



~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

"come just as you are"

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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Vol. 46 Issue 889

April 28, 2014

Worship Music

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[A Broken Wing-
Martina McBride](#)

[Temporary Home-
Carrie Underwood](#)

Prayer

Lord, I refuse to struggle in my own strength any longer, acting like I can handle every problem and challenge in my life by myself. You were raised from the dead to become my High Priest. I am so sorry for the times You have waited in vain for me to come to You because I lingered, thinking I didn't need Your help. Starting right now, I am changing this in my life—and when I have a need, I'm going to come straight to You because You are there waiting to help me, in Jesus' name. Amen.....

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

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Matthew 24:36 (AMP)

36 But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

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Matthew 9:1-38 (AMP)

1 AND JESUS, getting into a boat, crossed to the other side and came to His own town [Capernaum]. 2 And behold, they brought to Him a man paralyzed and prostrated by illness, lying on a sleeping pad; and when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralyzed man, Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven and the penalty remitted. 3 And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, This man blasphemes [He claims the rights and prerogatives of God]! 4 But Jesus, knowing (seeing) their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil and harbor malice in your hearts? 5 For which is easier: to say, Your sins are forgiven and the penalty remitted, or to say, Get up and walk? 6 But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins and remit the penalty, He then said to the paralyzed man, Get up! Pick up your sleeping pad and go to your own house. 7 And he got up and went away to his own house. 8 When the crowds saw it, they were struck with fear and awe; and they recognized God and praised and thanked Him, Who had given such power and authority to men. 9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's office; and He said to him, Be My disciple [side with My party and follow Me]. And he rose and followed Him. 10 And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and [especially wicked] sinners came and sat (reclined) with Him and His disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, Why does your Master eat with tax collectors and those [preeminently] sinful? 12 But when Jesus heard it, He replied, Those who are strong and well (healthy) have no need of a physician, but those who are weak and sick. 13 Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy [that is, readiness to help those in trouble] and not sacrifice and sacrificial victims. For I came not to call and invite [to repentance] the righteous (those who are upright and in right standing with God), but sinners (the erring ones and all those not free from sin). 14 Then the disciples of John came to Jesus, inquiring, Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, [that is, abstain from food and drink as a religious exercise], but Your disciples do not fast? 15 And Jesus replied to them, Can the wedding guests mourn while the bridegroom is still with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 And no one puts a piece of cloth that has not been shrunk on an old garment, for such a patch tears away from the garment and a worse rent (tear) is made. 17 Neither is new wine put in old wineskins; for if it is, the skins burst and are torn in pieces, and the wine is spilled and the skins are ruined. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved. 18 While He was talking this way to them, behold, a ruler entered and, kneeling down, worshiped Him, saying, My daughter has just now died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will come to life. 19 And Jesus got up and accompanied him, with His disciples. 20 And behold, a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His garment; 21 For she kept saying to herself, If I only touch His garment, I shall be restored to health. 22 Jesus turned around and, seeing her, He said, Take courage, daughter! Your faith has made you well. And at once the woman was restored to health. 23 And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making an uproar and din, 24 He said, Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping. And they laughed and jeered at Him. 25 But when the crowd had been ordered to go outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. 26 And the news about this spread through all that district. 27 As Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed Him, shouting loudly, Have pity and mercy on us, Son of David! 28 When He reached the house and went in, the blind men came to Him, and Jesus said to them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said to Him, Yes, Lord. 29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith and trust and reliance [on the power invested in Me] be it done to you; 30 And their eyes were opened. And Jesus earnestly and sternly charged them, See that you let no one know about this. 31 But they went off and blazed and spread His fame abroad throughout that whole district. 32 And while they were going away, behold, a dumb man under the power of a demon was brought to Jesus. 33 And when the demon was driven out, the dumb man spoke; and the crowds were stunned with bewildered wonder, saying, Never before has anything like this been seen in Israel. 34 But the Pharisees said, He drives out demons through and with the help of the prince of demons. 35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news (the Gospel) of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and every weakness and infirmity. 36 When He saw the throngs, He was moved with pity and sympathy for them, because they were bewildered (harassed and distressed and dejected and helpless), like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, The harvest is indeed plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 So pray to the Lord of the harvest to force out and thrust laborers into His harvest.

And so he entered into a ship, and he passed over, and he came to his own city (Mat 9:1).

His own city being Capernaum. I told you that was his headquarters.

And, behold, they brought to him a man who was sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus when he saw their faith said to the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee (Mat 9:2).

Now I can imagine that that was a tremendous disappointment to his friends. I'm certain that they had in their mind Jesus healing the guy so he'd get out of his bed and walk. And for Jesus to say, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven" that probably was disappointing to them. It may be was even disappointing to the guy lying there. But in reality, Jesus was giving him the greater gift first.

Really, it is more important that your sins be forgiven than you be healed of your ailments. What is more important than our salvation? Nothing. My healing is not as important as my salvation. The greatest miracle God has wrought in my life is my miracle of salvation, the forgiveness of my sins. That's God's greatest miracle in my life, the rest is really nothing compared to that great miracle of God. Sometimes people tragically say, oh, God's never really done any miracle in my life. Well, are you born again? Yeah. Well, hey, hey, hey. That's the greatest thing that God can do for you. The rest is really very simple when you consider the first thing that God has done.

"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven." Oh, how we so often misunderstand because you see, we place a greater emphasis upon the material than we do the spiritual realm. Jesus was constantly showing that the most important realm is the spiritual realm and the material is inferior to the spiritual. So Jesus takes first thing first, the spiritual realm; "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven". However, there were certain scribes within themselves, when they heard that they said, [oh, oh] that's blasphemy. And so Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? (Mat 9:3-4)

Would he say that to you if he knew your thoughts? "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" Oh, He does know your thoughts, he knows what's in the heart of man. Then he said,

What is easier to say, Your sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? (Mat 9:5)

Now as far as saying, it's easier to say your sins be forgiven you because who can tell, you know, immediately what happened. If you say arise and walk, that's really harder to say because hey, if the guy doesn't arise and walk you say hey, he doesn't have anything. You see the arising and walk can bring an immediate demonstration of whether or not there's any power in what you'd said. It immediately puts it on the line because now we can have a physical demonstration to either prove or disprove the power of your word. So "What is easier to say, Your sins be forgiven; or Arise and walk?" It's a lot easier to say your sins be forgiven.

But that you may know that I have power on earth to forgive sin (Mat 9:6),

In other words, I'll give to you a demonstration of the power of My word that you may know that I have the power to forgive sins because you can't see that, that the spiritual work within, but we'll give you some physical evidence.

(he said to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up your bed, and go home. And he arose, and went home. And when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and they glorified God (Mat 9:6-8),

Notice, "they marvelled and they glorified God". Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works they will glorify your Father which is in heaven"(Mat 5:16). And so He did it in such a way as it brought glory to God.

And as Jesus passed forth from there, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom (Mat 9:9):

Matthew was a tax gatherer. He was a customs official. Capernaum was one of those cities where they had established a customs for those coming from the area of the north down through the valley and in the Golan and around the Sea of Galilee, catching them there as they were bringing their goods and charging custom.

And Jesus said unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed Jesus. And it came to pass, as Jesus was sitting at meat in the house, behold, there were many publicans and sinners and they came and sat down with him and his disciples (Mat 9:9-10).

Open house. A lot of publicans and sinners.

And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, Why is your Master eating with publicans and sinners? (Mat 9:11)

In that culture eating with people was extremely significant. They had inculturated with them the concept that to eat with someone is to become one with that person. Because we take a loaf of bread and I hold it out to you and you grab a piece off and you start eating it; I pull off a piece and I start eating it, we are both of us eating from the same loaf of bread. As I am eating from that loaf of bread it is now going in and being assimilated by my body and it's becoming a part of my body. As you are eating your piece of bread, you are assimilating it and it's becoming a part of your body; and thus, in a mystical way we're becoming a part of each other. I'm becoming one with you because the bread that is nourishing me and becoming a part of me is also nourishing you and becoming a part of you.

So you would never eat with anyone unless you wanted to be identified with that person and becoming one with them. That's why they were shocked that Jesus would eat with sinners and with publicans. You mean you would become one with a sinner? You would be identified with a sinner? Yes, he was identified with the sinners in order that they might identify with Him and receive his power and his forgiveness.

And so they came to the disciples and questioned them, how come?

And Jesus when he heard that, said unto them, Those that are whole don't need a physician, but those that are sick. But go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice (Mat 9:12-13):

Now in the book of Hosea, the Lord talking to Israel said, "Look, I want mercy not sacrifice. I want you to start showing mercy. I'd rather you show mercy than offer sacrifices to me"(Hosea 6:6). And so Jesus is quoting them one of their scriptures out of Hosea. And he says,

Go and learn what that means when the Lord said, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for Jesus said I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Then came to him the disciples of John, and they said, Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples don't fast? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then they shall fast (Mat 9:13-15).

So while Jesus was with his disciples, was not the time for fasting. "The days will come when I will be gone, when I will leave and those will be the days when they can fast." And then Jesus talks about really, the worthlessness of reformation.

No man puts a piece of new cloth onto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up will take from the garment, and the tear is made worse (Mat 9:16).

Now in those days they didn't have Sanforize materials, preshrunk materials. And so if you would take an old garment that had been washed many times and you would sew a new patch into that old garment, the new patch would not have yet been shrunk. And so

the first time you would wash the garment that new patch you put in would shrink and rip out the -- make the tear worse. And so Jesus is saying, "Look, you don't try and patch up the old garment with new material".

You don't put new wine in old skins: the new wine will burst the old skins: but you get new skins (Mat 9:17).

Now basically Jesus is talking against the religious systems that were established at that time and there's no reforming of them. I haven't really come to reform Judaism, to sew a new piece of cloth into this old garment or to put new wine in these old skins.

I do believe that there is also an application to this in the present times. I do believe that when God is desiring to do a fresh work that God often times has to go outside of the boundaries of the organized religious systems. I really don't know in history where we have any record of a true revival in a denominational group. Usually the great revivals ultimated in a whole new denomination being formed. It seems like the old skins get set, and so we see this marvelous work of God here.

But it is my personal conviction that God had to sort of raise up new skins for the work that He was wanting to do. And so I found myself personally in that frustrating position for many years of trying to put the new wine into the old skins and I was just ripping things apart. I was known as a rebel and as a nonconformist and every other thing that they could say, because I couldn't see going along with just the traditional things of the denomination. Why don't we just get back to the Word and follow the Word of God. And it seems simple enough, but the old skins just can't handle it; they're already set in their ways.

There are many people today who are still involved in the process of carefully pouring the new wine in the old skins, always trying to pour it in such a way that we don't split them, you know, don't burst them. But ultimately, people come to the conclusion that it's not an easy thing to do if it is at all possible.

Now while he spoke these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay your hand on her, and she shall live (Mat 9:18).

Say, this fellow was understandably very desperate at this point, but look at this tremendous faith. Worshipping Jesus he said, "Look, my daughter's dead: but I know if you'll come and lay your hand on her, she'll live".

And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples. And, behold, there was a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood for twelve years, and she came up behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. And Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour (Mat 9:19-22).

Now, I wanna point out something that I feel is very important and very significant in this. And that is that this woman had set a point of contact for the releasing of her faith. Now I think that many times we have faith that God is able to do a particular thing but we never come to the place of actuating that faith. And I do believe that there is a value of actuating faith and it's important to actuate faith. It's more than just well, I know God can do it. Well, yes I believe the Lord can do it. It is I believe the Lord is doing it or the Lord will do it now or at that point when I am really actuating then the faith that I have.

Now this woman in her mind had set a point to actuate her faith; that point being the moment I touch the hem of His garment I know I'm gonna be healed. So that having set the point for the actuating of her faith, the moment she touched his garment, she actuated her faith and in that moment she was healed.

Now, I think that herein lies the value of having the elders lay hands on you, as the Bible tells us "If there are any sick among you let them call for the elders of the church. Let them lay hands on them, anoint them in the oil and the prayer of faith will save the sick"(James 5:14). I think that that laying on of hands is a tremendous place for the actuating of faith. I know that when I'm anointed with oil and the elders lay hands on me, God is gonna heal me because he's promised to. And it gives a point for the actuating of a person's faith. As soon as they lay hands I know God's gonna heal me, you know.

Jesus realizing that the miracle had been wrought, turned to her and said "be of good cheer, your faith," not My faith, "your faith has made you whole" and the woman was in that very hour.

And when Jesus came to the ruler's house, he saw the minstrels and the people making noise (Mat 9:23),

A, it is a custom many times, more in pagan lands, when someone is very sick or dying to gather together a great crowd for making a lot of noise, minstrels and so forth, to make a lot of noise, to drive the evil spirits away.

Jesus said unto them, Move aside: for the maid is not dead, she's only sleeping. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put out, he went in, and took her by the hand, and she arose. And the fame went abroad into all that land. And when Jesus departed from there, there were two blind men who followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus said unto them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? And they said unto him, Yes, Lord. And he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, Don't let any man know this. But they, when they departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. And as they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man who was possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb man spoke: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never like this in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He has casting out devils through the prince of devils (Mat 9:24-34).

Notice that, because we'll be getting to that in a few moments as we move on and deal with the unpardonable sin they're beginning to get close.

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. And when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. And then he said to his disciples, The harvest is truly plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest (Mat 9:35-38).

And so the ministry of Jesus. And notice how that Jesus does not formulate a pattern. How often we are trying to formulate patterns for God, define the circles in which God can move and develop the methods and develop the means. And we get all of these little, sort of, canned approaches to dealing with the problem. Let's see, what is your problem? Oh yeah, that's solution number seventeen. Let's see here, and you know, number one, two, three, four and we go down this little, you know, routine. We, so often like to routine God, put him in a box, combine him to a method and especially if, if that method has worked at one time.

And I'm guilty of this. I know that, you know, you think now what did I do, you know it worked that time. Now what did I do that was different you know. And you know, you try to get the same feeling or whatever you know, as though it was something to do with me rather than God's divine sovereign work.

And so with some, Jesus challenged their faith. But surely this little girl that was dead didn't have any faith. And you can't say, well it was her faith in Jesus, but immediately afterwards with the two blind men he said do you believe that I can do this? They said Oh yes, Lord. And he said, well, according to your faith be it done and their eyes were opened. The woman who had this hemorrhaging condition said I can just touch his garment and he said, "Woman, be of good cheer; you're faith has made you whole". Her faith.

So, you see there's no patterned way of God's working in a person's life. But when someone has the same thing that we have, we go and say now how did it happen? You know, what did you do? And, you know, I wanna learn the formula; I want to learn this little secret way so that I can follow, you know. But the Lord doesn't confine himself to a routine or to a pattern but he is diverse as we are diverse and he deals with each of us according to our own diverse need. And I love the Lord for his beautiful adaptability in being able to minister to me according to my own personality and my own need.

God is so glorious because I relate to him in such a personal way. He understands my own individual quirks and characteristics and he understands me and loves me just like I am and he deals with me according to my own personality and all, and thus he deals with each of us on that individual basis. And it is wrong for us to attempt to pattern God to, you know, well this is the way he did it for me and so if he doesn't do it for you that way well then hey, you, you know, don't quite have it, you know. If it wasn't done to you just like it's done for me, and so you form your denomination and I'll form mine and well, you know, and the lepers.

Another time there were ten lepers that came to Him. Jesus didn't touch him. He just said "go your way, show yourself to the priest". So, if they got together with this one that we read about tonight, oh, you mean he didn't touch you, ahem. Well you didn't get it like I did, man. He touched me. You can't belong to my church. I'm of the touch-me church. Well, we're of the touch-me-nots.

Yes, there is room for variety, as much diversity and variety as we have in people here tonight for God to work in our lives. Don't try to pattern God. Don't try to look for the same experience that someone had. You just relate to God in your own personal, unique way and God will relate to you in a very personal, unique way; and you'll have your own special walk and experience and relationship with God. So often times we give up, you know, they said that this happened, no it hasn't happened to me and no, you know, I don't have it. I guess because it didn't happen like it happened to them. The method by which God works in our lives are infinite in their varieties.

Well, we got two chapters done, we're improving. That's hundred percent. Next week, we'll start at ten. Who knows? Um, we'll try and take ten, eleven and twelve. I want to uh, get into the parables and spend time in the kingdom parables which begin in chapter thirteen, and that's not a good place to start, I mean that's not a good place to come in to at the end of a study; it's a place to start. So, we'll just aim for ten, eleven and twelve next week and uh, so, uh there's, there's a lot in that. Especially I want to spend some time on an issue that a lot of people have difficulty with and that's the unpardonable sin that Jesus brings out in our study next week, chapter twelve.

Shall we stand? We are so grateful for the marvelous work of God's love and His spirit within our lives, overwhelmed daily with the goodness and the blessings of God. God is so good. It's such a privilege being here with you. I thank God for this privilege. Every once in awhile I have a nightmare that I'm pastoring someplace else. Man, I'm so glad when I wake up in the morning. There's no place I'd rather be than just right here because of God's glorious work and the witness from this place that's going out to the world.

May the Lord bless you, continue to bless you. May the Lord's hand be upon your life this week. May you experience God's power working in your life in a very special way. May you be enriched in all things in Christ Jesus. May you experience a time of growth this week as the Lord draws you into closer fellowship with Himself, in Jesus' name.

Matthew 10:1-42 (AMP)

1 AND JESUS summoned to Him His twelve disciples and gave them power and authority over unclean spirits, to drive them out, and to cure all kinds of disease and all kinds of weakness and infirmity. 2 Now these are the names of the twelve apostles (special messengers): first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James son of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3 Philip and Bartholomew [Nathaniel]; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus [Judas, not Iscariot]; 4 Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. 5 Jesus sent out these twelve, charging them, Go nowhere among the Gentiles and do not go into any town of the Samaritans; 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand! 8 Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out demons. Freely (without pay) you have received, freely (without charge) give. 9 Take no gold nor silver nor [even] copper money in your purses (belts); 10 And do not take a provision bag or a wallet for a collection bag for your journey, nor two undergarments, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the workman deserves his support (his living, his food). 11 And into whatever town or village you go, inquire who in it is deserving, and stay there [at his house] until you leave [that vicinity]. 12 As you go into the house, give your greetings and wish it well. 13 Then if indeed that house is deserving, let come upon it your peace [that is, freedom from all the distresses that are experienced as the result of sin]. But if it is not deserving, let your peace return to you. 14 And whoever will not receive and accept and welcome you nor listen to your message, as you leave that house or town, shake the dust [of it] from your feet. 15 Truly I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. 16 Behold, I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves; be wary and wise as serpents, and be innocent (harmless, guileless, and without falsity) as doves. 17 Be on guard against men [whose way or nature is to act in opposition to God]; for they will deliver you up to councils and flog you in their synagogues, 18 And you will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a witness to bear testimony before them and to the Gentiles (the nations). 19 But when they deliver you up, do not be anxious about how or what you are to speak; for what you are to say will be given you in that very hour and moment, 20 For it is not you who are speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 Brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child; and children will take a stand against their parents and will have them put to death. 22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake, but he who perseveres and endures to the end will be saved [from spiritual disease and death in the world to come]. 23 When they persecute you in one town [that is, pursue you in a manner that would injure you and cause you to suffer because of your belief], flee to another town; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 24 A disciple is not above his teacher, nor is a servant or slave above his master. 25 It is sufficient for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant or slave like his master. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebul [master of the dwelling], how much more will they speak evil of those of His household. 26 So have no fear of them; for nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, or kept secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops. 28 And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be afraid of Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Gehenna). 29 Are not two little sparrows sold for a penny? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's leave (consent) and notice. 30 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, then; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 Therefore, everyone who acknowledges Me before men and confesses Me [out of a state of oneness with Me], I will also acknowledge him before My Father Who is in heaven and confess [that I am abiding in] him. 33 But whoever denies and disowns Me before men, I also will deny and disown him before My Father Who is in heaven. 34 Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to part asunder a man from his father, and a daughter from her mother, and a newly married wife from her mother-in-law— 36 And a man's foes will be they of his own household. 37 He who loves [and takes more pleasure in] father or mother more than [in] Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves [and takes more pleasure in] son or daughter more than [in] Me is not worthy of Me; 38 And he who does not take up his cross and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conforming wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying also] is not worthy of Me. 39 Whoever finds his [lower] life will lose it [the higher life], and whoever loses his [lower] life on My account will find it [the higher life]. 40 He who receives and welcomes and accepts you receives and welcomes and accepts Me, and he who receives and welcomes and accepts Me receives and welcomes and accepts Him Who sent Me. 41 He who receives and welcomes and accepts a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who receives and welcomes and accepts a righteous man because he is a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whoever gives to one of these little ones [in rank or influence] even a cup of cold water because he is My disciple, surely I declare to you, he shall not lose his reward.

Shall we turn now in our bibles to the tenth chapter of the gospel of Matthew?

In the beginning of the tenth chapter we find Christ sending His disciples out, telling them to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But in the fact that He is sending them to go, in the first part of chapter ten, makes the last verse of chapter nine quite significant. For in the last verse of chapter nine, Jesus said to His disciples: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of harvest, that he will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Mat 9:38). And having told them to pray that the Lord will send workers into the harvest, the next thing He says is, "Go."

So many times as we pray, the Lord speaks to our own hearts. So many times we see a need and we think, oh what a need. The church really should be trying to fulfill that need, and we become all concerned with the need. And the Lord says, "Pray about it." And as we pray about it, suddenly we realize that God has called us. He has shown us the need, because He wants us to plug ourselves into the filling of that particular need. Many times the very fact that God has made you conscious and aware of that particular thing, is the beginning of the call of God upon your own life for that particular field of service.

So the Lord says pray, "Because harvest is plenteous, the labourers are few; pray that the Lord of harvest, will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Mat 9:37-38). Then in the very next section, the Lord says, "Now you go out into this harvest." And so praying so often prepares us for going. It is while I am praying that the Spirit of God can really get a hold of my heart.

As I've said, I do believe that prayer changes things, mainly me. I don't think that prayer changes God. I wouldn't really want prayer to change God. I think it would be extremely dangerous if prayer could change God. I think that God knows best in every situation. And I

would not want to convince God, if I could, I can't, but if I could, I would not want to convince Him to see things my way. I would rather that through prayer the Spirit of God be able to get hold of my own heart and mold me, and shape me, into that which God has purposed, in that which God has designed. So often as I say, "Oh Lord, send forth workers into the harvest." Then I hear the call of God, "Who will go?" And I answer, "Oh Lord, here am I, send me."

And so Jesus said, "Pray the Lord of harvest," and then He says now you go.

And when he had called unto him the twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease (Mat 10:1).

Jesus is first of all empowering His disciples for that work before He sends them out to do the work, empowering them against unclean spirits, giving them the power to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease.

Now the names of the twelve apostles, and here they are first called apostles, because of the fact that He is sending them out. The word "apostle" means "one who is sent". Up to this point they have been disciples, they've been learning of Him. They have been following Him and learning as He taught, but now the time has come for them to go out. They are now being sent by Him, and thus the change from disciple, a follower, to an apostle, one who has been sent.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican [or tax collector]; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him (Mat 10:2-4).

"Simon the Canaanite", that word translated Canaanite is actually Canaanin. We are told in Luke's gospel that he was Simon the Zelotes (Luke 6:15).

Now Josephus tells us that the Zelotes were the extreme patriots. These were men who valued freedom above life itself. These were men who were willing to sacrifice their own lives, or even see their own families martyred, in order that they might be free. They preferred freedom to life. They were willing to do whatever is necessary to obtain freedom. They were the ones who rebelled constantly against the Roman government. Simon the Zelotes.

Matthew, a publican, was considered a quisling by the Jews. He was one that had more or less sold out to the enemy, because he was collecting taxes, for the hated Roman government.

Now had Simon and Matthew met under any other circumstances, Simon would have done Matthew in. I mean here you've got a Zelote, one who hates the Roman yoke, one who is willing to fight to overthrow it, and you have another one who was almost in league with Rome, a turncoat so to speak. It's interesting though how that Christ takes people from many different backgrounds, even adverse backgrounds, and brings us together in a loving fellowship.

Now it is also interesting to me, that as the Lord names these apostles, there aren't really any great marvelous people among them as far as the world is concerned. None of them are highly educated. None of them are prominent or wealthy. In fact, they are just common ordinary people. Four of them were fishermen, and one was a tax collector. We are not really given much of a background on the others, but they were just plain common people. That always interests me, because these men that God is preparing to send out to do His work, are just plain, common people like you. And when God has a work to be done, He doesn't really go to the universities to select those with the highest grades, and IQ's and all, but God chooses and calls just plain ordinary people like you.

It is wrong for any of us to excuse ourselves from serving the Lord, because of the fact that we are just so ordinary, because that is the kind of person God seeks to use for His glory. If God used the highly talented, highly developed kind of an individual, then we would all be saying, oh, but don't you know he's got his doctorate. Don't you know he was so brilliant? Don't you know he-- and we would be putting the emphasis upon the ability of the instrument, rather than upon the One who has used the instrument. We would have a tendency then to glory in man, or man's educational processes.

So the Lord has chosen the simple things to confound the wise, and the foolish things to put to naught the wisdom of this world. And God uses just plain common ordinary people like Raul Ries, Greg Laurie, Mike Macintosh, and Chuck Smith to do His work, just the plain ordinary people to do His work.

I love to hear Raul on the radio. I have to sacrifice listening to myself, because I am on KYMS at that hour. I heard Raul this week as he was describing his condition when he was in the Marine Corp. He had been such a vicious killer, and had killed so many people, that he was brought back and put in the hospital in Vallejo for the mentally deficient. And he said, "The psychiatrist said, 'Man, I was far and above beyond gone.'" That's a typical Raul-ism. He is ordinary, and yet anointed by the Spirit of God and used by God to do His work.

So not many wise, not many great, not many notable of the world, but just those plain ordinary people who He sent out as apostles to represent Him.

These twelve Jesus sent forth (Mat 10:5)

That is what made them apostles.

And commanded them saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, or into any city of the Samaritans do not enter. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mat 10:5-6).

So by telling them not to go into the way of the Gentiles, He was restricting their area of ministry. They were not to go south into Samaria. They were not to go west over to Tyre and Sidon. They were not to go as far north as Damascus, but they were to go only around the region of the Galilee; not even to the cities of the Decapolis, but only to those Jewish communities around the Galilee. So in the first sending out of the disciples, it was a very restricted area that He gave them to work in. They were to be forerunners of His coming; for He was going to follow up and to go into each of these villages. And they were more or less the forerunners of His own coming to these villages. So they were sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Paul the apostle said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: it is the power of God unto salvation to those that believe; to the Jew first" (Romans 1:16).

Jesus came to the Jew first. And as He was sending them forth now, it was very limited, only to the Jews, not to be going to the Gentiles or to the Samaritans. However, He Himself later was to reveal Himself to that Samaritan woman. He was to heal the daughter of the Syrophenician, and finally He was to tell His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). But it was important in God's plan that the Gospel come first to the Jew.

And so there was first of all that restricted ministry of the disciples when He was first sending them forth. It was not to the world at this time; it was just among the Jews, not even into the Samaritans, but only to the Jews at this point.

Later, He said, "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you: you will be witnesses unto me not only in Judea, but also in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8). But now restricted to the Galilee region, only to those Jewish communities: the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Notice it doesn't say, "The ten lost tribes of the house of Israel." Ten lost tribes is not a Biblical term. There are not ten lost tribes. God knows exactly where they are and who they are. He has never lost them. And when the time comes, He is going to seal 12,000 from each of the tribes to be preserved during the great tribulation period.

I discount the attempt to make a Jew out of me, because of my English heritage. The business of Denmark being of the tribe of Dan, or Danmark, so they are called the Dan-ish people. The word "ish" in Hebrew is "man", so Dan's man or Dan-ish, Brit-ish, Engl-ish, fool-ish. Just because it has an "ish" on the end, doesn't make it Jewish.

Now as Jesus sent them forth, He said,

Go, and preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mat 10:7).

What is the "kingdom of heaven," this glorious phrase? Well, we'll be getting parables about the kingdom in our next study as we get into Matthew thirteen and fourteen, these parables of the kingdom. What is the kingdom of heaven? Jesus said when you pray, say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (Mat 6:10). What are we praying for when we pray for the kingdom of heaven? Now Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is among you, rather than in you. But in reality God's kingdom has come to every man who has acknowledged Jesus Christ as his Lord and King. And if you tonight have acknowledged the Lordship of Jesus Christ, if He is the King of your life, you are already a citizen of the kingdom: the kingdom of heaven has come to you. And as a citizen of the kingdom, there are many tremendous benefits for the citizens of that kingdom.

As a citizen of the United States I have many benefits. Even when I travel in a foreign country there are certain protections that I have as a citizen of the United States. Should I get into trouble there are always those embassies to which I can turn who are there to help the citizens of the United States out of whatever difficulty they might find themselves in. And those within the embassies in these foreign countries will seek to help those citizens of the United States, that's just one of the benefits of citizenship. Just because I am a citizen, they'll go to bat for me, and they'll speak up for me, and they will pull strings for me, because I am a citizen of the United States. And the United States has an obligation to guarantee its citizens certain rights, certain privileges. So I enjoy being a citizen of the United States, because of those rights and privileges that I have as a citizen.

But I am also a citizen of a kingdom, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. And I tell you, the rights and the privileges that I have as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven far exceed the rights and the privileges that I have as a citizen of the United States. Wherever I go, I have protection. I have authority, the authority of the kingdom of heaven behind me.

Jesus is saying, "Now you go out and preach saying, herald it, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And they were to demonstrate the aspects of the kingdom of heaven by

Healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, and raising the dead, and casting out the devils (Mat 10:8).

We read in the prophesy of Isaiah thirty-five, some of the aspects of that kingdom age; where the lame will leap for joy, the dumb will sing praises unto God, the blind will behold the glory of the Lord, and the gospel will be preached unto the meek, to the poor. So Jesus is telling them to demonstrate the aspects of the kingdom by setting men free from the kingdom of darkness.

I love the commission that the Lord gave to Paul the apostle when He called him on the Damascus road. When Paul was talking to king Agrippa and relating to Agrippa that calling of God on the Damascus road, Paul said that the Lord spoke to him to go to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). So Paul's commission as he went to the Gentiles was to deliver them from the power of Satan unto God, from the power of darkness to light.

As a citizen of God's kingdom, I've been delivered from the power of darkness, and I am to bring deliverance to those to whom I come, to those who will heed the message and receive Jesus Christ as King. That is the effect: they are delivered from the power of darkness and brought into the light, from the power of Satan and made a part of the kingdom of God. There are people today who are living in the kingdom of darkness.

There are two basic kingdoms in the Universe. In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth there was only one kingdom in the Universe, the kingdom of God: the kingdom of light and life. But God in His kingdom created these beings we call, "angels", and He endowed them with the capacity of choice. And one of the choicest of the angels, the anointed cherub that covered, perfect in beauty, perfect in wisdom, was lifted up by pride and decided to exalt himself and be as God; the first Mormon. And the inspiration behind the Mormons today is to be as God.

What was it Shakespeare has this statement in one of his plays, "Oh Cromwell, flee ambition for by this sin the angels fell." What was the temptation that Satan offered to Eve in the garden? "Eat of it because you will be as God, knowing good from evil" (Genesis 3:5). That bait still works. And there are those who are attempting to be as God still. Tragic.

Now in his rebellion against God, in his pride being lifted up to be as God, he formed a second kingdom in the universe, a kingdom that was an antithesis to the first kingdom, a kingdom that was in rebellion to the first kingdom: The kingdom of death and darkness. So now in the universe there are two opposing kingdoms: the kingdom of God, the kingdom of light and life, ruled by God; but now a sub-kingdom in antagonism to the first, rebelling against the first, the kingdom of death and darkness.

Now when God created man, and placed him here upon the planet earth, He placed man here in the kingdom of God. Adam had fellowship with God. God came down and He communed with Adam there in the garden. There was this beautiful fellowship with man and God in the kingdom of light and life.

But Satan, the ruler of the kingdom of death and darkness, came to Eve and said, Did God say you could eat of all the trees? Yes, all but the one in the middle. He told us if we ate of that tree we would die. Satan said, Oh you really won't die. That's the finest tree in the garden. God isn't really being fair to you, Eve. He is trying to hold back something good. You see that tree holds the key to knowledge. And God doesn't want you to eat that tree because He knows that when you eat of it, you'll be wise as He is, knowing good from evil. He is trying to hold that back. You really ought to try it. How do you know unless you've tried it? (Genesis 3:1-5).

And so Eve being deceived ate of it and her eyes were opened. And she gave to her husband Adam and he did eat. But in that act of disobedience to God, which was a double act, because it was an act of obedience to Satan, they left the kingdom of light and life, and they were drawn into the kingdom of death and darkness. They drew all mankind into the kingdom of death and darkness, because they could not pass on something they did not have. They had lost that place in the kingdom of God, the kingdom of light and life. "And so by one man, sin entered the world, and death by sin; for death passed upon all men, for all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

So each of us born of Adam were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, born sinners by nature, and we were all by nature children of wrath, even as others; born into the kingdom of death and darkness.

But there is another tree. The tree of life is still available. It is through Jesus Christ. And if you choose to come into the kingdom of light and life, you can come by the cross of Jesus Christ, using that same exercise of free choice that Adam used in leaving the kingdom of God. You can use that to come back, come back into the kingdom of God, since Jesus Christ made provision.

So the duty of the apostles was to preach the kingdom. It's possible for a man to now again have fellowship with God. You can come out of the kingdom of darkness. You can come into the kingdom of light. You can have deliverance from the power of Satan, and you can know fellowship with God. And that's the glorious Gospel that we herald today. That's the glorious Gospel we still preach. It is possible for that man who has been bound in the kingdom of darkness and death, that man that has been alienated by God because of his life after the flesh, it is possible for him to know the power of God's Spirit in his life. He can come from that kingdom of darkness into the glorious light and liberty of the sons of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, through the tree, the cross. And so a lot of people blame Adam today for their problems and they feel that it is quite unfair that they have to suffer for Adam's mistake.

I was hiking a group of kids from the High Y camp there in Arizona, coming down the backside of Mt. Lemon from an old mine. And as I was leading them down this trail I heard this yell back in the line, and so I went back to see what this horrible scream was about. This one little guy had brushed to close to an Ajoja cactus. Now the Ajoja is called the jumping cactus, and if you just barely touch it, it will break off and just clamp on to you. He had one that really clamped on to him good. He was really yelling. So I got back there and I took a couple of sticks, and I carefully worked the sticks in between the thorns and then I flipped that Ajoja cactus off of him. And as he was shaking his hand and all, he said, "That darn guy, Adam." Where do you go to Sunday school? He said, "I go to the First Baptist Church." I said, "Well, they're teaching you correct doctrine anyhow." You know that the thorns and the thistles resulted from the curse. "Cursed is the ground... thorns shall it bring forth" (Genesis 3:17-18).

So many times we're looking at the miseries that we're facing and we say, that darn guy, Adam, got us into this mess. He made such a horrible choice. When he had the choice of the tree of life, or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, why couldn't he have chosen the tree of life, why would he eat of the other tree first? That tree of life in the midst of the garden, why didn't he eat of it? How foolish. And we're prone to really come down on Adam for the foolish choice. But in reality, there are still two trees today and you have the choice. You can choose to eat of the tree of life today, for God has given to you that choice by believing and receiving in Jesus Christ you can have eternal life. Or, you can choose to disobey God, to rebel, to eat of the fruit of the world and abide in death.

So you really can't blame Adam for your condition. You can only blame yourself, because you, many, are following Adam's folly not choosing to eat of the tree of life that God has made available to all men through Jesus Christ.

Now Jesus said to His disciples,

Freely you have received, freely give (Mat 10:8).

I wonder how that fits with these modern evangelists today.

I have got on my desk a letter, I wish I had it here right now before me. It's classic. We have these Jewish friends in Israel that we've been seeking to share the truths of Jesus Christ with, but it's a difficult task sharing with them, because he is a guide and he guides a lot of Christian tours. As a guide he sees a lot of the inner workings and the background, and a lot of the rip-offs. When I go over he will start telling me about these rip-offs that he sees where these tour guides get the people over there, the famous evangelists and all, and then they really rip the people off.

He will tell me of these things, and then somehow he has gotten on the mailing list of some of these evangelists, and he gets these computerized letters. "Dear brother," and all of this junk. Have you been bothered with an ear problem lately, or maybe its the eyes or nose, or a knee, or hepatitis? I mean the guy goes down a long list, and you're bound to hit something. Somehow I've been impressed to pray for you lately, and I think there might be something wrong. Why don't you write me and share with me. Now please don't send me any money for my birthday, but I've been laboring for the Lord three hundred and forty-one nights a year and I am really tired and I am gonna take a vacation and we could use a little extra money. Our organ blew up -- and all of this kind of stuff. Here this guy is getting these computerized letters, and he is smart enough to see through them, and to him the ministry is a sham. He sees the rip-offs.

Jesus said to His disciples, "Freely you have received, freely give." They weren't to demand fees for their services. They weren't to be taken offerings for themselves. They had received freely from God, and they were to give freely.

Now the Lord said,

Don't provide gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses (Mat 10:9)

Don't take any coins in your purses,

Nor script for your journey, Don't even take two coats, nor an extra pair of shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat (Mat 10:9-10).

Now you can go and it's proper that the people support you. You don't have to take a lot of money with you. It's proper that the people support you. The workman is worthy of his hire. However, you're not to go in and make yourself a burden, or lay yourself upon people.

And into whatsoever city or town you shall enter, inquire who is worthy; and stay there until you leave. And when you come into a house, greet it. And if the house worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you (Mat 10:11-13).

Now in those days they really thought quite a bit about giving a person a blessing. If they would greet you, they would often greet you with a blessing of the Lord. "The blessings of the Lord be upon you and your seed." "Thank you." But then if they get down the road and think, oh, he wasn't worthy. That was a Gentile or something, and he comes back, and he says, "I take that blessing back." They felt that they had to remove the blessings that they gave if the person was undeserving or unworthy. So Jesus is pretty much saying if thy house is worthy let your peace abide, if it's not, take your peace with you.

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, just shake off the dust off your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the Day of Judgment, than for that city. Behold, I'm sending you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore as wise as serpents, and harmless as doves (Mat 10:14-16).

Now someone said, well, serpents aren't really noted to be very wise. They're not considered to be a wise kind of a creature. And I heard a professor in biology making fun of the knowledge of Christ by pointing out to the class that serpents really weren't wise, and so for the Lord to say, "be as wise as serpents," was a rather stupid thing, and showed that He had really very little knowledge of biology. One of the students spoke up in class and said, "How long do you think you would survive without any arms or legs, and you had to take care of yourself out in the desert? So you have to give him some credit, at least they survive. That's more then we could do." The servant of the Lord, harmless as doves.

But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to their councils, they will scourge you in their synagogues [that is they will beat you]; You will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not take forethought how or what you are going to say: for it will be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you (Mat 10:17-20).

So you don't have to make up for the whole speeches in advance, just let the Lord anoint you by His Spirit.

And the brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved (Mat 10:21-22).

So here we have that basis for the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, which is oftentimes used as a contrast to those who would go to antianimism, to the extremes of the security of the believer. And there are those who press this side of the coin, "he that endures to the end," and the perseverance of the saints. Truth lies somewhere in the middle.

But when they persecute you in this city, flee to another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come (Mat 10:23).

Now Jesus is referring to His journey that He is going to be taken among these cities. And so if they persecute you in one city, just go to the next. You are not actually going through all of these cities before I'll be right behind you. I'll be coming behind you, and I'll be ministering in these cities. He is not really referring to His Second Coming at all, but just to His ministry in these cities of the Galilee.

Now Jesus said,

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master (Mat 10:24-25).

That's enough. You bet it is, that's great, if we could only be as our Lord. And He said, "Your not greater than the Lord." It's just enough that you be as the Lord. God help us to be as the Lord.

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub [or the lord of flies], how much more shall they call them of his household? (Mat 10:25).

They called me names, they are gonna call you names.

Don't fear them: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak in light: and what you hear [in sort of whispered] in the ear, that preach from the housetops (Mat 10:26-27).

Now I've been teaching you, I've been training you, I've been telling you in these little intercessions that we have, now you go out and proclaim these truths openly. That, which you've heard in these little sessions that we've had, go out and proclaim them.

And don't fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Mat 10:28).

So He's not saying to fear Satan. Satan has no capacity of destroying your soul in hell. He is saying, fear God, don't fear man. The worst thing man can do is kill you. So why should you fear man, "To be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). You should fear the one who is able to take both body and soul and cast it into hell, that's the one you really should be fearing.

Are not two sparrows sold for half of a cent? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father taking note (Mat 10:29).

Again, "your Father," and again, "your Father oversees His creation," and one of the common things of God's creation are the little sparrows. They are so common as to be almost worthless. You could buy four of them for a penny in those days. Two Sparrows sold for a half a farthing, and yet not a little sparrow falls, but what your Father doesn't know it, doesn't make note of it. How detailed is God's knowledge of you?

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered (Mat 10:30).

Now just look at all of us here tonight. Some make it easy on the Lord, but isn't it interesting the trivia that God knows about us. He knows more about us than we know about ourselves. God knows even trivia about you. That's how concerned your Father is with you. Oh, if we would only be aware of the tremendous concern that our Father has with us, His children.

For Jesus said, You are worth more than many sparrows (Mat 10:31).

If God takes note of the sparrows, and He's been saying, don't worry about if they kill you. There is not even a sparrow that falls to the ground, but what your Father knows it, if you fall to the ground in the proclaiming of the gospel, if you be killed in your endeavor to reach others with the glorious love of Christ, how much more will your Father take note. You really have nothing to fear, not man, the worst he can do is kill you.

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 (Mat 10:32-33).

This is a heavy, heavy verse, because we must all stand before God one day, stand before the creator of the universe.

Now if I have confessed Jesus Christ before men, when my name is called and I have to stand before God, Jesus will step forth and confess me before the Father. "Father, this is Chuck. He is perfect." Isn't that what Jude said, "Now unto him that is able to keep you

from falling, and to present you faultless" (Jude 24). Why should you laugh when I say, He says, "I am perfect?" Because you know the truth. I know the truth, but I also know the power of my Redeemer. When He confesses me before the Father, and when He presents me before the Father, I will be complete in Him, "Faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

But if a person has denied Jesus before men, you're going to stand all alone before God, the books will be opened, and He who knows all things, He who knows the secrets of the heart. The bible says, "Every thing are naked and opened before him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). And there in the embarrassment of your own bare being, and everything exposed, and you might turn fervently to Jesus Christ, and say, "Lord, Lord," and He shakes His head, "I never knew you." Ah, what a heavy thing. "If you deny me before men, I also will deny you before my Father."

Don't think that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword (Mat 10:34).

The gospel of Jesus Christ unifies men, it brings together a tax collector and a Zelote, but the gospel of Jesus Christ also divides men. It divides men into two categories: those who are apart of the kingdom of God, and those who are apart of the kingdom of darkness. But Jesus divides men as well as unifies men and many times Jesus divides those within a household. A child comes into the kingdom of light, but the father continues to rebel in the kingdom of darkness, and so division comes, and a difference comes. This contention oftentimes arises over the differences of being in the kingdom of light, and the kingdom of darkness.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes will often be those of his own household (Mat 10:35-36).

Jesus was speaking out of personal experience, for at this particular time His brothers were against Him.

He that loves his father or mother more than he loves me is not worthy of me: and he who loves the son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me (Mat 10:37).

Our love for Christ has to be supreme, even above those of our family members, if they are not united with us in the faith. If they are not a part of that kingdom of light, our love for Christ must exceed even our love for those in our own family.

And he that does take not his cross, and follow after me, is not worthy of me (Mat 10:38).

When we get to chapter sixteen, we will take up the cross and what it means.

He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for my sake, shall find it (Mat 10:39).

That we'll also take up in chapter sixteen.

He that receives you (Mat 10:40).

Now you see the authority that Jesus gives to His disciples. I mean you are there representing the Lord, you should be as your Lord.

Those that receive you receives me, and he that receives me receives the Father that sent me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones even a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward (Mat 10:40-42).

So you're doing it as unto the Lord, giving as unto the Lord. Giving unto a servant of the Lord, you receive him as you receive the Lord, and as you give to him, it is, as giving unto the Lord and you will receive your reward for it. The giving of a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, "verily I say unto you, you shall in no wise lose your reward."

Matthew 11:1-30 (AMP)

1 WHEN JESUS had finished His charge to His twelve disciples, He left there to teach and to preach in their [Galilean] cities. 2 Now when John in prison heard about the activities of Christ, he sent a message by his disciples 3 And asked Him, Are You the One Who was to come, or should we keep on expecting a different one? 4 And Jesus replied to them, Go and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed (by healing) and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have good news (the Gospel) preached to them. 6 And blessed (happy, fortunate, and to be envied) is he who takes no offense at Me and finds no cause for stumbling in or through Me and is not hindered from seeing the Truth. 7 Then as these men went their way, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: What did you go out in the wilderness (desert) to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 What did you go out to see then? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in the houses of kings. 9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one [out of the common, more eminent, more remarkable, and] superior to a prophet. 10 This is the one of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, who shall make ready Your way before You. 11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 And from the days of John the Baptist until the present time, the kingdom of heaven has endured violent assault, and violent men seize it by force [as a precious prize—a share in the heavenly kingdom is sought with most ardent zeal and intense exertion]. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied up until John. 14 And if you are willing to receive and accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come [before the kingdom]. 15 He who has ears to hear, let him be listening and let him consider and perceive and comprehend by hearing. 16 But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like little children sitting in the marketplaces who call to their playmates, 17 We piped to you [playing wedding], and you did not dance; we wailed dirges [playing funeral], and you did not mourn and beat your breasts and weep aloud. 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking [with others], and they say, He has a demon! 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking [with others], and they say, Behold, a glutton and a wine drinker, a friend of tax collectors and [especially wicked] sinners! Yet wisdom is justified and vindicated by what she does (her deeds) and by her children. 20 Then He began to censure and reproach the cities in which most of His mighty works had been performed, because they did not repent [and their hearts were not changed]. 21 Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes [and their hearts would have been changed]. 22 I tell you [further], it shall be more endurable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, are you to be lifted up to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades [the region of the dead]! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have continued until today. 24 But I tell you, it shall be more endurable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you. 25 At that time Jesus began to say, I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth [and I acknowledge openly and joyfully to Your honor], that You have hidden these things from the wise and clever and learned, and revealed them to babies [to the childish, untaught, and unskilled]. 26 Yes, Father, [I praise You that] such was Your gracious will and good pleasure. 27 All things have been entrusted and delivered to Me by My Father; and no one fully knows and accurately understands the Son except the Father, and no one fully knows and accurately understands the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son deliberately wills to make Him known. 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find rest (relief and ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. 30 For My yoke is wholesome (useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and My burden is light and easy to be borne.

Chapter 11

Now it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of these commandments, he departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities (Mat 11:1).

So He sent them out in front of them, and then He departed and was following up now, and coming into the cities. They were sort of the advance men for Him to go out in advance.

Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and he said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? (Mat 11:2-3).

Now John had been placed in prison by Herod. John had been preaching the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And he said, "There is one who is coming after me who is mightier than I am, I am not worthy to untie his shoes" (Mat 3:11). But here is John still in Herod's prison and he is saying to the Lord, hey, let's get this show on the road, for even John did not fully understand the mission of Christ in His first coming, but was anticipating the immediate establishment of the kingdom of God as was promised in the Old Testament scriptures.

And so the fact that Jesus had not yet proclaimed His power, and overthrown the Roman yoke and John was still in prison, he was getting impatient. He sends his disciples to Jesus asking, "Are you the one, or shall we start looking for someone else?" What he was really saying is, let's get this thing going. I am tired of sitting here in jail. Let's get the kingdom on the road. Let's get this movement going. Are you the one we should look for, or should we start looking for someone else?

Now Jesus answered and said unto them.

Go and show John those things which you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me (Mat 11:4-6). Now Jesus, rather than answering John directly, points to His ministry, the works that He was doing.

You remember on the night that Jesus was betrayed, as He was talking to His disciples, and John records it so faithfully there in the fourteenth chapter, where Jesus had been saying, "Now look, I am going to the Father, and if I go, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also". And where I go you know, and the way you know. Thomas said, Lord, we really don't know where you are going; and how can we know the way? Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no ones comes to the Father, but by me." And He said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father also."

Philip said, "Lord, if you will just show us the Father, it will suffice us". Jesus said, Have I been so long a time with you, and haven't you seen me, Philip? "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; why do you say then, Show us the Father? Don't you believe not the Father is in me? And the works that I do, I don't really do of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father or else believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14:2-11)

In other words, Jesus was pointing to the works as the evidence of His commission, of His person, and of His authority, pointing to the works. He also said, "The works that I do they do testify of me" (John 10:25). They were the evidence. He was fulfilling the promises of the kingdom in the Old Testament, as far as the lame walking, the blind seeing, the dumb speaking, the deaf hearing, he was fulfilling. The dead were being raised, the poor had the gospel preached, and he was fulfilling those aspects of the kingdom. His works were a witness and a testimony. All He did was heal a few of the sick that were around there, open the eyes of the blind, and all, and He said, now you just go back and tell John what you see. And just tell him, Blessed is the one who doesn't get offended because of my not really establishing the kingdom immediately, and over throwing the Roman yoke and establishing a physical, visible, earthly kingdom.

Now they departed, Jesus began to talk to the multitudes concerning John the Baptist, And he said, What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken in the wind? (Mat 11:7).

John was preaching down at the Jordan River, a lot of reeds down at the Jordan River. Did you go down to the Jordan River just to watch the reeds being blown by the wind? How come you went out of the cities and down to the Jordan? What did you go there to see? But what did you go out for to see? You obviously didn't go out to see the reeds being blown in the wind.

But what did you go out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment [a man who was wearing fancy clothes]? behold, those that wear soft clothing are in king's houses [they are not in the king's prisons] (Mat 11:8).

John was in the king's prison at that time. And those who wear that kind of clothes are in the king's houses or palaces.

What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say unto you, more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee (Mat 11:9-10).

He is declaring to them that John was indeed the fulfillment of the promise of a forerunner who would come before the Messiah to prepare His way.

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of woman there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he (Mat 11:11).

In other words, our position as children of God through Jesus Christ puts us in a greater position than those of the Old Testament. Our position of having the Holy Spirit indwelling us, puts us in a greater position. Of all the men born of women, not a greater prophet than John the Baptist, yet the privileges that God has bestowed upon us in the church exceed those privileges.

So often times we think, Oh, how blessed it must have been for Abraham to have had that kind of a relationship with God, and Moses, David and all, but in reality the potential of relationship that is ours through the Spirit is tremendous. That God would dwell in us, by His Spirit, that God would empower us with His Spirit, is absolutely amazing. So even the least of us, filled with the Spirit of God, walking in this glorious fellowship with Jesus Christ, have greater privileges than those of the old dispensation.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence (Mat 11:12).

John was thrown into prison and soon he is to be beheaded. The kingdom of heaven is going to suffer violence. The King Himself is going to be crucified. And so the kingdom of heaven is suffering the violence of man.

And the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are able to receive it, this is [Elijah], which was to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (Mat 11:12-15).

Now in an interesting way, according to Jesus, John the Baptist was Elijah. This does bring up some confusion and when we get to the seventeenth chapter, we will look at this again in a little more detail.

When Zechariah the priest was fulfilling his ministry in the temple, the angel Gabriel came to him and told him that his wife Elizabeth, who had been barren, was in her old age, going to bear a son, and he was to call his name John. And the angel told him, "He shall go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the children unto their fathers " (Luke 1:17). He quotes this prophecy that Jesus quoted concerning the forerunner of the Messiah. And basically the Lord was saying John the Baptist was going to be the forerunner of the Messiah, coming in the spirit and in the power of Elijah.

When in the gospel of John, John the Baptist began his ministry; they came out to him and began to challenge him concerning his authority. And they said unto him, "Who are you?" And they asked him point blank, "Are you Elijah?" and John answered, "No." Then

they said, "Who are you?" He said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths" (Mat 3:3), quoting another passage of scripture concerning the forerunner.

Now, the reason for the ambiguity here, is the fact that before Jesus comes again and establishes His visible, physical kingdom upon the earth, Elijah will be coming, of which John the Baptist was a type, for he came in the spirit and in the power. So even as there were two aspects of the coming of Jesus Christ: the first to be crucified, suffering violence; the second to reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, so there are two aspects of the forerunner Elijah.

So John the Baptist came to fulfill the first coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, but Elijah himself will actually come before Jesus returns again. Elijah will prophesy before the Lord to the Jewish people, not to the world, but to the Jewish people to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers; that is, to bring the Jewish people back unto the faith of the patriarchs in God the Father.

In Revelation 11:2, I am convinced that one of those two witnesses in Jerusalem will indeed be John the Baptist, for he has the power to shut up heaven, that it not rain in the time of his ministry, even as Elijah prayed and it rained not. And he has power to call down fire on his enemies to consume them, even as Elijah called down fire upon the captain with the fifties who came out from the king to take him in. So Elijah coming before the Lord.

Because I believe that the coming of the Lord is so near, I do believe that somewhere in the earth today, Elijah probably is alive and living, because I believe that we are that near the coming of the Lord. I don't think that anybody knows who he is or where he is. He may know himself, but I am not looking for him. I am looking for the Lord to come for me. I think that it is easy for us to get our eyes off the main attraction and start looking for little side events. "Oh, who is the Antichrist? I wonder if this one could be the Antichrist." But let's look for the main event, Jesus Christ.

So Jesus is saying, Hey, this is tough to take. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." I mean, if you can take it, if you can handle it, if you will receive it, this is he. This is Elijah, if you can receive it. If you can't receive it, then take it however you want, but "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear". So in a sense it was Elijah, coming in the spirit and power, as a forerunner of the Messiah, but not the total fulfillment of that promise in Malachi.

Now what shall I liken this generation to? It is like children sitting in the marketplace, that are calling to their fellows (Mat 11:16),

They're seeking entertainment.

And they saying, We have piped to you, and you didn't dance; we mourned, and you didn't cry (Mat 11:17).

What do you want? What are you looking for?

So John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, and the Pharisees said, He has a devil. The Son of man came both eating and drinking, and you say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children (Mat 11:18-19).

What did the people want? They really didn't know what they wanted. John came as an asthenic. And they said, "He's got a devil." Jesus came mixing with people, and they said, "Oh, He is a friend of the sinners. He is a friend of the publicans, a wine bibber."

Then he began to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they did not repent (Mat 11:20):

It is interesting that these cities that He upbraided around the Galilee have all been destroyed, and today are nothing but ruins. In fact, it wasn't until just recently that they even discovered the sight of Bethsaida. For a long time it was thought that maybe the Bible was speaking of some fictitious place, until more recently the archaeologists have uncovered Bethsaida. But Jesus in these cities that He pronounces woes upon, it is interesting that they have totally disappeared. Whereas many of the other cities, such as Tiberias, which was the capital of the Galilee region where Herod lived, Jesus didn't really go to Tiberias, it still remains today Tiberias. The city is still there. But Capernaum is gone, Bethsaida is gone, Chorazin is gone, so that these cities that he upbraided have disappeared off the map.

Woe, unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day (Mat 11:21-23).

Capernaum was the headquarters of Jesus, that was His city, that's where He spent the majority of His ministry. His earthly ministry was spent in and around the city of Capernaum. The majority of the miracles that Christ wrought, were wrought in Capernaum. And yet, the people there did not repent. And He said, "If the works had been done in the city of Sodom that were done here in Capernaum, they would have repented." And so the judgments that He pronounces upon Capernaum to be cast down to hell.

But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee (Mat 11:24).

Why? Unto who much is given, much is required. The greater understanding and light that a man receives, the greater will be the judgment of that individual. And so when God does judge, it will be according to the understanding or the knowledge that God has given. According to the grace they have been exposed to, will be the degree of judgement by which they will be judged. At that time Jesus answered and said (Mat 11:25),

He has just rebuked these cities for their failure to repent, for their failure to receive, and then He turns from the rebuking of these cities to the Father in a prayer in which He said,

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto the babes (Mat 11:25).

Father, I thank you that the great people of the earth, those great people of Capernaum, and Bethsaida and all, you have hid the truth from them. But here are these babes, simple ordinary people that you've chosen to reveal your truth and your love to. Jesus said,

Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in your sight (Mat 11:26).

I thank you, Father, that you've chosen just to use the common, ordinary people to reveal your love and truth to. I am too. How glorious that God has chosen to reveal Himself to just the common.

All things are delivered, [Jesus said] unto me of my Father: and no man really knows the Son, but the Father; and neither knows any man the Father, except the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him (Mat 11:27).

Now Jesus after this prayer, "Thank you, Father, because you've chosen to reveal yourself not to the wise and the prudent, but just to babes," then He said, "No one really knows the Father, but the Son. And no one really knows the Son, but the Father. And the only ones who really know the Father, are those to whom the Son reveals Him."

There are a lot of people who thought they knew the Father, but they had wrong concepts of God. There are a lot of people today who think they know God, but their concepts of God are all messed up. Jesus said, "No one really knows the Father, unless I reveal the Father to them." I look at the concepts that many people have of God, concepts that they have developed in their own minds. "If I were God this is how I would live; this is what I would do; this is how I would react; this is how I would respond; and so this is my god. I've created my own god, after my own likes and wishes and all." And this has been endemic of man through history, creating his own gods. "But no man really knows the Father, except the Son, and the ones to whom the Son reveals."

Then Jesus makes the broad invitation,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Mat 11:28).

You see, Jesus is relating the restlessness of humanity with its godlessness. And He is saying that you will never really know what it is to rest, until you know God. Come unto Me, I'll give you rest. Come unto Me, I'll reveal the Father to you.

Now the invitation, of course, is from Jesus to you. The invitation is to come to Him, and the promise is, "if you come, He will give you rest." So that the first consciousness that a person has when they have come to Jesus Christ, the very first consciousness that they possess is a deep, beautiful peace inside. It just feels so good. I can't tell you why, but I feel good. You see, I am not running from God anymore. I am not fighting God anymore. In fact, I begin now to really understand the Father, and my restlessness was my godlessness. But now as I've come to Jesus Christ, suddenly there is a beautiful peace inside, a rest.

And then Jesus said,

Take my yoke upon you (Mat 11:29),

The yoke was the thing that was put on the ox so he could pull a plow. Basically what the Lord is saying is, "Let me have the reigns of your life, and I will guide you to that work that I have for you," for the Lord has a purpose and a plan for each one of you.

Paul the apostle writing to the Philippians said, "I have not yet apprehended that for which I was apprehended by Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:12). Jesus Christ has apprehended every one of you. And when He apprehended you, He apprehended you for a specific purpose and plan that He has for your life. The Lord has a work for each of you to do for Him. He's got a plan for each one of your lives. The Lord does not waste anything. He is very conservative, uses everything, and when He apprehended you, He had in mind a purpose and a plan for you to fulfill for His glory, and for the kingdom's sake.

Paul recognizing that, having devoted himself to serving the Lord, after some thirty years said, "I am not yet apprehended that for which I was apprehended. Neither are things yet complete, but I am pressing towards the mark for the price of the high calling of God. I am still pushing on, seeking to apprehend that for which I was apprehended." Take My yoke upon you. I've got a plan for your life. Now you let Me take over the reigns, and let Me begin to guide you into My purposes, and into My plans for you.

And then the third thing Jesus said,

Learn of me (Mat 11:29), Now you need to know the Father, and you can't know the Father unless I reveal the Father to you. Learn of Me, because as you learn of Me, you'll know the Father. He who has seen Me, hath seen the Father. So learn of Me, that you might know the truth of God, that He might reveal to you the truth of the nature of God. And as you learn the truth of God, you'll learn that He is a God of love, a God of compassion, a God of great deep concern for you. A God who cares for you more than you could ever dream, a God who is interested in every minute detail of your life. "Learn of me," Jesus said, for in learning of Him, you will learn of the Father, and you'll have a true revelation of the Father.

And then Jesus adds,

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Mat 11:30).

That's in sharp contrast to those who go around telling me about the heavy burden they've been under lately. "Oh man, I've been under such a heavy burden. I don't know if I am gonna be able to handle it, Man. The burden is so heavy on me." Wait a minute! I believe that it is possible for us to take on burdens that are not from God, burdens that we take upon ourselves. It's possible for us to get ourselves into some real messes.

I feel that I've taken on many burdens that God didn't lay on me and I sometimes complain about the burdens. Right now I am sort of complaining at home about the burden of going to Norway. I don't know if God laid it on me or not. I accepted the invitation and now I sort of wish I hadn't. I am just tired, and I would like to stay home. But nonetheless, I have to go. But I can't say, "Oh, the Lord has laid this heavy burden on me. I've got to go to Norway." If the Lord indeed has sent me, than He is going to give me the strength and the energy and I am going to do great. If I've taken the burden on and He hasn't, then pray for me, I am in trouble. For the Lord said, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light."

Hey, wait a minute, what was His yoke? Every man bears a burden. A man's burden is that master passion by which his life is governed. Jesus said, "My burden is light." What was His burden? What was behind the life of Jesus? What was the main thrust behind His life? He revealed it in His first recorded words, when He was just twelve years old, when He said to His mother Mary, "Didn't you know that I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49).

Now when a person says, "I must," you better listen, because you're getting close to the heart of the issue. So many times a person says, well, I really ought to do that. I know I should. Forget it, you're not getting close yet. When a person says, "I must," then listen. "Didn't you know I must be about my Father's business." That was the burden in His life, His Father's business. "I do always those things that please the Father" (John 8:29). "I came not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me" (John 6:38). And He prayed: "Father, I have finished the work you have given me to do" (John 17:4).

And what does He say about His burden? He said, "My burden is light." It is light to do the will of the Father, to please the Father. It is not a heavy burden. Who is He calling? Those who are heavy laden, those who are carrying a heavy burden. "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden."

What are the heavy burdens of man? What is the burden of life that you are trying to carry? What is the master passion behind your whole life? You say, well, I am being honest and looking at myself, the master passion of my life is money. I love good things. I love nice things. I want to live comfortably. And so the master passion of my life is just to possess nice things, and to live a comfortable life. Someone else may say, well, the master passion of my life is fame. I just want people to admire me and to look up to me, and I want to be famous. Someone else might say, well, really the real thrust behind my life is pleasure. I just like excitement and pleasure, and the only reason why I work is to get enough money to go out and have a good time. I hate the job, and I hate working, but I have to work in order to get the money. I can't wait for the weekends, man, where we can just really have a great time, and my whole life is geared around the weekends, and the fun that I can have, and I'd have to say, that's the burden of my life.

Look a little deeper, because none of these are the burdens that any of you are carrying. Who do you want the money for? Who are you seeking fame for? For whose pleasure are you looking? And when you get behind these things, you have to say, well, I am seeking money for myself. I want to be wealthy. I am seeking fame for myself. I am seeking pleasure for myself. Now you've come to the truth. The burden that Jesus said is heavy, one that will weigh you down, is living for yourself. When a person is seeking to live for himself, that is a heavy burden that one day will become intolerable, and you will just come to the cynicism and say, life isn't worth going on. You will become totally cynical, because you'll never be able to satisfy yourself. The yoke is too hard. The burden is too heavy.

But Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, my yoke is easy, my burden is light". Living for God has to be the most satisfying life in the world. Nothing is more satisfying than to commit your life totally to God and to live for His glory. As Jesus said back in chapter ten, "he who finds his life, shall lose it, but he who loses his life for My sake shall find it." My yoke is easy, My burden is light, because my yoke is living to satisfy and to please God. And you find that is much easier to please God, then it is to please yourself. You'll never be able to please yourself, as you just live for yourself, because you're not answering to the basic purpose of your creation. When God designed you and created you, God purposed that you should be for His pleasure and for His glory.

As the elders are ascribing praise unto God and the worthiness of God to receive the praise of the Cherubim, "Thou art worthy oh Lord, to receive glory and honor, for thou hast created all things, and for your good pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). God did not create you to live for your own pleasure. And if you live for your own pleasure, your life is gonna be empty, frustrating, and dissatisfying. But if you will live for God's pleasure, if you take up the light burden, then your life will be fulfilling, rich, full. In fact even more, as David said, "my cup runneth over" (Psalms 23:5). And your life will be like an overflowing cup.

May the Lord put His hand upon your life, fill you with His Spirit, and guide you with His councils. May you be strengthened in your walk with Him. May you begin to experience greater victories over those areas of the flesh that have dominated, and may you begin to experience more and more the power of God's Spirit within your life, giving victory. May the Lord be with you and may the Lord keep you in His love during the time that we're absent from each other. And may you just grow in your knowledge of Him, and in your fellowship in Jesus Name.

Matthew 12:1-50 (AMP)

1 AT THAT particular time Jesus went through the fields of standing grain on the Sabbath; and His disciples were hungry, and they began to pick off the spikes of grain and to eat. 2 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, See there! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful and not permitted on the Sabbath. 3 He said to them, Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, and those who accompanied him— 4 How he went into the house of God and ate the loaves of the showbread—which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for the men who accompanied him, but for the priests only? 5 Or have you never read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple violate the sanctity of the Sabbath [breaking it] and yet are guiltless? 6 But I tell you, Something greater and more exalted and more majestic than the temple is here! 7 And if you had only known what this saying means, I desire mercy [readiness to help, to spare, to forgive] rather than sacrifice and sacrificial victims, you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord [even] of the Sabbath. 9 And going on from there, He went into their synagogue. 10 And behold, a man was there with one withered hand. And they said to Him, Is it lawful or allowable to cure people on the Sabbath days?—that they might accuse Him. 11 But He said to them, What man is there among you, if he has only one sheep and it falls into a pit or ditch on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 How much better and of more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful and allowable to do good on the Sabbath days. 13 Then He said to the man, Reach out your hand. And the man reached it out and it was restored, as sound as the other one. 14 But the Pharisees went out and held a consultation against Him, how they might do away with Him. 15 But being aware of this, Jesus went away from there. And many people joined and accompanied Him, and He cured all of them, 16 And strictly charged them and sharply warned them not to make Him publicly known. 17 This was in fulfillment of what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 18 Behold, My Servant Whom I have chosen, My Beloved in and with Whom My soul is well pleased and has found its delight. I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall proclaim and show forth justice to the nations. 19 He will not strive or wrangle or cry out loudly; nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets; 20 A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering (dimly burning) wick He will not quench, till He brings justice and a just cause to victory. 21 And in and on His name will the Gentiles (the peoples outside of Israel) set their hopes. 22 Then a blind and dumb man under the power of a demon was brought to Jesus, and He cured him, so that the blind and dumb man both spoke and saw. 23 And all the [crowds of] people were stunned with bewildered wonder and said, This cannot be the Son of David, can it? 24 But the Pharisees, hearing it, said, This Man drives out demons only by and with the help of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. 25 And knowing their thoughts, He said to them, Any kingdom that is divided against itself is being brought to desolation and laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will last or continue to stand. 26 And if Satan drives out Satan, he has become divided against himself and disunified; how then will his kingdom last or continue to stand? 27 And if I drive out the demons by [help of] Beelzebub, by whose [help] do your sons drive them out? For this reason they shall be your judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you [before you expected it]. 29 Or how can a person go into a strong man's house and carry off his goods (the entire equipment of his house) without first binding the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. 30 He who is not with Me [definitely on My side] is against Me, and he who does not [definitely] gather with Me and for My side scatters. 31 Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy (every evil, abusive, injurious speaking, or indignity against sacred things) can be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the [Holy] Spirit shall not and cannot be forgiven. 32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Spirit, the Holy One, will not be forgiven, either in this world and age or in the world and age to come. 33 Either make the tree sound (healthy and good), and its fruit sound (healthy and good), or make the tree rotten (diseased and bad), and its fruit rotten (diseased and bad); for the tree is known and recognized and judged by its fruit. 34 You offspring of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil (wicked)? For out of the fullness (the overflow, the superabundance) of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good man from his inner good treasure flings forth good things, and the evil man out of his inner evil storehouse flings forth evil things. 36 But I tell you, on the day of judgment men will have to give account for every idle (inoperative, nonworking) word they speak. 37 For by your words you will be justified and acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned and sentenced. 38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, Teacher, we desire to see a sign or miracle from You [proving that You are what You claim to be]. 39 But He replied to them, An evil and adulterous generation (a generation morally unfaithful to God) seeks and demands a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For even as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, Someone more and greater than Jonah is here! 42 The queen of the South will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, Someone more and greater than Solomon is here. 43 But when the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, it roams through dry [arid] places in search of rest, but it does not find any. 44 Then it says, I will go back to my house from which I came out. And when it arrives, it finds the place unoccupied, swept, put in order, and decorated. 45 Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and make their home there. And the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first. So also shall it be with this wicked generation. 46 Jesus was still speaking to the people when behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak to Him. 47 Someone said to Him, Listen! Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak to You. 48 But He replied to the man who told Him, Who is My mother, and who are My brothers? 49 And stretching out His hand toward [not only the twelve disciples but all] His adherents, He said, Here are My mother and My brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother!

Shall we turn to the twelfth chapter of the gospel of Matthew? Jesus was not one to follow traditions. He's already pointed out in the Sermon on the Mount, that through their interpretation of the law, they have thoroughly disallowed the law, for the purposes that God intended it. For they were interpreting the law after a physical sense. "Thou shalt not kill," interpreting that as clubbing your enemy to death. But Jesus said, no, really if you have hatred in your heart for your brother, you're guilty. It isn't just the outward action that the law was intended to speak to, but the inner emotions that so often provoked the outward action. Sin begins in the mind, the attitudes and from the attitudes come the actions. God is not interested in our just curbing the wrong actions, God is interested in our heart, and the inner attitudes from which actions spring.

Now the result of their misinterpreting of the law was that they had developed a very great sense of self righteousness, and with it a spiritual pride, where they set themselves in sort of a spiritual élites little category. And everybody else is on common sinner level, and

they look down from their perches at the common sinners with this stain. When they walked down the streets they held their robes tightly against them, because they didn't want their robe accidentally to swish out and brush against you, lest they be defiled with your filth. Very self-righteous, the attitude itself was detained by Jesus. And when we move along in Matthew, some of the heaviest words of condemnation and all I have ever heard.

You ask my little granddaughter what does grandpa do and she'll go... And now I am very self-conscious of it.

So they had sought to interpret the law. And in their endeavor to interpret the law, they had a field day with the Sabbath law, because the Sabbath law declared that they were not to bear any burdens on the Sabbath day. And so it was necessary for them to constitute what was bearing a burden. And it was decided that if you had lost your leg and had a wooden leg, that you could not use that on the Sabbath day, because that would indeed be bearing a burden. Well they went further than that. If you had false teeth, you could not wear them on the Sabbath day, because that also would be bearing a burden. As far as I know, false eyelashes weren't in at those times, but I would imagine they would have had to have ruled on that too.

Now in trying to fine-tune this law down, they lost the meaning of it entirely and Jesus cared not for their fanciful interpretations. He did not follow their traditions. In fact, He opposed their traditional interpretations, and thus He created a lot of ranker. And they were constantly getting after Jesus, because of His violation of the Sabbath law.

Now Christ is the fulfillment of the law, we are told. And one of the problems, one of the first problems that arose in the early church when there were many Gentiles who began to be converted and to become a part of the early church, the question arose, does a gentile have to become a Jew in order to be saved? In other words, if you are to be saved as a Gentile, must you be circumcised and keep the law of Moses? And there were many of the Jews in the church that took that position and some of them came down to the Gentile church in Antioch that had been established by Paul the apostle. And they began to create a division in the church in Antioch, saying that unless you are circumcised and keep the law of Moses, you can't be saved. And this was one of the first problems that arose in the church.

Paul and Barnabas came back with certain brethren to Jerusalem with these agitators in order that the church might make a ruling on this issue. And in the Acts of the apostles we read, how that it became the conclusion of the ruling body of the early church, that the law was not really intended for the Gentile believers nor was it essential to their salvation, that it was possible for God's Spirit to work in the heart of a man apart from the law. And so they were told to just keep themselves from idols and things strange, and if you do this you do well. God bless you.

In determining what relationship the Gentile church should have to the law, there was no declaration were you've got to keep the Sabbath, and no laying on then all of the aspects of the Sabbath law. But we are told rather in Hebrews that Christ is our rest. The Sabbath was for rest. Now really God intended you to stay in bed all day, that you just flake out for one day a week. Don't do anything just kick back and rest. And surely our body needs a day of complete rest. But it was made for man, because man needs rest.

So here in chapter twelve, the beginning, we find Jesus in one of His controversies with the religious rulers, once again the issues over the Sabbath day.

And at that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn, [that is the corn of wheat, they called the little ripened wheat, the corn], and the disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat them. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold your disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day. And he said unto them, Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priest (Mat 12:1-4)?

Now when David was fleeing from Saul he came to the Tabernacle of God. He went in to the priest, and he took the showbread, which only the priest were to eat, but David and his men were hungry. And so David took it, and he fed his men. Now that was not lawful for David to do; however, God has established the law, true, that only the priests were to eat the showbread, but here is a man who is in physical need, and there is a higher law of God that ministers to men's physical needs. If a man is starving, if a man is hungry, then there are those higher laws that deal with the preservation of life.

Have you not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profaned the Sabbath and are blameless? (Mat 12:5)

I probably work harder on Sunday than any other day of the week, yet blameless. In other words, if a person wants to be technical on those things, the priests worked on the Sabbath days, but yet they were blameless. So they bore burdens, they bore the sacrifices and all.

But I say unto you, That in this place there is one who is greater than the temple [referring to Himself] (Mat 12:6).

And if the priest could labor in the temple and not be guilty of violating the Sabbath, surely His disciples could labor with Him on the Sabbath day.

But if you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless (Mat 12:7).

Now this is the second time Jesus has quoted this scripture. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." God would much rather be, show mercy, and be merciful, than to offer sacrifices to Him.

You remember when Saul came back, having disobeyed the commandment of God to utterly wipe out the Amalekites, and he greeted Samuel and said, "I've done all that the Lord has commanded." Samuel said, "if you've done all the Lord has commanded, how come I hear the cattle and the sheep?" And he said, "Oh well, they were so nice I decided to bring them back to sacrifice to the Lord." And he said, "to obey is better than to sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of lambs" (1 Samuel 15:22).

God came to the place where He was sick of their sacrifices, because they had began to really do their evil with sort of the concept, well, we can always go offer a sacrifice and be forgiven. And God says, "to obey is better than to sacrifice". God said, "I would rather that you would have mercy than offer sacrifices." God finally said, look I am sick of your sacrifices; I don't want to smell them anymore. I am tired of them. You don't show mercy. You don't show the traits.

I would have you to show, and yet, you're coming and sacrificing. I care not for your sacrifices. God says, "they are an abomination on to me. So I will have mercy and not sacrifice." God would rather your heart be right before Him, than you be constantly be making sacrifices. "And if you'd understood this," Jesus said, "then you wouldn't be here condemning the guiltless." He doesn't say they are guilty at all of violating the law of God.

For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day (Mat 12:8).

So He puts Himself above the Sabbath, but He is indeed the rest for us. He is our Sabbath. We've entered into Christ. We've entered into our rest. For He is the Sabbath, really to the believer.

Now he left the fields and they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day: And there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days? In order that they might accuse him (Mat 12:9-10),

Because according to their law, you could not, and their interpreting of the law, you could not heal on the Sabbath day.

Now if a person had been injured and was bleeding to death, you could apply a tourniquet, and you could take what measures were necessary to save his life, but you could take no measures at all towards the healing of the injuries. You had to wait till the Sabbath day was over, until you applied the gauze and the bandages and so forth, for the healing aspects. But you could take preventive measures to keep him from dying, but that's all, nothing towards healing. And that was specified in their laws.

So here it was the Sabbath day, and here is a man in need. And isn't it interesting how that they instinctively seem to know that Jesus would want to help this man, even though it was the Sabbath day. That Jesus could never face human plight without wanting to do something about it. Jesus couldn't be satisfied, just observing human plight, but He would have, and they knew, that He would have this desire to help this man. So they beat Him to the trigger. Using their interpretation of the law they said, "is it lawful to heal of the Sabbath day?" and they were hoping to trap Him. Yes, it's lawful, ho ho, that's not what Rabbi Gamaliel says, and so they were planning to trap Him on this one.

And he said unto them, [rather than answering directly] if one of you have, one of your sheep, and if it would fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, wouldn't you lift it out? (Mat 12:11)

Well, of course. Well in reality if you would lift your sheep out of the pit on the Sabbath day, you are violating the Sabbath; you are bearing a burden. But yet they made those kinds of allowances.

And Jesus said,

Isn't a man better than a sheep? (Mat 12:12)

To help someone in need is more important than helping an animal in need.

Wherefore [He said] is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days (Mat 12:12).

Well, of course it would be. You couldn't say that it was not lawful to do good on the Sabbath days.

So He said to the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, just like the other. And the Pharisees went out, and they held council against him, how they might destroy him (Mat 12:13-14).

This is too much. He is violating our traditions. He is putting us down. At this rate all of our righteous acts are gonna be wiped out; and so, their council is to destroy Him.

But when Jesus knew it, [rather than a confrontation at this time] he withdrew himself (Mat 12:15)

Jesus deliberately avoided confrontation until the time came, when He was to be crucified and so He withdrew.

and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all. And he commanded that they should not make Him known. In order that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, who said, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he will show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he sends forth judgement unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust (Mat 12:15-21).

So here was the prophesy of Isaiah who was proclaiming, actually that the Gospel is gonna be declared ultimately to the Gentiles, and Israel, the bruised reed, the smoking flax. The Lord is not going to face them with a direct confrontation, just to withdraw Himself. He is not there to destroy the bruised reed, but He is there to minister to those who will harken.

Then there was brought unto him one who was possessed with the devil, he was blind, he was dumb: and Jesus healed him, insomuch that the blind and the dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and they said, Is not this the son of David? (Mat 12:22-23)

That is prophetically, where God promised unto David that of his seed should the Messiah come. "Is not this the Messiah, the son of David?" The title used for the Messiah.

But when the Pharisees heard, they said, This fellow doeth not cast out devils, but by [the lord of the flies] Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and he said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house that is divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan is casting out Satan, he is divided against himself; and how then shall his kingdom stand? (Mat 12:24-26)

So their whole philosophy was shut down by just a few words of logic. Satan couldn't be casting out Satan, otherwise he's divided his kingdom and he's gonna fall.

And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else who can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me is scattering abroad (Mat 12:27-30).

So Jesus in the answer in response to the accusation of the Pharisees, that He by the power of Satan is casting out Satan, declares to them, that this is inconsistent, that he is binding the strong man of the house, in order that He might spoil it. But then He declares, look, there is no neutral ground. And I think this is important that we note. "He that is not with me is against me." You see He doesn't leave any neutral ground for you to stand on.

What think ye of Christ, whose Son is He? That's basically the question. He doesn't leave you some little neutral corner here in which to stand, well, I really don't know that I have made a firm decision. Well, no decision is a decision. No decision is a "no" decision. "He that is not for me," He said, "is against me." You can't be neutral concerning Christ. He is too radical. He doesn't allow you any neutrality. You are for Him, or you are against Him. If you are not for Him, you are against Him. You cannot take a place of neutrality in regards to Jesus Christ; if you're not gathering, than your scattering.

Now because they had accused Him of doing His works by the power of Satan, He warns them against the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Because by this accusation they are showing evidences that they are approaching that horrible sin for which there is no forgiveness.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven men. If you speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven: but whosoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come (Mat 12:31-32).

Two weeks ago on Sunday morning we took the Sunday morning with this lesson on the sin against the Holy Spirit and what it is. And if you weren't here, I would recommend that you get that tape, because we went into a full exposition of what constitutes the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Basically, it is the refusal to harken to the work of the Spirit within your life. For Jesus said, "when the Spirit comes He is not going to testify of Himself, He is gonna testify of me" (John 15:26). "And He is going to reproof the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement." And then He said, "of sin, because they do not believe on me" (John 16:8-9).

The work of the Holy Spirit is to convict men of sin, by revealing to man the answer for his sin, even Jesus Christ. God has made only one provision for your forgiveness. Only one provision for the putting away of your sin and your guilt, and that provision is in and through His only begotten Son. And the Spirit of God comes to bear witness to us of this fact. That there is only one way you can have forgiveness of your sin, and that is by the receiving of the Son of God, Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.

Now if you continually refuse that work of the Holy Spirit in your heart revealing Jesus Christ to you, reproving you of your sin, because you do not believe in Him; if you continue in that mode, there is no forgiveness, because God has provided no other way for men to be saved.

As Peter said, "neither is there Salvation in any other, for there is no other name given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

So for you to reject God's provision for your sins through the death of His Son, leaves God no alternative. There is no forgiveness for you, not in this world or in the world to come. Because God has made only one provision for men's sin; the Holy Spirit bears witness to your heart of that truth. To refuse to believe, to refuse to accept the witness of the Spirit, is ultimately to blaspheme against the Spirit.

Now as you are progressing in this position against Jesus Christ, ultimately as you are faced with indisputable evidence that Jesus is

indeed all that He said He is, by the power of His name, and of His life and you're faced with evidence that you can not deny, because you have continued this rejection mode so long; you've got to somehow now rationalize or explain this obvious evidence for the fact that He is indeed the Son of David, the Messiah.

And the Pharisees having adopted this mode of rejection of Jesus, were coming close to the place of no return. When they said, "He is doing those works by the power of the devil", now they're beginning to deny obvious evidence. And when a person comes to that place in his rejection of Jesus Christ, where he begins to deny this obvious evidence that God puts in his path, and begins to try to explain away the evidence that God is placing before him, that person is coming close to that place testified in John 12:38, where the Pharisees finally came; therefore, they could not believe.

He comes to that place where it's impossible for him to change, to believe, to turn around the mode he has established, and he's gone to far down the road, and there is no turning back and the denial of obvious evidence, which was when they began to attribute the works of Jesus Christ to Satan. Because how are you gonna explain the fact that this demon-possessed man is now talking, he is now seeing; whereas before he was dumb and he was blind? Evidence that they cannot deny. He is standing there before them talking. And so they have to give some explanation. Denying the evidence before them, you're getting close.

Now Jesus said,

Either make the tree good, or his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings 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 man shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgement. So by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered, and they said, Master, we would like you to show us a sign (Mat 12:33-38).

Now here they had just denied the sign that they had just seen. When the man was brought to Jesus possessed with the devil, blind and dumb, they had seen that. They had seen the man with the withered hand; they'd watched him stretch it forth. And now they have the audacity to say to Jesus, "why don't you show us a sign, proof that you're the Messiah."

And he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; but there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. And the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgement with this generation, and will condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here (Mat 12:39-41).

Now in this short little answer of Jesus to the Pharisees, He affirms three biblical facts that are often denied by those who refer to themselves as higher critics. Those who have presumed to have the authority to tell you what parts of the Bible you can believe, and what parts you cannot believe. Which parts are genuine, which parts are spurious. Which parts are inspired, which parts are uninspired, which is truth, and which is myth.

And one of the stories in the Bible that has received some of the greatest criticism by these higher critics, is the story of Jonah. But as I've said the only problem that a person has with Jonah is not the fact that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, but their problem is deeper than that, their problem is their concept of God. If you have a right concept of God, you have no problem with the story of Jonah. Even if it said, God prepared a minnow to swallow it, rather than a great fish, for God can do anything. And so it is your concept of God that is your problem, not the story of Jonah.

And one of the basic problems of man is his concept of God. And that problem exists because man has a tendency of creating his own god. And when a man creates his own god, he creates his god as a projection of himself to immensity. And there is always that, if I were God, this is how I would have done it, this is how I would have managed it. This is how I would have worked it out, if I were God. And there are many people who have difficulty with the revelation that God has given of Himself. Because there are aspects of that revelation that differ with their own ideas and concepts of how they would judge, or how they would govern the universe. Or how they would create men, how they would deal with free moral agency, how they would deal with choice. How they would deal with all of these aspects that God is--had to deal with when He created us.

And so there are many who reject God's revelation of Himself, preferring their own concepts, preferring really to worship themselves. As we told you a couple of weeks ago, there are only two burdens that men have, and one is to do the will of God, and the other is to do the will of himself. Jesus said, "my yoke is easy, my burden is light" (Mat 11:30). What was His burden? To do the will of the Father. What's your burden? To do your own will. Heavy, isn't it? He said, "come onto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I'll give you rest" (Mat 11:28). Now David observed how that the men had made their own gods. He said, "they've taken the little pieces of wood, and they've carved them out." And of course you've all seen pictures of the gods that have been created by the pagans, grotesque little creatures that they carve out of wood. Or they sometimes will mold, using gold or other metals, and they make their little god. And they set it up, and they put the candles around it, and they burn their incense to it, and they bow before it, and often their prayers and so forth, and that's their god. But as David observed the gods that they made, and he said, "eyes they have, but they cannot see. Ears they have, but they cannot hear. Feet they have, but they cannot walk. Mouth the have, but they cannot speak."

You see David observes that man has made a god like himself. Why do you put eyes in your god? Because you've got eyes. Why do you put ears in your god? Because you've got ears and make your god like yourself, but less than yourself, because the little wooden image here that you've made and you're worshiping. Though you've put ears on it, those ears can't hear. Though you put a mouth on it, it can't talk. So you made it less than yourself.

But David made one further observation. They that have made them have become like the gods that they made. If you make a dumb little god, you become dumb. If your god is insensate, you become like your god, you soon become insensate to the voice of God. You no longer hear the voice of God. You no longer see the work of God. You no longer sense the presence of God. You've become insensate, because you've been worshipping an insensate god. Some person says, well, I've never seen God. You're insensate. I've never felt the presence of God because your god is insensate, and you've become insensate.

It's a horrible curse that a man becomes like his god, if his god is false. It's a tremendous blessing that a man becomes like his God, if his God is true. Beloved now are we the sons of God, it doesn't yet appear what we are gonna be, but we know when He appears we're gonna be like Him. Why? Because man becomes like his God. They that have made them, have become like the gods that that they have made. A man becomes like his god.

And we with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory into the same image, as we are being conformed by the Spirit into the image of Jesus Christ, becoming like our God. And we should becoming more like Him every day. And if we are truly worshipping Him and serving Him, that will be the case in our lives.

Jesus here affirms the authenticity of the story of Jonah, as a historic fact. If you have the right concept of God, you'll have no problems. If you don't have the right concept of God, your problems are just starting.

The second thing Jesus affirms is His resurrection, after three days and three nights. This is another thing that has been the target of the higher critics of the Bible, the denial of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And yet He affirms it. The third thing He affirms is the final resurrection of everyone, small, and great to stand before the judgement bar of God. All men of all ages will one day stand before God, no escaping.

The men of Nineveh will rise with this generation (Mat 12:41).

There will be that general resurrection from the dead that Daniel tells us about in the twelfth chapter of the book of Daniel, where he there declares, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake. Some to everlasting life, some to shame, and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

And of course in Revelation John gives us a very graphic description of this resurrection. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; for there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things, which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works" (Revelation 20:11-13).

So the day of Judgement, the resurrection, and Jesus again affirms that, declaring that the men of Nineveh will rise with this generation, and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah.

Jonah was a bitter prophet. Jonah was filled with hatred. He had no love for the people that he was ministering to, but he had a deep resentment and hatred for them, and resented deeply his being there ministering to them. He had done his best to escape this job. He was coerced. Now someone said, God will not force you to go against your will, but He is able to make you willing to go, and such was the case of Jonah. I mean after three days and three nights in that hot humid whale, he had it. Seaweed wrapped around his head, the waves, he said, sloshing over him. In a mammal it would be 98:6 degrees, humidity is tremendous. He said, I've had it, I'll go. Now the Lord really didn't force him to go against his will, but He sure had a way of making him willing to go.

But much like the little kid whose dad said sit down, and the little kid just stood there. And he said, "I told you sit down." And the little kid still stood there, and he finally started toward him as he is pulling off his belt, and he said, "I said sit down," and the little kid sat down. And he said, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I am still standing on the inside."

He was still reluctant. He still didn't want to go. And he preached one monotonous message, forty days, and comes destruction. And the king called for a general fast. He put on sackcloth and ashes. They prayed, they said, "who can tell the Lord may be merciful." And they repented at the preaching of Jonah, a miracle. And here these people with Jesus coming with love and compassion, rejecting Him. Oh yes, you bet the men of Nineveh will point a finger of accusation, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and that generation was refusing the message of Jesus.

The queen of the south [the queen of Sheba] shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, [general resurrection from the dead] and she will condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here (Mat 12:42).

There is absolutely no excuse for the rejecting of Jesus Christ. No excuse. He is God's provision for your sin and if you reject Him, men from every generation will rise to condemn you, in that day of judgement.

Now Jesus talks about exorcism.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. He says, I will return to the house from where I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept and garnished. Then he goes, and takes with himself seven other spirits that are more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worst then the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation (Mat 12:43-45).

So Jesus is talking about the casting forth of evil spirits. It is certainly important that we not go around just seeking to expel evil spirits because you can actually be harming a person rather than helping a person, by just casting forth evil spirits. If something doesn't move into that vacuum, if something doesn't come in its place, the spirit will return finding the house all swept, clean. He'll go out and get seven other spirits more wicked, and really, you've done a great disservice to the person.

I believe in the expelling force of the higher power. I believe the best way to drive out darkness is to turn on the light, not to go around and flail at the darkness, scream at it, and yell at it, and try to drive it out, just turn on the light and the darkness automatically flees.

Light and darkness cannot co-exist. And when Jesus Christ comes into a person's life, when his heart and life is open to receive, then whatever force of darkness may be there is expelled by the power of the stronger force, the expelling force of the stronger power and a man is saved. He doesn't have to worry about a reoccurrence of the problem even in a worse degree. Better, that you bring the light to men, better that you bring them Jesus Christ, that their hearts and lives might be filled with Him and with His love, and through His power the forces of darkness will automatically be dispelled.

Now,

While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, and they desired to talk with him. Then someone said to him, Behold, your mother and your brothers are outside, and they want to talk with you. And he answered and said unto the one that had told him that, Who is my mother? and who are my brothers? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and he said, Behold, my mother and my brothers. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and my mother (Mat 12:46-50).

Now for those who are putting so much dependency upon the intercession of Mary, this scripture would give me a lot of problems. For when they said, "Hey, your mother is outside, she wants to talk to you." He said, "Who is my mother?" I mean He didn't drop everything and run and say, "Oh Mary, mother of God, blessed art thou among woman, blessed is the fruit of thy womb." He said, "Who is my mother?" Nowhere in the scripture are we encouraged to seek Mary, to seek favors for us from her son. There is not one indication or inkling in the scriptures that Mary can do you any good.

Jesus said, "Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, I'll do it." He didn't say, whatever you ask Mary, I'll give special consideration to, because every son gives special consideration to his mother. Nor did He say, you really shouldn't bother me, or talk to me about these things, talk to my mother and she filters them out, she'll tell me what I need to know.

I would hate to be depending upon Mary, when Jesus took this attitude towards her while He was here on earth. "Who is my mother, who is my brother?" and then looking around at His disciples He said, "hey, whoever does the will of God, they are my brothers, they are my sister, they are my mother."

Now Jesus, as we get to the end of chapter thirteen, we discover had earthly brothers and sisters inasmuch as they were sons of Mary and Joseph. Jesus of course was the Son of God. Mary being a virgin when the Holy Spirit came upon her and she conceived and bore Jesus Christ. But the teaching of the perpetual virginity of Mary is not scripturally based; in fact it's contrary to the scripture. For verse 55, they said, "is not this the carpenter's son and His mother is called Mary, and His brothers, James, and Joseph and Simon, and Judas, and his sisters, are they not with us?"

Now there is indication that those natural half-brothers of Jesus did not really believe on Him. You remember He said, "a prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own family" (Mat 13:57). He knew what it was to have the personal rejection of His family. And His brothers at one time, were going to rescue Him, they said, "He's gone crazy, he is beside Himself." And that's talking about a person who has sort of a schizophrenia that he begins to talk to himself. And so you're beside yourself, you're holding on a conversation with yourself.

Now it is true, that those who have a bond in Christ, those who are related by Jesus Christ, have a closer relationship than actual brothers and sisters who are not bound in Christ. In other words, you will have a closer relationship to those in the family of God than to those of your own family, if your own family is not also a part of the family of God. And many of you have no doubt experienced this. Your accepting of Jesus Christ has created an alienation between some of the members of your own family, blood family. But you've come into a new family, of which ties are deeper and greater, and the bond is tighter. And so with Jesus, His brothers, and all, not believing in Him at that point, said, "who is my brother? Look, this fellow here, whoever does the will of God, the same is my mother my sister, my brother. (Through The Bible c 2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Bible commentaries,1979-1986)

The Lord bless you and watch, guard, and keep you;

The Lord make His face to shine upon and enlighten you and be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up His {approving} countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 1399-1402)

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