up and be counted for the cause of Christ. God give us men.

Now let us turn our attention to Amos 3:3 and not only notice this sublime passage but also see some of the great lessons that can be gleaned from these powerful words of God.

### **Can Two Walk Together?**

Certainly we see the association this passage has with fellowship. As we consider this statement in the broadest sense we would consider it first from the vantage point of fellowship with our God. *"Can two walk together"* could also be expressed this way, *"Can we have fellowship with God?"* What a glorious thought that is expressed by this question. To think that sinful man could stand in the presence of God. To think that man could not only associate with God but also could participate with God in God's plan and His work. It overwhelms us when we spend time meditating on such a rich truth. Can we have fellowship with God? The answer is *"Most definitely, yes!"*

In the Book of Genesis we learn of Enoch who *"walked with God"* (Gen. 5:22). In Luke's account of the Gospel it says the parents of John the Baptist *"were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"* (Luke 1:6). Yes we can walk with God.

It thrills our souls to think of it. John's words cause the faithful to rejoice with great awe. Consider 1 John 1:1-4.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

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(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

At great cost Jehovah provided for us the opportunity to walk together with Him.

John also introduces the fellowship that results in our fellowship with God. That is, we have fellowship with those who also have fellowship with our God. Paul expressed Heaven's desire when he heard of the problems of division that existed in the Corinthian church. He wrote,

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you (1 Cor. 1:10-11).

Paul often spoke of how his heart so desired the unity that is necessary for the people of God. He wrote,

Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind (Phil. 2:2).

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Again in Ephesians 4, Paul wrote that we should be *“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Eph. 4:3). Again, Paul called for the unity that is so special between the people of God to the Colossians when he wrote, *“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love”* (Col. 2:2). Paul was not the only one who expressed his desire for unity among the people of God.

Jesus also expressed His desire for the believers when He addressed the Father in prayer.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20).

Not only does Jesus express the desire He has for unity, but He also introduces another rich truth. He also speaks of the example of perfect unity provided by our God. In that great context of *“ones”* that is revealed in Ephesians we see that great example of unity.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. 4:4-6).

Note one Spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father of all are spoken of in these verses – The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We will mention just two areas in which we see this marvelous unity. First we see the unity in Deity’s creative work. God the

Father was the architect, the Son was the creator of something from nothing and the Holy Spirit was the organizer or the garnisher. We can also see the unity in Deity's redemptive work. God the Father devised the plan, Christ the Son provided the power through His blood and the Holy Spirit revealed the plan.

We, as the children of God, are responsible to also strive for the great unity that is shown by our God. We see an example of it in Galatians 2:9. Paul said,

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

There was a different focus in work, but there was a grand fellowship in what was done and what was accomplished. Even when we see Paul and Barnabas having a sharp contention in Acts 15, which led to their going in different directions, they both continued in their fellowship of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Yes we must see the value and joy that can come from brethren being united in the cause of Christ.

### **The Beauty, Power And Necessity Of Fellowship**

One of the most sublime of the Psalms is Psalm 133. It was a Psalm of degrees which meant it was sung by those who were gathering for the special occasions of the Jews. David wrote,



Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

First David expresses the utilitarian purpose (how good) and aesthetic beauty (how pleasant) that exists when brethren are united. However he does not stop there. First he illustrates the aesthetic beauty. David said, "*It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard.*" It must have been a very pleasant thing to stand near Aaron during the preparations and offerings of the sacrifices where the mixture of ointments and spices blended together for the sweet smell of the ointment. It was not necessary (other than the fact that God revealed it), to the offering of the sacrifices. Yet it must have been very pleasant.

Then, David illustrates the utilitarian purpose. Brethren dwelling together in unity are like "*the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.*" In this arid region where rain was not always common, the vegetation and plant life was dependant upon the dew. If the dew did not come, the plant life and thus the people would suffer. It was a necessity. Thus of the unity that should depict the children of God, we see it is not only a pleasant thing, but also a good and needed thing.

Yet it is very interesting how David concludes this Psalm. He wrote, *"For there the Lord commanded the blessing."* Concerning the question, *"Can we have fellowship with God?"* we would answer, *"Not only can we but we must walk (have fellowship) with God!"*

### **...Except They Be Agreed**

Our God has certainly blessed us in many ways. One of the greatest blessings we have is access to His revealed Word. Paul told the Jews they had a great advantage because they had the Old Law entrusted to them. Then the Hebrew writer proclaimed the superior blessings of the New Testament to the Old Testament. Every man, woman and child has access to the Bible, the precious Word of God. In fact it is the complete revelation of a God who loves and cares for us.

Our God chose to reveal Himself to us. In that revelation, He makes His Sovereignty known. Concerning the sovereignty of God, Brother Wayne Jackson writes these words.

God is sovereign over all created beings (cf. Rev. 4:11). The term *"sovereign"* has to do with Jehovah's right to exercise authority over all his creation according to the pleasure of his will (Psm. 115:3). The earth is his, and the fullness thereof (Psm. 24:1).

No one has a right to dispute with God about how he exercises his will (Isa. 45:9; Dan. 4:35). This is one of the profound lessons from the book of Job (see 38:2; 40:8). Moreover, the Lord's ways are beyond human analysis (Rom. 11:33).

Jackson, Wayne. (2002), Who Controls The Kingdoms Of This World: Christian Courier Website - [http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/read/who\\_controls\\_the\\_kingdoms\\_of\\_this\\_world](http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/read/who_controls_the_kingdoms_of_this_world)

Not only has He revealed His sovereignty, but He has also revealed His will. When we study God's Word, we learn of God and His character and His nature. We also learn of His will and when carefully studied we see how magnificently consistent He and His law for man are. Now what we must realize is sovereignty plus revelation equals obligation. We can walk together with our God but we must be in agreement with our God to do it.

We must agree in speech: James wrote,

For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body (James 3:2).

It is a shame that too often we speak up when we should hush up and hush up when we should speak up. The gospel must be preached and taught and too often we stand quietly by (Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 4:2). We are the church and thus we stand as the "*pillar and ground of truth*" or rather the "*bulwark of truth*" (2 Tim. 3:15). And yet as truth stands under constant attack we sit too often silently by. Then we find, not only outside of the church but in the church, false teachers abound. Men's doctrines are taught as God's truth and another transgression of the tongue occurs (Titus 2:1; 2 Tim. 4:2; Eph. 4:15).

In all of the above we still have not addressed

what is probably the most reprehensible of all. That is the way we slander, attack, and harm our brethren with our tongues. Lying, gossiping, backbiting, bearing tales, and just flat out ugliness. Jesus said, *"that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment"* (Matt. 12:36). What a sobering thought it is to consider that all that I have said that is out of line in one way or another will be considered in the day of judgment.

Then we must also be in agreement in our speech when we consider the positive things that must be done. Exhortation, edification, reproving and rebuking are all responsibilities that the spiritual have one toward another. And if we want to walk with God, we must be agreed in our speech.

We must be agreed in action: Those things that we do here on earth must be in agreement with our God if we wish to walk with Him. Jesus went about doing good while here on earth (Acts 10:38), and so too must we. In Ephesians two, Paul informs us, that we have been saved by grace for a reason. He wrote,

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:8).

John emphasized for us how righteousness is something that must be done.

If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him (1 John 2:29).

Again he said,

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous (1 John 3:7).

If we want to walk with God, then we must agree with Him by "*doing righteousness*" or by those things that are right.

But there is another direction that must be followed in this study. That is, there are things that we can not do if we wish to be in agreement with God. Our God is a holy God and that certainly applies to our God. It is no surprise then, we must also be "*holy as He is holy*" (1 Peter 1:16). Peter outlines how that can be accomplished very well in verses 14 and 15).

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

Not only do we see obedience mentioned, but there is also abstinence. There are some things that must be done and some things that cannot be done if we wish to be in agreement with our God and thus able to walk with Him.

We must be agreed in thought: Really we see the import of this when we understand that the Bible says concerning a man, "*as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*" (Prov. 23:7). Really, it is the mind that serves as the well-spring for the actions and the speech. When a man meditates on

whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are

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just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report (Phil. 4:8),

then he can be in agreement with God. If, however, he fills his mind with the filth of this world, then he will most definitely not be in agreement or in fellowship with God. Paul wrote concerning this point in Ephesians four.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Eph. 4:17-19).

If we are to be in agreement with God and thus able to walk with Him, then we must remove the vile from our mind and we must fill it with that which is associated with our God.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, we would emphasize that there will be agreement in one area. Jesus said,

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 (Matt. 10:32-33).

One day when we stand before our God, there will be a marvelous consistence. If we have not confessed Christ, then neither will He confess us. Each one of us must agree, this is only right because *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"*

### *Don Walker*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Ezekiel 33:7-9**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Stan Stevenson***

**W**e express our appreciation to the leadership of the East Hill church and to all who have a part in conducting this annual lectureship. The true measure of its full impact for good will not be known on time's side of eternity.

The text assigned for this lecture is, Ezekiel 33:7-9, which reads,

So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked [man], thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked [man] shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

## The Context

Ezekiel, a priest (Ezek. 1:3), had been carried into Babylonian captivity with the second wave of captives out of Judah. Unlike Daniel, who was carried away earlier with the first wave of captives and put in training to serve the Babylonians, Ezekiel was among the captives by the river Chebar (Ezek. 1:1). In his prophetic work, he first announced judgment against Judah (chs. 1-24). Next, he turned his attention to the surrounding nations (chs. 25-32). Finally, he again directs his message against Judah, but with the assurance that the captivity will end and Judah will be restored if they will return to Jehovah (chs. 33-48).

## Some Concepts

First, we note the responsibility of a watchman. The work of a watchman was extremely important, as described in 33:1-6. He was stationed so as to watch for any approaching enemy or invading army. When he saw such, he was to warn his fellow-citizens of the enemy's approach. If they did not heed his warning, he would be innocent of their blood, even though they died. But, if he did not warn, and they died, their blood would be upon his hands. God had set Ezekiel for a watchman for Israel (3:17; 33:7). In thinking of the modern application of this principle, we might ask, "*Who are the spiritual watchmen today?*" Preachers and teachers of the Gospel would be watchmen today, as those who must sound the warning against sin in their preaching and teaching. After having spent many months preaching in Ephesus, Paul could confidently say,

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27).

Note that Ezekiel was to "*hear the word at my mouth*" (v. 7), that is, the mouth of God. So Ezekiel would not be preaching his doctrine or his opinions, but the word of God. So, Paul could say that he was pure from the blood of all, because he likewise had preached "*all the counsel of God.*" He had not preached his doctrine, or his opinions. Paul recognized that if he had not so preached, then it would be possible that someone might be lost because Paul did not address their sins or their situation in life. Preachers and teachers today must preach and teach all that God has said. Yet, there are those who will not address some subjects. There are congregations wherein the preaching and teaching that is done is the truth, but they do not address the whole truth.

Secondly, elders are God's watchmen today. The writer of Hebrews specifically referred to them as those who "*watch for your souls*" (Heb. 13:17). One of the words applied to the men who lead the congregation is "*pastors*" (Eph. 4:11). Thayer says the original word translated "*pastor*" means "*a herdsman, especially a shepherd.*" The elders of the Ephesian church were to "*take heed*" to themselves and to "*all the flock,*" and they were to "*feed,*" literally, "*to tend as a shepherd.*" The elders serve under the "*Chief Shepherd*" (1 Peter 5:4). And note that the writer of Hebrews says that they serve "*as they that must give an account*" (Heb. 13:17). The Lord is going to look to those men to see how they have taken care of His

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sheep that He has entrusted to their care. Since the preachers and teachers of a congregation serve under the oversight of the elders, they will certainly give an account of the kind of teaching and preaching done on their watch. If all the counsel of God is not presented, they will be held responsible, in addition to the preacher or teacher who failed to so do.

But, again, every Christian is a watchman. Note Paul's words,

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men (1 Thess. 5:14).

You will take note that this is addressed to the brethren, not just the elders, or the preachers and teachers, but to all the brethren. Paul told the Galatians,

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. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:1-2).

Paul told the church at Rome, *"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another"* (Rom. 12:5). Putting these thoughts together we see that as members of the body of Christ, we are joined together. Just as we are concerned about every member of our physical body, so we are concerned about every member of the spiritual body. When one member is overtaken in a fault, we will want to restore that member. We will want to warn those members who are unruly. In so doing, we are helping

to watch for their soul that they will not forfeit their inheritance. Should we not be grateful for those brothers and sisters who love us enough to help watch out for our spiritual welfare? Whether the elders, the preachers and teachers, or any other Christian, we are fortunate when they care for our souls and warn us of dangers and exhort us toward righteousness.

A second concept we see is that the word of God is the standard for right and wrong. Ezekiel would hear God's word and thereby be able to warn of impending sin. How else would Ezekiel know that sin was at hand? How else would he know of impending judgment against sin? In the temptation to turn stones into bread, Jesus answered with, *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4). How do we know that which we are to avoid and from which we are to abstain? How do we know that which we are to do? We live by the word of God. Just as Ezekiel was to hear the word from the mouth of God, so we live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Isaiah warned, *"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil..."* (Isa. 5:20). We read in Proverbs, *"He that justified the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord"* (17:15). Peter said, *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..."* (1 Peter 4:11). Note, that Peter says, *"if any man speaks."* This is not limited to the preacher, or the elders, but to any person who would speak. How often have we spoken of things that people ought or ought not to do? Are we speaking as the oracles of God? If we say that something is right, we must say it because God says it is right. Likewise, if we

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say something is wrong, we must say it because God has declared it to be wrong. Though Paul knew that people would turn away from hearing the truth, he told Timothy to "*preach the word*" (2 Tim. 4:1-4). The word of God is the standard of our conduct for it will be the standard used to judge us at the last day (John 12:48).

Another concept that confronts us is the reality of the judgment of sin. As a watchman, Ezekiel was admonished to warn the wicked, but if he did not the wicked would still die. It was not the rejection of the warning that condemned the wicked to die. The wicked were under condemnation because of their iniquity. The remedy was to heed the warning and turn away from the iniquity. While the warning to Ezekiel was to impress him with his accountability for failing to warn the wicked, his failure to do so would not deliver the wicked from a just punishment for iniquity. From this concept we may find help in answering the oft asked question of what will happen to those who have never heard the gospel. No man will serve as another's judge at the Day of Judgment. None of us will have the final say in any person's eternal destiny. We take comfort in the confidence of Abraham when he said, "*...shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*" (Gen. 18:25). Indeed, God will do what is right with every one of us. But, there is nothing in the Bible to offer hope to those who have not obeyed the gospel. Paul wrote,

...in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. People are not lost because they have not obeyed the gospel. They are lost because they have

sinned. The gospel is God's answer (Rom. 1:16).

In John 3:17, we read,

For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

Jesus did not condemn the world when He came into the world; man was already condemned because of sin. Jesus was the remedy for that sin. Just as Ezekiel did not condemn the wicked by warning them, so we do not condemn folks when we preach the gospel to them. We are offering them the only remedy for their sins.

Yet another concept that confronts us is the necessity of repentance to be delivered from destruction. Ezekiel was to sound the warning and the wicked had to let the warning so affect them that they turned from the wickedness. It was not enough to hear the warning, or to assent to its truthfulness. Unless the message led to abandoning their wickedness, the wicked would die (33:7, 8). Here is a description of repentance. A fitting picture of repentance is seen in the Thessalonians. Paul said, ". . . and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God..." (1 Thess. 1:9). The next verse tells us they were delivered from the wrath to come. So by hearing the gospel and turning away from their idolatry, they were delivered from death. That is the desire for all mankind, as Peter wrote,

The Lord is not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that

any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Repentance here stands in the place of all that one does in obeying the gospel and living faithfully.

One final concept to consider in the verses before us is the sovereignty of God. Both the watchman and the wicked were ultimately accountable to God. Ezekiel's commission was from God (33:7) and he was accountable to God (33:8). God would judge him regarding his announcing of the warning. Likewise, the wicked were being warned of impending death and they would be judged no matter what. If they heard the message, they would be held accountable for how they applied the message. But, inevitably, both would be called to judgment before God. Paul wrote, *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Rom. 14:12). And again, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ..."* (2 Cor. 5:10). To the Athenians, Paul said, *"Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness..."* (Acts 17:31). It is because we must give account of ourselves to God that we should give attention to our responsibility to one another as a watchman, using the Bible as the standard by which to admonish and warn one another, and readily and speedily repenting when we stand guilty of sin lest we have to endure the judgment for sin.

### **Conclusion**

In a way, Ezekiel 33:7-9 pictures for us the gist of the Bible. Man has sinned against God. He, in turn, has given warning through His word. From the beginning of time, when man has sinned, God



has reached out to him with the offer of forgiveness. Those who hear His word and heed its message will find deliverance from judgment for sin. But, the message must be heard. May those of us who have been blessed to hear and to know the word of God give diligence to warn all that we can that they might have opportunity to render obedience.

### *Stan Stevenson*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# ***Lamentations 1:12***

*This Chapter Written By*

***Robert Hatfield***

Jeremiah had proclaimed God's word for forty years prior to the Babylonian invasion, but to no avail; the people would not listen. The Israelites had fallen into a dangerous state, for they had developed within themselves an indifference to the law of God, and refused to harken unto Jeremiah's warnings. Jeremiah's words send chills to modern day readers:

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?  
behold, and see if there be any sorrow  
like unto my sorrow, which is done unto  
me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me  
in the day of his fierce anger (Lam 1:12).

How had God's people fallen into so horrible a state? Has modern man heeded Jeremiah's warning and learned from the rebellious people of the past? This study will note four attributes of Israel's condition: the sin, the sorrow, the shouts, and the sentence.

## **The Sin**

Jeremiah noted, "*Jerusalem hath grievously sinned*" (Lam. 1:8). It was not a single sin that brought about God's wrath, but a series of rebellious actions. Truly

it was the "*multitude of her transgressions*" (Lam. 1:5) which caused the just hand of God to outpour His wrath upon the city. The repetitive acts of transgression denote the people's indifferent attitude. Interested in their own pleasures and worldly gain, the people of Jerusalem detached themselves from God's will.

The sin of indifference exists today. Satan dilutes man's spiritual senses, causing a misunderstanding of the seriousness of sin. As Christians today look around at the world's moral decline, they share Jeremiah's sentiments: "*is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?*"

God's view of sin is unmistakable. The sinful actions of men caused God sorrow in having created mankind (Gen. 6:5-7). "*For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God*" (Deut. 25:16). God hates sin (Prov. 6:16-19; Rev. 2:6). David clearly explained God's attitude toward sin:

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: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man (Psm. 5:4-6).

Man cannot fool himself into thinking that an indifferent attitude is acceptable to Almighty God. Christians are to keep themselves as far from sin as is possible (1 Thess. 5:22).

The Israelites teach Christians today that it is possible for the righteous to fall. The doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy teaches that the Christian

needs not worry about his spiritual state following his baptism, for God has chosen that person, thus making it impossible for him to slip back to sin in God's eyes. This doctrine is simply not true. The Israelites provide clear evidence that God's people are still subject to fall away. Concerning the Israelites, it is said, "*while living in close proximity of the Temple, they were far removed from its builder*" (Jer. 7:4). (McCann, 278). Created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), human beings possess an ability – given by God – to choose the right way or the wrong way.

The frequency of warnings found within the New Testament are clear proof that Christians may fall away. Paul warned first century Christians to "*take heed*" (hold upon; give close attention to) lest they, through neglect of spiritual matters, fall away (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 10:12; 1 Tim. 4:16). God's people who fall away, leaving sins uncovered at the time of their death, should beware the severity of God (Rom. 11:22). Why would John warn concerning those who "*walk in darkness*" (1 John 1:6) if it were impossible for Christians to fall out of the light?

Jeremiah stood witness to God's own people falling away, failing to heed forty years of his pleadings. The wise man wrote, "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Prov. 14:34). Have Christians made this modern application from Lamentations?

## The Sorrow

One cannot imagine the sorrow undertaken by God's weeping servant in this difficult time. Jeremiah had reason to weep as the people continually rejected the will of God, saying, "*we will not walk therein*" (Jer.

6:16). In four different chapters God told Jeremiah to cease praying on behalf of the wicked nation (cf. Jer. 7:16). It must have deeply hurt Jeremiah to have to declare about his own people,

This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth (Jer. 7:28).

There is no doubt but what Jeremiah's spirits were heavy with the weight of Judah's neglect and pride.

Additionally, the people of Judah, realizing the error of their ways, expressed sorrow for their sinful actions. They realized their dependency upon God, and remembered the former days when God showered blessings upon His people. Jeremiah noted Jerusalem's former days in Lamentations 1:1-2:

- The city, once full of people, sat solitary.
- The city, once great among the nations, was tributary.
- The city that was once joyful wept.
- The city that was once the spouse of the Lord was widowed.
- The city that was once rich in friends had become friendless.

Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old (Lam. 1:7).

Judah remembered a time when God blessed her and cared for her needs.

The people could have avoided this disaster had they been righteous! The people admitted, "*The Lord*

is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment" (Lam. 1:18). Two verses later the same sorrow is expressed: "...for I have grievously rebelled" (Lam. 1:20).

The message is the same for New Testament Christians of every age. God's children must "*hunger and thirst after righteousness*" (Matt. 5:6). Christians ought to be willing to help one another to strive toward righteousness (Gal. 6:1-2). It is interesting to note the phrase "*one another*" is found 43 times in the King James translation of the New Testament. Testifying of the concern Christian brethren are to have for each other, many of these 43 New Testament passages contain admonitions to love one another (John 13:34, etc.), greet one another (2 Cor. 13:12, etc.), salute one another (Rom. 16:16), prefer one another (Rom. 10:12), consider one another (Heb. 10:24), and exhort one another (Heb. 3:13). If only the Israelites had the same care for each other as was shown for them by Jeremiah!

### The Shouts

Someone said, "*when the righteous fall, the unrighteous rejoice.*" The shouts were those of the ungodly as they rejoiced at the downfall of God's chosen people. "*[T]he adversaries saw her, and did mock her*" (Lam. 1:7). They said,

...Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth? All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed her up: certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it (Lam. 2:15-16).

Enemies of God's people wait to attack until a weakened condition is detected. The enemy attacked, God's people were put to shame by their sinful actions, and Jeremiah wept (Lam. 1:21).

Satan has not changed his ways over time. All Christians – weak and strong – will be tempted by Satan (1 Peter 5:8). It is during a weakened, unguarded state that Satan is able to do the most damage to a soul. Jesus said that the enemies would “*say all manner of evil against*” God's people, but the Lord noted that one is blessed only when such accusations are falsely made (Matt. 5:10-11). As representatives of Christ, how do Christians represent Christ and the church when they possess an indifferent attitude?

- Their lights no longer shine (Matt. 5:16).
- They stand in the darkness rather than walk in the light (1 John 1; Eph. 5:8).
- They no longer possess the qualities of servanthood and committed obedience, also known as the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:15).

Fallen Christians who possess an indifferent attitude provoke the shouts from the enemy. The world is waiting on God's faithful to sin. It is a serious thing when someone knows the right thing to do, but does not do it (James 4:17).

### **The Sentence**

Because of rebellious acts, resulting from an unwillingness to obey God and heed the warnings of the pleading prophet, the people of Israel were punished by God. Today, two extreme viewpoints are held concerning God's justice.

1. God is loving and merciful, therefore He is accepting of disobedient, sinful behavior.



2. God is able and extremely willing to punish the sinful, and He will do so impulsively, without any consideration.

This writer is thankful for the balanced Bible, which portrays the true picture of a loving, yet just God.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

God wants all men to be saved, which is why He gave His only begotten son (John 3:16-17). God has given to man the soul-saving gospel (Rom. 1:16). Yet, God has made it clear through the gospel that He will not save anyone who is disobedient to His will (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Man should not fail to note the balance between God's love and God's justice. God has shown His great love for man through the offering of His son and through the abundance of blessings He gives to mankind on a daily basis (James 1:17). This is the aspect of God's immeasurable love. Yet, as mentioned before, God is capable of punishing the sinful. God is supreme in all that He does, and men should be aware that God will supremely judge and supremely punish the unrighteous.

God's blessings were removed from the people of Israel because of their abundant and continual sin. God sentenced Israel to a period of time when God's

blessings would no longer be with this sinful nation. McCann notes, *"Sometimes something has to be taken away from us before we truly appreciate it"* (p. 278). They took for granted the rich blessings of God, so God took those blessings away (Lam. 1:12, 14). Why do some people claim that the withdrawal of the blessing of Christian fellowship is not the correct way to handle a fallen Christian who continually refuses to turn from sin and obey? This Old Testament example is parallel to what God has commanded Christians to do under the Law of Christ (2 Thess. 3:6)!

God supremely reigns over His creation. His love is supreme (as has been already noted). Additionally, His blessings are supreme. The people realized that they were dependent upon *"the comforter"* who was, because of sin, *"far from me"* (Lam. 1:16). Further, God's judgments are supreme. Even those sentenced by God's justice were quick to note God's righteousness: *"The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled..."* (Lam. 1:18). God's precepts do not change from day to day; He judges all men based upon the standard of His Word (John 12:48; Psm. 7:11). Too, God's reward is supreme. God is able to do for mankind, *"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"* (Eph. 3:20). Heaven is a place filled with the light, for God is there (Rev. 21:23). There will be happiness in heaven, for troubles and sorrows are over (Rev. 21:4). There will be no time limit, for heaven is eternal (Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:1). One cannot begin to describe the reward awaiting the faithful on the other side of eternity!

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him (1 Cor. 2:9).

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Finally, it is important to note that, just as His reward is supreme, God's punishment is supreme. Heaven will be an indescribably peaceful and happy place, but hell will be an indescribably sorrowful and painful place. There is no light, only darkness there (Matt. 25:30). There is no happiness, only weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12). There is no time limit, for hell is eternal (Matt. 10:28; 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:8-9; Heb. 6:12; Rev. 14:10-11).

God is also changeless (Lam. 5:19; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). To Christians today, this means the lessons learned in the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations are certainly applicable in this present age. God has not changed in His love for man. Judah had sinned, yet God was willing to forgive upon their turning from sin to walk His path. God has not changed in His reaction to, and hatred of, sin. Following God's punishment of sinful Judah, Jeremiah noted concerning the city, "*she came down wonderfully*" (Lam. 1:9). The word "*wonderfully*" must be understood differently than the meaning with which modern men may be accustomed. As the people looked upon the chastised city, they were amazed at her fallen condition. God had extended His wrath in reaction to His hatred for sin. Jeremiah noted God's "*fierce anger*" (Lam. 1:12) that was kindled against the people. Additionally, God is changeless in His position of righteousness and justness. "*Jehovah is righteous*" (Lam. 1:18) in every age; His just qualities have been clearly manifested throughout human history (Gen. 18:25; 1 John 1:9; 2 Thess. 3:3; Heb. 10:23; 2 Cor. 8:18; 1 Thess. 5:23-25; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; 10:13). God is changeless in His forgiveness. The eternal Father has promised that,

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Men are blessed to serve a changeless God who has made known His will.

## Conclusion

Has modern man heeded Jeremiah's warning and learned from the rebellious people of the past? Will Christians be motivated to teach and preach all around the globe – at home and abroad – because of their concern for lost souls? Will Christians look around and see opportunities of service in God's kingdom? If not, they should answer Jeremiah's question, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" (Lam. 1:12).

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### *Robert Hatfield*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **1 Kings 18:21**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Jimmy Clark***

**T**he ancient text under consideration in this lesson is the following:

And Elijah came to all the people, and said, How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him. But the people answered him not a word (1 Kings 18:21, NKJV).

Elijah further gave a way to prove which of the two could be confirmed as the true God. The challenge that Elijah made to the people of Israel was according to the instruction from God. The text states further down in the chapter,

And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word (1 Kings 18:36).

The northern kingdom of Israel was suffering under the evil leadership of Ahab and Jezebel accompanied with the spiritual bankrupt practice of Baal worship. While leadership may falter in its philosophy and practice, a nation can be brought to the light of truth through other leadership of a grand quality. Elijah stood on Mount Carmel that day as an example of truth and hope. There are several practical messages to be gained from Elijah's probing question and powerful qualities.

### **Challenging Convictions**

The world is going to continue to vacillate between various views of popular opinions. This is due to the fact that the world gropes in darkness as it travels down life's pathway. Jesus Himself said, "*he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth*" (John 12:35). Elijah stood before them as a beacon of light on the mount called Carmel to challenge their convictions. If the world is not shown the light by the people of God, who will show them? It becomes the responsibility of the people of God to shine bright before the world. Paul wrote,

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world (Phil. 2:14-15).

Light will always be a challenge to darkness as they are direct opposites. John's gospel has much to say about this contrast.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:1, 4-5).

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God (John 3:19-21).

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12).

Jesus said further, *"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"* (John 9:5).

Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him (John 11:9-10).

While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light (John 12:36).

Citizens of the kingdom of heaven are to be *"the light of the world"* (Matt. 5:13). Jesus exhorted,

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Paul wrote,

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (Eph. 5:6-8).

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians,

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation (1 Thess. 5:4-8).

The challenge of light before the presence of darkness is a distinctive conviction of truth before the masses of confusion.

Another probing insight of Elijah's challenge is seen in the use of questioning. Questions force the hearer to think and come to a conclusion. The confusion of the people was evident in that the question posed by Elijah received the response



of silence. The scriptures record many challenges through the use of questions. Moses wrote of God's words to Adam,

And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (Gen. 3:9-11).

When Adam pointed to the woman who led in the transgression, the text states,

And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat (Gen. 3:13).

None of those questions were for God's benefit. After Cain was not accepted by the Lord and he responded in a shameful way. The text again addresses God's questions,

Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him (Gen. 4:6-7).

Probing questions are a vital way to get to the heart of matters.

## **Confronting Though In The Minority**

Elijah stated of the two sides,

Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men (1 Sam. 18:22).

One against 450 is not good odds from a human standpoint. However, truth is not determined by the insights and numbers of men. A vital practical lesson throughout the Bible is that truth is most often with the minority.

The Old Testament is filled with the minority standing of the righteous. During the days of Gideon, it is stated,

So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley. And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand (Judges 7:8-9).

Jonathan, the son of king Saul, stated to his armor bearer,

Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few (1 Sam. 14:6).

Isaiah stated of the nation of Israel,

Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah (Isa. 1:9).

The New Testament gives equal expression to the righteous remnant.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

Again, *"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen"* (Matt. 20:16). This principle is repeated in Matthew 22:14. Peter wrote concerning the days of Noah and the flood,

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water (1 Peter 3:20).

Paul wrote of the saved,

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: (1 Cor. 1:26).

The majority status of religious thinking scattered over an array of beliefs may hold some credibility with men. Nevertheless, the truth of God, while

standing often in the minority, changes not. Elijah stood with God opposing the falsehood of Baal and stood victoriously.

## CONFIRMING AND COMPELLING

When the Lord God confirmed that day who was and is God, such compelled the people to make a decision based on the evidence. Faith does not move finicky from one religious belief to another. Faith rests upon reliable testimony. There was a clear declaration that day who was God.

Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God (1 Kings 18:38-39).

Genuine faith today must rest upon reliable testimony. Isaiah stated,

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isa. 8:20).

Jesus said,

If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him (John 10:37-38).

The gospel of John can be summarized in these

words:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

The inspired apostle Paul wrote concerning faith, "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). He complimented the Thessalonian brethren, by writing,

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

Throughout the text of scripture faith is tied to what God says. The completed and confirmed revelation of God in the inspired written word is the absolute standard for faith and practice (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

One of the great practical applications of this account is that there was a compelling decision to be made by the people who at one time faltered between two positions. Today, man must be compelled to hold to that which is consistent with the teaching of the text of scripture and reject all opinions or beliefs that conflict with the scriptures. This challenge can be summarized with the words, "*Where is the scriptural authority for it?*" The Bereans knew that it was the

scriptures that made things so (cf. Acts 17:11). God encourages mankind to *"prove all things; hold fast that which is good"* (1 Thess. 5:21). It is possible to know by *"the faith"* whether one is in *"the faith."* Paul wrote, *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves"* (2 Cor. 13:5). The scriptures are the standard by which one will be judged in the last day (cf. John 12:48; Rev. 20:12).

Elijah's question challenged and ultimately led to the conquest of hearts of the people that day. May it be so from today and throughout time that there be a *"bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Cor. 10:5).

### *Jimmy Clark*



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*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Amos 4:12**

*This Chapter Written By*

**B. J. Clarke**

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel:  
and because I will do this unto thee, prepare  
to meet thy God, O Israel.

## **Introduction**

**F**ive little words from Amos 4:12 comprise one of the most sobering statements in all of Scripture: *“Prepare to meet thy God.”* This phrase has been the genesis of countless sermons and articles, and one of the best known invitation songs in our songbooks is based upon the message of Amos 4:12. These five words convey one of the weightiest propositions man could ever consider. If the weight of every mountain in the world could press upon our minds at the same time, this could not compare with the weight of the thought of preparing to meet God.

## **God’s Predictions Of Coming Judgment**

The herdman from Tekoa, the gatherer of sycamore fruit, Amos, recalled the origin of his ministry:

And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel (Amos 7:15).

Although he had no special training (he was no prophet, nor a prophet's son), Amos proclaimed what he saw concerning Israel,

...in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake (Amos 1:1; cf. 7:14).

His initial message was no doubt embraced and enjoyed by Israel and Judah, because he systematically announced the coming judgment of God upon the surrounding enemy nations of God's people (1:3-2:3). However, his popularity as a prophet was short-lived for he quickly turned his attention to the transgressions of Judah and Israel, unreservedly declaring that Divine judgment was coming to them as well (2:4ff). Speaking through Amos, God reminded His people of all that He had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt and leading them for forty years through the wilderness, to possess the promised land (2:10). And what did the people do in response to God's grace and mercy? They defied His commandments and instructed His prophets to keep their meddling message to themselves. Consequently, God had no choice but to announce: "*therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities*" (3:2).

It is exceedingly significant that God had given His people a prediction of His intention to punish



them for their sins. He said,

Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts, that in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord (3:13-15).

Further details of God's plans to judge His people are recorded in chapter 4. Amos wrote,

The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.

These predictions from God about His intentions to judge His people are not isolated to the book of Amos. Indeed, the general rule of Scripture is that God warns before He wounds. He forewarned Adam and Eve of the consequences of eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:17). When God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, He sent a "*preacher of righteousness*" (2 Peter 2:5), Noah, to forewarn humanity of the coming flood (Gen. 6:1-5). Moses warned Israel,

If thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before

your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God (Deut. 8:19-20).

On another occasion, Moses said:

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known (Deut. 11:26-27).

One of the lengthiest passages of God forecasting punishment for His people, if they disobeyed, is found in Deuteronomy 28:15-68. In verse after verse, God forewarns Israel concerning what would happen to them if they chose to disobey His precepts.

Each of the books from the literature classified as "*The Major Prophets*" contains numerous instances of God forewarning His people of coming judgments. Each and every book of the minor prophets contains passages wherein God forewarns of a coming judgment. Indeed, God warns before He wounds!

## **God's Patience Prolonged The Coming Judgment**

In His very nature, God has no desire to punish His people. God was willing to forgive Israel if she would but repent of her transgressions. In fact, one of the most amazing features of Amos 4 is what it reveals to us about the patience of God. He had sent

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prophet after prophet to Israel and yet they refused to repent. Rather than punishing them with one swift and final blow, God punished His people in waves, hoping to persuade them to return unto Him. He sent a famine, withheld the rain, devoured their crops with disease and locusts, sent pestilence as severe as that which He sent upon Egypt, slew their young men with the sword, killed their horses until their camp was permeated with the stink of rotting flesh, and overthrew them as He had overthrown Sodom and Gomorrah, although He rescued them from total destruction (Amos 4:6-11).

What effect did these punitive actions have upon His people? Remarkably, after each wave of punishment, God lamented, "*yet have ye not returned unto me*" (4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11). Hence, Israel had made her choice, and consequently, it was time for her to prepare to meet her God and the unspecified judgment He would bring upon her (Amos 4:12).

The rest of Holy Scripture corroborates this same truth regarding the patience of God. One of the first manifestations of the patience of God is the time and opportunity He often gave for sinners to repent. He sent Noah to preach a message of righteousness to the sinful world. We learn from Genesis 6:3 that God had determined that the days of man "*shall be an hundred and twenty years.*" We also know that "*the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing*" (1 Peter 3:20). During this same time period, Noah was a "*preacher of righteousness*" (2 Peter 2:5). Thus, we conclude that Noah preached for 120 years while the longsuffering of God waited for souls to repent. God was not obligated to wait

120 days to judge His creation, much less 120 years, but He longed for man to be saved, and so He waited. Those who perished in the flood could not justifiably argue that God punished them with a hair-trigger temper. He gave them every opportunity to repent, but they squandered it; only eight souls (Noah and his family) were saved from the flood (1 Peter 3:20).

Indeed, the patience of God is directed toward us each day that He lingers in His coming. Peter affirmed,

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

The patience of God is prolonging the time until He returns for the Second Coming!

## **God's Promise Of Coming Judgment Will Come To Pass**

When God promises something, rest assured that it will come to pass (Heb. 10:23). This is true whether the promise has to do with a reward, or punishment. Some are so arrogant that they do not believe they will ever be held accountable for their actions. There have always been scoffers who denounce the concept of a coming judgment (2 Peter 3:3-4). The nation of Babylon was of such an attitude. She said,

I shall be a lady for ever...I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children (Isa. 47:7-8).

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The Babylon of the New Testament (Rome) possessed the very same attitude (Rev. 18:7). Yet, God was faithful to His promise to judge these nations; He brought them both to their knees.

God's promise of coming judgment was directed even toward His own covenant people who had transgressed against Him. God's people needed to learn that He really meant it when He forewarned that judgment was coming. Often, Israel and Judah dismissed these warnings as nothing but the empty threats of an overwrought prophet (Ezek. 12:22-25). When a prophet told them that God was going to judge them, they replied, *"It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword and famine"* (Jer. 5:12). Tragically, they were echoing the false promises made to them by the false prophets who had said,

Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place (Jer. 14:13).

God made it abundantly clear that such prophets were liars, and that the very prophets who affirmed that sword and famine would not affect the land, would themselves be consumed by sword and famine (Jer. 14:14-15). Moreover, God said,

All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us (Amos 9:10).

Nevertheless, His people often taunted the prophets, as if to say, *"You've been talking about a judgment from God for a long time now. Well, let's see it, if it's really going to happen. Quit talking about it and bring it on, if it's so real."* Isaiah depicted such individuals

as saying about God's promised judgment, "*Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it*" (Isa. 5:19). Remarkably, when Amos predicted the intense wailing that would accompany the coming judgment, he declared, "*Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord!*" (Amos 5:18). This is a troubling text! For these sinful people to "*desire*" the day of the Lord meant one of two things: (1) Either they were mockingly asking for something to happen, which they really did not believe would happen, such as those who taunted Christ to come down from the cross (Matt. 27:40), or (2) They believed that the promised judgment would not be near as bad as the prophets made it sound, or that if it were, they would somehow personally escape the force of it. Whatever their view, Amos told them that they would regret having requested for that day to come; it would be a day of darkness, and not light, and there would be no escape from it (Amos 5:18-20).

Whereas some prophets preached that there would be no judgment at all, some, like Hananiah, promoted a modified judgment message. Hananiah preached that there would be a judgment from God, but that it would not last seventy years as had been predicted by Jeremiah. He alleged that God had revealed to him that the captivity in Babylon would be over within two full years. The true prophet, Jeremiah, rebuked him for making the people to trust in a lie, and predicted that he would die that very year because of his rebellious teaching. This is precisely what happened (Jer. 28:15-17).

Furthermore, some of the people did not deny that a judgment day was coming; they simply

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convinced themselves that it would not happen for a long, long time. God told Ezekiel that some in the house of Israel were saying that Ezekiel's predictions of judgment "*is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off*" (Ezek. 12:26). Amos addressed this very same issue when he described God's people as having "*put far away the evil day*" (Amos 6:3). Some may have erroneously concluded that the life of ease and luxury they were living was proof positive that a day of judgment was way off in the distant future (Amos 6:1).

Still others may have argued, "*God is so merciful and loving that He is not going to do anything drastic anytime soon. I mean, look how long it has already been. We're fine; we still have plenty of time to get ready to meet God.*" The children of Israel needed to come to terms with the fact that God's forbearance toward sinners does not last forever. We agree that "*The notion of judgment being far off has always been an incentive to the sinner's recklessness of living* (Eccl. 8:11-13; Matt. 24:48). *That very recklessness brings near the evil day which he puts far off.*"

It is possible to linger in sin until there is no remedy. In the Old Testament, God sent His messengers to the people,

...because He had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: 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 the 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 (2 Chron. 36:15-17).

This passage shows us that it is possible to abuse the patience of God, by putting off, and putting off our repentance. If we are not careful, we will wait too long to try and get right with God. The people of Jeremiah's day had no doubt overestimated both their spiritual condition and the lengths of God's patience. They did not realize that they were so far gone into sin that even men as great as Moses and Samuel could not have successfully interceded to God on their behalf to rescue them from judgment (Jer. 15:1). They could have amended their ways and their doings earlier, and would thus have remained in the land (Jer. 7:1-7), but they waited too long to face their need for change. They waited "*till there was no remedy.*"

Likewise, if Israel had only repented at some of God's earlier attempts to reclaim them (Amos 4:6-11), they would never have had to hear those haunting words: "*Prepare to meet thy God.*" They learned the hard way that when the Wisdom of God forewarns of the need to repent, one must hasten to turn and take advantage of God's forbearing nature. Otherwise, God will be faithful to bring about the judgment He has promised.

## **Are We Prepared To Meet God In Judgment?**

We must be careful in a study of this nature to make personal application of the principles we

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have studied. It would be easy to think of these things only as they relate to Old Testament Israel. However, we must recognize that we also must prepare to meet God, because the final Day of Judgment is approaching. The Second Coming of Christ is mentioned in twenty-three of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. A total of 370 verses in the New Testament address the vital subject of our Lord's return, an equivalent of one out of every twenty-five verses. The Scriptures are filled with the promise of his coming.

In his sermon to the Athenians on Mars Hill, Paul gave assurance that God

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 (Acts 17:31).

To those scoffers who asked, "*Where is the promise of his coming?*", Peter replied,

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come... (2 Peter 3:4, 9-10).

The Scriptures clearly teach that it is not within the power of man to know when Jesus is coming back. In the first half of Matthew 24, Jesus gave His disciples signs whereby they could know that the destruction of Jerusalem was drawing near. But in

speaking of the final day of judgment, Jesus said,

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken into. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh (Matt. 24:36, 42-44).

The comparison between a thief and his coming and Christ and His coming, is used quite often in the Sacred Writings. Christ said He would come as a thief (Rev. 16:15). Concerning the period of the Second Coming, Paul told the Thessalonians,

But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:1-2).

We have already noted that Peter used this same imagery in his second epistle (2 Pet. 3:10).

Since we do not know when our Lord will return we must be ready at all times. God wants the lack of information concerning the time of Christ's Second Coming to motivate us to watch and be ready for whenever He might come. The greatest concern of our life is to be ready for the next life. Whether morning, noon or night we must be ready (Mark 13:34-37). There will be no time to make preparation after the trump has sounded.

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Jesus told the story of ten virgins and their preparation (or lack thereof) for the coming of the bridegroom. Five of the virgins were wise and made proper preparations. Five were foolish and waited until it was too late. Whereas, the wise virgins were welcomed and secure within the shut door, the foolish virgins were shut out from the festivities. There is a sad finality to the phrase "*and the door was shut*" (Matt. 25:10). In fact, the Greek tense used in this passage conveys the idea of the door being "*shut, to stay shut.*" Someone may point out that, in Matthew 7:7, Jesus taught,

...knock, and it shall be opened unto you:  
for everyone that asketh receiveth; and  
he that seeketh findeth; and to him that  
knocketh it shall be opened (Matt. 7:7-8).

Why, then, did not the foolish virgins receive that for which they asked? The answer is seen in the fact that the time for knocking and asking is not promised to us forever. A time is coming when it will be too late. Such a time came for the foolish virgins when, because of their unpreparedness, the doorkeeper refused to grant them entrance into the marriage feast. They cried, saying, "*Lord, Lord, open to us*" (Matt. 25:11). However, their earnest plea was met by the haunting words, "*I know you not.*" Alexander Maclaren aptly observes:

The wedding bell has become a funeral knell. They were not enemies of the bridegroom, they thought themselves his friends. They let life ebb without securing the one thing needful, and the neglect was irremediable. There is a tragedy underlying

many a life of outward religiousness and inward emptiness, and a dreadful discovery will flare in upon such, when they have to say to themselves, "This might have been once, and we missed it, lost it for ever.

Their lack of preparation brought upon them embarrassing and permanent consequences. We find similarly haunting words spoken by our Lord in Luke 13:24-25:

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

Some will be unprepared at the Second Coming of Christ. They too, will beg for entrance into the marriage supper of the Lamb and they too, will be denied the privilege of entrance.

Many scoffed at Noah's promise of a coming flood to separate the righteous from the wicked. There are twentieth century scoffers who go about "*eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*" giving little if any thought to the promised Second Coming of Christ (Matt. 24:38-39). Sadly, many hear the preachers of righteousness today warn of preparing for the Second Coming and yet fail to respond in obedience. On August 17, 1969, Hurricane Camille slammed into the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, killing hundreds of people. The most disturbing part of this tragedy is that the majority of these people had

plenty of time to escape. But, they refused to believe the warnings! Policemen warned twenty-two young people to evacuate the house they were partying in on three separate occasions. These young people laughed because they were having a good time and did not believe the warning. When they finally realized that death was closing in on them, it was too late. Likewise, many tune out the warnings of preachers because they do not want to be disturbed. Someone has well said, *"You can smash the barometer that tells you the storm is coming, but that won't stop the storm from coming."* We must prepare for the coming storm (Matt. 7:21-27).

### **Conclusion**

When Jesus comes back again there will only be two classes of people: the lost and the saved. The sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:32-33). The prepared and the unprepared (Matt. 25:1-13). The unashamed and the ashamed (1 John 2:28). Those who are in Christ and abide in Christ shall be confident and unashamed (2 Tim. 2:10; 1 John 2:28). Penitent believers enter into Christ by baptism (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). Accountable individuals in the New Testament age who have not been baptized into Christ are not in Christ and thus have no hope of being with Christ in eternity.

Prior to judgment day, the question of life is, *"What are we going to do with Jesus?"* But, the question on the day of judgment will be, *"What will Jesus do with us?"* If we want Him to receive us then, we must accept Him now by obeying His will. A string of lyrics from the well-known song *"Prepare*

*To Meet Thy God*” serves as a fitting conclusion to this message:

Careless soul, why will you linger,  
Wand’ring from the fold of God?  
Hear you not the invitation?  
O prepare to meet thy God.

Why so tho’tless are you standing  
While the fleeting years go by  
And your life is spent in folly,  
O prepare to meet thy God.  
Hear you not the earnest pleadings  
Of your friends that wish thou well?  
And perhaps before tomorrow  
You’ll be called to meet your God.

Careless soul, O heed the warning  
For your life will soon be gone;  
O how sad to face the judgment  
Unprepared to meet thy God!

### *B. J. Clarke*



B. J. is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman University (B.S., 1993; M.A., 1998). The son of a faithful gospel preacher. Editor of **POWER**. Director of an annual lectureship. Author of excellent work exposing Promise Keepers. Has worked in Etowah and Knoxville, TN. Presently working with the Southaven congregation in Southaven, Mississippi. Tish and B. J. have three children (Daniel, Holly and Michael).



***Women's  
Classes***





*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Isaiah 55:8-9 & 1 Samuel 16:7**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Irene C. Taylor***

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, saith the  
Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways than your ways, and my  
thoughts than your thoughts.

**I**t is futile to argue with God though foolish  
mankind often tries. It has been so from the  
beginning of time. Think how Adam and Eve turned  
to worldly wisdom (Satan) rather than following  
God's instructions. The same is true of Cain, of Lot's  
wife, the many occasions where the children of Israel  
followed their own desires.

We humans need to reflect upon and believe  
the import of the verses above. God's wisdom is  
so far above man's that it is impossible for us to  
comprehend its depth. The wise man in Proverbs  
asserts that,

There is a way which seemeth right unto  
a man, but the end thereof are the ways  
of death (Prov. 14:12).

If we would but believe what God has revealed, we could know the heavy price which will be assessed for disobedience. This underscores the importance of obeying the laws which have come from the very mind of God. To know God's mind we must study His revealed will (2 Tim. 2:15).

We will be called upon to give an account for our thoughts as well as our deeds in that final day. What a sobering thought that is (Matt. 12:35-37)! Good thoughts are cultivated in the heart. It is crucial, therefore, that we plant within the soil of that heart (Phil. 2:5; Col. 3:16a; 1 Peter 2:21). Only when we fill our mind (the Bible heart) with God's truth can we begin to understand what God expects from mankind. God has revealed a catalog of things to sow in our hearts, not leaving us in the dark regarding how to cultivate a mind approved of God.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).

We must be willing to submit to His wisdom if we are to be pleasing to Him.

We are given further insight into the mind of God in 1 Samuel 16:7.

(F)or the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

This truth is revealed during the time in which

Samuel was sent to Bethlehem to anoint David as future king. He was first impressed with Eliab who apparently presented a striking image. But God rejected Eliab. He here instructs the standard for rightly judging a person, a standard surely needed today. Though we cannot look into the heart, as did God, we can look carefully into one's conduct. Instead of being unduly impressed by one's outstanding attire or by his money, we must look much deeper and find the real person. Though the outward appearance is not to be the deciding factor, a Christian should present a clean, well-groomed, attractive and modest appearance at all times (1 Tim. 2:9). Peter gives us Inspiration's counsel regarding the attire which matters. In instructing wives how best to win their husband he says,

Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing the gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Peter 3:3-4).

The true beauty of a Christian is not the outward attire. Though the Christian who gives careful attention to what she wears can present a beautiful example of God's child, it is not necessary to acquire designer clothes to accomplish this. The attire from designer Jesus is far more important. It is what is worn on the inside that matters to God.

It may be that those who are attired in fancy clothes wear a haughty, worldly spirit inside. God

approves the meek and quiet spirit. **Honest** humility is priceless. God sees through hypocrisy! Man may be greatly impressed by the outward facade but we cannot deceive the Father above.

Some have misunderstood 1 Peter 3:3. They have taken the reference to plaiting the hair and wearing of gold literally. They have assumed that it is sinful to beautify one's hairstyle or to wear **any** type of jewelry. But let's look at the passage again. It also mentions "*putting on of apparel.*" If doing the first two is sinful then it would have to follow that wearing of apparel is sinful also. Who among us is ready to assert that?! Is not the intent here to emphasize the inward adornment versus the outward? We are not to be flashy in our dress nor are we to succumb to the current ultra-casual, sloppy attire so widely accepted—even in the worship assembly.

There is a principle given in a beloved hymn which implores, "*Give of your best to the Master.*" This principle should be present in every phase of the Christian's life. We should give of the best of our time and talent and, yes, of our attire. And the best we can give, for most of us, is of higher standard than what is generally seen today. It is significant to note the value God places on a "*meek and quiet spirit.*" Referred to as "*an ornament*" we are told that in God's sight it is of "*great price.*" This adornment is worth more than all the fancy clothes money can buy.

The crux of the teaching in both our text passages under consideration is basically this: Are we willing to adhere to God's way or are we rebelliously determined to follow our own desires?

Do we really want to gamble with our soul's final destiny by ignoring God? What have we gained if, by going the way of self and pleasure, we lose our very soul? Which way is it going to be—God's way or man's way? Think about it!

### *Irene C. Taylor*



Irene is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman College. She has taught Bible classes most of her life; active in community work; a gifted writer (**Through The Eye Of Joy; Poems Of Poetry**, and other works). Married to Robert R. Taylor, Jr. in 1952. They have two children, Rebecca and Tim and four grandchildren: Ryan, Jonathan, Jeff and Lori Beth. They have lived in Ripley, TN for over 30 years.



*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# ***Esther 4:14***

*This Chapter Written By*

***Jan Beard***

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

**W**hat can one person do to affect the outcome of God's plans? Can one person change His plans? Can one person put an end to them? Can one person make the difference between success and failure of what God intends to do? Our God is an all-powerful God and He will see to it that His will is accomplished no matter what human beings choose to do. There is no one that can stand against the power of God. However, one person can be very significant in the success of God's plan. Noah was one example of this; his faithfulness saved his family and the whole human race. Joseph was another great example of this; his dedication to God kept his family from starvation and made it possible for them to develop into the nation of Israel. Esther

was another example of how one single person was crucial to God's plan being carried out.

In the first chapter of Esther, we see that Vashti had been dethroned for refusing to go before the king. The search for the ideal queen is underway. This is where Esther comes in. Esther and Mordecai were cousins; Mordecai had raised her like his own daughter. Mordecai advised Esther to "*enter the contest*" for queen. After a year of special preparation, Esther was presented to the king—and chosen!

After a few years, the king promoted Haman, setting his throne above all the other officials that were with him. All the king's servants who were at the gate would bow down to Haman, except for Mordecai. The fact that Mordecai would not bow down enraged Haman, so he requested that the king have all the Jews destroyed. The king gave Haman the authority to carry out his plot to kill all the Jews; but he did not know that he was risking the life of his own queen. When the decrees were written and sent out, Mordecai immediately went into mourning publicly. He sat at the king's gate and "*he cried out with a loud and bitter cry*" (Esth. 4:1). Esther sent garments to Mordecai so that he could take off his sackcloth but he refused them. Mordecai sent a copy of the decree back to Esther so she could see how desperate the situation and told Esther that she must go to the king and plead with him on behalf of the Jews, her people. Esther knew that if anyone went in to see the king without being called, the law said that they were to be put to death, unless the king held out his golden scepter to them.

Mordecai basically told Esther, "*Don't think you are safe just because you live in the palace. If you don't*



*go to the king, God will find another way to save His people. But for all we know, you were put in this position at this time to save your people."* So, at a crucial point in the book of Esther, Mordecai said to her,

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? (Esth. 4:14).

Esther had two possible courses of action, each with its own consequence. After pointing these out, Mordecai encouraged Esther to take the right course by emphasizing the very real possibility that God may have brought her to this position for this very purpose. This passage reveals three very important lessons for Christians today.

### **Our Failure Will Not Cause God's Will To Fail**

God's will is going to be achieved even if we refuse to do what is right. He will find a way for His plan to be carried out whether we choose to do what is right or not. This is one of the great lessons we learn from Mordecai. He knew that God would never allow His people to be destroyed. Whether Esther agreed to help or not, God was still in control.

Satan has tried many ways to put an end to God's plan. He has tried direct attacks on God's plan and God's people—like he did with Haman—and he has tried indirect attacks by tempting God's people to do nothing. When we see people who refuse to help with the work of God, it can be very

discouraging. But we always need to have the kind of faith Mordecai had. God will see to it that His will prevails. This should encourage us to do all we can do in His service, even if others remain idle. To be on God's side guarantees we will always be on the right side.

### **Our Failure Will Bring God's Punishment On Us**

If Esther did nothing, she and her family were sure to die. If we sit back and do nothing, we are sure to receive God's punishment for our lack of concern. Many times doing nothing would be a lot easier. In today's world, too many want to get things done the easiest way possible. We don't want to be inconvenienced and we look for the easy way out.

The easy way out is not really the easy way out. It may be easier now, but there will be a time to give account of our actions to the Lord. Jesus' parable of the talents reminds us of this (Matt. 25:14-30). The master in that parable entrusted his possessions with three of his servants. He expected them to use his money wisely. The servant who received one talent took what he thought was the easy way out. He hid his master's money and did nothing. When the master returned he condemned that servant. Why? It was not because the servant did something wrong; it was because he did nothing.

This is as it has always been. With Esther, she had an opportunity to do something to save her people. If she had chosen to do nothing, she would have suffered consequences. Remember the words of James: *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"* (James 4:17).

## **We Never Know When We May Be Aiding Some Purpose Of God**

Esther really had nothing to lose by trying to help. Being a Jew, Esther would surely die if she did nothing; there was also a good chance that she would die if she approached the king without being summoned. If God put her in this position providentially, He would surely be with her and help her carry it through. We, like Esther should go forward with a courageous heart, never doubting our success with God on our side. He promises to always be with us:

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Heb. 13:5-6).

Esther truly was a courageous woman and she knew that God was on her side. We should all consider why we are in the position that we are in at this point in our lives. Has God placed us here for a reason? Are we fulfilling that purpose? Are we being active in the Lord's church as we are commanded? *"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone,"* (James 2:17). We must work in the Lord's kingdom. When an opportunity comes our way to serve God, do we take advantage of that opportunity or do we let it slip on by thinking, *"well, someone else will do it."* God gives us opportunities every day. He entrusts us with them and we will suffer the consequences if we let those opportunities go by. The old adage

is so true, *"this opportunity may never come my way again."*

## Conclusion

The book of Esther is a great example of God's providence. It shows us how God can use individual people to ensure the success of His plans. That key verse where Mordecai confronted Esther with her need to do her part teaches us some valuable lessons: (1) God will always make sure His plan succeeds, even if we choose not to do our part; (2) Failure to act is a serious thing and we will answer for it in judgment; (3) Sometimes God intends for specific people to do specific things. What if He has something like this in mind for us? Wouldn't it be wonderful to know throughout eternity that God used us for some important aspect of His plan?

Some Christians may be like the king—enjoying life and unconcerned about the welfare of others, while some may be like Mordecai—concerned about saving those that are lost. There are also those out there like Esther who are willing to sacrifice themselves to help the lost. Are we willing to put ourselves out there for the Lord's cause even if it means we have to sacrifice our desires for God's will? God has given each of us talents and we must use them to glorify His name.

### *Jan Beard*



Jan Beard, daughter of Elbert and Sarah Richey, is a native of Poplar Bluff, MO. She attended Freed-Hardeman University where she majored in Office Management. Jan is active serving the Lord as an outstanding children's Bible Class teacher, and has spoken on several Ladies' Day programs. She and Kevin live in Fayette, AL, and have four children: Jonathan, Justin, Jeremy, and Emma.

*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# ***Ruth 1:16-17***

*This Chapter Written By*

***LaDon Sain***

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

**I**n order to fully understand the awesomeness of this verse, let us look at the circumstances that led up to it, as recorded in the book of Ruth. Read Ruth 1:1-2:

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion,

Ephrathites of Bethlehem-Judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

Naomi was married to Elimelech. He was the brother of the Prince of Judah. They had two sons, Mahlon and Chilion.

There was a famine in the land of Judah so it became necessary for them to leave their native land. They moved to the land of Moab where there was plenty of food for their family.

In verse 3 of chapter 1, tragedy strikes Naomi's family. Her husband, Elimelech, died. She is now left in a strange land, away from her friends and family, with two little boys to raise on her own. However, she moved on with her life and made the best of a bad situation.

The story moves fast from this point in time. Verse 4 of chapter 1 states that the two boys married. They married girls from Moab named Orpah and Ruth. Tragedy again strikes the family and after only 10 years, both the sons, Mahlon and Chilion, died.

Naomi is left with two daughters-in-law, whom she loved very much. When the famine is over in Judah, she decides to go back to her homeland and to her own people.

Orpah and Ruth had a very close relationship with their mother-in-law, Naomi. This is a great example of the relationship that should exist between every mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. The closeness that the girls felt is seen in the fact that they packed their things and started back to Judah with Naomi. After they had gone a little way, Naomi unselfishly encouraged them to go back to their

families in Moab. She knew the sacrifice they would have to make if they continued on with her.

Orpah, though sad and crying, and with great mixed emotions I am sure, kissed Naomi and turned back to return home to Moab and to her family. Ruth, however, chose to continue on with Naomi. The love and respect she had for Naomi is evident, as reflected in our text, Ruth 1:16-17. Let's look again at that great declaration of love for a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law.

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

Loyalty (of this depth and kind) is found very rarely. That must tell us a little bit about the kind of woman Naomi was to have such devotion from her daughter-in-law.

Naomi's love for Ruth was a very unselfish love. She thought it would be better for Ruth if she were living in her own country instead of the country of Judah, where she would not know anyone. She also could see that Ruth would have problems finding another husband, being a foreigner in a land that was the enemy of the Moabites.

As they arrived back in Bethlehem, the people were not sure it was Naomi they were seeing. Probably time, as well as grief, had taken a toll on Naomi and her appearance had changed from the last

time they had seen her. But she assured them that she was, in fact, Naomi. Nevertheless, they are now broke, no money, very little possessions, so they had to go to work and make a living for themselves.

In Judah, there lived a wealthy man by the name of Boaz. He was a cousin to Naomi's late husband, Elimelech. He had many fields of corn and barley. They went to work for Boaz, gleaning in his fields.

One day, as Boaz was looking out his window into his fields, he saw Ruth. He asked his servant who she was. He knew he had not seen her before. The servant told him she was the girl that had come with Naomi. Boaz told the servant to bring Ruth into his house. (You think it may have been love at first sight?)

Boaz was so impressed with Ruth that he gave her special privileges to glean in his fields first instead of having to gather the leftovers. Ruth asked Boaz why he was being so gracious to her. Ruth 2:11 answers her question.

And Boaz answered and said unto her, it hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband; and how that thou hast left the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

Ruth was a very beautiful woman so Boaz promised her that she would be protected from all the young men who might want to take advantage of her as she worked in the fields.



Verse 3 of chapter 2 is a very interesting verse. It says that Ruth gleaned where her "hap" was. This is the only time this word is used in all of Scripture. It's the root word from which our present day word "happenstance" has come. To Ruth, it appeared to be just "happenstance," but it was far more than Ruth could have ever imagined. Remember, she was in the lineage of Christ. God's providence is seen throughout all of the Bible and I believe that it is definitely evident in the life of Ruth.

Naomi knows that Boaz is a kinsman to Ruth so she comes up with a plan to get them together. Naomi told Ruth to go in from the fields and get cleaned up, take a bath, put on some sweet smelling perfume, change clothes and go in where Boaz would be sleeping. She instructed her as to what to do when Boaz fell asleep. Ruth did as Naomi told her.

When Boaz fell asleep, Ruth went in very softly, uncovered his feet, and laid down beside him. About midnight, Boaz awakened. He saw this woman at his feet and he was afraid. It was dark so he could not see who it was. He said, "*who are you?*" and could well have said, "*and what are you doing here?*"

She said, "*I am Ruth, thine handmaid; spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.*" We do not talk like this today, but it was, in essence, a marriage proposal to Boaz.

Boaz wanted to marry Ruth, but he knew there was a nearer kinsman than he, that would get "*first chance*" so to speak. Boaz wasted no time in getting the "*kinsman part of customs*" worked out so he could marry her.

Verse 13 of chapter 4 the Divine record states

they were married. God blessed their marriage with the birth of a son whom they named Obed. He would later become the grandfather of David.

Naomi's dedication and love for God led Ruth to make that great declaration of "*your people will be my people and your God my God.*"

How very much today we need Christian wives and mothers who will live in such a way that will lead others to Christ, and most of all our own friends and families.

I am afraid that instead of that, we are much too concerned with perhaps losing a friend or upsetting a family member, and we just do nothing.

Have you ever heard someone, who, after the preacher had just preached a great, sound, gospel sermon, would go out the door apologizing for the sermon to someone that was not even a Christian? I have. What a shame!

May God have mercy on our souls if we are that kind of a Christian. The apostle Paul said in Romans 1:16,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

We should be willing to stand on the mountain tops and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and be proud to be a member of His church, the ONE true church, no matter who might disagree or get angry.

Ruth, because of Naomi's influence, gave up her family, her friends, her idol god and her homeland to follow the God of Naomi, the **ONE TRUE GOD**.

We are all influencing other people every day of our lives. We are either an influence for good or an influence for evil. God is either glorified or the devil is glorified by how we live our lives.

Ask yourself, *“Will I, and those around me, be saved because of the way I conduct myself every day,”* or *“will I, and those around me, be lost because of the way I conduct myself every day?”* If the answer is the latter, let us change our lives to serve God daily and influence as many others as possible to be saved.

We only have this moment in time, right now. Yesterday will never come again, tomorrow may never come at all, so we have today to live in such a way that Christ can be seen in us and save our own souls and the souls of those whom we love in this world.

### **Let The Beauty Of Jesus Be Seen**

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,  
All His wonderful passion and purity;  
May His spirit divine all my being refine,  
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

When your burden is heavy and hard to bear,  
When your neighbor's refuse all your load to share;  
When you're feeling so blue, don't know just what to do,  
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.

When somebody has been so unkind to you,  
Some words spoken that pierces you thru, and thru;  
Think how He was beguiled, spat upon and reviled,  
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.

From the dawn of the morning to close of day,  
In example in deeds and in all you say;

Lay your gifts at His feet, ever strive to keep sweet,  
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.  
~ Ben Cumnock

### *LaDon Sain*



Daughter of R. W. and Floy Vick (Hardin, KY). Mother of four girls, foster mother of five, grandmother (“*Nana*”) to seven grandchildren. Wife of Paul Sain (42 years). LaDon has taught Ladies Bible class as well as various ages of small children. Co-Owner of Sain Publications (publisher of *Studying Through The Bible* class material, which she assisted in development). Business manager of Sain Publications.

*Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:*

# **Proverbs 31**

*This Chapter Written By*

***Tish Clarke***

**P**roverbs 1:8-9 begins with an admonition from a father:

My son, hear the instruction of thy father,  
and forsake not the law of thy mother: For  
they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy  
head, and chains about thy neck.

Proverbs 31 begins with an admonition from a mother to her son:

The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy  
that his mother taught him. What, my son?  
and what, the son of my womb? and what,  
the son of my vows? (Prov. 31:1-2).

It is fitting that a book filled with wise sayings would begin and end with a wise saying from a father and a mother.

The home is truly the heart of a nation and the church. History has proven that, when the home breaks down, the nation is not far behind. Therefore, when leadership in the home is guided by the righteous Word of God, all that it touches

is strengthened. Much speculation has been made about who King Lemuel and his mother were in chapter 31. Many scholars believe him to have been Solomon, and his mother would naturally have been Bathsheba. The mother in this chapter was burdened with a desire to see her son choose a wise path. For this wise mother, her son's footsteps would have been to follow all that God would have for him to do. If this mother was Bathsheba, she would certainly not have wanted Solomon to repeat the mistakes she and David had made. However, whether Lemuel is actually Solomon, or another man with a deeply concerned mother—we can still learn her message today.

The woman spoken of in this passage had a heart filled with virtue. The Hebrew word in this text meant more than purity; it actually carried a meaning that she was "*strong in all moral qualities.*" She has been known as the virtuous woman through countless centuries across the globe. Proverbs 10:7 states, "*The memory of the just is blessed: But the name of the wicked shall rot.*" Jezebel, Athaliah, and Delilah conjure up thoughts of evil and rottenness to the core. And yet, the names of Mary, Ruth, and Esther bring thoughts of wisdom and courage and virtue. Proverbs 22:1 declares,

A good name is rather to be chosen than  
great riches, And a loving favour rather  
than silver and gold.

The virtuous woman gained her name from her virtuous actions. Because of her life, she had true, priceless value. As we go through this study, notice

how her heart was translated into the work of her hands in so many areas.

### **How Rare She Was...**

*"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."* (Prov. 31:10). She is compared to rubies, a perfect stone for a woman. The Ruby is the most valuable member of the corundum family, of which all other colors, except red, are referred to as sapphires. Most rubies have been heated to clarify the stones and improve the color. According to one source, large, gem-quality rubies can be more valuable than comparably sized diamonds. It is a hard and tough stone, which makes it a superb jewelry stone. What a wonderful comparison for the worthy woman! She is a most valuable member of her family; she is tough and can withstand great pressure. She has been tried by fire, found stronger and even more beautiful. At the time of this writing, the Israelite nation is witnessing the lavish beauty of the temple, and the kingdom of Solomon is amassing great riches. To declare a woman as more valuable than rubies would certainly be an asset any man would desire to possess. J. Paul Getty (1892-1976) said, *"I'd trade my fortune for just one happy marriage."*

### **How Restful She Was...**

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life (Prov. 31:11-12).

Any husband blessed to have a virtuous woman would never have to worry what his wife was up to.

There would be no mischief in her life, and, as such, his life would be spent in peace and not worry. Can we say that we are bringing peace to our husband's life? If you are not married, you can still possess the qualities of the virtuous woman in many aspects of your life. Her attributes can be translated into anyone's life and bring joy to those around us.

What a joy it would be if all of our husbands had the same desire as Winston Churchill. He once attended a formal banquet in London, and a number of dignitaries and celebrities were present. The question was asked, *"If you could not be who you are, who would you like to be?"* Everyone was curious as to what Churchill would say. When it was his turn the old man stood and gave a classic answer. *"If I could not be who I am, I would most like to be"*—he paused to take his wife's hand—*"Lady Churchill's second husband."* He must have had great rest and peace with her as his wife.

### **How Resourceful She Was...**

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens (Prov. 31:13-15).

What is it that is keeping us busy in our lives? Are we like the virtuous woman? Are we busy caring for our homes with a *"willing"* heart? Or are we so stressed out with all the different directions that are pulling each one of us? No matter what is occurring



in our lives, our families should feel that they are our priority. This is very difficult in today's society. We spend much of our days rushing here and rushing there—and our homes suffer the personal attention that is required to run a home. In each of our lives, there will be times when we have no choice about the things that will fill our days.

As you have listened to the verses detail the virtuous woman's day, does it sound like she could easily find herself stressed out? Absolutely! The key is that her heart is willing. She is not resentful at the continual work and lack of rest; she is at peace with this, and each task is done lovingly and cheerfully. We all have duties and jobs that only we can fulfill in our homes. How are we accomplishing them? Are we filled with anger and resentment, or do we feel blessed that we have children that need us and a husband that cannot get along without our fashion sense? Many women would trade the garb of widowhood and/or the empty nest for the chance to give again to those that she loved and are gone.

### **How Rich And Responsive She Is...**

She considereth a field, and buyeth it:  
with the fruit of her hands she planteth  
a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with  
strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She  
perceiveth that her merchandise is good:  
her candle goeth not out by night. She  
layeth her hands to the spindle, and her  
hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out  
her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth  
forth her hands to the needy...She maketh

fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant (Prov. 31:16-20; Prov. 31:24).

Each of us has a specific talent that is uniquely our own. Some are blessed with more than one! This woman had a business sense that translated into knowledge of real estate, gardening, sewing, and resale. Each of these is a daunting task, and yet she plunges in with courage and wisdom. Her family is blessed by the fruit of her hands. Her gains are not hoarded; she is ready and willing to share with the poor and needy of her community. Her heart truly is kind! She is an Old Testament Dorcas! What talent do you possess? Can you sew? If so, have you considered putting your talent to use and making bears for abused children for the police to have available to pass out? What about that child—the child whose parents have fallen on hard times—who could use a few more dresses to wear?

### **How Ready And Respected She Is...**

She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple...She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness (Prov. 31:21-22; Prov. 31:27).

Jerusalem has cold winters, even today. John Phillips, in his commentary on Proverbs, states, *“Two winters out of three, snow can be expected in Jerusalem. From time to time up to seventeen inches of snow can fall and it can linger in the hollows and shadows for two or*

*three weeks.*" The worthy woman provided the best attire to get her family through a cold spell. Is this verse teaching us that we need to be sure that we have the correct clothing for the temperature for our families? No! It is showing that the virtuous woman had a readiness of mind which led her to be prepared to meet the varying needs that her family might encounter. Organization is often a dirty word, but shouldn't we try to have a plan and work the plan so things run smoothly in our homes? A Chinese proverb wisely declares that one should "*Dig a well before you are thirsty!*" The home that has a prepared woman in it runs smoothly, and everyone in it feels a great deal more peace than the home that is constantly running out of supplies.

The worthy woman is also respected for the way in which she is dressed. She is covered in tapestry, silk, and purple. She takes care to be concerned with her appearance, her modesty, her tastefulness, and also what her clothing says about her character. What does our clothing say about our character? Does the world find it hard to distinguish between what our clothes say about our values and what we profess to be? Model a Christian example in your home of a godly woman. A woman who is not afraid to declare God's fashion for herself will choose to be modestly and decently attired. Proverbs is filled with verses about the evil woman, and her dress and demeanor are part of what make her one to be avoided.

### **How Respected Her Husband Is...**

*"Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land"* (Prov. 31:23). If you are

already married, you are in a bond that you have vowed to remain in and, as such, your husband is all yours, for life! Whatever qualities and attributes he possesses—these are the ones that you can work with to help him attain the Godly characteristics that God would have him attain. Are you capitalizing on these traits, or do you constantly nag and whine about the faults that he possesses? A virtuous woman looks to the ways of her husband and helps him to be the righteous and faithful worker that God has planned him to be. Can you encourage your husband to study and become a servant to the needs of the church? Do you see your husband as a future deacon or elder in the church? Do you do what you can do to be a helpmeet to him in these areas? Are you hospitable, submissive, kindhearted, and giving to the church and your family?

If you are not married, are you looking for a man with godly traits? Notice that, in this verse, it is his wisdom that is praised in the gates, not his looks or money. Girls, please look for a man that will help you get to heaven, not one that will hinder your path, placing weeds and briar patches in your way. He may have the looks of a Greek Adonis with a heart of stone. Choose a man that has a heart molded after God. Look to his inward traits, and see the man inside the heart. It is a virtuous heart that will provide you with true happiness—not his looks (these fade with time), not his finances (markets crash in a heartbeat), and not his professional career (layoffs occur across the board). Remember, if you are blessed to have children, his code of ethics will be what he draws from to help raise these children.

Don't trust your precious little ones to anything less than a godly man.

### **How Right She Is...**

Strength and honour are her clothing;  
and she shall rejoice in time to come. She  
openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in  
her tongue is the law of kindness (Prov.  
31:25-26).

She has a strong and honest character. This is readily seen in how she lives her life and the speech that comes out of her mouth. Her words are filled with kindness and wisdom. She is known for honey and not sour lemons! Consider the following verses in Psalms and Proverbs:

Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments (Psm. 119:164).

My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness (Psm. 119:172).

For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether (Psm. 139:4).

A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it! (Prov. 15:23).

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver (Prov. 25:11).

Is your tongue constantly getting you in trouble with gossip, lying, or generally unkind words? Do

you strive to make people smile with the thoughts that are conveyed in your words? Or do your words make people either sin, or frown—in disbelief that you uttered that statement? Do your words let the son of God shine forth, or is He hidden behind hurtful, sinful utterances? The virtuous woman has the law of kindness in her words.

### **How Rewarded She Is...**

Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates ( Prov. 31:28-31).

Abraham Lincoln stated, *“All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.”* Do your children actively praise you? The virtuous woman’s children *“arise”* and call her blessed. What a blessing for a Godly woman to have children praise her for her qualities and efforts that went into years of effort on her part. Children must be taught to praise God from a *“godly”* woman. When a child learns the beautiful nature of God, and then witnesses this nature in his mother, he cannot help but praise her. How blessed are the children of a virtuous woman!

Truly the book of Proverbs ends with a beautiful sentiment:

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that

feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates (Prov. 31:29-31).

### **The Modern Virtuous Woman**

The virtuous woman had a loving, wise heart that translated into many acts of kindness in her hands. This woman's name says it all. She is full of moral strength and character. In today's modern world, with sin seemingly running rampant and unchecked, the church and her families truly need virtuous women to stand up, and be living beacons—declaring the truth of God's Word in their lives. One cannot watch the news without seeing acts of murder, rape, robbery, gambling, sex, and many other sinful deeds splashed across our TV screens.

It is easy to say the sin is out there, as we wave our hand at the world, and yet fail to see the sin in our own lives and infiltrating into the church. Do you find yourself standing firm when it comes to the doctrines of baptism and instrumental music, and yet faltering in your steadfastness when your children want to go to the prom, or to the beach in skimpy attire, or to a movie of ill report? After all, what could be wrong with dressing up and having a little fun with your friends? If I don't wear the latest fashion—low risers, belly-bearing shirts, leg-revealing skirts, and skintight clothing—then I'll be looked upon as weird. No one will listen to me anymore; I'll be a pariah. That cannot possibly be good for my influence in the church. After all, my friends are good people, and, if I am going to be able to reach

them, they have to feel at ease with me. I just won't participate in any of the big sins – denominationalism, murder, or adultery.

As women striving to be like the virtuous woman, and Christ-like in all that we do, we do not need to turn a blind eye to the sins and enticements of the world. We need to recognize it in all its ugly, painful, reality. Especially as women of homes with children in them—we need to guard these precious souls from the sins of this world. I would like to quote from an article my husband recently wrote:

Through modern television programming, Satan's henchmen (TV producers, scriptwriters, etc.) constantly assault and bombard the very foundations of our faith. The airwaves are full of "electronic visions of a world so violent, sensual and narcotic that childhood itself appears to be under siege" (**U.S. News and World Report**). Analyst and columnist Michael Novak wrote, "Our own public moral culture formed preeminently by television, cinema and music is a disgrace to the human race." Even the Ladies Home Journal published an article entitled "Living In Truly Tasteless Times," in which the author asserted: "the American people appear to be unshockable now, desensitized even to genuine brutality—not to mention simple civility—and possessed of an insatiable appetite for whatever might once have been thought unsavory, crude, crass and even decadent...our popular culture is becoming flashier, trashier, more vulgar and exploitive.



This has happened slowly over time, and we as a nation became desensitized to what the media was putting out in front of our eyes. As Christian women, we need not only to turn away from it, but take others with us also.

What kind of movies do you go see? Would you be completely comfortable if an elder and his wife tagged along with you? If I wouldn't want an elder, or my Lord, to view what I watch, then I need to realize that I should not view it either! As mothers, please be concerned with what your children are watching. The old adage "*Garbage in, Garbage out!*" is so true. Those of you, who have access to the internet, put the site "*screenit.com*" into your favorite's column. This site will tell you every objectionable scene, crude word, and a basic story plot. You will find yourself appalled at what the movies have become! Be industrious and diligent like the virtuous woman to guard your children's souls in what they watch.

What about the music industry? A song that had recently swept through the country and rock stations is "*Picture*" by Kid Rock and Sheryl Crow. The lyrics contain cursing, condone multiple sex partners, and mention cocaine and whiskey. It is sung as a duet with beautiful harmony, and most people are not even listening to the actual words. Again, please be aware of the songs that you and your children are listening to. Words teach a message, and many of the songs today will lead your children far from the paths of righteousness.

If your children have access to a computer, please do not give them easy access to the internet.

I know of a child that has full and unsupervised access to the internet at any time of day with his parents' blessing. He is addicted to pornography. I do not know of a time in society when this particular sin has been so easy to partake in. Even seemingly harmless internet searches will bring up ungodly sites and pictures. Please put a password on your computer for your child's protection.

To close this lesson out, I want to discuss the qualities of the virtuous woman that gave her strength to be the woman God had in mind. Earlier I mentioned that her righteous heart translated to willing hands of work.

The first quality is her venerate fear of the Lord. Webster's Dictionary defines "*venerate*" as "*to regard with reverential respect or with admiring deference, to honor (as an icon or a relic) with a ritual act of devotion, to revere.*" It is certainly true that the underlying strength of the worthy woman is her respect and reverence to the Lord. Proverbs 9:10 tells us,

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

If you seek wisdom, turn to the ways of the virtuous woman and respect the Lord. We also learn that

By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life (Prov. 22:4).

The worthy woman was filled with riches and honour and life. Finally, it was her goal to pass it onto her children: "*Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord*" (Psm. 34:11). May we

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each have a child in our life to pass on the fear of the Lord.

Closely connected to her reverence of her Lord is her virtuous character. We have spent the chapter detailing the worthy aspects of her beautiful life. In comparison, what may be in each of our lives hindering us from living pure, moral, upright lives? We must be willing to sacrifice the things that stand in our way from attaining this high prize. A verse we are all familiar with, Philippians 4:8, states,

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

2 Peter 1:3 teaches us that God has called us to be virtuous:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.

In this modern day, let it be said that we are hearing the call and making ourselves virtuous women worthy of our God.

Again, the virtuous woman was valued by her husband. Remember the beautiful love Solomon shared with the Shulamite woman? Song of Solomon 2:16 speaks of the intimate love a husband and wife share with each other: *"My lover is mine and I am his; he browses among the lilies."* Each of us is a treasure to

our husband. Marriage is more than cleaning house, raising children, and placing a square meal on the dinner table. It involves a godly sexual union with the man we love. A marriage involves a healthy sexual relationship for complete God-ordained happiness. Do you admire and praise your husband? Many marriage enrichment manuals declare this to be the most important quality husbands overwhelming desire in their mate. Are you valued by your husband? If you are, thank him for the joy that he brings to your life and the encouragement he gives you. If you are not, make yourself invaluable to him in a cheerful and pleasing way. Kill him with kindness, and gently teach him what an asset you are in his life. Let your hands be ever ready to render to your husband aid and gentleness. Let all that you do be seasoned with love and a spirit of genuine peace. Even though, you may be burdened with "*much to do,*" find in yourself a pleasant attitude, and try not to complain throughout the day. Let's make ourselves valuable to our husbands as fine, polished rubies.

She also possesses a vision for her family. In Psalm 144:11-12 it states,

Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of  
strange children, whose mouth speaketh  
vanity, and their right hand is a right hand  
of falsehood: That our sons may be as plants  
grown up in their youth; that our daughters  
may be as corner stones, polished after the  
similitude of a palace.

What vision do you possess for your children? Do you consume your time planning what they will be when they grow up, or do you plan what they

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will become for the Lord? There is a vast difference. Joshua stated, *“As for me and my house we will serve the Lord”* in Joshua 24:15. Notice the language of that statement—it is not a wishful desire. It is a foregone conclusion that his home will serve the Lord. Have you decided whom your home will serve? What is your vision?

The worthy woman had a voice of love. Her children called her blessed, and her husband praised her. She does not sound like the contentious woman of Proverbs or the harlot either, for that matter. She was praised by her family. A mother and wife worthy of this kind of admiration will have words as sweet as honey for her family. However, her voice would be heard speaking words of admonition also, for that is the greatest form of love. Do you have a voice of love? Or is your voice too soft to be heard? The worthy woman had strength and courage in her character. Her voice was strong and sure, and her words would be backed with the richness of the words found in the pages of the Bible. In this modern world, we are taught that love is gentle and kind: it does not speak harsh words of correction. However, the virtuous woman must have admonished her children in the right paths to tread, or they would not have recognized her as worthy of praise—as she humbly walked behind her Master.

She was truly viable in her home. Unfortunately, some mothers are abusive and neglectful in their homes. Not so the worthy woman! She was alive, and her presence filled every room. Her home was her priority—her children, her husband, and the care that they needed. What are you devoting your

life to? Is it a career, a hobby, or just plain neglect? Are you alive and well in your home? Do you have your priorities right like the worthy woman?

Finally, what is your view of eternity? Do you have plans to reach heaven? Are your feet firmly planted on the path that will lead you there? James teaches us that our life is a vapor and before long it vanishes away. How true that statement is! In the daily stresses and pressures that we face, we need to be like Stephen in Acts 7:55 when he

looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

Do we see heaven in our future? If not, it is not too late to make heaven your goal and make your life right with God. Make sure that you possess a view of eternity like the virtuous woman.

### *Tish Clarke*



Tish is married to B. J. Clarke, minister for Southaven church of Christ (16 years). They have been married for nearly 24 years and have three children: Daniel (19), Holly (17), and Michael (13). She has been blessed to speak on various ladies days and lectureships. She and BJ have worked together in Etowah, TN, Knoxville, TN, and Southaven, MS. She is a 6th grade teacher at Hernando Middle School in Hernando, MS.