

THE COMMANDS OF CHRIST

by Paul G. Apple, August 2008

With some chapters from Douglas Smith

STUDY GUIDE IN CONJUNCTION WITH DR. JOHN PIPER'S BOOK: WHAT JESUS DEMANDS FROM THE WORLD

"teaching them to observe all that I commanded you"
(Matthew 28:20)

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*Course Title: **The Commands of Christ***

Description: This adult education course will be taught by Paul Apple with assistance from Douglas Smith. It will be a topical treatment of the various commands of Christ from the Gospel accounts – including some well-known texts on a wide range of subjects. The arrangement will follow the book by Dr. John Piper What Jesus Demands From the World. The emphasis will be on obedience and discipleship. Each week there will be an exposition of the major text for that command, some associated teaching from Jesus from other passages, some related systematic theology (using Wayne Grudem's text) and an emphasis on practical application. The homework will be reading the brief 3-5 page summary by Dr. Piper of that week's command and memorizing one key verse. This course should be helpful to younger believers as well as those who would like preparation in a course of study to disciple others (either one-on-one or in leading their own family devotions). Each lesson stands on its own, so you do not need to study them in any particular order. We will be studying them in the order covered by Dr. Piper. Both the primary text and a study guide are available online from Dr. Piper's website.

http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/OnlineBooks/ByTitle/1822_What_Jesus_Demands_from_the_World/

INTRODUCTION

- Using Piper's book as a text: *What Jesus Demands from the World*
 - The Great Commission – significance of obeying all the commands
- Various approaches to **Discipleship**
 - cf. Navigators model
 - Importance of the role of the local church
- Other people have studied the Commands of Christ
- Course Expectations

CLASS ELEMENTS

- Memory Verse
- Exposition of the primary text
- Observations from Piper's chapter
- Systematic Theology notes (primarily using Wayne Grudem)
- Supporting passages to study
- Obstacles to obeying the command
- Practical homework assignments

GOALS

- helpful to grow in your own Christian life
- material you can use to disciple others
- material you can use for family devotions

Demand #1: You Must Be Born Again

Main Text: John 3:1-21

Memory Verse: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

I. Exposition of Primary Text – John 3:1-21

BIG IDEA:

ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS ONLY BY THE NEW BIRTH:

-- ACCOMPLISHED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

-- APPROPRIATED BY REPENTANCE AND FAITH

- A. (:1-3) Even the Most Religious Need to be Born Again
- B. (:4-8) Our Natural Physical Orientation Must be Radically Replaced by a Spirit-Produced New Life
- C. (:9-13) Spiritual Ignorance Not Necessarily Overcome by Revelation from Heaven
- D. (:14-18) Repentance and Faith in the Son of Man is the only Requirement
- E. (:19-21) Response to the Light (Intimacy with Jesus) = Barometer of Spiritual Condition

II. List the Parallels between Physical Birth and Spiritual Birth

(Get the class to suggest these)

- Totally a Work of God – no participation on the part of one being birthed
 - Life comes only from God
 - John 1:13 – *not of the will of the flesh*
- Before the birth, one is totally lifeless (Eph. 2:1 -9); in fact interest in spiritual things is an evidence that the Holy Spirit is working in your life
- Like begets Like
- Enters one into an entirely new realm of existence
- Exclusive nature – no other way to enter the new realm of existence
- Mechanics are mysterious – don't fully understand how God accomplishes it
- You see the evidences and the fruit

III. Understanding the Doctrine -- Theology of Regeneration – Wayne Grudem – Systematic Theology (pp. 699-708)

- A. Regeneration is Totally a Work of God
- B. The Exact Nature of Regeneration is Mysterious to Us
- C. In This Sense of "Regeneration," It Comes Before Saving Faith
- D. Genuine Regeneration Must Bring Results in Life

IV. How do you know you have been Born Again?

Two Tracks of Assurance of Salvation --

- Teaching of 1 John on this subject
- Two Tracks of Assurance

Demand #2: Repent

Main Text: Luke 13:1-9

Memory Verse: "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Luke 13:3

I. Exposition of Primary Text – Luke 13:1-9

BIG IDEA:

DESPITE GOD'S PRESENT PATIENCE WITH SINNERS -- CERTAIN CATASTROPHIC JUDGMENT IS COMING AGAINST ALL WHO REFUSE TO REPENT

A. (:1-5) Interpretation of Isolated Disasters -- Catastrophic Judgment Faces All Men Who Refuse to Repent

1. (:1-3) Incident of the Galileans slaughtered by Pilate while offering sacrifices in the temple

Goldenhuy: Pilate = notorious for his hard-hearted acts

Are calamities proof that those singled out are necessarily greater sinners?

Look at disasters and response of preachers today: 9/11; Katrina devastating New Orleans

- Not singled out as greater sinners
- Eternal catastrophic judgment awaits all who refuse to repent

All are guilty

Urgency of responding in repentance and changing course while there is time

2. (:4-5) Incident of those killed by the fall of the Tower of Siloam
 - Not singled out as greater sinners
 - Eternal catastrophic judgment awaits all who refuse to repent

B. (:6-9) Parable of the Fruitless Fig Tree -- Don't Misinterpret the Patience and Goodness of God as an Excuse for Fruitlessness

1. (:6) Expectation of Fruit from the Fig Tree
2. (:7) Condemnation of the Fruitless Fig Tree
3. (:8-9) Patience of the Vineyard-keeper in cultivating the Fig Tree
 - Urgency of Repentance – God's patience is limited

Morgan: I always believe these men who told Him about the Galileans, were Judeans, and they had no sympathy with the Galileans. I think they told Him with pious satisfaction. He took the illustration of the Galileans; but added a reference to something which had happened in Jerusalem itself, at the heart of Judea. . . He had rebuked them for not being able to interpret the time; and they came to Him, and in effect they said, We are not so blind as Thou dost make us appear. We recognize the activity of judgment as suggested by the parable of the law-court. To show their understanding, they told Him this story of the Galileans and Pilate. They were standing up in smug self-satisfaction, and never more blind than then. . . They did not understand God. . . Perishing, said Jesus, cannot be interpreted in the terms of the physical. It lies deeper, in that spiritual realm where you are so blind.

II. Additional Teaching of Christ – Necessity of Repentance

Matt. 4:17 *"From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven*

is at hand.”

- Continuity with the message of John the Baptist ; Progressive revelation
- Now the announced King of the Kingdom was actually present
- Does our preaching contain proper emphasis on Repentance? – drastic internal change is demanded – what does that say about our present state??

Matt. 12:41 *“The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”*

- We have better revelation than the wicked Ninevites; greater accountability
- Greater condemnation is fast approaching; look at all of the access that our generation has to God’s truth; don’t long for greater revelation unless you are committed to greater obedience

Luke 5:32 *“I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance”*

Are there some people who do not need repentance?

Look at the context – talking to the self-righteous Pharisees who imagined that they had no need of repentance

Piper: Jesus did not mean that some persons are good enough not to need repentance. He meant some *think* they are. . .

Luke 24:46-47 *“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem”*

Part of our responsibility in fulfilling the Great Commission today – proclaiming the universal need for repentance.

Connection between repentance and forgiveness of sins.

III. True / False Questions

- Repentance is an OT doctrine; the last one to preach about it was John the Baptist.
- When a person repents of his sin he is sorry for what he did wrong.
- When a person is sorry for having done something wrong he is repentant.
- You must exercise genuine repentance before you can put your faith in Christ.
- Both repentance and faith are conditions for salvation.
- You can be saved by faith alone – even if you don’t repent of your sins.
- You are not repentant until you have changed your lifestyle and abandoned your sins.
- Repentance and penance are the same thing.
- Genuine repentance will always lead to a changed life.

IV. Understanding the Doctrine -- Theology of Repentance – Wayne Grudem – Systematic Theology (pp. 713-721)

A. Faith and Repentance Must Come Together -- Definitions:

Conversion = our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation

- the turning from sin is called repentance
- the turning to Christ is called faith

View them as two sides of the same coin: where one is genuinely present, the other must be also

How can Paul say in Acts 16:31 to the Philippian jailor who asks “*What must I do to be saved?*” -- just “*Believe*” without any mention of repentance

Repentance = a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ

A change of mind that leads to a change in action

- a change of mind about what?

Two parts to the Greek word: *meta* and *noeo* = experience a change of the mind's perceptions and dispositions and purposes

R. Kearsley: It is a serious misrepresentation of Scripture to separate repentance and faith as if the former were in any sense a condition of receiving the latter. This is clear from the fact that apostolic preaching sometimes summoned people to repent (Acts 2:38; 17:30; 26:20) but on other occasions to believe (Acts 13:38-41; 16:31). Equally, forgiveness of sins follows upon either repentance or faith (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 10:43). Repentance and faith, therefore, are simply two aspects of the same movement. . .

It cannot be stressed too much that repentance is a moral act involving the turning of the whole person in spirit, mind and will to consent, and subjection, to the will of God. It is in a very real sense a moral miracle, a gift of grace.

B. Don't confuse the commitment to repentance with the actual fruits of repentance = the changed life – Identifying Genuine Repentance

Luke 3:8 *“Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance”*

- can't rely on family pedigree – *“we have Abraham for our father”*

Aside -- 2 Cor. 7:8-12 -- Difference between worldly sorrow and genuine repentance

(:8-10) GODLY SORROW PRODUCES GENUINE REPENTANCE

A. (:8-9) Godly Sorrow is a Means to an End, not an End in Itself

B. (:10) Godly Sorrow is Different than Worldly Sorrow

1. It is directed by God – *“according to the will of God”*

2. It is the believer's insurance policy: the premium hurts, but the benefits pay off in the long run – *“without regret”*

If you had to do it all over again, you would pay the insurance premiums just like you did the first time.

3. It results in *salvation* (or reconciliation)
(worldly sorrow results in death, separation)

4. Examples of worldly sorrow

a. King Herod Matt. 14:9

b. Rich young man Matt. 19:22

c. Judas Matt. 27:3-5

d. Esau Heb. 12:16-17

(:11-12) GENUINE REPENTANCE CAN BE RECOGNIZED BY OTHERS

A. Recognized according to its nature, its orientation

B. (:11) Recognized according to its fruit – The 7 Fruits of Genuine Repentance

1. Speedy Resolution (diligence, earnestness, eagerness)

“For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you”

(our English word “speed”) – same word used in Rom. 12:11 – *“not slothful in business”* – I am

afraid we are more diligent in doing a good job solving problems at work than we are in addressing reconciliation problems. A genuinely repentant person will quickly seek out reconciliation on his own initiative. He will not treat the situation with careless indifference or ignore the problem (hoping it will go away). There is a need to get busy and be in earnest.

2. Reasonable Dialogue (controlled by reason, not by emotion)

“what vindication of yourselves”

(controlled by reason, not emotion – cf. English word “apology”) – Not compounding the sin or seeking to justify your participation in that sin, but explaining your repentance so that now you stand in a state of innocence – not participating in any of these false charges; not giving them any more of a hearing.

3. Indignation (shame and distress)

Not calm and unruffled evidencing no sorrow for sin; not arrogant and stubborn; but recognizing the shame associated with such failure and being distressed by the whole situation and yet not despairing because of the forgiveness for sins provided by the blood of Christ.

4. Fear

The Corinthians recognized they had sinned against a holy God and against His apostolic representative. They realized how serious such an offense was and what judgment could have been theirs; no complacency or false security.

5. Longing (to see the offended party)

They wanted to meet personally to set things right and to make sure that the problem is behind them; not avoiding or despising the offended party.

6. Zeal (upholding the honor and reputation of the offended party)

Encouraging others to express their loyalty towards this person; upholding his honor; not undermining loyalty to such a person and attacking him at every turn

7. Avenging of wrong

C. (:12) Recognized For What it Is

Essential for their ongoing spiritual growth and fruitfulness in ministry

C. Issue of Easy Believism vs. Lordship Salvation

Position of **Lewis Sperry Chafer** – Major Bible Themes

“The divine message is not ‘believe and pray,’ ‘believe and confess sin,’ ‘believe and confess Christ,’ ‘believe and be baptized,’ ‘believe and repent,’ or ‘believe and make restitution.’ These six added subjects are mentioned in Scripture, and there they have their full intended meaning; but if they were as essential to salvation as believing they would never be omitted from any passage wherein the way to be saved is stated (note John 1:12; 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:29; 20:31; Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:16; 3:22; 4:5, 24; 5:1; 10:4; Gal. 3:22). Salvation is only through Christ, and men are therefore saved when they receive Him as their Savior.” (p. 187)

Zane Hodges – The Gospel Under Siege

thinks that including repentance in the gospel presentation leads to a works approach ; cites the example of Jesus offering salvation in John 4 to the woman at the well

“It must be emphasized that there is no call here for surrender, submission, acknowledgement of Christ’s Lordship, or anything else of this kind. A gift is being offered to one totally unworthy of God’s favor. And to get it, the woman is required to make no spiritual commitment whatsoever. She is merely invited to ask. It is precisely this impressive fact that distinguishes the true Gospel from all its counterfeits.” (p. 14)

Position of **Charles Ryrie** – Repentance only involves changing your mind about who God is;

Christ is called “Lord” as God ... but not as “Master” . . .

Study Support for Lordship salvation – **Curtis I. Crenshaw** – Lordship Salvation – The Only Kind There is! What is the Relationship of Faith to Repentance? (pp. 67 -77)

- Both produce works
- Both imply one another
- Both embrace Jesus as Lord

D. Both Faith and Repentance Continue Through Life

Col. 2:6 – *“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”*

When was the last time you exercised repentance?

Demand #3: Come to Me

Main Text: Matthew 11:25-30

Memory Verse: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

I. Exposition of Primary Text – Matthew 11:25-30 -- Illumination and Invitation

BIG IDEA:

THE POOR IN SPIRIT CAN LOOK TO CHRIST FOR SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION AND COME TO CHRIST FOR SPIRITUAL REST

Context:

- Rejection of Christ – cf. judgment proclaimed against cities that had rejected such great revelation (:20 -24)

I. (:25-27) The Poor in Spirit Can look to Christ for Spiritual Illumination According to the Good Pleasure and Sovereign Authority of the Godhead

A. Spiritual Illumination only comes to the Poor in Spirit (:25)

1. Recipients of Illumination – contrast between self-bankrupt and self-sufficient
 - a. Definitions

(1) *"poor in spirit"*

Mat. 5:3 – those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy and instead of trying to meet that need on their own, look to God in dependence for their every resource

Luke 21:2-4 uses several of the diff. Gk. words for poverty; this word is a *beggar* – poor in the worst possible way – having absolutely nothing left to contribute; cf. *broken and contrite heart*; looking not at recognition of sinfulness (for Christ is truly *poor in spirit*) but at the source of resources not being in self

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble

(2) *"babes"* –

A word used here in contrast to "wise and intelligent" (lit. "without the power of speech" ?? Kittel says no)

Mat. 21:16

The righteous have always been viewed by the world as simple, naïve in their belief in a gospel that is foolishness to those who are perishing (who yet view themselves as wise and intelligent and sophisticated); sense of helplessness; not spoiled by sophistication; still trustful in disposition

b. Contrast = *"wise and intelligent"* – those who imagine that they have some resources to contribute toward saving themselves; here especially it would be the rabbis and scribes who were respected as the custodians of God's wisdom

2. The Process of Illumination – Hiding vs. Illuminating

Distinction between revelation and illumination: the preaching was public and accessible to the multitudes; but the illumination was private – the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of the elect;

How does this work?

We like the doctrine of election, but we shrink away from talking about God hiding the truth; yet for Christ this was a matter for praise; cf. the reason why Christ taught in parables

“*these things*” = the things concerning the kingdom of God (11:12), the gospel (Lk. 9:6), repentance and salvation (Mk. 6:12)

3. The Architect and Administrator of Illumination

a. Father – close union within the Godhead

there was no dissension regarding the plan and implementation of this mysterious manifestation of God’s sovereignty; whole-hearted agreement and partnership

b. Lord of heaven and earth –

Shall not the Judge of all the world do what is right? We dare not question the Sovereign Ruler of all regarding His criteria or justification for hiding and illuminating; in areas like this we recognize that God is inscrutable (Deut. 29:29; Job 11:7,8; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:20)

Illumination comes to the poor in spirit on what basis then?

B. According to the Good Pleasure of God the Father (:26)

Our concern should be God-centered; not what seems fair to us, but what is well-pleasing to God

C. According to the Sovereign Authority of God the Son (:27)

II. (:28-30) The Poor in Spirit Can Come to Christ for Spiritual Rest

Gracious Twofold Invitation:

Tenderness of the invitation vs. sharpness of the scathing judgments proclaimed against the blind cities

Contrast **Outward Call** (general to all who hear the message of the gospel) with **Inward Call** = Effectual Call that results in elect coming to Christ

A. Come to Christ for the Spiritual Rest of Salvation

Inward Peace / Cleansed Conscience (:28)

1. Who are Invited? All who are *weary and heavy-laden*

There must first be a felt need for salvation; Jesus did not come to call the righteous but sinners; these people are exhausted from their own efforts at trying to work hard to earn their salvation

2. What must they do? Simply *Come to Christ* (study this word in John)

3. What does Jesus promise?

Augustine: “Father, thou hast made us for Thyself, and our souls are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

Transition: Christ offers Himself as Lord and Savior in the same invitation

Song: Like a River Glorious – perfect peace and rest

B. Come to Christ for the Spiritual Rest of Service -- Fulfillment / Abundant life

1. Who is invited? Exact same group – it is really one extended invitation – not 2 different and separate invitations

2.. What must they do?

a. *Take my yoke upon you* – for work – submission, fellowship, cooperation, participation; formed from a mold of clay to fit perfectly

b. *Learn from Me*

c. Example – *I am gentle and humble in heart*

It could be dangerous to focus so much on one man and to put all your eggs in one basket; Christ is not going to exploit such commitment in a wrong sense; He can be trusted; such a life has already been modeled by Christ – not asking us to do something He has not already done

3. What does Jesus Promise? *You shall find rest for your souls*

Assurance: *For my yoke is easy, and My load is light*

Spiritual rest in the sense of fulfillment and the abundant life rather than frustration and despair is possible ;

If we are following Christ from a spirit of thankfulness for the inner peace He has provided, we will not find His will burdensome

II. Other Teaching of Christ on This Subject

John 7:37 “*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.*”

John 6:35 “*I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger.*”

John 5:40 “*You refuse to come to me that you may have life.*”

III. Understanding the Doctrine -- Theology of Effectual Calling –

Wayne Grudem – Systematic Theology (pp. 692-698)

“This powerful act of God is often referred to as **effective calling**, to distinguish it from the general gospel invitation that goes to all people and which some people reject. This is not to say that human gospel proclamation is not involved. In fact, God’s effective calling comes **through** the human preaching of the gospel, because Paul says, ‘*To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*’ (2 Thess. 2:14). Of course, there are many who hear the general call of the gospel message and do not respond. But in some cases the gospel call is made so effective by the working of the Holy Spirit in people’s hearts that they do respond; we can say that they have received ‘**effective calling**.’ We may define effective calling as follows: **Effective calling is an act of God the Father, speaking through the human proclamation of the gospel, in which He summons people to Himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith.**”

IV. Hymn: I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast.”
I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Behold I freely give
The living water; thirsty one, stoop down and drink, and live.”
I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “I am this dark world’s light;
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be bright.”
I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun;
And in that light of life I’ll walk, till trav’ling days are done.
-- Author: Horatious Bonar, 1846

Stedman:

In the New Testament there are certain thumbnail passages which gather up the whole of the Christian life in a very few words. They are wonderfully helpful passages, for we can lay them alongside our experience of Christ and thus know whether we are abridged or unabridged Christians. One of these passages is found in Matthew 11, beginning with verse 28, these extremely familiar words that many know by heart.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

This is a summary by the Lord Jesus himself of all that is essential in the Christian life.

It is amazing how it can be put in a few words. It can even be stated in smaller compass than that. Jesus put the whole of the Christian life in two phrases when he said, "Ye in me and I in you." It is all there, and it is all here as well.

You will note immediately that the Christian life falls into two very perceptible stages. There is an initial act by which the life of Christ in us begins, which leads in turn to a continuing attitude. It takes both to make a full Christian experience. There is a contact which brings about a commitment. It is like marriage. Those of us who are married know that the story all began with that age-old experience of boy meets girl. One of the questions I have learned to ask married couples who come to me with problems in their married life is, "Where did you meet?" You can almost see the softening of the friction between them as memory goes back to that hour when boy met girl. But that is just the beginning, for the relationship goes on until bride meets groom. There a commitment is made that totally and radically alters their whole lives. This is what Christian life is like.

You will further note that these two aspects of the Christian life are marked by a double use of the word "rest." It occurs once in verse 28 and again in verse 29. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." **There is a rest that is given, imparted, and there is a rest that is found,** discovered. It is not the same rest. It happens to be the same word in the original Greek, but it is not the same experience, for there is a different procedure: "Come," that is all, "Come, and I will give you rest." The second rest is dependent upon quite another activity: "Take my yoke upon you ." A yoke is a heavy wooden beam that binds two oxen together and makes them a team. The yoke is an invitation to partnership and to direction. It means submission to control. **Therefore, the whole of the Christian life can be put in two simple phrases: It is a contact that involves receiving something, and a control that leads to a discovery. That is the Christian life.**

Now look with me at those statements for a moment. The first is a contact that involves receiving. Christianity, of course, begins with meeting Christ. You are not a Christian because you go to church, any more than you become an automobile by going into your garage. You are a Christian when you receive Christ. It is not learning a doctrine that makes you a Christian, it is not subscribing to a creed, it is not joining a group: it is coming to know Jesus Christ! The wonderful thing about that is that, as the living Lord, he is never far away from us. When Paul stood on Mars Hill in Athens and spoke to the intellectuals of the Greek world, he said to them concerning God, "In Him we live and move and have our being." No man is very far away from God, but no man can come to the Father but by the Son, and the Lord Jesus Christ is available to anyone. That is why he can say in this simple way, "Come to me." When we turn aside from our own ways, when we turn from the pursuit of our own will and look for him, there he is, waiting for us. We cannot see him but we can experience him for he is waiting to be contacted.

This invitation, you will notice, is given to two classes of people, there are those who

labor and those who are heavy laden. To read it that way sounds as though this invitation is restricted to the working people and to the poor, but it has nothing at all to do with the way you earn your living. Those who labor, here, are those conscientious, sincere, earnest men and women, boys and girls who are trying to be good, who recognize that God is in control of the world and that ultimately they must answer for their life before him. They know that good actions and good attitudes have certain value in protecting and delivering them from destructive forces in life, so they are trying to live good, moral lives. There are many, perhaps many here this morning, who obey the law, who try to stay out of trouble and hope thereby to please God. They are doing the best they can, hoping to please God. But they are finding this is dull, hard work. It is to these that Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that are laboring, all that are working, trying hard."

The second class are those that are heavy laden. These are the people who have flung over the traces, who have given themselves to pleasure and to what we call wild living, and already they are sick and tired of it. They have wrung themselves out and there is not much left. Their nights are an empty round of empty pursuits with empty people. Their days are an endless battle with the hangover of guilt and despair. We know them, these folk who are laden down, heavily burdened with the emptiness, the meaninglessness, the frustration of life. To these also Jesus says, "Come." "Come to me and I will rest you" - literally, "I will relieve you." The word has in it the thought of the lifting of a burden.

Rest comes to either of these two classes by the individual realizing that what he is seeking to do Jesus Christ has already done. He has done it in their place. Are you laboring to be good enough for God? Then you need to know that God stands ready to credit you with all Christ's goodness, that you can throw away your own filthy rags of righteousness. Your efforts to be good enough fall far, far short of what God requires. You know it and he knows it. But you do not need them. God stands ready in Jesus Christ to credit you with his righteousness. That is the glory of the cross. It is a place of exchange where what I am is placed on him and what he is is given to me. What a relief that is. As Paul says, "We are accepted in the Beloved One," no longer depending on ourselves but on him.

"Dear, so very dear to God,
Dearer I cannot be
For, in the person of his Son,
I'm just as dear as he."

What a relief! I stop trying to work out my own righteousness and rest on his.

Are you burdened with a sordid record and a soiled life? Then you need to know that in Jesus Christ the full penalty has already been paid. You can begin life anew with the page absolutely wiped clean for he has borne the guilt, he has paid the penalty. You can realize that,

"Payment God will not twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine! "

If he has paid it, there is nothing left for me to pay. In the realization of that the burden is lifted, the guilt is gone. You rest in what another has done in your place. That is true rest.

The sense of relief that comes to anyone who experiences this is very real and immediate. It is what Paul calls "peace with God." Most of our songs and hymns and much of our religious testimonies are about this. It can be a tremendous sense of the lifting of a load and result in an immediate sense of joy. I met with a young man this morning who only last night had this experience and he was fairly shaking with joy. He could hardly contain himself over what had happened in his life. I remember well a dear woman a few years ago who was one of those shallow, rootless people living life on the surface, trying to extract satisfaction out of an empty round of pleasure seeking. When she came to Christ the sense of relief was so tremendous she did not know how to express it. She had not yet learned the religious phrases by which we express happiness. She did not know how to say "Hallelujah!" or "Praise the Lord" so she simply stood and shouted "Whoopee! Whoopee!" Many of us can look back to that day as the beginning of days, as a day of great joy.

"O happy day that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad."

But remember this is only a beginning. Many of us are quite content to rest the whole matter there. We are grateful to the Lord Jesus for having forgiven our sins and set us on the road, but we are hopeful that he will leave us alone from here on. We are quite content with the joy that we found then and are ready to go on and live our life pretty much as we did before, only with the wonderful assurance that our destiny is settled. But if we are content, Jesus never is. It is not very long before we realize he is making rather unpleasant demands on us. He says a flat "No" about certain activities we have been indulging in, certain habits we have been yielding to. We sense within that he is not pleased he is saying "No." He makes us feel uncomfortable about certain pet attitudes we have. We feel convicted about our shortness with those we love, about our criticisms, our lovelessness. He urges us to become involved with people and activities that we have always avoided before. We squirm and twist and thus become aware of the second stage of Christian life, a control that leads to discovery.

At this point Jesus Christ is exerting in your life his right of Lordship. He is the Lord of all, and your acceptance of his salvation has given him the right to be Lord in your life and now he is beginning to assert it. He is making clear that you must give up your pet delusion that you have a right to your own life. This is a false philosophy that we were born under and raised by. We feel we have a right to run our own affairs. But he makes

clear that we have no such right. "***You are not your own, you are bought with a price.***" He is insisting we give up that fancied right and allow him his right to make us his instrument in the work that he is doing. In other words, we must move on from being redeemed to becoming redeemers. We become his instruments to do the work that he came into the world to do, that is, redeeming, transforming, changing men and women.

At this point a crisis usually occurs. We either submit and surrender or we resist and rebel. If we rebel we discover we lose our sense of rest and peace and wander out into a wilderness of doubt where we can never be happy no matter what we do. Many of us have experienced this and know how true this is. No matter how hard we try we can never be happy. We go back into the world and the things of the world and discover that what once was fun is nothing but a misery, a superficial pleasure for the moment, but leaving an unhappy sensation deep within. We try to keep up an outwardly Christian front but inwardly we are wretched, unhappy, critical and hypocritical. Perhaps we try to ram our way to the top of whatever job or profession we are in and thus try to satisfy ourselves with the acclaim and plaudits of men. But we never fully escape the knowledge that we shall have to stand at last before the God whom we have robbed all our lives of his right to be Lord in us and hang our head over a wasted life.

But Jesus does not invite us to this. "Take my yoke upon you," he says. If we take his yoke, if we bow to his lordship, if we yield to his relentless love, two things begin to happen. First we begin to learn. "Learn from me," he says. Christ himself is our teacher and under his tutelage the secrets of life begin to unfold to us. We begin to understand ourselves. We begin to understand why men act the way they do, and what is going on in the world, what is behind the strange criss-cross of currents of human life that reflect themselves in the pages of our newspapers? What are these powerful forces? How do they operate? The Holy Spirit becomes our teacher. We are taught of the Spirit only when we take Christ's yoke upon us. That is the first thing.

And the curriculum is outlined for us here, too. What is the subject matter? What shall we study? "Learn of me," he says "for I am gentle and lowly in heart." Our whole subject matter will be gentleness and humility, that is, the secrets of inner beauty. Anyone can obtain a species of outward beauty. If nature does not give it to you then you can buy it in little boxes. But it is inner beauty that makes a person attractive, that makes him wanted and desired. This is simply nothing more than gentleness and humility. Gentleness is strength under control: humility is selflessness. This is the course of study.

Then there is a second thing we discover, Jesus says. We discover rest! "You shall find rest unto your soul," soul rest! The first rest was a rest of spirit. It meant a destiny settled, a relationship assured. When Jesus Christ entered into our spirit we knew that we were his, our destiny was settled. That was the rest of spirit, but this is a rest of soul. The soul is the mind, the emotions and the will. It is a rest that affects us mentally, emotionally, and volitionally. How does it appear? Jesus goes on to tell us, in verse thirty, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." That which seems to us to be so restricting, the yoke of Christ, that limitation he has put upon us, that control he

exercises in our lives, which at first seems to be narrow, restrictive, limiting us, binding us down, holding us back, we discover, when we yield to it, to be easy and light. This comes as a delightful surprise, a discovery. We find that to yield to his control is the key to true liberty. To surrender to his desire is to find the greatest enjoyment. To give up and to give in is the only way to really begin to give out.

This burden of our Lord's yoke is like the burden of wings to a bird, like fins to a fish, like a motor in a car. What would you think if I came to you and said, lifting up the hood of your new car, "Why do you carry this big chunk of iron around with you? Look at all the weight it adds to your automobile! How much easier this car would be to push if you did not have this heavy motor here in the front?" You would look at me very pityingly, and would say, "My dear friend, you do not understand. It is that weight of metal that makes the difference between pushing and riding. If I did not have that I would have to push, but it is the motor that makes possible the free movement of a car." So it is the yoke of Jesus Christ that makes life worth living. It is as we submit to his control that we discover we can step out into a world of adventure and glory, a world where every day is a new experience, a new adventure of faith, an exciting time when every contact is filled with utmost possibilities, where you never know what is going to happen next, and life is filled with meaning and richness. Listen to these words of the hymn writer, George Matheson, in a prayer which fully captures this thought.

"Make me captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free;
Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conqueror be;
I sink in life's alarms
When by myself I stand;
Imprison me within Thine arms,
And strong shall be my hand.

My will is not my own
Till Thou hast made it Thine;
If it would reach the monarch's throne
It must its crown resign;
It only stands unbent,
Amid the clashing strife,
When on Thy bosom it has leaned,
And found in Thee its life."

Three elements of personality are involved in making a decision to become a Christian, or in making any significant decision for that matter. They are the emotions, the intellect, and the will.

For example, a young man meets a young woman. They are immediately attracted to one another. They both say to themselves, "Now there is someone I'd like to marry." At that point, if the emotions had their way, there would be a wedding. But the intellect

intervenes, questioning the impulsive emotional response. Would we be compatible? What is she really like? Can I afford to support her? Both conclude it would be better to take some more time and answer a few questions before they proceed. So the two begin spending more time with each other. He eventually concludes that she is as beautiful on the inside as she is on the outside. Now his intellect has sided with the emotions on the idea of marriage.

But the final and heaviest vote remains to be cast -- that of the will. It stops the march toward the altar with the questions, "Am I willing to give up this lifestyle for another? What about my freedom -- is it worth the trade? Am I willing to assume the added responsibility?" The marriage will occur only when the will finally agrees with the emotions and the intellect. And so it is in coming to Christ.

Jim Peterson, [Living Proof](#), NavPress, 1989, p. 170.

* * * * *

Doctrine of Effectual Calling

In John 1:13, we are taught that believers are born "*not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.*"

John 5:21 says, "*For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.*"

John 6:37,39: "*All that the Father gives me will come to me.... And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up on the last day.*"

John 6:44–45: "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.... Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.*"

John 6:65: "*No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.*"

And in John 15:16, "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit.*"

In Ephesians 2:10, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which Christ hath fore ordained that we should walk in them.*"

Gal. 1:15-17 "*But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.*"

1st Thessalonians 1:4-5 says, "*knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. **For** our gospel did not come to **you** in word only, but **also** in power, and in the Holy Spirit....*" This verse speaks of both types of callings. For those Paul was speaking to, the gospel did not come in word only (the outward calling), but also in power and in the

Holy Spirit (the inward, effective calling). To the non-elect, the gospel comes in word only. The preacher calls upon everyone who hears to believe on Christ, but the heart of the sinner remains hard and rebellious and he continues to resist the truth. But in the case of the elect, the outward call is accompanied by a powerful inward call. The Holy Spirit of God calls the dead sinner out of spiritual death into life and gives him a new heart. The result is that there is no will or desire to resist the truth. The newly born again person now gladly embraces the truth of the gospel and believes in Jesus

Def. of Effectual Calling:

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by this grace. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

Difference between General Call and Effectual Call:

The word "effectual" is used by theologians to distinguish between the call of God which involves the spiritual rebirth of the sinner and the general call of God which is present whenever His Word is proclaimed. As Paul explained in those passages from 1 Cor., not everyone who hears the summons of the gospel responds in a saving manner. Some hear its call, but reject it. They have heard a call from God, to be sure, but that call did not bring about their salvation. Therefore, it is helpful when discussing this matter to use the term "effectual calling" when referring to God's saving activity. At the same time I must add, however, that the New Testament generally speaks only of God's call and that call is always to salvation. Using the modifier "effectual" is unnecessary, Biblically speaking, but it is an aid to our understanding.

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/freligion/1073552/posts>

Difference between Outward Calling and Inward Calling:

There are two types of CALLS in the New Testament regarding salvation. **Outward calling** is simply the preaching of the gospel. Through the message which Christians preach, many sinners, both elect and non-elect, are called upon by the gospel to believe in Christ. Jesus spoke of outward calling when He said, "many are called but few are chosen." In this passage our Lord was merely pointing out that, although multitudes of people from many nations have heard the outward call of the gospel to put their faith in Jesus, very few of them, in comparison to the whole, had been elected for eternal life before the foundation of the world. **Inward calling** is when the Holy Spirit comes to an elect person who is spiritually dead and unconverted and sovereignly calls him out of that state of spiritual death, thus giving him spiritual life (i.e. regeneration, the new birth

) Inward calling is never resisted. The Holy Spirit sovereignly changes the sinner's heart through the new birth, and once the sinner's heart is changed, he has no desire to reject Christ, but rather, gladly and freely comes to Him. In theory, a regenerated person could reject the gospel, since he has the ability to make choices, but the new nature he obtains through regeneration makes him unwilling to do so .

<http://www.geocities.com/heartland/2057/grace.html>

What is effectual calling?

Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace, whereby, out of his free and especial love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto, he doth, in his accepted time, invite and draw them unto Jesus Christ by his Word and Spirit, savingly enlightening their minds, renewing and powerfully determining their wills, so as they, although in themselves dead in sin, are hereby made willing and able freely to answer this call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein.

Are the elect only effectually called?

All the elect and they only, are effectually called, although others may be, and often are, outwardly called by the ministry of the Word, and have common operations of the Spirit, who, for their willful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ.

The expositor of the Confession, in his comments upon the sections above, remarks, "That in this calling the operations of the Holy Spirit are irrevocable." We admit that there are common operations of the Spirit, which do not issue in the conversion of the sinner; but we maintain that the special operations of the Spirit overcome all opposition and effectually determine the sinner to embrace Jesus Christ as he is offered in the Gospel. If the special operations of the Spirit were not invincible, but might be effectually resisted, then it would be uncertain whether any would believe or not, and consequently possible, that all which Christ had done and suffered in the work of redemption might have been done and suffered in vain.

Explanation of Calvinism in preparation for raising objections:

And from the above, we derive as the faith of Calvinists upon the subjects of effectual calling, irresistible grace, and regeneration (These subjects were blended because in the Calvinism system they constitute essentially but one branch of doctrine, as the above quotations abundantly show. Whatever may be their shades of difference and divers ramifications, they spring from one identical principle and its cognates --to all intents and purposes they are the same.)

1. That up to the moment of effectual calling --regeneration--a man cannot cease from sin; he has not the power to do so.
2. None but the elect ever are effectually called --regenerated.
3. When the elect are effectually called, they cannot help but yield; they have no power to resist.

4. This effectual call is sent upon the elect without any conditions or preparation on their part.

Now to the doctrine thus summed up --and no Calvinist dare dispute any point included in it--I shall proceed to allege **a number of objections**; and it will be with the good sense and candor of my readers, to decide whether they constitute sufficient reasons for discarding the doctrine.

1. I object to this doctrine that it is anti-scriptural, nowhere taught in the Word of God, and contradictory to much that is therein taught: as that salvation is conditional --that all may seek and find--that they are criminal who do not seek--that many are lost who might have been saved--that the Spirit may be resisted--that repentance and faith precede regeneration--indeed, the doctrine is in palpable conflict with the whole tenor of revelation. This is one objection.

2. But, further, I object, that if regeneration is the work of irresistible grace, wrought without previous conditions, then they who are not regenerated, are not to be condemned for remaining unregenerate. It is attributable to no fault in them, and so cannot render them blameworthy, because it is a matter with which they have nothing whatever to do. It is God's work, and not theirs in any sense; they are passive entirely, from beginning to end; and so, if there be any wrong in their remaining unregenerate, the wrong is not in them, because it is not by their consent.

But if it be said the wrong is not in their remaining unregenerate, but in their being so in the first instance, then, I reply, neither are they to blame for this, because it, also, was entirely, without their consent. They were born corrupt, and so cannot be guilty for this; they cannot escape from corruption, and so are not guilty for remaining in it; and, therefore, they have no guilt whatever because of their corruption. From this reasoning there is no escape, but an assumption that men are absolutely and damnably guilty for that over which they have not now, and never did have, any control. Believe this who can! But let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth before I can so calumniate the adorable Jehovah!

3. If the doctrine be true, men are not to be condemned for actual sin unless they are condemnable for not avoiding that which they never had power to avoid. For they were brought into the world with a corrupt nature, without any consent of theirs, unless they consented before they had an existence; and being thus born, they never could cease from sin without regeneration; and they never had power to promote or secure regeneration, and so are not to be condemned for the sins they commit prior to regeneration, unless they are to be condemned for an absolute impossibility.

4. If this doctrine be true, then they who are not regenerate not only are not to be condemned for not being regenerate, and for actual sins committed prior to regeneration, but, also, they cannot be required to be holy in heart or in life, unless it is assumed that men may justly be required to do what they never had, and have not, the power to do. If they do not do right, they violate no requirement, but a requirement to perform an impossibility, which is the requirement of an abhorrent, despot, and not of the glorious Jehovah.

5. If this doctrine be true, there can be no punishment for either depravity or sin, unless men are punishable for not performing impossibilities. If men are finally punished with eternal torments, then they are punished without any cause on their part, but simply that they did not do what it was eternally impossible for them to do. They are punished for impenitence and unbelief; but impenitence and unbelief are the unavoidable fruit of a corrupt nature; from this corruption there is no deliverance but by regeneration; man has no power to regenerate himself, and he can do nothing to induce God to regenerate him: he is, therefore, damned in hell forever, for that over which he had no more control than the angel Gabriel. Think of hell! Then think of such a fate! Can God be chargeable with such a government and conduct as this?

6. If the doctrine be true, then men cannot be required to do anything to promote their salvation; for their salvation is not susceptible of being promoted, as it is unconditional. In salvation man is not a co-agent, but a mere passive subject. Until the work is commenced by irresistible regeneration, he can do nothing but sin. When regeneration takes place, all the rest follows as a necessary effect or unavoidable fruit.

7. They cannot with any propriety, be invited or exhorted to repent and seek God; for the thing is impossible; and to invite or exhort men to perform an impossibility, is trifling--is nonsense. A Calvinistic minister who believes that up to the moment of regeneration a man cannot repent and turn to God--and who also believes that regeneration is a gift of God without conditions, and, also, that when regeneration is given, men must repent--and yet urges, and invites, and implores men to repent and turn to God, must be accounted guilty of the strangest inconsistency, to say the least of it.

8. They cannot with any propriety be required to do one thing rather than another, before regeneration, only as one sin is preferable to another; for whatever they do must be sinful. Nothing that a man can do before regeneration is good; it is all sin. If he prays for the forgiveness of his sins, it only increases them. If he observes the Sabbath, if he reads the Scriptures, if he goes to the house of God, if he fasts, and mourns, and humbles himself before God, it is all sin. But, it is said, a man cannot do these things until regenerated: but that is precisely my proposition; he can do nothing but sin, and cannot turn away from it any more than he can create a universe --cannot even try. Why, then, ask him or labor with him upon the subject?

9. If this be true, then it must be that God prefers that the elect should commit a great deal of sin before they are regenerated. For their regeneration is his work; he can do it one time as well as another; for it is by irresistible grace, and against the sinner's disposition, whenever it is done; and that he leaves them unregenerate a long term of years, must be because, on the whole, he prefers that during this period they should be unregenerate and sinful, rather than regenerate and holy.

10. Yea, more: if this doctrine be true, God must prefer all the impenitence, and unbelief, and sin, that is in the world. For if regeneration is his work alone, independent of all conditions and if regeneration would produce holiness, then the reason why the world remains unregenerate and unholy must be, that, on the whole, God prefers it. He prefers that it should be as it is, or he would make it otherwise. There is no other reason but his preference; for a sufficient atonement has been made to remove all impediments

out of the way, so far as divine justice is concerned; and in the creature there is nothing but what might be overcome by irresistible grace. That such grace is not exerted, is of the good pleasure of God alone; and this good pleasure must arise from the fact, that, in view of all things, God prefers the final impenitence and unholiness of some persons to their holiness, and their eternal destruction to their everlasting salvation.

11. If this doctrine be true, man is not a free agent in consenting to salvation, or yet in refusing to consent; because in the former case the will is irresistibly coerced to its choice; in the latter it has no ability to make a contrary election. In both cases it acts under an irresistible agency. For if the soul, under the influence of the effectual call, retains its freedom, it has power to resist; but then the call would not be irresistible; but if it has no power to resist, but must necessarily choose, then it is not free. And if without the effectual call it might choose life, then without the effectual call it might be saved; but if it has not the power, then it is not free.

12. I object to this doctrine because it antagonizes the doctrine of salvation by faith, and makes faith an involuntary exercise--these both. Is not regeneration salvation from depravity? and is it not the work of salvation commenced in the soul? If so, and if regeneration precedes faith, is it not inevitable that faith is not a condition to salvation to this extent? And if faith is a necessary effect of regeneration, can it be a voluntary exercise? And if it is not a voluntary exercise, can it, with any propriety, be called a condition of anything which follows after it? And, particularly, can men be exhorted to its exercise, as though it were a condition to which they are competent?

Can a regenerate person be lost? If not, regeneration itself infallibly secures salvation, with all that is included therein. And if it does secure salvation, how can anything which comes after it be called a condition of salvation. Must not everything following after rather be said to be included in salvation

13. I object to this doctrine, further, that it not only makes salvation an involuntary and unconditional work, but it also does away with repentance entirely. Look at it soberly and see if it is not a shocking misrepresentation, not only of the particular teachings and general tone of the Bible, but, also, of all experience. There is a man who, up to this moment, is a sinner; and now, without any conviction or turning of heart to God, or any use of means, while his heart is proud, and stubborn, and sinful as ever, he is in one instant, by irresistible grace, born of God; in the same instant he is justified; but preceding his justification and succeeding his regeneration, he exercises faith and repentance! Now, I ask, in the name of reason and religion is this so? Will the world furnish one solitary witness to an experience of this kind?

14. According to this doctrine, a Christian is no more to be esteemed for his virtues, than a sinner for his sins; and the latter is no more to be censured than the former; because they are both passive, and only passive, with respect alike to their sins and virtues: the only difference between them is produced by irresistible fate. Indeed the whole system of Calvinism, in its peculiar tenets, inevitably destroys both the accountability of man and the distinctions between vice and virtue. If one man is irresistibly and invincibly drawn to a holy life, and another man is equally irresistibly drawn to an unholy and sinful conduct, and this without anything under their control, it

must be manifest, that, though there is a difference, it may be both in the character and conduct of the individuals: yet they are neither commendable nor censurable, or, indeed, in any sense responsible for the difference.

http://www.gospeltruth.net/foster_on_cal/otc_5.htm

Demand #4: Believe in Me

Main Text: John 14:1-14

Memory Verse: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." John 14:1

I. Exposition of Primary Text – John 14:1-14

BIG IDEA:

OUR HEARTS NEED THE REASSURANCE THAT OUR FAITH IN CHRIST SECURELY CONNECTS US TO GOD THE FATHER

(:1) INTRODUCTION: FAITH IN CHRIST = FAITH IN GOD THE FATHER = ANTIDOTE FOR ANXIETY AND FEAR

"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."

In light of Christ's soon departure to rejoin the Father in heaven, the disciples were in need of words of reassurance.

Christian life is a marathon (cf. Rick running in marathon in Hawaii over Christmas break – Dec 2003).

Understand the Jewish OT background of monotheism. Faith in Christ as equivalent to faith in Jehovah God was quite an expansion in their thinking.

Stedman: That verse could well be called a Manual for Stress Management, a remedy for anxious and troubled hearts. Here is where we find the answer to the question, "How do you spell relief?" . . . while we cannot prevent stress, we can overcome it. ..

"Believe in God, believe also in me." In this version both of those words "believe" are in the imperative mood, i.e., they are commands. There is some question among the commentators as to whether these should be indicative statements: "You do believe in God; you do believe in me," or whether they are commands, as rendered here. The Greek text will bear either rendering. The best way to take it, in line with the context, is, "*You do believe in God; believe also in me.*"

(:2-6) SHOW US THE WAY – JUST LOOK TO JESUS WHO IS THE WAY TO GOD

"I am the Way" -- the world is searching for the way to God and a true spiritual relationship

A. (:2-3a) Jesus, Our Heavenly Home Builder

"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you"

Deffinbaugh: Our Lord is telling His disciples and us that there is plenty of room for us all in His Father's heavenly house. Dwelling with Him there will be a significant improvement on their "housing" while on earth with Jesus: "As they were walking along the road, someone said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' But Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head'" (Luke 9:57-58). A good deal of the time, the Lord and His disciples may have been camping rather than living comfortably in some spatial home. What Jesus promises His disciples is a dramatic (what an understatement!) improvement.

B. (:3b) Jesus, Our Close Companion

"I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Implications regarding the Second Coming

Intimate Friendship with the Master of the Universe

C. (:4-6) Jesus, Our Absolute Answer to Every Important Question

The world has rejected the concept of absolute truth. Jesus presents Himself in absolute terms.

1. (:4) Simple Statement

"And you know the way where I am going."

2. (:5) Need for Reassurance

"Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?'"

3. (:6) Powerful Reinforcement in absolute terms

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.'"

Stedman: Many bristle with indignation at those words. When I quoted this verse in a Bible study once, a woman said, "That's terribly narrow-minded." I said, "Yes, it is, but that is the way truth is. I find the phone company to be terribly narrow minded too. If you want to call someone up you must dial the exact numbers, in the exact order given; they will not allow any deviation. The IRS is terribly narrow-minded. They require you to state your income exactly. They don't accept a wild guess on your part." "But I think you must interpret a verse like that," she said. "How would you interpret it?" I asked her. She said she didn't really know how. I said, "Well, if it is true, if Jesus means what he says that there is only one way to God, that those that try to come another way will not end up with the God who exists, but with some god of their own invention, and, if there is only one way, how could he ever have said it any plainer than he does here, 'No one comes to the Father but by me'?"

Carr: In this passage, Jesus gives us a threefold assurance:

1. How can I be saved? He is the Way!
2. How can I be sure? He is the Truth!
3. How can I be satisfied? He is the Life!

(:7-11) SHOW US THE FATHER – JUST LOOK TO JESUS WHO ENABLES US TO EXPERIENCE GOD

"He who has seen Me has seen the Father" – the world is searching for genuine spiritual experience

A. (:7) Simple Statement

"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on

you know Him, and have seen Him.

B. (:8) Need for Reassurance

“Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’”

C. (:9-11) Powerful Reinforcement supported by both the Words and Works of Jesus

1. (:9-10a) Tone of Patient Exasperation

“Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?’”

2. (:10b-11a) Testimony of Words of Jesus

“The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me;”

3. (:11b) Testimony of Works of Jesus

“otherwise believe on account of the works themselves.”

Deffinbaugh: Jesus is not encouraging His disciples to become miracle -workers here. In fact, He is doing the opposite. He is urging His disciples to believe His words, because they are the Father’s words. If they must have added verification, let them take note of His miraculous works as the Father’s accreditation and approval of His teaching. The “high road” is to simply believe in what Jesus has said. The “lower road” is to believe what He has said because of the miracles He has done. Let us not twist this text and our Lord’s words to promote miracles, signs, and wonders, when Jesus speaks of sign-faith as second-class faith.

(:12-14) SHOW US THE POWER – JUST LOOK TO JESUS WHO EMPOWERS US TO ACCOMPLISH THE WORKS OF GOD

“greater works than these shall he do” – the world is searching for significance and fulfillment

A. (:12) Simple Statement

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.”

Matt. 9:1-6 contrast between physical healing and spiritual healing

Stedman: he who keeps on believing in me, not just he who becomes a Christian but he who keeps on growing and trusting as a Christian "wil I also do the works that I do." Remember these words were first addressed to the apostles. Surely our Lord is referring to his miracles of healing the sick, raising the dead, opening the blind eyes, and curing the lame. In the book of Acts these words were literally fulfilled

...

But he goes on to a second promise, "*Greater works than these shall he do.*" What intriguing words! On occasion a young, starry-eyed Christian has said to me, "God has anointed me to do

the greater works that Jesus promised." By that he meant greater physical miracles. I submit to you that this word of Jesus can not possibly mean that. The bald fact is, there are no greater miracles in the physical realm than the works Jesus did. What could be greater than raising a man who had been dead four days, healing someone who had been ill for 38 years, or restoring instant sight to blind eyes? There are no greater physical miracles. So when Jesus speaks of "greater works" he must mean "greater" in a spiritual dimension. . .

When we look at both the record of Scripture and of church history we see how true this is:

On the day of Pentecost, 40 days after our Lord uttered these words, Peter, filled with the power of the Spirit, preached with such effect that 3,000 people were converted in one day. That never happened during Jesus' ministry. Perhaps a few hundred on occasion believed when he preached, but mere handfuls was the usual response, never thousands as the book of Acts reports.

When Billy Graham preached on the parable of the prodigal son in Wembley Stadium during his first crusade in London in 1955, 3,000 people became Christians. According to the record there was no account of any conversions when Jesus told that story. That was a "greater work."

In his ministry in Palestine Jesus probably never spoke to crowds larger than 5,000 -7,000 people, but even I had the privilege in January of this year, on Super Bowl Sunday, of preaching to 10,000 people in Grace Community Church in Panorama City.

Luis Palau told me just recently how thrilled he was to speak to a great crowd of 700,000 people in one vast meeting in Guatemala City.

A few years ago Billy Graham preached to over a million people gathered in a great public square in Seoul, Korea. That is far more than Jesus ever accomplished.

B. (:13) Need for Reassurance (Jesus doesn't wait for the question this time)
"And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

C. (:14) Powerful Reinforcement
"If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."

II. Other Teaching of Christ on This Subject – Reprimands for Smallish Faith -- 4 ENEMIES OF FAITH WHICH MUST BE OVERCOME

INTRODUCTION: Jesus chastizes His disciples as "*men of little faith*" 4 times in Matthew

A. (Matt. 6:25-34) Enemy of Anxiety or Worry --
FAITH IN DIVINE PROVISION – FOCUS ON KINGDOM PRIORITIES
Matthew 6:30 "*But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?*"

B. (Matt. 8:23-27) Enemy of Fear or Timidity –

FAITH IN DIVINE PROTECTION – REST SECURE IN LIGHT OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE

Matthew 8:26 *And He *said to them, "Why are you timid, you men of **little** faith?" Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and it became perfectly calm.*

C. (Matt. 14:22-33) Enemy of Doubt –

FAITH IN DIVINE PROMISES – FOLLOW YOUR LEADER

Matthew 14:31 *And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and *said to him, "O you of **little** faith, why did you doubt?"*

D. (Matt. 16:5-12) Enemy of Man's Wisdom and Resources vs God's Wisdom and Resources –

FAITH IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE – GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT MAN'S WAYS

Matthew 16:8 *But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of **little** faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?"*

III. Other Teaching of Christ on This Subject

John 12:36 *"While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."*

(:34-36A) SACRIFICIAL DEATH MUST BE RESPONDED TO IN FAITH WHILE THERE IS STILL OPPORTUNITY

A. (:34) Confusion Regarding the Identification of the Son of Man

"The multitude therefore answered Him, 'We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?'"

B. (:35-36a) Urgency of Responding in Faith

"Jesus therefore said to them, 'For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light.'"

Hendriksen: The closing admonition is very touching and beautiful: While you have the light (Christ in your midst, as the source of truth and salvation), believe – exercise saving faith, by God's sovereign grace; -- in the light, in order that you may become sons of light, i.e., lights (a Semitism; cf. Matt. 5:14), having the light of Christ not only round about you, but within your hearts and minds (cf. Eph. 5:8; I Thess. 5:5).

John 20:27 *"[Jesus] said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.'"*

(:26-29) JESUS PATIENTLY PROVIDES ABUNDANT EVIDENCE BUT PREFERS AN AGGRESSIVE FAITH (THAT BELIEVES BEFORE IT SEES)

A. (:26) Repeat Performance

"And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them, Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, 'Peace be with you.'"

B. (:27) Patient Exhortation: See and Believe

"Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.'"

C. (:28) Appropriate Confession of Faith

"Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'"

D. (:29) Praiseworthy Faith: Believe before Seeing

"Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.'"

IV. Understanding the Doctrine -- Theology of Faith

Richard Mayhue, [Divine Healing Today](#), Moody Press, p. 100.

Definition of faith: Hebrews 11:1.

"What is faith, unless it is to believe what you cannot see." (Augustine)

Faith is derived from the Word of God: Romans 10:17

Faith's demand: Hebrews 11:6

Faith's design: 2 Corinthians 5:7 "walk by faith"

The dualism of faith: Hebrews 4:2

Faith's duty: Romans 1:17--live by it.

Wayne Grudem – Systematic Theology (pp. 709-721)

1. Knowledge alone is not enough for saving faith

James 2:19 – *"even the demons believe . . . and shudder"*

2. Knowledge and Approval are not enough

Cf. story of Nicodemus in John 3

Nicodemus had evaluated the facts of the situation, including Jesus' teaching and his remarkable miracles, and had drawn a correct conclusion from those facts: Jesus was a teacher come from God.

Acts 26:27 – story of King Agrippa – but he did not have saving faith – vs. 28

3. I Must Decide to Depend on Jesus to Save Me Personally

In addition to knowledge of the facts of the gospel and approval of those facts, in order to be saved, I must decide to depend on Jesus to save me. In doing this I move from being an interested observer of the facts of salvation and the teachings of the Bible to being someone who enters into a new relationship with Jesus Christ as a living person. We may therefore define saving faith in the following way: **Saving faith is personal trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God.**

The word *faith* is sometimes used today to refer to an almost irrational commitment to something in spite of strong evidence to the contrary, a sort of irrational decision to believe something that we are quite sure is *not* true!

4. Faith should Increase as Our Knowledge Increases
5. Faith and Repentance Must Come Together
6. Both Faith and Repentance Continue Throughout Life

V. How to Grow Your Faith

- A. Feed on the Word of God and Fix Your Eyes on Jesus Christ
Especially noting biblical examples of faith (e.g. Hebrews 11)
- B. Be Encouraged by Examples of Faith down through Church History
- C. Be Encouraged by Examples of Faith on the part of your own Family and Friends
- D. Be Encouraged by Examples of Faith in your own life – proving the Faithfulness of God
- You need to look for opportunities to step out in faith to accomplish great things for God

ASIDE: Study the line between Presumption and Faith – how can we “step out in faith” in matters where we do not have clear revelation from God? Yet look at the life of men of faith and prayer like George Mueller. On the other hand look at excesses by strong church leaders who call upon their congregations to “trust God” for X or Y. . .

VI. Illustrations of Faith

E-Mail From God

Good Morning:

I am the Lord your God. Today I will be handling all of your problems. Please remember that I do not need your help. If the devil happens to deliver a situation to you that you cannot handle, DO NOT attempt to resolve it. Kindly put it in the SFJTD (something for Jesus to do) box. It will be addressed in MY time, not yours. Once the matter is placed into the box, do not hold on to it or attempt to remove it. Holding on or removal will delay the resolution of your problem. If it is a situation that you think you are capable of handling, please consult me in prayer to be sure that it is the proper resolution. Because I do not sleep nor do I slumber, there is no need for you to lose any sleep. Rest my child. If you need to contact me, I am only a prayer away.

Love Eternally,
The Lord your God

<http://www.jesussite.com/illustrations/faith2.html>

Borrowing A Quarter - A Story about Trust

http://www.biblical-illuminations.com/2006_Mar/trust_in_the_lord.asp

Suppose you were at a store, and as you were getting ready to make your purchase, you realized that you didn't quite have enough money to cover the purchase. What would you do?

Go home and get more money? How about walking up to the person behind the counter and asking "Can I borrow some money from the store so I can make my purchase? I'll pay you back the next time I'm here..."

Well, that actually happened to me today. Fortunately, it was at a place of business I go to quite frequently, so the people there know me really well. Fortunately, I was only short by 25 cents. Did they loan me a quarter? Yep. They sure did.

Now, in general, I wouldn't hold out much hope of getting loans that way, and in most stores I wouldn't even *think* about asking to borrow a quarter. What made the difference here?

Two things. First, as I said, the people there *know* me. They know that if I say I am going to do something, I will. They *trust* me. And secondly, their trust wasn't really going to cost them very much. If I didn't pay them back, they would only have lost 25 cents.

The book of Proverbs says (**Proverbs 3:5**) *Trust in the Lord with all your heart.* Trusting God means having confidence in Him, that what He says, He will do. Trusting God implies that we believe in His integrity.

But trusting Him with all our heart goes a step further. Trusting Him with all my heart implies that I would trust Him *no matter what the cost, or the risk.*

Imagine I had walked into that same store and said, "Can I borrow two thousand dollars? I'll pay you back the next time I'm in." Do you think they would have agreed as readily?

No! Because the *cost* (risk) of their trust would be much higher. They would have to know me far better than they do to be sure I could be trusted with two thousand dollars!

But trusting God with all my heart means that I no longer count the cost - no matter how big or small the issue, I can count on God to fulfill His promises.

Well, now I need to go pay back a quarter!

Donner Atwood: One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness. As can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: "Jump! I will catch you." But the boy protested, "Daddy, I can't see you." The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters."

Here is a similar illustration:

During the terrible days of the Blitz, a father, holding his small son by the hand, ran from a building that had been struck by a bomb. In the front yard was a shell hole. Seeking shelter as quickly as possible, the father jumped into the hole and held up his arms for his son to follow. Terrified, yet hearing his father's voice telling him to jump, the boy replied, "I can't see you!"

The father, looking up against the sky tinted red by the burning buildings, called to the silhouette of his son, "But I can see you. Jump!" The boy jumped, because he trusted his father. The

Christian faith enables us to face life or meet death, not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are seen; not that we know all the answers, but that we are known.

<http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/f/faith.htm>

The following letter was found in a baking -power can wired to the handle of an old pump that offered the only hope of drinking water on a very long and seldom -used trail across Nevada's Amargosa Desert: "This pump is all right as of June 1932. I put a new sucker washer into it and it ought to last five years. But the washer dries out and the pump has got to be primed. Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water, out of the sun and cork end up. There's enough water in it to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour about one -fourth and let her soak to wet the leather. Then pour in the rest medium fast and pump like crazy. You'll git water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. When you git watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller. (signed) Desert Pete. P.S. Don't go drinking the water first. Prime the pump with it and you'll git all you can hold." [Keith Miller and Bruce Larson, The Edge of Adventure.](#)

Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends. [George Muller.](#)

The more we know of God, the more unreservedly we will trust him; the greater our progress in theology, the simpler and more childlike will be our faith. [J. G. Machen.](#)

The African impala can jump to a height of over 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than 30 feet. Yet these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a 3 -foot wall. The animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will fall. Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with faith we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that only fear allows to entrap us. [John Emmons.](#)

Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward of faith is to see what we believe. [Augustine.](#)

Olympic gold medalist Darrel Pace was to give an archery exhibition in New York City's Central Park, and the event received coverage by all the news stations. Shooting steel- tipped hunting arrows, Pace punctured bull's-eyes without a miss. Then he called for a volunteer. "All you have to do," said Pace, "Is hold this apple in your hand, waist -high." ABC correspondent Josh Howell took a bold step forward. He stood there, a small apple in his hand, a larger one in his throat. Pace took aim from 30 yards away as we all held our breath. Then THWACK -a clean hit that exploded the apple before striking the target behind. Everybody applauded Howell, who was all smiles--until his cameraman approached with a hangdog look. "I'm sorry, Josh," he said. "I didn't get it. Had a problem with my viewfinder. Could you do it again?"

[Bob Teague, Live and Off-Color: News Biz.](#)

During an especially trying time in the work of the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor wrote to his wife, "We have twenty-five cents--and all the promises of God!

W. Wiersbe, [Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching & Preachers](#), p. 242.

There was a tightrope walker, who did incredible aerial feats. All over Paris, he would do tightrope acts at tremendously scary heights. Then he had succeeding acts; he would do it blindfolded, then he would go across the tightrope, blindfolded, pushing a wheelbarrow. An American promoter read about this in the papers and wrote a letter to the tightrope walker, saying, "Tightrope, I don't believe you can do it, but I'm willing to make you an offer. For a very substantial sum of money, besides all your transportation fees, I would like to challenge you to do your act over Niagara Falls." Now, Tightrope wrote back, "Sir, although I've never been to America and seen the Falls, I'd love to come." Well, after a lot of promotion and setting the whole thing up, many people came to see the event. Tightrope was to start on the Canadian side and come to the American side. Drums roll, and he comes across the rope which is suspended over the treacherous part of the falls -- blindfolded!! And he makes it across easily. The crowds go wild, and he comes to the promoter and says, "Well, Mr. Promoter, now do you believe I can do it?" "Well of course I do. I mean, I just saw you do it." "No," said Tightrope, "do you really believe I can do it?" "Well of course I do, you just did it." "No, no, no," said Tightrope, "do you believe I can do it?" "Yes," said Mr. Promoter, "I believe you can do it." "Good," said Tightrope, "then you get in the wheel barrow."

The word believe, in Greek means "to live by". This is a nice story...makes you ask, how often do we say that we believe Christ can do it, but refuse to get in the wheelbarrow? [Unknown](#).

A man fell off a cliff, but managed to grab a tree limb on the way down. The following conversation ensued:

"Is anyone up there?"

"I am here. I am the Lord. Do you believe me?"

"Yes, Lord, I believe. I really believe, but I can't hang on much longer."

"That's all right, if you really believe you have nothing to worry about. I will save you. Just let go of the branch."

A moment of pause, then: "Is anyone else up there?" [Bits & Pieces, June 24, 1993, p. 3.](#)

NOTE: Order of presentation for SS:

Cover Piper's Chapter along with Understanding the Doctrine (IV)

Illustrations of Faith (VI) solicit from class

4 Enemies of Faith (II)

How to Grow Your Faith (V) solicit from class

Main Exposition (I) (needs more work)

Commands of Christ

Week 5 – Douglas Smith

Love Me

Matthew 10:37 ESV

(37) **Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.**

Does it seem strange that Love would be included in a discussion on the commands of Christ? To many people, love is an emotion. If we were to subscribe to the wisdom of our day, we would see love as an irresistible force that has its own will and intersects people's lives in almost a capricious manner. In the world's view, love is not something that can be manufactured or commanded. In spite of this, we are faced with uncontestable evidence that Christ commanded us to love Him. Piper illuminates it this way:

Jesus' demand that we love him may involve *more* than deep feelings of admiration for his attributes and enjoyment of his fellowship and attraction to his presence and affection for his kinship, but it does not involve *less*. At least two things that he said show this. He said, for example, that our love for him must exceed the love we have for mother and father and son and daughter. "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). The love that binds us to these relationships is not mere willpower. It is deep with affection. Jesus says that the love we must have for him is not less than that, but more.

The other evidence that Jesus requires our love to be more than good deeds is in John 14:15. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Sometimes people use these words to say: Loving Jesus *is* keeping his commandments. That's not what it says. It says that keeping Jesus' commandments comes *from* our love for him. It does not *separate* deeds from love, but it does *distinguish* them. First we love him. Then because of this—overflowing from this—we do what he says. Love is not synonymous with commandment-keeping; it is the root of it. So the love that Jesus demands is something very deep and strong—like the closest family bonds of affection that we have, but greater than that and more than that.

Let's take a look at the idea that love is the basis for keeping commandments.

John 14:15-21 ESV

- (15) "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
- (16) And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,
- (17) even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.
- (18) "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.
- (19) Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.
- (20) In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.
- (21) Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

Christ exemplifies love. Every aspect of His earthly ministry was a living example of love. He not only left His position in heaven to take on the flesh, He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins when we were in a rebellious, unworthy and unappreciative state. He provided a Helper for us after He departed this earth and it wasn't just any Helper. The Holy Spirit dwells within us. Christ knew this arrangement was the absolute best solution for our needs.

John 16:7 ESV

- (7) Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

Once we gain an appreciation for the outrageous love Christ showed for us, we will naturally respond with love and obedience. To develop this, let's take a look at the example that has been set for us.

A Prophetic Vision of Pure Love

Isaiah, whose name means "Yahweh is Salvation", was a prophet who wrote between 739 -686 BC. According to Ryrie:

Isaiah has often been called "the evangelical prophet" because he says so much about the redemptive work of Messiah. More about the person and work of Christ is found here than in any other book of the Old Testament."

In Isaiah 53, we see Christ pictured as the Suffering Servant who is beaten and killed for the transgressions (sins) of Israel (and ultimately the entire world).

Isaiah 53:7-9 ESV

- (7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.
- (8) By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?
- (9) And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Look at these verses again as amplified by Peterson in the Message:

Isaiah 53:7-9 MSG

- (7) He was beaten, he was tortured, but he didn't say a word. Like a lamb taken to be slaughtered and like a sheep being sheared, he took it all in silence.
- (8) Justice miscarried, and he was led off-- and did anyone really know what was happening? He died without a thought for his own welfare, beaten bloody for the sins of my people.
- (9) They buried him with the wicked, threw him in a grave with a rich man, Even though he'd never hurt a soul or said one word that wasn't true.

Imagine yourself as a prophet seeing this vision 700 years before it would happen. Wouldn't you find it confusing? Wouldn't you ask why this person would willingly yield to such suffering? Scripture indicates that was a typical reaction of the prophets.

1 Peter 1:10-12 ESV

- (10) Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,
- (11) inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.
- (12) It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Why the Servant Willingly Suffered

The good news (gospel) Peter mentioned can be summarized in what may be the most well known verse in all of Scripture:

John 3:16 ESV

- (16) **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**

Again I will turn to Peterson because I believe his amplification is helpful:

John 3:16 MSG

- (16) "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

The answer, quite simply, is love; a love so pure and outrageous that it could only come from God. Outrageous is defined in Webster's Dictionary as excessive, exceeding all bounds of moderation, beyond reason. This is an appropriate description of the love Christ has for us. As Christ stated:

John 15:13 ESV

- (13) **Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.**

Paul expounded on this theme in Romans:

Romans 5:6-8 ESV

- (6) For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.
- (7) For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die--
- (8) but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

An Appropriate Response

What can we do in response to such pure and outrageous love? Christ answers this question Himself:

John 15:9-14 ESV

- (9) *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*
- (10) *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*
- (11) *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*
- (12) *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*
- (13) *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*
- (14) *You are my friends if you do what I command you.*

Christ commands us to abide in His love. According to Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary, the word abide means: to *stay* (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy): - abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry (for). Literally, we are to "live" in God's love. Christ goes on to explain that abiding in God's love means keeping God's commandments. During His ministry, a teacher of the law asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was.

Matthew 22:35-40 ESV

- (35) And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.
- (36) "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"
- (37) And he said to him, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*
- (38) *This is the great and first commandment.*
- (39) *And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*
- (40) *On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

Putting it All Together

Isaiah 53:7-9 shows God's pure and outrageous love for us. We didn't deserve this love and we could never do anything to earn this love but since we have received this love, we need to follow Christ's commandment and abide in God's love. We abide in God's love by loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and that love is demonstrated as we love our neighbors as ourselves. Piper states:

How God enables us to love Jesus more than we love our closest friends and relatives is not a total mystery. The gift of the new birth and repentance—the new nature of a child of God—is brought about through seeing the glory of Jesus' love *for us*.

Piper then goes on to use the example of from Jesus' earthly ministry.

Luke 7:36-47 ESV

- (36) One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table.
- (37) And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment,
- (38) and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.
- (39) Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."
- (40) And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."
- (41) "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.
- (42) When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?"
- (43) Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly."
- (44) Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.
- (45) You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.
- (46) You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.
- (47) Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven--for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

As Piper explains:

This is a story about the way great love for Jesus comes into being. It comes into being when we are given eyes to see the beauty of Jesus in the way he loved us first. We did not love him first. He loved us first (John 15:16). Our love for Jesus is awakened when our hearts are broken because of our sin (unlike the judgmental Pharisee) and when we taste the sweetness of Jesus' forgiving love preceding and awakening our love for him.

Scripture makes it clear that Christ showed outrageous love for us long before we had the capacity to even get a glimpse of the magnitude of His sacrifice on our behalf. We love because He first loved us.

1 John 4:19-21 ESV

- (19) We love because he first loved us.
- (20) If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.
- (21) And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Once we fully understand the magnitude of Christ's love for us, the obvious response is to love Him in return. Piper concludes this way:

Jesus demands that he be loved by the world because he is infinitely worthy to be loved. And since our love for him is the enjoyment of his glory and presence and care, therefore Jesus' demand that we love him is one more way that his love overflows on us.

Commands of Christ

Week 6 – Douglas Smith

Listen to Me

John 10:27 ESV

(27) **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.**

To many, Jesus' life and teaching were similar to the way Prime Minister Churchill once described the former Soviet Union, "... a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma ...". People saw what He did but could not truly see. They heard what He said without truly hearing. To be a follower of Christ requires that we listen to Him. Jesus was often quoted as saying:

Matthew 11:15 ESV

(15) **He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**

This statement implies two things. First, we must develop listening ears and second, we must actually listen with them. Piper begins his discussion of this demand of Christ by stating:

The entire life and work of Jesus is one great argument why we should listen to his word. Page after page of the New Testament Gospels pile up reasons to turn off the television and listen to Jesus.

Piper goes on to explore eight reasons why this command is important to us.

No One Ever Spoke Like This Man

John 7:30-32, 37-46 ESV

- (30) So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.
- (31) Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"
- (32) The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.

- (37) On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, **"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.**
- (38) **Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"**
- (39) Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
- (40) When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet."
- (41) Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee?"

- (42) Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"
- (43) So there was a division among the people over him.
- (44) Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.
- (45) The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?"
- (46) The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!"

One of the enigmas of Jesus' life was the effect His words had on people. Even those who did not believe in Him recognized that He did not speak like other men. John records an incident where the Temple Guards were sent to arrest Jesus. Dutifully, they went out to where He was speaking but came back empty handed. No doubt, they were confused by His references to spiritual things beyond their earthly comprehension, but something about the way Jesus spoke caused them to abandon their mission. This was not a unique reaction. Although these men could not explain why Jesus' words were so astonishing, Scripture does reveal the answer.

Jesus Speaks the Very Words of God

Matthew 7:24-29 ESV

- (24) "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.
- (25) And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.
- (26) And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.
- (27) And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."
- (28) And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,
- (29) for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount by emphasizing that those who listen to Him are wise and those who do not are foolish. His sermon never emphasized following the rabbinical traditions so cherished by the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus opinion of that type of teaching is perfectly clear:

Matthew 15:7-9 ESV

- (7) You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:
- (8) "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;
- (9) in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

Jesus did not speak the doctrines of men; rather, He spoke of the coming Kingdom and the pathway to it. The people of His day were unaccustomed to this type of teaching and the crowd's response was one of astonishment. As Wiersbe notes:

The congregation was astonished at this sermon. Why? Because Jesus spoke with divine authority. The scribes and Pharisees spoke "from authorities," always quoting the various rabbis and experts of the Law. Jesus needed no human teacher to add authority to His words; for He spoke as the Son of God.

Jesus confirmed that He spoke God's words:

John 8:28 ESV

(28) So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.

John 12:49-50 ESV

(49) For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment--what to say and what to speak.

(50) And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

John 14:24 ESV

(24) Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

Jesus spoke with authority because the words He spoke originated from the supreme authority, God the Father.

Jesus Words Silence Supernatural Powers

Mark 1:21-27 ESV

(21) And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

(22) And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

(23) And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,

(24) "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God."

(25) But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "**Be silent, and come out of him!**"

(26) And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

(27) And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

Jesus' words contained more than just the power to amaze a crowd. Scripture reveals that His words also had the power to control supernatural forces. Although men often rejected the truth that Jesus was the Messiah, supernatural forces clearly recognized that He was the Son of God and had to bow to His authority. Jesus never resorted to ritualistic incantations or theatrics, He merely spoke and miraculous things happened in the supernatural and natural world. His power extended over disease, disability, and even death itself.

Matthew 8:2-3 ESV

(2) And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."

(3) And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "**I will; be clean.**" And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Matthew 9:28-30 ESV

- (28) When he entered the house, 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 be it done to you.**"
(30) And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, "**See that no one knows about it.**"

Mark 7:32-35 ESV

- (32) And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.
(33) And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue.
(34) And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "**Ephphatha,**" that is, "**Be opened.**"
(35) And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

Luke 7:12-15 ESV

- (12) As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her.
(13) And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "**Do not weep.**"
(14) Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "**Young man, I say to you, arise.**"
(15) And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

Jesus Has the Words of Eternal Life

Amazing a crowd, casting out demons, healing the sick and raising the dead are all wonderful things but they are not of eternal value unless they point us towards the pathway to eternal life. Fortunately, Jesus' words do just that. As Piper states:

. . . Jesus' words were life in more ways than one. They could sustain physical life and restore physical life. But more important than that they were the indispensable way to eternal life. It is a wonderful thing to be raised from the dead—but not if you are simply going to perish later in hell. The most precious thing about the words of Jesus, and the most important reason to listen to him, is that his words lead to eternal life.

John records an incident during Jesus' ministry where, after some particularly hard teachings, most of His followers were beginning to turn away.

John 6:60, 66-69 ESV

- (60) When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"
(66) After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.
(67) So Jesus said to the Twelve, "**Do you want to go away as well?**"
(68) Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,
(69) and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

During our study of Demand #4 – Believe in Me, we looked at how eternal life comes through believing in God. Jesus has the words of eternal life because it is through His words that our faith is awakened.

Jesus' Words Awaken Faith

Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23 ESV

- (3) And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow.
 - (4) And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.
 - (5) Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil,
 - (6) but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.
 - (7) Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.
 - (8) Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
 - (9) He who has ears, let him hear."
-
- (18) "Hear then the parable of the sower:
 - (19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.
 - (20) As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy,
 - (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.
 - (22) As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.
 - (23) As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

The parable of the sower shows four responses to Jesus' words of eternal life. Notice that in all cases the seed (word) was the same, it was the soil (condition of the heart) that was different. In three instances the seed fails to bear fruit; however, a bountiful harvest awaited the one who listened with understanding. Jesus' words point those who have ears to listen towards the pathway to eternal life. As Paul states in his epistle to the Romans:

Romans 10:13-17 ESV

- (13) For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
- (14) How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?
- (15) And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"
- (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"
- (17) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

When someone truly listens to Word of God, they experience its power. It reveals our deepest secrets and exposes our greatest needs. It is alive, active and always accomplishes its mission.

Hebrews 4:12-13 ESV

- (12) For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- (13) And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Isaiah 55:10-11 ESV

- (10) "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
- (11) so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Piper expresses it this way:

The reason Jesus' words awaken faith in him is that they reveal who he really is and what he does to obtain eternal life for us. We see the glory of Jesus and the all-sufficiency of his work through his word. But not everybody does. Some hear his words, but do not hear them as true and compelling. They see what he is talking about, but do not see it as beautiful and convincing. So Jesus said, "This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matt. 13:13).

Why Do They Not Hear and Believe?

John 8:37 ESV

- (37) **I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.**

Have you ever wondered why two people can hear the same message and have completely different reactions to it? It happens every day. All you have to do is listen to the nightly news and you will hear an endless barrage of pundits expressing completely opposite views on some event or statement. During Jesus' ministry, He encountered this on a daily basis as well. Some saw the hand of God in His miracles and others accused Him of casting out demons through the hand of Satan (Matthew 9:34). Unfortunately, Jesus' words could not find a place in many people's hearts. Jesus gave several reasons for this in the parable of the sower. For some, they are consumed by the cares of the world. Others expected a life of ease and withered at the first sign of trials or tribulations. Jesus' words need to fall on soil tilled by the Spirit to bear fruit.

Whoever is of God Hears the Words of God

John 8:47 ESV

- (47) **Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."**

Although we cannot fully explain why some have hearts tilled by the Spirit and others do not, we know that God is both just and merciful. Since we cannot know ahead of time who the elect are, we should continue to proclaim the Words of Life to everyone. We cannot till the soil but we can sow the seed. We learned in Demand #5 – Love Me that the evidence of our love is obedience. Our job, as those who have heard, is to tell others and pray earnestly that God will show mercy and unstop their ears so that they too can listen and find the pathway to eternal life.

My Sheep Hear My Voice

John 10:24-28 ESV

- (24) So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."
(25) Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,
(26) but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.
(27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
(28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

To follow Christ, we must listen to Him. We have seen that His words are not like the words spoken by anyone else because they are the very words of God. They have authority and power. They lead to eternal life. We find time through the course of our day to listen to many empty words. Wouldn't it be better to focus our attention on the words of the Good Shepherd? They are not empty words, they are eternal words.

Mark 13:31 ESV

- (31) Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

When Jesus took Peter, James and John up to the mountain and they witnessed His transfiguration, God the Father gave us a command.

Matthew 17:5 ESV

- (5) He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

Pray earnestly that your hearing never grows dull. Listen to Jesus!

Demand #7: Abide in Me

Main Text: John 15:1-11

Memory Verse: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me." John 15:4

REVIEW

Explanation of course ... what we have covered so far

Do you want to bear fruit for Jesus Christ?

Abiding in Christ is the key ... How do you abide in Christ?

I. Exposition of Primary Text – John 15:1-11

SPIRITUAL HORTICULTURE – ABIDING IN CHRIST – PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

BIG IDEA:

CHRIST CALLS ALL GENUINE BELIEVERS TO PERSEVERE IN RELIANCE UPON HIM IN ORDER TO BEAR MUCH FRUIT (BECOME MORE LIKE HIM)

INTRODUCTION: Remember the **Context**:

Disciples have left the upper room and are on the way to Gethsemane (14:31);

Final training of the disciples and preparation for departure of Christ;

Judas (that false professor of faith) has departed (gone out from them) so that Christ is just speaking to the remaining genuine disciples. His betrayal is imminent.

2 Main Interpretations:

- Abiding refers to level of intimacy of the relationship with Christ -- all the branches are "in Christ" – so the fruitless branches must refer to loss of reward and that is the imagery of fire here (Yes, it is important that our relationship be as intimate as possible ... but is that an application or the interpretation of this passage)

- Abiding refers to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in their faith in Christ -- fruitless branches had a form of profession of faith and association with Christ externally; but never were genuine believers; the imagery of fire is that of eternal condemnation

John 15 does **not** teach:

- believers can lose their salvation – and be thrown into the fires of hell

- that there are 2 levels of Christians

- good Christians who abide in Christ and bear fruit and reap rewards

- carnal Christians who fail to abide and don't bear fruit and don't reap rewards

Let's examine some of the details of the analogy

1. (:1-3) PREPARATION FOR THE CALL TO ABIDE IN CHRIST – PROPER UNDERSTANDING IS CRITICAL

A. (:1) Identify the Key Players – very easy

1. **Christ** is the True Vine – Source of Life; Change Agent to Transform and Empower

"I am the true vine"

"I AM" passages in Gospel of John

This is the last of 7 claims to deity in the form of “I AM” statements by Jesus in the book of John (6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6)

genuine, perfect, without imperfection
cf. John 1:9 – the true light
cf. John 6:30-35 – the true bread
the other wasn’t false, but imperfect

Gil Rugh: (lots of good info. from his tape on this passage – sermonaudio.com) – OT background that Israel is the vine of God ... but always in negative sense as a degenerate vine that failed to accomplish God’s purpose and did not bear fruit; worthless; Jesus in contrast is all that God intended His vine to be; (Ps. 80:8-16; Is. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15; Hos. 10:1). If a vine fails to produce fruit it is worthless; not good for anything else; can’t build houses with it or even burn it for heat.

2. The **Father** is the Vinedresser – Cultivator of Life
“*and My Father is the vinedresser*”
cf. OT imagery above of God as the vinedresser
cares for the vine; the fruit belongs to Him
God always the one taking the initiative; God has certain Expectations

B. (:2) Identify the Spiritual Condition of the Branches = Area of Controversy
All Believers Bear Some Measure of Fruit – Proving their Connectivity to Christ

Dead or Alive – Only Two Types of Branches – Not abiding vs. Abiding

1. **Dead Branches** (non fruit bearing = all false professors of faith like Judas) Removed

“*Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away*”

Key phrase: “*in Me*” – must take it here to mean professing believers; not a statement that these are actual believers (if they were they would be bearing some measure of fruit). Look at other instances in the Gospels where people have some sort of external connection to the kingdom but are not truly part of it (cf. Matt. 7:15-23; wheat and tares; Mat. 13). Also Romans 11:13-24.

Not looking here at some third group – not looking at “carnal believers” that somehow have genuine life but never produce any fruit.

Therefore, all true believers abide (remain) in Christ ... the question is one of degree.

It is clear that the contrast is not between good Christians (who will get lots of rewards) and poor Christians (who will still get to heaven but miss out on rewards). Very misunderstood passage.

It is also not teaching that Christians can lose their salvation.

“*take away*” – in what sense? not loss of reward for believers like 1

Corinthians 3; but not even connected to the life of Christ.
Speaking of the eternal fire of hell and God's condemnation.

2. Live Branches (fruit bearing = all true believers) Pruned

“and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.”

Significance of fruit: the testimony or evidence that you are a child of God (Matt. 3; Matt. 7)

What is the nature of this Fruit? (some people think of soul winning right away)

- Christian character qualities; fruit of the Holy Spirit (Context: **Love**)
- impact on the lives of others (**John 4:36**)
- adherence to right doctrine?

Eph. 5:9 *“the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth”*

Vine's: Fruit = the visible expression of power working inwardly and invisibly, the character of the fruit being evidence of the character of the power producing it

Stedman: God came looking for justice and righteousness; instead he found oppression, cruelty, exploitation, and indifference to the needs of others. So it is evident from that parable that the fruit which God expects of the vine is moral character, or as we have it in the New Testament, the fruit of the Spirit -- the fruit which the Spirit produces. The life which is in the vine produces fruit which Paul describes in Galatians 5 as: *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.”* The fruit, in other words, is Christ-likeness. And our Lord is indicating that the very purpose of the vine is to produce such fruit.

Emphasis in the context is on **LOVE**

All different levels of fruit bearing; goal is to mature and bear as much fruit as possible

Why does God prune us? to make us more productive

How does God prune us? often through difficult circumstances; the testing talked about in book of James

Necessity of pruning – **Heb. 12:10-11** What do we tolerate or indulge in that cuts back our fruit production?

C.. (:3) Distinguish the One Time Cleansing of Regeneration from the Ongoing Pruning of Sanctification -- Fruit Bearing is Not a Works Oriented Approach to Salvation

“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”

cf. **John 13:10** – same type of emphasis

MacArthur: The cleansing that Christ does at salvation never needs to be repeated – atonement is complete at that point. But all who have been cleansed by God's gracious justification need constant washing in the experiential sense as they battle sin in the flesh. Believers are justified and granted imputed righteousness (Php 3:8,9), but still need sanctification and personal righteousness (Php 3:12-14).

Christ has cleansed us with **His Word**; The work of regeneration is solely by grace through faith; our fruit has no part in atoning for our sins; However, if Christ has cleansed us and given us a new heart and a new nature, we will demonstrate that changed life through fruit of some sort.

Stedman: I struggled for a while with this word prunes because in the Greek it is really "cleanses." It seemed to me a far cry from cleansing away debris to pruning back the branches -- until I learned that, in the usual practice of viticulture (i.e., the care of vines), the branches are pruned back each year in order to cleanse them. That is, a vine produces certain shoots (called "sucker" shoots) which start to grow where the branch joins the stem. If allowed to continue to grow, they would dissipate the life of the vine through so many branches that the vine would produce little or no fruit but would produce leaves instead. So every vinedresser knows it is important to prune away these little sucker shoots in order that the vine may produce more fruit. And since they grow right where the branch joins the stem, creating a tight cluster where dirt, leaves, and other debris collect, the pruning is therefore a cleansing process. This is what our Lord has in view.

2. (:4-5) PRESENTATION OF THE CALL TO ABIDE IN CHRIST – CRITICAL FOR FRUIT BEARING --

(Talking about the **Demands** that Christ makes on the world)

All Fruit Depends on Connectivity to Christ

A. (:4) No Fruit Possible Apart from Abiding

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

Concept of Abiding: idea of permanence and perseverance

Absolute dependence; “make our permanent home” - **Deffinbaugh**

Meno – occurs 11 times in this chap; 40 times in the entire Gospel; 27 times in John’s epistles

B. (:5) Much Fruit Possible in Connectivity to Christ

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

3. (:6-8) PURPOSE OF THE CALL TO ABIDE IN CHRIST – CRITICAL FOR OUR ETERNAL DESTINY AND GOD’S ULTIMATE GLORY

What’s the big deal?? Why is it so critical whether or not we heed this call to Abide in Christ?

- Reveals our eternal destiny

- Designed to bring glory to God

A. (:6-7) Reveals Our Eternal Destiny

1) (:6) Negative Response – Fire of Eternal Judgment

“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

Heb. 6:7-8 drawing the same type of distinction between those who really belong to Christ and those who do not

Deffinbaugh: *I know that many of the Jews think they already have a living relationship with “the vine.” That is to say they suppose that just because they are Jews physically they are in fellowship with God and therefore eternally secure. I must say that this is not the case. In truth, anyone who trusts in anything or anyone but Me—the way, the truth, and the life—is not saved at all. Those who are truly “in Me” are those who enjoy a union with Me by faith, and who thus bear fruit in Me. Those who do not bear fruit in Me will sooner or later be severed from any relation to Me, and will ultimately face the fire of God’s eternal wrath.*

2) (:7) Positive Response – Blessing of Answered Prayer

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.”

Especially talking about our desire to see growth in terms of Christlikeness

Stedman: We must never forget that prayer and promise are linked together. Prayer is not a way of getting God to do what you want him to do, rather it is asking him to do what he has promised to do. We pray according to the promises. So if you want to make your prayers effective begin to read and study the promises of God. When you do, you will pray according to the mind and will of God.

B. (:8) Designed to Bring Glory to God through Abundant Fruit Bearing

“By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

How will someone know whether or not we are truly a Christian

If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck ... it is probably a duck

4. (:9-11) PATTERN OF THE CALL TO ABIDE IN CHRIST – WHAT DOES ABIDING IN CHRIST LOOK LIKE?

A. (:9) Look at the Relationship Between God the Father and God the Son -- Divine Pattern for Mutual Love

“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.”

Christ gives us a picture of what it means to be loved by the Father;

How can He say this when He is on the way to the Cross to die??

What it means to abide in that love;

What it means to love others in the same way

How has Christ demonstrated His love for us – John 17; high priestly prayer

We are partakers of the divine nature; the branches have the life of the vine running through them; we are called to become like Jesus Christ

B. (:10-12) Look at the Connection Between Obedience and Love and Joy

1) (:10) Obedience and Love Can Never Be Separated

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.”

2) (:11) Obedience and Love Always Bring Fullness of Spiritual Joy

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

II. Additional Teaching of Christ in Gospel of John – Necessity of Abiding

John 3:36 *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God **abides** on him.”*

- Emphasis is not on the increasing intensity of the wrath of God or the nearness to that wrath, but the fact that the individual cannot escape the wrath that will be executed in judgment.

John 6:56 *“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood **abides** in Me, and I in him.”*

- vs 66 – *“As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.”* Note reference to Judas in this passage

John 8:31 *“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you **continue** in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’”*

- Can you be a believer, but just not be a disciple?? That is the key question here

III. Insights from Dr. Piper

“Jesus’ demands are for a lifetime. He does not demand a single decision to repent or come or believe or love or listen. All these continue. . . A transaction with Jesus in the past that has no ongoing expression in our lives was a false transaction. ”

Def of *Abide*: simple word: stay, continue, remain, dwell

How do we abide in Jesus?

Abiding = continual trust in the **truth of Jesus’ words** and in the **certainty of His love**. The result is freedom and security vs bondage and insecurity.

“We are not idle in the battle to abide in Jesus. But in the end the battle is assured because it does not depend finally on us. Jesus wins. No one can snatch us out of his hand. He and his Father are greater than all. Therefore, his demand that we abide in him is that we keep trusting the one who keeps us trusting.”

IV. Understanding the Doctrine -- Theology of Perseverance of the Saints – Wayne Grudem – Systematic Theology (pp. 788-809)

A. All Who Are Truly Born Again Will Persevere to the End

Must understand all that is involved in the sovereign accomplishment of our salvation.

No one gets off the train of **Romans 8**.

Perseverance does not secure our salvation – God secures our perseverance; doctrine of the Preservation of the saints

John 6:38-40 everyone who truly believes in Christ will remain a Christian up to the day of final resurrection into the blessings of life in the presence of God

John 10:27-29 some might argue that we might remove ourselves from Christ's hand; not possible

Emphasis in the Greek: "*they shall certainly not perish forever*"

God is continually using his power to guard his people by means of their faith

B. Only Those Who Persevere to the End Have Been Truly Born Again

John 8:31-32 must *continue in His Word*

Matt. 10:22 "*He who endures to the end will be saved*"

Those whose faith is not real will eventually fall away from participation in the fellowship of the church

I John 2:19 "*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us.*"

C. Those Who Finally Fall Away May Give Many External Signs of Conversion

Did Judas look like a true disciple of Christ? Was with Him for 3 years

John 6:64 "*Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him*"

Mark 4:5-6 Parable of the sower – "*they have no root in themselves*"

John 15 Don't press the analogy of the vine and the branches too far on every detail

D. What Can Give a Believer Genuine Assurance?

Objectors will advance straw man arguments – claiming that one can never then have assurance of salvation.

Need to understand the multiple tracks of assurance of salvation.

New Dict of Theology: emphasis of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints = "the ultimate destiny of the Christian is achieved by God's grace through an enduring faith."

Loraine Boettner: The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination:

1) Statement of the Doctrine of The Perseverance of the Saints --

Westminster Confession: "They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."

Tied fundamentally to Calvinistic doctrines of Election and Efficacious Grace

Holy Spirit never taken away; justification never undone; atonement; reconciliation ... etc.

"The nature of the change which occurs in regeneration is a sufficient guarantee that the life imparted shall be permanent."

2) Perseverance does not depend upon the person's good works but upon God's grace -- Paul teaches that believers are not under law, but under grace, and that since they are not under the law they cannot be condemned for having violated the law.

3) Though truly saved the Christian may temporarily backslide and commit sin -- Yet it remains inconsistent for the Christian to commit sin.
State of constant spiritual warfare

4) An outward profession of righteousness not a guarantee that the person is a true Christian -- Numerous examples of temporary faith are found in the Scriptures and are often seen in every day life. These experiences often precede or accompany genuine conversion; but in many cases they are not followed by a real change of heart. They may occur repeatedly, and yet those who experience them return to their normal state of unconcern and worldliness. Often times it is impossible for an observer or even the person himself to distinguish these experiences from those of the truly regenerated. "*By their fruits ye shall know them,*" is the test given by our Lord.

5) Arminian sense of insecurity --
A consistent Arminian, with his doctrines of free will and of falling from grace, can never in this life be certain of his eternal salvation.

6) Purpose of the Scripture warnings against apostasy --
God's exhortations to duty are perfectly consistent with His purpose to give sufficient grace for the performance of these duties.

7) Scripture Proof -- many passages

V. Application: Insights from Epistle of 1 John -- Abiding = Test of Life

Two very different views of I John -- get back to how you interpret this demand to *Abide in Him*

Demand #8: Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me

Main Text: Matt. 16:24-27

Memory Verse: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Matt. 16:24

REVIEW

I. Exposition of Primary Text – Matthew 16:24-27

(Mark 8:31-34; Matt. 10:38; Luke 9:23; Luke 14:27)

TRUE DISCIPLESHIP -- THE DIFFICULTY AND REWARD OF FOLLOWING JESUS

BIG IDEA:

CHRIST CALLS HIS DISCIPLES TO PAY THE PRICE OF FOLLOWING HIM IN LIGHT OF THE PROSPECT OF SUCH GREAT REWARD

INTRODUCTION: Remember the **Context:** vs. 21-23

The harsh reality of Jesus setting His face to go to the cross; the gospel message of crucifixion and resurrection; the watershed distinction between God's agenda and man's self interest;

Here is a good text to refute the notion of **Easy Believism**

I like the tract we are using – 2 Ways to Live – Who is wearing the crown? Whom are you following?

1. (:24) THE GREAT COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Tote o'lhsoij eipen toij maqhtaij autou(Ei; tij qelei opisw mou el qei h(aparnhsasqw eauton kai. araw ton stauron autou/ kai. akolouqei,tw moiA

A. The Noble Aspiration

"If anyone wishes to come after Me"

A lot more people attracted to this calling than actually are willing to pay the price; look at the Gospel accounts to see how large the crowds were at various times; What made Jesus so attractive?

Then look at the people who wanted to come after Christ but ended up counting the cost and were not willing to pay the cost

Parable of the Sower – ¼ not interested; ½ not able to pull it off; only ¼ good soil – but categories, not amounts

"many are called, but few are chosen" – very important principle

"Many will say, Lord, Lord" –

"the road is narrow that leads to salvation"

Whosoever is a wide open invitation –

Importance of counting the cost – **Luke 14:25-35**

B. The Narrow Application – **The Three Fundamentals of Christian Discipleship**

1) Self-Denial – Rejection of living for self

“he must deny himself”

This alone is saying a lot; how are we doing at denying self

Lots of people are attracted to seminars on improving their self esteem – but what about the emphasis here on self denial; you have some very superficial, external attempts – Lent, etc. – but nothing that cuts deep to the heart

Hendriksen: To deny oneself means to renounce the old self, the self as it is apart from regenerating grace. A person who denies himself gives up all reliance on whatever he is by nature, and depends for salvation on God alone. He no longer seeks to promote his own predominantly selfish interests but has become wrapped up in the cause of promoting the glory of God in his own and in every life, and also in every sphere of endeavor.

Gal. 2:20 *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.”*

A true disciple must set aside his own interests and mindset in order to embrace the teaching and lifestyle of his master

2) Suffering – Identification with Christ no matter what the cost – Cross-bearing

“and take up his cross”

Luke 9:23 *“take up his cross daily”* – not looking at some one time commitment here

Cross = instrument of shame and death; can’t shrink back when the heat is applied
Look at the various views

How are we doing at identifying with Jesus Christ?

Hiebert: The disciples had not associated the thought of suffering and death with Him as the Messiah. . . Peter’s objection to the cross for his Master led Jesus to make the further revelation that the cross was necessary also for the disciples. A suffering Messiah means also a suffering Messianic community. . . The reference is not to the common sufferings experienced in life, but to that shame and suffering which the disciple assumes because of his relationship to Jesus and which can be escaped by denying that relationship.

The Pathway of Rejection and Suffering must precede Resurrection and Glory

Matt. 10: 38 *“And he who does not take his cross, and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”*

3) Submission – Where you go, I will follow – sight unseen; no questions asked

“and follow Me”

Goes back to Abraham following the call of God from Ur
Look at how Christ called the disciples in the gospels

What is the difference between physically following someone you can see and how we follow Christ today?

What happens when we follow Jesus?

- *Follow Me and I will make you Fishers of Men*
- *Be imitators of me just as I imitate Christ*

Look at the image of the sheep following the shepherd in John 10:4 – they know the voice of the shepherd; He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out

2. (:25) THE GREAT PARADOX OF DISCIPLESHIP – SELFISHNESS VS SURRENDER

oj gar ean qe|h| thn yuchn autou/ sw/sai apol esei authn\ oj dl an apol esh| thn yuchn autou/
eheken emou/ eurhsei authn\

“except a grain of wheat fall into the ground”

A. Trusting in Self is a Losing Proposition

“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it;”

Look at all the self help counsel: you have to believe in yourself and you can accomplish anything

B. Trusting in Christ is a Fulfilling Proposition

“but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.”

You exchange a life that is spiritually dead for an eternal life that enjoys fellowship with God and is fulfilling

John 17: this is eternal life ..

3. (:26) THE GREAT VALUE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE ITSELF

ti, gar wfel hqhsetai anqrwpoj ean ton kosmon o| on kerdhsh| thn de. yuchn autou/ zhmiwqh| h'
ti, dwsei anqrwpoj antal lagma thj yuchj autouf

Simple Value Equation --

Great quote from **Jim Elliott** – an evangelical Christian missionary to Ecuador who, along with four others, was killed while attempting to evangelize the Waodani people through efforts known as Operation Auca.

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

2 Searching Questions with 1 Simple Answer:

A. Question #1 – What can you possibly hope to gain?

Answer: Nothing Can Compare to the Value of Your Soul

“For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul?”

Does not seem to be talking about reward here; this requirement of following Christ applies to all

disciples; to all believers; not optional – it is a Demand that Christ makes of the world

Look at what Satan offered Christ in his time of temptation = the whole world and all its kingdoms

B. Question #2 – What price are you willing to pay?

Answer: Nothing Can Compare to the Value of Your Soul

“Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Reminded of Esau – sold his birthright for a bowl of porridge

How did the 30 pieces of silver benefit Judas?

What is your price? What will buy you off and dissuade you from following Christ?

4. (:27) THE GREAT REWARD OF DISCIPLESHIP

mel lei gar o ui oj tou/anqrwpou ercesqai en th| doxh| tou/patroj autou/meta. twh angel wn autou(kai. tote apodwsei ekastw| kata. thn prakin autou|

A. Certainty of the Lord’s Glorious Return

“For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels;”

Addition in **Mark 8:38** *“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words I this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”* Same theme of Certainty of Second Coming and accountability

Dan. 7:13-14 image of the return of the *Son of Man*; Christ often designated himself by this phrase

What did it cost Christ to leave the glory of His father and come to earth the first time to live as a man? He did not cease to be God, but his glory was veiled – it won’t be veiled the second time

MacArthur: Those who reject the demands of discipleship prove themselves to be ashamed of Jesus Christ and the truth He taught, thus not redeemed from sin at all.

Today there are a lot of mockers: *Where is the promise of His coming?*

B. Compensation in Accordance with Performance

“and WILL THEN RECOMPENSE EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.”

II. Additional Teaching of Christ

Mark 1:17 *“Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men..”*

Have we become **fishers of men**?

John 8:12 *“I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life..”*

Are we walking in the **light**; are we functioning as salt and light towards the world around us

Matt. 8:22 *“Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead..”*

Do we have as our **priority** to *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?*

Matt. 19:21 *“If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me.”*

Where is our **treasure**? Ask Where is our heart?

III. Insights from Dr. Piper about Following Jesus

For the disciples, it was a very physical reality to follow Jesus.

A. WHAT DOES FOLLOWING JESUS INVOLVE?

1. WALKING BY FAITH -- IT INVOLVES FOLLOWING JESUS WHEN HE IS NOT HERE
Until Jesus comes again, he expects his disciples on earth to “follow” him. So following Jesus is not limited to physically walking around Palestine behind him. Jesus demands it of every person in every country in every age.

2. FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION -- IT INVOLVES JOINING HIM IN WHAT HE WAS SENT TO DO

Gathering a people in allegiance to him for the glory of his Father

3. EMBRACING THE CROSS BEFORE THE GLORY -- IT INVOLVES FOLLOWING JESUS INTO SUFFERING

Jesus put the emphasis on self-denial and cross-bearing

B. WHY IS IT WORTH IT TO FOLLOW JESUS?

1. SUFFERING FOR JESUS WITH JOY SHOWS HIS SUPREME VALUE

He did not die to make his life easy for us or prosperous. He died to remove every obstacle to our everlasting joy in making much of him – Jesus is more valuable than all the earthly rewards that the world lives for

2. SUFFERING FOR JESUS IS TEMPORARY; PLEASURE IN JESUS IS ETERNAL

Following Jesus does indeed lead through suffering and death. But the path is luminous with life and truth.

C. WHAT CAN BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FOLLOWING JESUS?

Ruptures in various areas of our life ... but these ruptures are not devastating

1. RUPTURES IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE

Might have to make some tough decisions when it comes to putting Jesus first; calls for behaviors that are sometimes going to look like hate to the world

2. RUPTURES IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH POSSESSIONS

If something gets in the way of following Jesus we must get rid of it

3. RUPTURES IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH VOCATION

Won't be required of most people .. but will be very risky for others; look at how the initial disciples responded: immediate and complete commitment

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING JESUS IS COSTLY AND WORTH IT

Jesus is not out to trick us; calls on us to count the cost; but assures us that it is more than worth it

Rom. 8:18 *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*

Demand #9: Love God With All Your Heart, Soul, Mind , and Strength

Main Text: Mark 12:28-34

Memory Verse: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30

I. Exposition of Primary Text – Mark 12:28-34 (Matt. 22:34-40)

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

BIG IDEA:

CHRIST PLACES THE HIGHEST PRIORITY ON LOVE – COMPLETE AND SUPREME LOVE FOR GOD AND VERY VISIBLE AND PRACTICAL LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOR

INTRODUCTION: Remember the **Context:** vs 18-27 (Luke’s version is from a different occasion **Luke 10:25-28**) Takes place right at the end of Jesus’ ministry in Passion Week in Jerusalem – the heart of all the opposition on the part of the religious establishment

Hiebert: The successive questions directed at Jesus during this day suggest that there had been a caucus of the various religious groups in Jerusalem the preceding night for the purpose of devising means whereby they might publicly discredit Him with the people.

Brian Bell: A Political Question; A Hypothetical Question; The Real Question.

1) Political Question

Pharisees – strict separatist Jews, totally opposed to Roman rule.

Herodians – gladly co-operated w/Rome.

He reminds them of a greater responsibility. Our 1st allegiance is to God!

2) Hypothetical Question

Saducees: They didn’t believe in: the existence of the soul, life after death, resurrection, final judgment, angels, or demons. (Acts 23:8); in charge of temple and priesthood

“Resurrection is not the restoration of life as we know it; it is the entrance into a new life that is different.”

In heaven there is no reduction of love!

We will be ourselves at our ultimate best!

We will be more capable of loving than ever before!

We will be like Jesus!

3) The Real Question

<http://archives.ccmurrieta.com/brian/studies-books/new-testament/41-mark/41-mark-012-013.doc>

Hypothetical, technical question – splitting hairs about something that had no impact on their heart condition towards God and their obedience – nothing more than a diversion trying to make Jesus look silly and complicate the doctrine of the resurrection; Wise response of Jesus:

Vs. 24 *“Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God?”*

God is certainly powerful enough to provide a resurrection body that is different in nature and needs from our current body that is acclimated for this world

Hendriksen: Jesus had silenced the Sadducees. His victory pleased the Pharisees, for the latter, as well as Jesus himself, believed in a bodily resurrection, a doctrine denied by the Sadducees. We can well imagine how triumphantly the Pharisees gloated over the defeat suffered by the deniers of the resurrection.

Hiebert: Matthew told the story from the standpoint of the Pharisees as a group, while Mark related it from the standpoint of the questioner himself.

Consider the concern of the Pharisees who had so much at stake in defending their interpretation of the law and the supremacy of the law; here comes Christ with his emphasis on the fulfillment of the law and introduction of grace

What is our **top priority** as followers of Jesus Christ – those desiring to obey his commandments? Where should we **focus**?

1. (:28) SETTING FOR THE THEOLOGY LESSON -- ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTION

Kai. proselqwn eij twh grammatewn akousaj autw h suzhtountwn(idwn oti kalwj apekriqh autoij ephrw,thsen auton(Poia estin entol h prwth pantwn

A. The Initiative of the Religious Scholar – his turn up at bat; his approach to Jesus
“and one of the scribes came”

Question of Motivation:

Pharisees select someone to ask Jesus a question and test him further ... was this scribe an approver of the teachings of Jesus or someone who wanted to trip him up?? That word for “test” – must it have a negative connotation?? Could the scribe have a different motivation than that of the group who designated him for this assignment??

B. The Investigation of the Religious Scholar – took in all of the content of the debate
“and heard them arguing”

He had been evaluating everything that had been said earlier in response to the questions put to Jesus; not overlooking or discounting anything; what type of attitude did he have compared to his fellow Pharisees

C. The Insight of the Religious Scholar – attracted to the wisdom of Christ
“and recognizing that He had answered them well”

D. The Inquiry of the Religious Scholar – wanted clarification of priorities
“asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?”

Much better question than the wrangling over the details of the resurrection in the preceding context. But still his motivation is to test Jesus (Matt. 22:34)

What sort of commandment ... what quality made a commandment of principal importance?

Hiebert: The rabbis counted 613 different commandments, 365 negative and 248 positive.

Hendriksen: The rabbis, devoted to hairsplitting legalism, carried on lengthy debates about the commandments, arguing whether a particular one was great or small, heavy or light.

Silversides: A different kind of question – asked by expert in Jewish rabbinical law; represented the Pharisees; they did not want Jesus to end on a high, victorious note; thought that his answer would at least bring him into disfavor with some of the people; this scribe was less hostile to Jesus than they were; he may already been willing to acknowledge the teaching ability of Jesus

2. (:29-31) SUMMATION OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY – FOCUSING ON WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT

apekriqh o vlhsouj olti Prwth estin(:Akoue(vlstrahl(kurioj o qeoj hmwh kurioj eij estin(30 kai. agaphseij kurion ton qeon sou ex ollhj thj kardiaj sou kai. ex ollhj thj yuchj sou kai. ex ollhj thj dianoiaj sou kai. ex ollhj thj iscuoj sou 31 deuteqa auqh(vAgaphseij ton plhsion sou wj seauton meizwn toutwn alh entolh. ouk estin

A. Foundation of Obedience is Theology Rooted in Historic Jewish Monotheism

“Jesus answered, ‘The foremost is, Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord.’”

The Unity of Deity

Pres. Tense – keep on hearing, continue to hear and respond

Overlaps with our earlier study of the Demand of Christ related to Hearing – **Listen to Me #6**

Hendriksen: Hebrew: *Shema* -- Deut. 6:4-5 – today, the ancient custom of beginning the synagogue service with the recitation of the Shema is still being observed.

“*Israel*” – no great disconnect between the teaching of Jesus and that of the OT Scriptures the Pharisees claimed to know so well; not overturning Judaism, but coming as the fulfillment to all the promises made to Israel; these religious rulers should have been prepared for the coming of the Messiah; but they did not have ears to hear

Jehovah, the unchanging covenant Lord

Lenski: Yet this Oneness in no way conflicts with the Trinity of God since it is the Oneness of being and not of person. The one God has revealed himself as three persons.

Often Jesus chose to respond to a question with another question; here he is happy to take the opportunity to give a basic theology course – covering the fundamentals of Who God is

Crucial that the one whom we are called to obey is the Supreme Creator and Sustainer of all; the one to whom we all are accountable

B. First Command = How to Love God – **Insights from Dr. Piper – All In**

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

Man’s chief obligation

Rom. 13:9-10; 1 Cor. 13

Guzik:

- It is the first commandment in regard to age. Before Adam and Eve had any other command, they were commanded to love the Lord their God who created them
- It is the first commandment in regard to priority. Every other act of obedience is empty if we do not love God first

Hendriksen: Man must use all these powers *to the full*. Note fourfold “*all . . . all . . . all . . . all*” The point is that God’s wholehearted love must be answered in a halfhearted manner. When God loves, he loves the world; when he gives, he gives his Son, hence himself. . . Surely the response to such love must not be less than that indicated in Rom. 11:33 -36; 1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31; 2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 5:1,2; Col. 3:12-17.

Spurgeon: “We must give the Lord our love, or that love will go somewhere else. We are so created that we must love something or other. If the ever -blessed One does not win our love, the world, the flesh, or the devil will gain it.”

Hiebert: These variations make it clear that there is no intention to give a psychological analysis of human personality; the accumulation of terms underlines the comprehensiveness of the duty of love.

C. Second Command = How to Love your Neighbor (Lev. 19:18)

“The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Hendriksen: *neighbor* = anyone who has been providentially placed in his path for sympathy and help.

Luke 10 passage answers this question of Who is my neighbor? With story of the Good Samaritan

Piper: I say it is overwhelming because it seems to demand that I tear the skin off my body and wrap it around another person so that I feel that I am that other person; and all the longings that I have for my own safety and health and success and happiness I now feel for that other person as though he were me.

It is an absolutely staggering commandment. If this is what it means, then something unbelievably powerful and earthshaking and reconstructing and overturning and upending will have to happen in our souls. Something supernatural. Something well beyond what self-preserving, self-enhancing, self-exalting, self-esteeming, self-advancing human beings like John Piper can do on their own.

Brian Bill: The two commandments are complimentary and are therefore really one – you can’t fulfill one without the other. In fact, after giving the second part, Jesus uses the singular word “commandment” to show that they are really impossible to separate. **1 John 4:21** says, “*And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.*”

D. Supremacy of These Two Commands

“There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Law divided up into 2 tables – those related vertically to our responsibility towards God and those related horizontally to our responsibility to our fellow men; love is the summary of both – comprises all of the law and the prophets

Carr: If all of these things are taken together, it becomes clear that the Lord is telling us to love God with perfect sincerity, the utmost of fervency, with the fullest exercise of an enlightened reason and with the entire energy of our being. This is the spirit of the greatest commandment!

Stedman: We are to solve our problems by responding again and again to God's love. When we start with God's love, then we are ready to turn to our particular problem -- our relationship to our wife, children, neighbor, friend, or boss. Then we are freed to love our neighbor as ourselves. The same process that reached us and won a response from us, we are now to pass on to somebody else. We can show them the same love that we ourselves have received. Our response to God's love makes it possible. If we start with our neighbor, we get so wrapped up with all the hurts, difficulties, and friction that we start responding in the same way they treat us. But when we start with God and we have experienced his love and responded to it with love, then we can pass it along to our neighbor. It never works when we start with "love your neighbor" first, as we always are trying to do. All the social humanities of our day teach us that we ought to love our neighbor and they are right. But if we start there, without loving God first, we find ourselves incapable of loving others.

Silversides: An answer that ought to devastate – Jesus did not go into any of the details of the law or even go into the summary of the Ten Commandments; takes an unexpected tact; no dichotomy between love and law as if love has replaced the law; Christ is quoting here the law of God; Ten commandments tell you how that love should express itself; Love to God is foremost; heart = spring of all thought and action; soul = emotional aspect; mind includes disposition and attitudes; strength = all that we are capable to do; mindless worship is not worship; should be no intellectualism without the feelings engaged; godly action is essential as well; don't try to produce love to our neighbor without foundation of love for God; Why should Christ's answer devastate us? Because we haven't obeyed this. There is no hope of attaining to righteousness by keeping God's commands. If God judges you according to his law, there is no hope for you at all. This is the standard that God expects. The fact that we are sinners does not mean that God has to alter his standards.

3. (:32-33) SUPREMACY OF HEART-ROOTED LOVE OVER EXTERNAL BEHAVIOR (ACTS OF WORSHIP AND DEEDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS)

kai. eipen autw/o grammateuj(Kal wj(didaskale(epl al hqejaj eipej oti eij estin kai. ouk estin al loj plhn autouk 33 kai. to. agapah auton ex o||hj thj kardijaj kai. ex o||hj thj sunesewj kai. ex o||hj thj iscupj kai. to. agapah ton plhsion wj eauton perisso,teron estin pantwn twh ol okautwmatwn kai. qusiwh

A. Approval of the Teaching of Jesus by the Religious Scholar

“And the scribe said to Him, ‘Right, Teacher, You have truly stated that’”

Recognizes Jesus as a Teacher sent from God who proclaims truth

B. Acknowledgement of the Theology Taught by Jesus – repeats teaching to show he has grasped it

1. Embraces Historic Monotheism

“HE IS ONE”

2. Embraces the Uniqueness of God

“AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM”

3. Embraces the Two Commands as set forth by Jesus

“AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF”

Warren Wiersbe points out that Jesus' answer reveals that we are to live “not by rules but by relationships.”

C. Application of the Lesson

“is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. ”

Lenski: he indicates which commandments he had been inclined hitherto to rank as first, namely those regarding sacrifices.

Brian Bill: This man also knew his Bible for he is making an allusion to **1 Samuel 15:22:** “*To obey is better than sacrifice*” and **Hosea 6:6:** “*For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.*”

God not satisfied with external acts of righteousness; the inward heart attitude must be loving and worshipful as well = the whole point of the Sermon on the Mount

Religious activity can never be substituted for the devotion of one's heart

Silversides: A surprising agreement – whole burnt offering = meant to be expressive of thanksgiving; worth nothing apart from love for God; Ps. 51:16 – David realized this

4. (:34) SOVEREIGN MAJESTY OF THE KING OF THE KINGDOM

kai. o Vhsouj idwn Iauton) oti nounecw) apekrigh eipen autw) (Ouvmakran ei=apo. thj basileiaj tou/ qeou) kai. oudeij ouke,ti eto,ma auton eperwthsai

A. Knows the Condition of Man's Heart

“And when Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

There is a huge chasm between being almost in the kingdom and being in the kingdom; Jesus seems to encourage this scribe but challenge him at the same time

Head knowledge will not get you into the kingdom; there must be that commitment

Almost saved is altogether lost!

Lenski: This man was so near to the kingdom because he realized that God required the love that is described in Deuteronomy. If he now went on and realized further that he had not loved God and his neighbor in this perfect way he would come to recognize his sinfulness and bow in contrition before God.

David Hoke: An English minister writes, "When, after safely circum navigating the globe, the Royal Charter went to pieces in Moelfra Bay on the coast of Wales. It was my melancholy duty to seek to comfort the wife of the First Officer, made by that calamity a widow. The ship had been telegraphed from Queenstown and the lady was sitting in the parlor expecting her husband, with the table spread for his evening meal when the messenger came to tell her he was drowned. Never can I forget the grief, so stricken and tearless, with which she wrung my hand as she said 'So near home, and yet lost!' That seemed to me the most terrible of human sorrow. But, ah, that is nothing to the anguish which must wring the soul which is compelled to say at last, 'Once I was at the very gate of heaven and had almost entered in; but now I am in hell!'"

B. Shuts the Mouths of Skeptics and Opponents

"And after that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions."

Elicits response of fear and awe; he was not someone to take lightly; they knew when they had met their match

Silversides: How can any one unregenerate sinner be any nearer to the kingdom than another? He had a better grasp of the truth and the law of God than his colleagues -- Part of the preparatory work of the Holy Spirit prior to regeneration. Not told whether he was ever truly converted. Men can be enlightened and still lost. What about you? Perhaps you have some grasp of the truth? You might even be concerned about your soul.

Constable: It was clear that Jesus' derived His authority from God's Word (cf. 11:28). All the answers He gave went back to the Old Testament. Since this is the authority all the Jewish leaders claimed to follow, though they did not, they failed to discredit Jesus.

II. Additional Teaching of Christ

Luke 11:42 *"Woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."*

John 5:42-43 *"But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him."*

III. Insights from Dr. Piper about Loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength

Jesus came to restore human beings to the kind of relationship with God and each other that we were created for. . . Jesus assumes that loving God means loving him for who he really is, and so his vision of who God is permeates all that he says.

A. LOVING GOD IS BASED ON KNOWING GOD

1. KNOW GOD, AND LOVE HIM FOR ALL THAT HE IS

To love God we must know Him – as Creator, Sustainer, Father; know Him in all of His attributes

2. JESUS: REVELATION OF GOD, LITMUS TEST OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD

Jesus so deeply reveals God that receiving Jesus becomes the test of loving God and having him as our Father. . . denying Him means denying God.

3. "I MADE KNOWN TO THEM YOUR NAME"

Deut. 30:6; we must see God as compellingly beautiful

B. LOVING GOD MUST START WITH THE AFFECTIONS, NOT JUST THE WILL

SEEING AND SAVORING GOD AS COMPELLINGLY BEAUTIFUL

Loving God is not a mere decision. . . Something changes inside you, and as a result he becomes compellingly attractive. His glory – his beauty – compels your admiration and delight.

Love for God is not essentially behavior but affection – not deeds but delight. God's glory becomes our supreme pleasure.

C. PROOF THAT LOVING GOD MUST BE ROOTED IN OUR AFFECTIONS

1. LOVING GOD IS FIRST, LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR IS SECOND

These are different – not the same. The second is secondary and depends on loving God.

2. "THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME"

External actions – even religious ones directed toward him – are not the essence of worship.

3. THE OPPOSITE OF LOVING GOD IS HATING AND DESPISING

Serving God is rooted in loving God = a strong inward emotion. Intense passions

4. AN ADULTEROUS GENERATION SEEKS FOR A SIGN

The love Jesus demands for God is like a faithful wife's love for her husband – not mere external behavior but heartfelt affection and admiration and delight.

D. LOVING GOD MUST BE ALL-ENCOMPASSING, SUPREME AND ENDURING

1. WITH HEART, SOUL, MIND, AND STRENGTH

Every faculty and every capacity of our being should express the fullness of our affection for God.

- *heart* – center of our volitional and emotional life without excluding thought
- *soul* – our life as a whole, though sometimes distinguished from the body
- *mind* – thinking capacity
- *strength* – capacity to make vigorous efforts both bodily and mentally

2. EVERY CAPACITY TREASURES GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS

Every joy that does not have God as the central gladness of the joy is a hollow joy and in the end will burst like a bubble.

3. LET NOT YOUR LOVE GROW COLD

Continue to look steadily at Jesus and pray that he would reveal God as compellingly beautiful.

Demand #10: Rejoice and Leap for Joy

Main Text: Matthew 13:44-46

Memory Verse: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Matt. 13:44

I. Exposition of Primary Text – Matthew 13:44-46

TWO PARABLES EXPRESSING THE GREAT JOY OF POSSESSING THE KINGDOM

BIG IDEA:

REJOICE AND LEAP FOR JOY BECAUSE POSSESSION OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS PRICELESS

INTRODUCTION: Context = parables relating to the kingdom of heaven; Christ turning his attention to his own disciples, having spoken earlier to the entire crowd (13:1);

- Parable of the Soils
- Parable of the Wheat and Tares
- Parable of the Mustard Seed
- Parable of the Leaven

Why did Christ speak to the crowd in parables (13:34)

Switching focus to the disciples in vs. 36

Importance of vs. 43 – *"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* – glorious future to anticipate – Can you get excited about that? Can you rejoice and leap for joy?

1. (:44) PARABLE #1 – UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY OF THE PRICELESS KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BRINGS GREAT JOY (ONCE POSSESSED) AT WHATEVER THE COST

-Omoia estin h basileia twh ouranw qhsaurw/ kekrummenw/ en tw/ agrw(oh eurwn anqrwpoj ekruyen(kai. apo. thj caraj autou/upagei kai. pwlei/panta ofsa ecei kai. agorazei ton agron ekei hona

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field."

A. The Pathway to Possession of the Kingdom = Unexpected Discovery (maybe Gentiles)

- Sovereign Grace at work in Election and Drawing a person to himself; Divine Initiative
 - you are not digging up whole fields looking for treasure; you come upon it unexpectedly
- Examples of unexpected salvation
 - Look at how Jesus called His disciples to Himself – leave everything and follow
 - Thirsty Samaritan woman going about her daily tasks
 - Apostle Paul's conversion on road to Damascus; Phil. 3 – counted all but loss
- Priority of Securing Possession of the kingdom

Practice of hiding valuables in the ground was common; someone could die and only later would someone accidentally stumble upon the riches

Charles Hadden Spurgeon, when he was young, attended church only because he thought it was the right thing to do. He didn't know Christ, and he wasn't seeking Christ. He was content with his religiosity. When he was fifteen years old, he decided he should go to church on New Year's day. There was a bad blizzard that day, and he could not make it to the church he usually attended. Instead, he turned down a court and went to a small Methodist church. The preacher who was supposed to speak that day never made it because of the weather. One of the church officers went forward and conducted the service before the congregation of about fifteen people. According to Spurgeon, the man was very stupid. He kept reading the same text throughout the service because he had nothing else to say: "*Look unto Me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth.*" Then something about young Spurgeon caught the preacher's eye. He said, "Young man, you look very miserable. You will always be miserable in life and miserable in death, unless you obey my text." Then he shouted, "Young man, look to Jesus!" Spurgeon said he looked, and the darkness rolled away and he saw the Son. He hadn't been searching for anything, but it got him anyway. He stumbled upon a fortune. Few people have ever lived and affected as many souls as Charles Hadden Spurgeon. Whoever that stupid man was who kept repeating the text to the church had God working through him.

B. The Priceless Value of the Kingdom = *a treasure*

- Nature of the kingdom – hidden from most

- Value of the kingdom – what do we treasure in this life?
How excited does someone get when they win the lottery?
Imagine an unexpected inheritance of a vast sum of money

Trench: There is but one such pearl, since the truth is one, even as God is one; and the truth possessed brings that unity into the heart of man which sin has destroyed. Only when man has found God does the great Eureka break forth from his lips.

C. The Prospect of Possession Elicits Great Joy and Excitement

- Joy accompanied by suffering before glory

D. The Payment of Any Price is More Than Worth It

- the kingdom must be personally appropriated
- free gift of salvation – not saying that can purchase it with money
- repentance / renunciation / self denial
- faith / commitment

MacArthur: The Nature or Character of the Transaction in view:

Isaiah 55:1 is a great Old Testament passage that talks about salvation by grace. It says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money; come, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." There is a transaction made to purchase salvation, but it's not with money or good works. The transaction is this: You give up all you have for all He has. Let me explain that using scriptures, because I don't want that to be misunderstood.

a. **Luke 9:57-62**

Luke 9:57 says, "And it came to pass that, as they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow Thee wherever Thou goest." The man who came up to Jesus was saying that He wanted to be a follower of Jesus. The Lord said to Him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have

necks, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (v. 58). In other words, "Here's the price for following Me: You give Me your comfort and I'll give you My Kingdom." The man didn't like those terms, and didn't make the transaction. In verse 59, Jesus asked another man to follow Him. The man said, "...Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father" (v. 59). What's interesting there is that the man's father wasn't even dead yet. The man wanted to wait for his inheritance. Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (v. 60). That man didn't want to give up his inheritance, so he didn't make the transaction. Another man, in verse 61, said, "Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, who are at home at my house." Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (v. 62). In other words, "You can't plow a straight furrow while looking in the opposite direction." That man was not willing to give up his family.

b. Matthew 10:37-39

The issue is whether a person is willing to give up everything he has to receive Jesus. The Lord said in Matthew 10:37, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me." If you are not willing to give up something that needs to be given up, such as your family, then you're not going to enter the Kingdom. Continuing on, Jesus said, "And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it" (vv. 38-39). That's the transaction: You give up all that you are and receive all that He is. That's how one receives salvation.

c. Matthew 16:24

In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said to His disciples, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." The basic principle in salvation is that a person gives himself up to make Christ the ruler of his life.

d. Matthew 19:16, 21

In Matthew 19, a rich young ruler came to Jesus and said, "...what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (v. 16). Jesus said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me" (v. 21). Jesus was saying, "If you want My treasure, then give away all of yours." He wasn't saying that if the rich man gave all his money to the poor, he would be saved. A person becomes saved when he is willing to abandon everything he has to affirm that Christ is the Lord of his life. A person must exchange his sin and self-will for Christ's leadership.

2. (:45-46) PARABLE #2 – DILIGENT SEARCH FOR THE PRICELESS KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BRINGS GREAT JOY (ONCE POSSESSED) AT WHATEVER THE COST

Palin omoia estin h basileia twh ouranwh anqrwpw|emporw| zhtouhti kal ouj margari,taj| 46 eurwn de. efa polutimon margari,thn apelqwn pepraken panta oša eieen kai. hgorasen auton|

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, 46 and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

- A. The Pathway to Possession of the Kingdom = Diligent Search (maybe Jews)
 - Sovereign Grace at work

- Examples of seeking after spiritual truth
- Kingdom is not immediately visible

The Pathway is what will differ from person to person ...

Regardless – whatever your pathway to possession – the joy and willingness to renounce all is the same

MacArthur: It is incredible what was involved in pearl hunting. Pearls were found in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. The price to pay in obtaining them was great --many people died from pearl hunting. They did not have the equipment that is available today for pearl diving. Rather, a pearl diver would tie rocks to his body, jump over the side of a little boat, go down into the dangerous waters infested with sharks and other creatures, and scour the mud below for oysters. A pearl diver had to hold his breath during the whole dive, and hope that he wouldn't burst and die.

B. The Priceless Value of the Kingdom = *one pearl of great value*

- Nature of the Kingdom --

- Uniqueness of the Kingdom

- Value of the Kingdom

C. The Prospect of Possession Elicits Great Joy and Excitement

- Joy accompanied by suffering before glory

D. The Payment of Any Price is More Than Worth It

- the kingdom must be personally appropriated

- free gift of salvation

- repentance / renunciation / self denial

- faith / commitment

Augustine says in describing his conversion: How sweet did it at once become to me, to want the sweetness of those toys! And what I feared to be parted from was now a joy to part with.

John Walvoord:

- Israel = the great treasure

- the church = the one pearl of great value

But whose Joy is in view in this passage?

II. Additional Teaching of Christ – What is the focus of Joy and Rejoicing as a Believer

Are we characterized by Joy and Rejoicing?

A lot of people will get awful excited today about football

Luke 6:22-23 “*Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets..*”

Suffering for the sake of Christ brings great joy at the prospect of great eternal reward

Following in the steps of the persecution endured by what OT prophets?

Luke 10:19-20 *“Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*

Priority of rejoicing in salvation over the greatest moments of victory in ministry

John 15:11 *“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”*

Joy focused in union with our Lord Jesus Christ; context of abiding in love of Christ

Remember prayer of Eph 3 that we just studied – being filled up to the fullness of God

III. Insights from Dr. Piper

Quote from C. S. Lewis – “we are far too easily pleased”

The parable means that God’s saving presence and sovereign reign are so valuable that when people see them for what they really are – treasure hidden in the field – they count everything as nothing compared to the vast fortune of being part of that reign.

Jesus is not preaching a health, wealth, and prosperity gospel – one of America’s most lamentable exports to the world. It is joy in God and in his Son.

The power of a superior pleasure

Many Christians think stoicism is a good antidote to sensuality. It isn’t. It is hopelessly weak and ineffective. Willpower religion usually fails, and even when it succeeds, it gets glory for the will, not for God. It produces legalists, not lovers.

The essence of the reward that we count on to complete our joy is the fullness of the presence of Jesus experienced in the age to come. The reason that we can rejoice now is not only that we taste that future fellowship in hope, but also that Jesus is with us now by his Spirit.

S Lewis Johnson

http://www.slj.institute.net/sermons/new%20testament/pages/treasure_pearl_fisherman's_net.html

So, having spoken to the men of sight, as one of the commentators has put it, he now speaks to the men of faith. And I think that the fact that he is now speaking to the believers – the disciples – is evidence to the fact that we may have a parable or two that has to do with them. And I think that is exactly what we do have.

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure is a simple, artless, straightforward story very natural to the land of Palestine. There was a rabbinic saying that the only safe repository for money was the earth. So evidently, it was quite common for men to take their treasures – their coins, their gold, their silver – and put them in the ground for safe-keeping. When the Lord Jesus tells the Parable of the Talents in the 25th chapter of this book, and he speaks about the man of one talent, who received his one talent and hid it, the man answers the Lord when the Lord asks him what he has done with it, he says, “Well, I hid it in the earth.” So it was very common for people to put their money in the earth. Evidently, the banks weren’t a whole sounder then than they are now, so they put their money in the earth.

Alternate Views:

1) It is the opinion of some that the church of the Lord Jesus is the treasure, and that the man who found the treasure is the Lord Jesus himself, and that when the man of the parable sells all that he has and buys that field, that is a picture of the Lord Jesus giving all that he possessed in the sacrifice on the cross for the church of the Lord Jesus.

But how could the church be “found” by the Lord Jesus when she was chosen before the foundation of the world? How could the church be represented as some thing the Lord stumbled over while he was

wandering through a field?

2) Still others say, no, the church is not the treasure, Israel the Nation is the treasure, because does not the Old Testament say that in the beginning of Israel's history "A peculiar treasure will I make of Thee unto me?"—

What he is doing is giving us things that have to do with the gathering of the sons of the kingdom during this present age, in order that they may enter that glorious Messianic kingdom of the future.

3) Others have said the kingdom is the treasure and Jesus is the man finding it and giving himself for it. The discovery is a surprise to the man. I don't think that this is a fit picture of the Lord Jesus.

* * * * *

Now if that is true, if the kingdom is the treasure and the man who stumbles over it is the man who comes to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and appropriates the blessings of the kingdom himself, then these points are made. First of all, the kingdom is something of great value, but men may fail to see it by virtue of blindness. Now we know that that is true. The kingdom is something of great value. To possess the life of the kingdom is great. To possess the life of the kingdom and live in that future Messianic kingdom is something that is surely great, and it is held out as future for the believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is another thing that this parable would seem, then, to teach, that there is such a thing as a decision involving a forsaking of all self-reliance. When the Apostle Paul speaks about his own conversion in that same passage of Philippians chapter 3, he describes the decision that he made as one of self-renunciation. Listen to what he says, "But what things were gain to me those I counted lost for Christ. Yea, doubtless and I count all things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but refuse that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the Lord, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which of God by faith."

Let me ask you another question. What's your pearl? What's your pearl of great price? Is it success in your business? Have you been so exercised to become a tremendous success in your business that your relationship to the Lord Jesus has suffered? Is it position for your family? Have you been so involved in gaining position for your family in the social world that your relationship to the Lord Jesus has suffered? Is it simply the pleasures of life? Are you so occupied in the pleasures of life, possessed in good health, not realizing that good health can flee in a moment? And have you so involved yourself in that that your relationship to the Lord Jesus is secondary?

The kingdom is the loveliest of possessions. There is no pearl like the relationship to the Lord Jesus. And I say to you young people, too, there is no possession like a relationship to Jesus Christ. There is no relationship that can compare to it. There is no pursuit of life that can compare with the pursuit of the relationship to Jesus Christ.

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IV. Insights from Lamentations 1:1

This passage should remind us of the riches we enjoy in union with our Lord Jesus Christ. The heart of the OT prophet was broken as he surveyed the landscape of the devastated former capital of the City of God. Certainly our fellowship within our local church should provide the stimulus to keep us on a path of spiritual joy rather than despairing in spiritual grief.

1. CONTRAST #1: LONELINESS VS COMMUNITY

*"How lonely sits the city
That was full of people!"*

A. Disadvantages of Loneliness

- Unnatural for a city to be empty and deserted and by itself – forsaken by all

- Painful Memories of former times of companionship now forfeited
- Subject to further decay and deterioration

(see other sermon outlines below on subject of loneliness)

B. Advantages of Community

- Life and activity should characterize a city rather than death and silence
- Possibility for growth and stimulus
- Full of hope and promise for the future

Yet God is able to gather the lonely under His wing and provide all of their emotional needs as the one who knows them the best.

If you are lonely, come to the Lord Jesus Christ today.

John 14:3 *“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”*

2. CONTRAST #2: HELPLESSNESS VS GREATNESS

“She has become like a widow

Who was once great among the nations!”

A. Disadvantages of Widows:

- Dependent on others for financial support
- Bereft of companionship
- No possibility of offspring

Yet God is able to be the companion and the sustainer of widow and even provide joy in the midst of their grief.

B. Advantages of Greatness:

- Self-sufficient
- Honored among the nations
- Powerful and prestigious
- Source of blessing for surrounding Gentile nations; a light and a witness

If you are helpless, come to the Lord Jesus Christ today.

Psalm 146:9 *“The Lord protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, but He thwarts the way of the wicked.”*

3. CONTRAST #3: SLAVE VS ROYALTY

“She who was a princess among the provinces

Has become a forced laborer!”

A. Advantages of Royalty

- Wealthy
- In Control

- Lives in Comfort
- Freedom

B. Disadvantages of a Slave

- Impoverished
- Dominated by others – the nation of Israel sent off into captivity
- Consigned to hard labor in Babylon – remember the former days in Egypt
- Bondage

Yet God is able to turn slavery into an opportunity to serve Him and look to Him for our ultimate reward and inheritance.

If you are in bondage, come to the Lord Jesus Christ today.

John 8:36 *“If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”*

Matt. 11: 28 *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”*

So whatever our circumstances, we should look to the Lord for the fullness of joy. He is our portion and all that we need.

Rejoice . . . Leap for Joy

Demand #11: Fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell

Main Text: Matthew 10:28

Memory Verse: "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.."

Matt. 10:28

I. Exposition of Primary Text – Matthew 10:28 (Luke 12:4-5)

INTRODUCTION: Context = Anticipating Persecution

Why shouldn't the disciples fear man and fear the upcoming persecution?

Why shouldn't they shrink back from their huge task of confronting a wicked world with the gospel of repentance and faith as essential for new life in Christ and escape from hell?

(:26-33) Given Our Mission -- 4 Reasons Not to Shrink Back in Fear Because of Persecution:

1) (:26-27) Truth Will Triumph Over Hypocrisy Because God Exposes Hypocrites While He Commands Our Mission of Proclaiming Truth

A. (:26) Hypocrites (like the self righteous, religious Pharisees) will be Unmasked

B. (:27) God's Truth Must be Proclaimed Openly and Boldly

2) (:28) We Must Fear God Rather than Man Because God Can Do the Greatest Damage

3) (:29-31) God's Providential Care Extends to all of the Details of Our Lives Because We are Precious to Him

4) (:32-33) Open Confession of Christ as Lord Guarantees Eternal Acceptance by God

Are you more concerned with pleasing men or God?

Damage Assessment – Hurricane coverage all about anticipating and then trying to document the damage inflicted

We face all sorts of **fears** that can paralyze us and keep us from obeying God and walking by faith. Emphasis in this context is fears related to proclaiming the gospel – as we face rejection and opposition and ridicule ...

FEAR GOD RATHER THAN MAN BECAUSE GOD IS THE SUPREME LORD OF ALL --

(:28) TWO CONTRASTING COMMANDS WITH SUPPORTING RATIONALE:

1. DON'T FEAR MAN – BECAUSE THE DAMAGE HE CAN INFLICT IS LIMITED

kai. mh. fobei'sqe apo. twh apoktennontwn to. swma(thn de. yuchn mh. dunamenwn apoktei'hai\

A. Negative Command – Don't Fear Man

1. What do we mean by Fearing Man?

Fear of man is appropriate for the animal kingdom; **Gen. 9:2** --"And the **fear** of you and the terror of you shall be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given."

Fear of man does not take into account God's final judgment and vindication and vengeance : **Isaiah 35:4** "Say to those with anxious heart, 'Take courage, **fear** not. Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.'"

2. Why do we Fear Man?

Why shouldn't we Fear Man?

Associated with rebellion; lack of faith in God's presence with us and ability to protect us:

Numbers 14:9 "Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not **fear** the people of the land, for they shall be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not **fear** them."

We mistake numbers for strength: **Numbers 22:3** "So Moab was in great **fear** because of the people, for they were numerous;" **2 Kings 6:16** "So he answered, 'Do not **fear**, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.'" **2 Chronicles 32:7** "Be strong and courageous, do not **fear** or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of all the multitude which is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him."

We forget how great and awesome God is: **Nehemiah 4:14** "When I saw *their fear*, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people: 'Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.'"

We overlook the protection we have from God --**Psalm 27:1** {A *Psalm* of David.} "The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I **fear**? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?" **Psalm 118:6** "The LORD is for me; I will not **fear**; What can man do to me?"

We forget the presence of God with us : **Isaiah 41:10** "Do not **fear**, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

We forget we are the Lord's precious possession, having created and redeemed us: **Isaiah 43:1** "But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, 'Do not **fear**, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!'" **Isaiah 44:2** "Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, 'Do not **fear**, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.'"

We need to value righteousness and the verdict of God over the reproach of men : **Isaiah 51:7** "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, A people in whose heart is My law; Do not **fear** the reproach of man, Neither be dismayed at their revilings."

Don't want to be embarrassed or humiliated or put to shame : **Isaiah 54:4** "**Fear** not, for you will not be put to shame; Neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; But you will forget the shame of your youth, And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more."

Because they try to intimidate us : **1 Peter 3:14** "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you are* blessed. AND DO NOT **FEAR** THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED"

3. What are some of the Negative Consequences of Fearing Man?

We show partiality in judgment: **Deuteronomy 1:17** 'You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not **fear** man, for the judgment is God's."

Associated with Discouragement: **Deuteronomy 1:21** 'See, the LORD your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not **fear** or be dismayed."

Makes us ineffective in battle : **Deuteronomy 2:25** "This day I will begin to put the dread and **fear** of you upon the peoples everywhere under the heavens, who, when they hear the report of you, shall tremble and be in anguish because of you."

Paralyzes us from walking by faith: **Joshua 14:8** "Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with **fear**; but I followed the LORD my God fully."

Trips us up : **Proverbs 29:25** "The **fear** of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted."

B. Supporting Rationale – The damage he can inflict is limited – Because Man is Not the Supreme Authority

C. KEY: Value the Soul More Than the Body

2. FEAR GOD – BECAUSE THE DAMAGE HE CAN INFLICT IS UNLIMITED

fobeiſqe de. mal lon ton dunamenon kai. yuchn kai. swma apolesai en geennh

A. Positive Command – Fear God

1. What do we mean by Fearing God?

Associated with worship of God as the unique Supreme Being: **Deuteronomy 6:13** "You shall **fear** *only* the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name."
Psalms 22:23 "You who **fear** the LORD, praise Him; All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel."

Involves worshiping God for all of His attributes: **Deuteronomy 28:58** "If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to **fear** this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God"

Fundamental obligation of God's creatures: **Deuteronomy 10:12** "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to **fear** the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul"

Involves clinging to God; not running away from God: **Deuteronomy 10:20** "You shall **fear** the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name."

Of eternal worth: **Psalms 19:9** "The **fear** of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;"

Involves listening to the voice of God: **Deuteronomy 13:4** "You shall follow the LORD your God and **fear** Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him."

Demonstrated by obedience to the most difficult commands: **Genesis 22:12** "And he said, 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you **fear** God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'" **Ecclesiastes 12:13** "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: **fear** God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to every person.*"

Learning about God from His Word encourages fear of God : **Deuteronomy 4:10** "*Remember* the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to **fear** Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'"

Characterizes a man of integrity: **Genesis 42:18** "Now Joseph said to them on the third day, 'Do this and live, for I **fear** God:'"

Associated with other godly traits: **Exodus 18:21** "Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who **fear** God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain;"

The prerequisite to abandoning idolatry: **Joshua 24:14** "Now, therefore, **fear** the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."

Involves hating evil -- **Proverbs 8:13** "The **fear** of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate."

2. Why should we Fear God?

Keeps us from sinning: **Exodus 20:20** "And Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the **fear** of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.'"

Prevents us from taking advantage of others: **Leviticus 25:17** "So you shall not wrong one another, but you shall **fear** your God; for I am the LORD your God."

Because the hand of the Lord is mighty: **Joshua 4:24** "that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may **fear** the LORD your God forever. "

Ultimate victory comes from the hand of God: **Joshua 10:25** "Joshua then said to them, 'Do not **fear** or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies with whom you fight.'"

Because of His past faithfulness and consistency in doing such great things for us and providing for our needs: **1 Samuel 12:24** "Only **fear** the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you." **Jeremiah 5:24** "They do not say in

their heart, 'Let us now **fear** the LORD our God, Who gives rain in its season, Both the autumn rain and the spring rain, Who keeps for us The appointed weeks of the harvest.'

Enables us to exercise delegated authority in a righteous manner: **2 Samuel 23:3** "The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me, 'He who rules over men righteously, Who rules in the **fear** of God"

So we do not incur the Lord's wrath and the execution of his judgment: **2 Kings 17:25** "And it came about at the beginning of their living there, that they did not **fear** the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them which killed some of them." **Psalms 90:11** "Who understands the power of Thine anger, And Thy fury, according to the **fear** that is due Thee?"

Because of His holiness: **Isaiah 8:13** "It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your **fear**, And He shall be your dread." **Revelation 15:4** "Who shall not **fear** thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou* only *art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

Because of the awesome wonders of His creation: **Jeremiah 5:22** "Do you not **fear** Me?" declares the LORD. 'Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it.'" **Jonah 1:9** "And he said to them, 'I am a Hebrew, and I **fear** the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land."

Key to us remaining loyal to God: **Jeremiah 32:40** "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the **fear** of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me."

Because His kingdom endures forever: **Daniel 6:26** "I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to **fear** and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion *will be* forever."

3. What are some of the Blessings from Fearing God?

Restrains wickedness: **Genesis 20:11** "And Abraham said, 'Because I thought, surely there is no **fear** of God in this place; and they will kill me because of my wife.'"

Pathway of wisdom: **Job 28:28** "And to man He said, 'Behold, the **fear** of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.'" **Isaiah 11:2** And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the **fear** of the LORD."

God fights our battles: **Deuteronomy 3:22** "Do not **fear** them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you."

Protection and Deliverance and Rescue: **Psalm 34:7** “The angel of the LORD encamps around those who **fear** Him, And rescues them.”

Prosperity and general blessing on you and the next generation: **Deuteronomy 5:29** “Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would **fear** Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!” **Psalm 34:9** “O **fear** the LORD, you His saints; For to those who **fear** Him, there is no want.” **Psalm 147:11** “The LORD favors those who **fear** Him, Those who wait for His lovingkindness.”

Strong confidence: **Proverbs 14:26** “In the **fear** of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge.”

Long life: **Deuteronomy 6:2** “so that you and your son and your grandson might **fear** the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.”

Survival: **Deuteronomy 6:24** “So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to **fear** the LORD our God for our good always and for our survival, as *it is* today.”

Increased revelation and understanding of God’s program and promises: **Psalm 25:14** “The secret of the LORD is for those who **fear** Him, And He will make them know His covenant.”

Experience all of God’s Goodness and Lovingkindness: **Psalm 31:19** “How great is Thy goodness, Which Thou hast stored up for those who **fear** Thee, Which Thou hast wrought for those who take refuge in Thee, Before the sons of men!” **Psalm 33:18** “Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who **fear** Him, On those who hope for His lovingkindness” **Psalm 103:11** “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who **fear** Him.”

Experience the Lord’s Compassion: **Psalm 103:13** “Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who **fear** Him.”

Contentment -- **Proverbs 15:16** “Better is a little with the **fear** of the LORD, Than great treasure and turmoil with it.”

Proverbs 22:4 “The reward of humility *and* the **fear** of the LORD Are riches, honor and life.”

B. Supporting Rationale – The damage he can inflict is unlimited – Because He is the Supreme Authority

Hendriksen: The word “*destroy*” is used here in the sense not of annihilation but of the infliction of everlasting punishment upon a person.

Grudem: Those who deny eternal conscious punishment often advocate “annihilationism,” a teaching that, after the wicked have suffered the penalty of God’s wrath for a time, God will “annihilate” them so that they no longer exist. . . . The punishment will therefore be “conscious” but it will not be “eternal.”

In Phil. 3:19 and 2 Peter 3:7, the term for “*destruction*” is *apoleia*, which is the same word used by the disciples in Matt. 26:8 to speak of the “*waste*” (in their view) of the ointment that had just been poured on Jesus’ head. Now the ointment did not cease to exist; it was very evident on Jesus’ head. But it had been “*destroyed*” in the sense that it was no longer able to be used on someone else, or sold. In 1 Thess. 5:3 and 2 Thess. 1:9 another word, *olethros*, is used of the destruction of the wicked, but again this word does not imply that something will cease to exist, for it is used in 1 Cor. 5:5 of delivering a man to Satan (putting him out of the church) for the destruction of the flesh – but certainly his flesh did not cease to exist when he was put out of the church, even though he may have suffered in his body (this would be true whether we take “*flesh*” to mean his physical body or his sinful nature).

C. KEY: Understand the awful reality of Hell

Hope Bible Church – What We Teach: The Judgment of the Lost --

1. Satan and his angels will be thrown into the Lake of Fire and brimstone to be tormented forever and ever, whereupon Christ, Who is the judge of all men, will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne judgment. [Matthew 25:41; John 5:22; Revelation 20:10]
3. The resurrection of the unsaved dead will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the Lake of Fire in varying degrees of torment according to their works. [Matthew 24:41; Romans 14:10-13; Revelation 20:11-15]

TRANSITION : - “*fiery furnace*” – where law-breakers will be thrown at the end of the age when he returns; another reference to “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (**Matt. 13:41-42**)

- Story of Fiery furnace in Daniel chapter 3

II. Illustration from Daniel 3 -- Fear God Rather Than Man

THE GOD WHO IS SUPREME IN SAVING POWER DESERVES OUR UNSWERVING LOYALTY DESPITE THE PRESSURE OF INTENSE PERSECUTION

Background:

Daniel and his friends were in a pagan environment that was hostile towards the worship of the true God. They faced the dilemma of remaining faithful to God's revealed will while trying to submit to the God-ordained authority of King Nebuchad. When there was a conflict between these two objectives, sometimes a creative alternative will do the trick (cf. Daniel 1), but at other times the choice is plain: Remain loyal and be willing to pay the price (recognizing God's ability to deliver if He chooses) or compromise to protect yourself.

Choice: Fear Man (who has power to only inflict limited damage) **or Fear God**
Comes down to an issue of Idolatry; whose authority do we recognize as ultimate?

1. IDOLATRY CHALLENGES THE SUPREMACY OF GOD (:1-12)

Neb's image of gold

Key Question = Who has the supreme authority?

This attack against God's Supremacy comes from 3 areas:

A. (:1-6) Proud Men in Positions of Power -- They Challenge God's Authority and Standards, Promote Idolatry, and Threaten Persecution

1. (:1-3) Motivated by Pride they seek to exalt themselves thru impressive, outward displays of Supremacy

Neb. went to a lot of trouble and expense to build this image.

The image was spectacular (90 feet high by 9 feet, probably overlaid with gold).

The setting was impressive -- "*on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon*" -- no fear of God; a blatant challenge

The dedication ceremony was impressive:

- important people in attendance
- appropriate pomp and ceremony

2. (:4-5) Misrepresenting their God-given authority as absolute, intrinsic authority

The image had both political and religious significance

Commanding worship

3. (:6) Abusing their power – look at the penalty for defying the king's order

B. (:7) The Masses Promote Idolatry By the Pressure of Conformity

- great music to help people respond on the basis of the emotional mood rather than truth
- a fiery furnace to frighten the fence sitters into compliance
- Tremendous peer pressure

C. (:8-12) The Enemies of God's People Make Every Effort to Enforce Idolatry

- Chaldeans with a desire to get ahead
- Satan is the accuser of the people of God and uses whatever means he can to take the offensive and promote worldliness and idolatry.
- Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego targeted for non-compliance; king needs to make an example of them; the audacity that anyone should defy the order of the king

2. THE SUPREMACY OF GOD DESERVES UNSWERVING LOYALTY REGARDLESS OF THE COST (:13-23)

A. The Loyalty of Men of Faith (in God's Supremacy) Bothers Men of Pride (in Their Own Supremacy)

1. Proud men are angry when their supremacy is opposed
 - Neb. had so many servants under him, but could not control his own spirit.
 - cf. anger of church leaders when opposed in various contexts
2. Proud men are mystified when confronted with faith
 - Neb. had gone to great lengths to organize this event; had prepared for the possibility of non-compliance, but didn't really expect it.
 - Satan, the tempter, is quick to give us a second chance and a third ... to see if we will deny the Lord.
 - Neb. left the door open for them to **rationalize** their surrender to the king's threats:
 - a. after all he is the king and he has been good to us
 - b. what's the big deal; why cause any trouble or make waves?
 - c. it's only this one time
 - d. we can bow down outwardly, but not really mean it in our hearts
 - e. what good will it do God if His only testimony gets snuffed out in the fiery furnace (the end justifies the means)
3. Proud men are arrogant about their own power and skeptical about the power of God

- Blind to the spiritual realm
- Could not imagine how he could lose this confrontation
- Could not see the Lord's hosts

B. (:16-18) Idolatry Should Never Be An Option for Those Who Understand the Supremacy of God

1. The issue is cut and dried
2. There should be no doubt about God's Ability to Save
3. Loyalty is Man's Obligation
4. Deliverance is God's Option
 - very important that we not try to dictate terms to God or condition our loyalty on any factor other than the Person of God
 - We need a vision for the supremacy and majesty of God; our God is too small
 - Why do empty things, the things of this world, hold any attraction for us?

C. (:19-23) The Price of Loyalty May Be Intense Persecution

fiery furnace -- the external circumstances looked hopeless:

1. the wrath of the king -- he has lost control; you can't reason with him
2. the temperature of the furnace
3. the assistance of the valiant warriors
4. the helplessness of being tied up/immobile

picture of submission to the will of God (not putting up any fight)

you don't always come out of the fire alive (Heb. 11:36 -38)

Philippians 3:10 "*the fellowship of His sufferings*"

3. THE SUPREME GOD IS ABLE TO SAVE HIS SERVANTS (:24 – 4:3)

Key question: Who is the supreme deliverer? What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?

- A. (:24-25) The Living God Can Manifest His Presence in the Fiery Furnace
- B. (:26-27) The Supreme God Can Deliver His Servants Out From the Trial
- C. (:28) God Can Glorify Himself as "*the Most High God*"
- D. (:29 – 4:3) The Resulting Environment Can Be Made More Secure for Future Worship

III. Insights from Dr. Piper – Descriptions Jesus uses for Hell

- “outer darkness” where there will be “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Matt. 8:12)

- intensity of misery
- look at blessings associated with life and fears associated with darkness

- “*the hell of fire*” – (Matt. 5:22)

- “*eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41)
 - look at the type of characters that are going to end up in hell
- “*unquenchable fire*” (Mark 9:43)
- “*eternal punishment*” (Matt. 25:46)
 - contrasted with eternal life
 - never-ending experience of misery under God’s wrath (John 3:36; 5:24)

IV. Additional Teaching on Hell – Luke 12:4-5 parallel passage

MacArthur: Message on Hell – Resolve 2008 Conference

If Jesus visited the largest church and just had one message to give, what would it be about? He chose to talk about Hell to the most religious people – One great message to a massive crowd; Pharisees at the core of that crowd ; Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy; you had better escape the religion you are a part of or you will end up in hell; people OK for a hell for some reprobates ... but not for the common Joe; most people in hell will have been very religious; The illusion: I am a good person; God will never send me to hell; that is what is behind this text; they believed in the Scriptures of the OT; they believed in a coming Messiah, etc.; apostate Judaism under attack by Jesus

Multitude stepping on one another (v.1); some honest learners in the midst of the crowd; would classify themselves as disciples; they are in process; some are true believers; others are considering the claims of Christ; following Him and listening to Him; have not yet rejected Him; called “my friends” in vs. 4; they are only a minority – true believers would be a very small amount (little flock); He particularly addresses his words to that group

Leaven is permeating influence; deadly; you have got to escape from your false religion; false religion provides a damning perception that sin doesn’t provide; warns against religion that sends to hell; ceremonies and ritual on the outside; corruption on the inside

You need to be motivated to abandon your false religion; what will motivate you? God will uncover the truth; no one escapes exposure; hypocrites know they are hypocrites; you know whether your salvation is real or superficial; you will get exposed; unmasked

3 Reasons to Fear God:

- 1) God will unmask hypocrites
- 2) God will send hypocrites to hell
- 3) God knows everything; no one will escape

God knows every detail of your life; doesn’t have to count; it exists; He knows it; He knows whose is his and whose is not; that is frightening news to the hypocrite ; you are not going to fool him

Fear of man is at the heart of hypocrisy; want to be accepted in a certain group

Worst case scenario is death; people feared death; they cannot determine your eternal destiny; Satan is not the one – can take no life except under the sovereign allowance and purpose of God; cannot cast anyone into hell; he will end up there

Gehenna – Jews worshipped idols there; south and west of Jerusalem; place of spitting; abhorrence; place of burning; turned into city dump; always smoldered and burned; perfect image of hell; abomination, judgment, slaughter

Have you made a true, open confession of Jesus Christ

John McCain asked about his faith: he would not answer because it was a very private thing??

That's hypocrisy in most cases

Rom. 10:9-10

A Christless Judaism is no different than any other form of unbelief

You will never be confessed by God as one of His own before angels until you have confessed Jesus openly as Lord

Chap. 13 :1 same day, same place; same event – Jesus continuing the long message

Some reported to Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices; a lot going on while Christ was teaching; clincher to this great message; someone brings up a recent event; dramatic scene; what precipitated this? Anti-Roman insurrectionists – Pilate was commander-in-chief of Roman military presence – primarily had ascended ladder of military achievement; soldier; admin ability; responsible for collection of taxes as well; a man who had spilled blood his whole life; vivid and public and unforgettable execution to send message to the Jews

Every fruitless life is living on borrowed time; you must repent and believe; you do not know when death is coming and then it will be too late – vineyard producing nothing; cut it down; it is useless; why should it even take up the ground space; patience of God

Hell is real

* * * * *

V. Hendriksen on Man's Twofold Nature

Nowhere does Scripture teach that man is composed of three parts. Read Gen. 2:7, and you will notice that in the story of man's creation his twofold nature is clearly asserted. A long list of passages could be given to indicate that the inspired authors of the Bible were dichotomists. The list would include such passages as Eccl. 12:7; Matt. 10:28; Rom. 8:10; 1 Cor. 5:5; 7:34; Col. 2:5; and Heb. 12:9. There is only one immaterial and invisible element, though at least two names are given to it. Now, it is true that when the Bible is referring to that immaterial element in its relation to the body, to bodily processes and sensations, and in fact to this entire earthly life, with its feelings, affections, likes and dislikes, it generally employs the term *soul (psuche)*; for example, "The Jews stirred up the *souls* of the Gentiles" (Acts 14:2). It is also true that when reference is to the same immaterial element considered as the object of God's grace and as the subject of worship, the term *spirit (pneuma)* is used most frequently (always in Paul when that meaning is intended); for example, "My *spirit* prays" (1 Cor. 14:14). But the matter is by no means as simple as that. In several instances the two terms *soul* and *spirit* are used interchangeably, with no (or very slight) difference in connotation. Let me give one clear example. It is Luke 1:46, 47: "My *soul (psuche)* magnifies the Lord, and my *spirit (pneuma)* rejoices in God my Savior."

The conclusion therefore is this: When you are talking about man's invisible and immaterial element, you have a perfect right to call it either soul or spirit.

Hope Bible Church – What We Teach:

Man is a two part being having both a material part (body) and an immaterial part (soul or spirit). The spirit, soul, heart, mind, and conscience of man are not separate parts of man but are different aspects of the one immaterial part of man. [Genesis 2:7; Matthew 10:28; 26:41; Luke 23:46; compare Acts 7:59 with Revelation 6:9; 1 Corinthians 2:11; 6:20; James 2:26]

Demand #12: Worship God in Spirit and Truth

Main Text: John 4:20-24

*Memory Verse: "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
John 4:24*

I. Exposition of Primary Text – John 4:20-24

INTRODUCTION:

"It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'" With these words of conviction from the heart of the Old Testament law the Lord Jesus, the perfect man, repulsed the temptation of Satan. Because of Who He is, God both merits and demands the worship of men. His character has not changed and He remains today a jealous God with respect to worship. Thus there has been a continuity throughout all of human history with respect to the worship of the one true God.

"God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." With these words of instruction to the Samaritan woman the Messiah, the Son of God, inaugurated a new era in man's worship. The promised Messiah has arrived. As Immanuel, God now dwells among men on earth during this special hour of human history. Thus this new teaching of Jesus in John 4:20-24 concerning worship must be understood in the light of progressive revelation.

WHAT TYPE OF WORSHIP PLEASES GOD?

3 KEY CRITERIA TO DISTINGUISH GENUINE WORSHIP FROM FALSE WORSHIP:

(:20-21) The Realm of Worship – The Priority Must Not be on the Physical Realm

A. Wrong Orientation: Plea for Clarification Regarding the Proper Physical Location

"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Background regarding the **Samaritans** :

1) Their Origin

2 Kings 17:24, 41 reference – most of the Israelites were carried off into captivity by the Assyrians. The king of Assyria then brought in foreigners from Babylon and surrounding areas to repopulate the land. These pagans intermarried with some of the lower class Israelites who had remained behind in the land. The resulting race of half breeds became known as Samaritans.

2) Their Worship System

The Samaritans had set up a system of worship on their own initiative apart from the OT mandates, although maintaining a very close affinity to Jewish theology. Their worship was characterized by human reason and spiritual ignorance. They accepted the five books of Moses but even altered portions of these to support their religious system. The most blatant substitution was made in Deut. 27:4 where **Mt. Gerizim** was inserted in place of **Mt. Ebal**. There was a lot of jealousy and enmity between the Samaritans and their Jewish neighbors. They built a rival temple; inaugurated a rival priesthood.

Debating the wrong question

The Lord is seeking to awaken a spiritual thirst in the woman by directing her attention to her immoral life. Her conscience is pricked by the Lord's exposure of her history of divorces and she comes to the realization that Christ is manifestly a prophet. At this point she redirects the conversation to the controversial topic of the God-ordained place of worship.

B. Reorientation: Switching the Focus away from the Physical Realm to the Person of Christ

“Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.”

The realm which we cannot see is more important than the realm which we can see
Cf. Pastor Leake’s teaching on Ephes 6 on Wed night – what are we wrestling against?

True worship cannot have any intrinsic, eternal limitation to a particular geographic locality since at some future point in time worship will definitely not be limited to either Mt. Gerizim or Jerusalem.

Def. of worship: the English word has the connotation of “*worship*” – to regard with extreme respect or devotion; to adore; to honor or revere as a supernatural being
(word study below)

Man is ideally suited to worship the Creator by virtue of having been created in the image of God

(:22) The Object of Worship --The Central Focus of Worship Must be the Promised Messiah who Reveals God and His Program of Salvation

“You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”

A. Ignorance / Sincerity / Enthusiasm is No Excuse
Rom. 10:1

B. Importance of the Judaic Historical Roots of Christianity

Only one mediator between God and man = the man Christ Jesus

(:23-24) The Nature of Worship = “*in spirit and truth*” – Genuine Worship Comes from a Spirit Energized by the Spirit of God and is in Accordance with the Truth (especially the truth about Who God is and How to approach God as Revealed in Christ)

A. Time Reference – inaugurating new era of worship
“But an hour is coming, and now is”
significance of First Coming of Christ
eschatological focus as well directed towards Second Coming

Progressive Revelation: OT saints could not worship “*in spirit and truth*” in the same sense as believers since Christ. Both the specific time indicators in the context (“*an hour is coming and now is*”) and the unique Christological focus of John 4:23 -24 point to the climactic institution of new guidelines for worship. The present application of these guidelines in the Church Age is preparatory for the eschatological fulfillment of such worship.

Transition; Jewish worship had been largely ceremonial with types and shadows that pointed to Jesus Christ; time of transition – Christ’s death on the cross and the rending of the veil in the temple climax the transition from the former system to God’s new requirement; the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers begins at Pentecost; and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD is God’s seal on the finality of this transition. But still looking forward to the eschatological

consummation.

B. Nature of Worship Defined

1. Not bowing down in some physical locality limited by a temple structure

Word study of *proskuneo* – from *pros*, towards, and *kuneo*, to kiss – used of act of homage or reverence towards God – such worship is never disassociated from the **physical act of bowing down**, and demands the visible presence of the object of one's worship. The word seems to be avoided in the NT when the emphasis is on the present Church Age. Christ stresses the intrinsic nature of worship which is not limited to bowing down in a particular locality

In its classical and extra-Biblical usage the word came to denote “the act of prostrating oneself before one who is, who claims to be, or who is regarded as being (greatly) one's superior.” While the physical act is most prominent, there are many verses which prove that a heart attitude of submission and reverence (when God is in view) accompanied the act itself (cf. Gen. 27:29; Ex. 12:27).

Look at the NT pattern of distribution of word usage:

Gospels:	29 times
Acts:	4 times
1 Cor	1 time (unbeliever coming into the assembly)
Hebrews	2 times (OT quotations)
Rev	24 times

Thus Gospels and Rev account for 53 of the 60 usages

The word is never disassociated from the physical act of bowing down; never used of worship offered during the church age – demands visible majesty before which the worshipper bows

Illustration: if Shakespeare entered we should all rise; if Christ appeared, we must kneel.

Christ's teaching stresses the intrinsic, eternal nature of genuine worship which is not limited to the display of a particular physical gesture in a particular locality

2. “*in spirit*” = in the realm of our spirit as energized by the Spirit of God impossible for non-believers – no worship apart from the new birth opposite of insincere or mere intellectual worship

Key: man looks on the external, but God looks at the heart

Possible views:

- **Holy Spirit worship** – by means of the Holy Spirit; in the realm of the Holy Spirit

- **Heart Worship** – emphasis in on the intensity and sincerity of worship

- **Inward Worship** – sphere of worship rather than intensity of worship is emphasized

But this view does not go far enough .. God is not just immaterial and not confined to any physical body – The life-giving, creative power of God operates upon man, taking the initiative and enabling man to worship God

- **My view**: worship in spirit refers to the immaterial part of man that has been acted upon by the Spirit of God, regenerated, and given the capability of worshipping God in the realm of this regenerated spirit. This view stresses God's sovereignty in enabling man to worship Him. It is

evident from the NT that only the regenerate can offer worship and spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable and well-pleasing to the Father. Just as “*no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:3), so it is impossible to function as a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9) apart from regeneration.

3. “*in truth*” = in accordance with God’s revelation

Worship in truth is worship in accordance with reality based on God’s revelation, with Jesus Christ being the culmination of that revelation and the personal embodiment of reality. Before the Incarnation there could be no such worship in truth to that degree – importance of Progressive Revelation

Jesus is The Truth
John 1:14, 17; Heb. 1

John Murray: The true in the usage of John is not so much the true in contrast with the false, or the real in contrast with the fictitious. It is the absolute as contrasted with the relative, the ultimate as contrasted with the derived, the eternal as contrasted with the temporal, the permanent as contrasted with the temporary, the complete in contrast with the partial.

C. Nature of Worship Significant to God

1. Desires “*true worshipers*”
2. Desires Worship directed towards the “*Father*”
3. Recruits such Worshipers
“*for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers*”

D. Nature of Worship Consistent with the Character of God

“*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*”

Spirit must not be limited to a contrast with the material, visible realm. The emphasis is on the inherent power of God and His life-giving activity. God must enable men to worship Him or such communion is impossible.

John Morris: In view of the references to living water (which symbolizes the life-giving Spirit) in the context it is probable that this verse contains an allusion to the **life-giving activity of God**. This is all the more likely in that when the Old Testament refers to the Spirit of God the usual idea is that of divine activity, not of opposition to things material. John not infrequently combines the ideas of Spirit and life (cf. 6:63). God is a living God. Since He is ceaselessly active as the life-giving Spirit He must be worshipped in a manner befitting such a Spirit. Man cannot dictate the “how” or the “where” of worship. He must come only in the way that the Spirit of God opens to him.

Piper: When Jesus says in v. 23, “*True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,*” some take him to mean “in the Holy Spirit.” I’ve taken him to mean that worship must come from your spirit within instead of being merely formal and external. But in John 3:6 Jesus connects God’s Spirit and our spirit in a remarkable way. He says, “*That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*” In other words, until the Holy Spirit touches our spirit with the flame of life our spirit is so dead it does

not even qualify as spirit. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. So when Jesus says that true worshippers worship in spirit he must mean that true worship only comes from spirits that are made alive and sensitive and vital by the touch of the Holy Spirit.

II. Implications from this Passage – What Type of Worship Impresses God?

- Material things do not impress God
 - Facility for worship – just a tool
 - Religious garb – clerical collar; fancy robes; even expensive suits
 - Pomp and circumstance
- Performance and Entertainment do not impress God
 - Quest for Excellence in Ministry – needs a Caveat – a Beware
 - Role of drama; music – God does not have a short attention span; we do not need to WOW God with some spectacular multi-media event; is worship directed at God or at man?
- Legalistic, self righteous Religious Activity does not impress God – cf. **Sermon on the Mount** – defining the inner spiritual focus of the law of God and His righteousness
 - True worship must be in accordance with the outward forms prescribed by God and the inward heart attitudes that are pleasing to God. Abel obeyed the revelation of God and brought the proper type of sacrifice in faith. Cain, on the other hand, took the initiative in devising his own system of approaching and worshipping God.
- Relationship and Truth must take priority over Service -- remember the story of **Mary and Martha**
- Spontaneity and Emotionalism do not impress God
- Intellectualism does not impress God (although worship must include the mind)
- Hypocrisy is Anathema to God – pretending to be something you are not
 - cf. the warning against the **leaven of the Pharisees** = the religious rulers of the day
 - recognized religious position and professional status mean nothing in themselves
- Pride of Denominationalism does not impress God – any type of feeling of exclusivity as if you have a corner on the truth market; as if genuine worship must be reside in your group of churches
 - No hallowed mountain; every genuine church is made up of sinners saved by grace
- Intermediaries are Anathema to God – don't exalt someone to a position of trust where they stand between you and God as if they can facilitate your relationship or access to God – we are all a kingdom of priests with direct access through the one Mediator = our Lord Jesus Christ
 - Opportunity and privilege for us to worship God
- Idolatry is Anathema to God – worship must be in accordance with a true knowledge of God and directed towards God (God rejects both idolatry and formalism = just going through the outward motions)
- Simplicity of the observance of the Lord's Supper – the cup and the bread; the offering of praise and worship on the part of the NT priests; not going back to the ritual of the OT law

III. Insights from Dr. Piper

-- **Introduction:** Everyone in the world worships something. From the most religious to the most secular, all people value something high enough to build their lives around it. . . what makes it worship is the driving power of some cherished treasure that shapes our emotions and will and thought and behavior.

- The Hour is Coming and Is Now Here

The kingdom of the Messiah has dawned and there was going to be a radical break in the way people worship

- Destroy This Temple and in Three Days I will Raise it Up

Jesus intended to take the place of the temple himself. – the place where people would meet God from now on would be Jesus

- Not in This Mountain or in Jerusalem But in Spirit and in Truth

What takes the place of external geographic concerns are internal spiritual concerns . . . What matters now is not where you worship but whether you worship God in accordance with the truth and whether your spirit is authentically awakened and moved by that truth.

- All Worship Should be Through Jesus and of Jesus

“whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him” (John 5:23)

- Worship in Spirit

Until the Holy Spirit quickens our spirit with the birth of new life, our spirit is so dead and unresponsive, it does not even qualify as spirit. Only that which is born of the Spirit is (a living) spirit . . . true worship comes only from spirits made alive and sensitive by the quickening of the Spirit of God.

- All of Life is Worship

The essence of worship lies in our mind’s true vision of God and our spirit’s authentic affections for God. . . whenever we display the worth of God by words or actions that flow from a spirit that treasures him as he really is, we are worshipping in spirit and in truth.

- You Cannot Serve God and Money

We serve God by treasuring him so much that we shape our whole life so as to benefit from what he can do for us.

- The Infinite Worth of God in Jesus

Ask Jesus to open your eyes to the truth of God’s supreme worth and to awaken your spirit to treasure him above all.

IV. 1 Kings 18 – Confrontation Between True and False Religion

Demand #13: Always Pray and Do Not Lose Heart

Main Text: Luke 18:1-8

Memory Verse: "Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart." Luke 18:1

INTRODUCTION:

What type of anticipation do we have for Christ's return? He promised that He is coming back quickly. The Bible says that we are living in the last days. Yet we can easily become discouraged. Our faith can grow weak. Scoffers mock and say Where is the promise of His coming? It's been over 2000 years and things continue on as they have been? Where's the hope in that? Our primary text shows what is necessary for continuance in a life of faith in the midst of a world that is hostile to our faith. Our love has a tendency to grow cold; the things of this world press in and distract us.

Illustration of a train powered by a steam engine: needs coal to keep running – imagine that God's Grace is the coal that we need; View Prayer in conjunction with faith as the shovel that keeps the coal of God's grace flowing into the engine of our lives.

I. Context of the Parable – Sermon by Dr. Piper

Piper: The last verse of our text, Luke 18:8, refers to the second coming of Christ: "I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" I think this ending of the parable shows we should read it as a conclusion to the section on the coming of the kingdom just before it, Luke 17:20 -37.

In 17:20 the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God was coming. They meant: When will Messiah come and overthrow our enemies and establish the throne of David and bring peace and righteousness to the world? Jesus' answer was baffling to people who didn't acknowledge him to be the Messiah. He said in effect: If your only way of recognizing the kingdom of God is by miraculous signs that bring down the Roman tyranny, then you will surely miss it, because the kingdom of God is already in the midst of you (v. 21; 11:20 -- it should not be translated "within you" because Jesus would not have said that to unbelieving Pharisees). Jesus is the King and wherever he wins people into allegiance, his reign is established.

Then in 17:22-24 he warns against the opposite mistake. In verse 21 he warned against looking for catastrophic signs and said the kingdom was quietly but powerfully in their midst. But in verses 23 and 24 he warns against thinking that the final appearance of the Son of Man could be anything but catastrophic. It will not be quiet or hidden. If someone says, "Lo, here," or "Lo, there," then you know they are wrong. "For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day" (v. 24). The second coming of Christ will not be a hidden thing which one person sees and then shows to another. It will be obvious to all from horizon to horizon, like a streak of lightning. "But first," verse 25 says. "he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." The difference between the first and second comings of Christ is the difference between a little candle and a bolt of lightning.

Then in 17:26-30 Jesus describes what the days will be like leading up to the coming of the Son of Man. He compares the coming of the Son of Man to the flood in Noah's day (v. 27) and to the destruction of Sodom by fire and brimstone (v. 29), and says that the days before Christ's coming will be like the days before those two catastrophes, namely, full of busy, ordinary life. Verse 27: "They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built." Verse 30 says, "So it will be

on the day when the Son of Man is revealed." In other words, we can expect that most of the world will be engaged in business as usual when the lightning of the Son of Man flashes from sky to sky.

Then in verses 31-37 Jesus warns us not to be like Lot's wife (v. 32). That is, in the hour of crisis, don't love the world. Don't turn back with longing, or you'll be unfit for the kingdom (9:61).

Remember, when the Son of Man comes he will separate the sheep and the goats, even if they are sleeping together or working side by side at the mill. One will be taken into safety, the other left.

"Left where?" the disciples ask. "Where the body is there will the vultures be gathered together" (v. 37). Not to be gathered to Christ at his coming is to be left for destruction. Jesus makes it clear that eternal life hangs on whether we are ready when he comes.

Now we can see that Luke 18:1-8 is really part of this end-time teaching. It closes in verse 8 with the question, "When the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth?" Will the warnings of Jesus to remember Lot's wife, to keep the heart fixed on Christ and not love the world -- will these warnings secure the faith of the disciples? Will they endure to the end? Will the Son of Man find us trusting him or busy securing our lives in this world?

I think a natural question the disciples would ask (and which we should ask) is: How can we endure to the end? How can we make sure that we don't become like Lot's wife, too much in love with this world to go all the way with Christ? How can we resist the relentless temptations of Sodom to be desensitized to God's kingdom by the ordinary pressures of daily life? Did you notice back in verse 28 that Jesus doesn't mention sodomy in the list of what characterized Sodom just before its destruction. In fact, he doesn't mention anything in itself sinful: "they ate, drank, bought, sold, planted, built." Judgment didn't come upon Sodom merely because it had practicing homosexuals in it, but also because all the good, ordinary activities of life were godless. The good things in life can make us just as insensitive to the reality of God as the gross things in life can. So the disciples of Jesus are left in a **tremendous battle**, which most people don't even know is going on: the battle to maintain radical, heartfelt, self-denying faith in Christ not only in the threat of persecution (21:12-19) and sinful temptations, but also in the threat of ordinary home life and business life which can blunt all our sensitivity to God's eternal kingdom.

The danger we face as disciples of Jesus waiting for his return is stressed even more clearly by Matthew 24:11-13 (which provides a sober link to last week's message on lukewarmness). Jesus says concerning the last days before his coming: "Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, **most men's love will grow cold**. But he who endures to the end will be saved." So in Luke 18:8 Jesus could have asked, 'When the Son of Man comes will he find fervent love on earth?' The danger we face is that our faith in Christ and our love for him and for each other will be swallowed up by opposition or by the sheer ordinariness of daily life. So the question is: How can we endure? How can we be found with faith and love? How can we avoid being like Lot's wife and like those who are left in judgment?

II. Exposition of Primary Text – Luke 18:1-8

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER IN ANTICIPATION OF CHRIST'S RETURN PROTECTS AGAINST DISCOURAGEMENT AND REINFORCES OUR FAITH

(:1) The Point of the Parable – Keep on Praying

:Elegen de. parabolhn autoij proj to deih pantote proseucesqai autouj kai. mh. egkakeih(

A. Method of Teaching – Effective Story Telling Paints the Picture

“Now He was telling them a parable to show that”

No mystery about the point of this parable – some are hard to interpret
Jesus does not usually provide the interpretation to the parable.

MacArthur: So here we find that the key to the parable is hanging on the door. Before you even get inside to the parable, the key is out there.

B. Master Template – Apply this approach to every situation because it works
“*at all times*”

Cf. use of template in Powerpoint presentations
Prayer is at least part of the solution to everything – pray at all times
Always appropriate; always necessary; often overlooked and neglected

Piper: As Peter says (1 Pet. 4:7), "the end of all things is at hand; therefore, keep sane and sober for your prayers." The pressures of worldliness will become greater as the end draws near, therefore, all the more must we watch and be sober unto prayer, and not lose heart.

Difficult days before the second coming – 2 Peter 3

MacArthur: So this is not a call to prayer in general like “Pray without ceasing.” That’s a call to unceasing prayer in general. This is a call to eschatological prayer, pray that the Lord will come and pray for the strength to endure until He arrives, to endure the flesh, the world, the devil, the hostility against the gospel, persecution, rejection and even martyrdom. This is eschatological praying.

There’s a similar call by our Lord in the twenty-first chapter of Luke and verse 36 as well. “*Keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place and stand before the Son of Man.*” You need to pray that Christ will come, you need to pray that you’ll have the strength to endure to the end, the end of your life and the end until the Lord Himself comes should you live until we are gathered to Him.

C. Main Tactic – Persevering Prayer is Essential
1. Positive – Keep Taking your requests to the Lord in Prayer
“*they ought to pray*”

Does not say -- At all times they ought to:

- Try harder / more sincerity / more enthusiasm / more zeal / more faith
- Study more
 - independent study
 - committee approach to study the situation

E. M. Bounds: The pulpit of this day is weak in praying. The pride of learning is against the dependent humility of prayer.

- Ask the counsel of others
- Be anxious / worried / fearful / frightened
- Assume things will work out for the best / Power of Positive Thinking

2. Negative – Don't Give In to Discouragement / Don't Stop Praying “and not to lose heart”

Why are we tempted to lose heart?

- it seems like prayer does not work
- we just don't like to pray
- we don't expect the Lord to answer
- we want things on our timetable

Ritchie: as we are confronted with rejection and injustice while ministering and waiting for his second coming, we should continue to ask God to protect us and other believers and ask him to provide all the resources necessary to confront our present realities.

Steven Cole: One of the most difficult aspects of prayer is persevering when it seems that God is not answering. Jesus instructed us to pray that the Father's kingdom would come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And yet here we are, almost 2,000 years later, and that prayer, prayed millions of times by millions of Christians down through the centuries, is still not answered.

[**G. Campbell Morgan** takes interesting approach: Nearly all expositors declare that the parable teaches us that we must be importunate in prayer. I hold, on the contrary, that it teaches that when we are dealing with God there is no need of importunity. It is a parable of contrast all through.]

(:2-5) The Plot (Players and Story line) of the Parable – Perseverance Works

legwn(Krithj tij hñ en tini poliei ton qeon mh. foboumenoij kai. anqrwpon mh. entrepomenoj 3 chra de. hñ en th/poliei ekeinij kai. hrceto proj auton legousa(VEkdikhson me apo. tou/antidikou mou 4 kai. ouk hqelen epi. cronon meta. de. tauta eißen en eautw(Eivkai. ton qeon ouv foboumai oude. anqrwpon entrepomai(5 dia. ge. to. parecein moi kopon thn chran tau,thn ekdikhsu authn(iha mh. eij teloj ercomenh upwpiazh) me 5

“There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. 3 "And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' 4 "And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out. ”

A. The Setting = “a certain city”

These players all interact with one another within the limited confines of a specific city

B. The Players

1. The Wicked Judge

a. Position of Power = *a judge*

- We should expect a lot out of a judge
- The reality is that Power Corrupts – much oppty for bribes, favoritism
- Going to be seen in contrast to the person of God

b. Bankrupt Spiritually = *did not fear God*

- prideful and arrogant – characterized himself in this manner – not just

something others are charging him with; comfortable with his wickedness

- viewed himself as independent of God's authority
- no wisdom – cf. prayer of Solomon when faced with prospect of judging large nation
- no sense of mission = punishing evil and promoting good

c. Indifferent Socially = *did not respect man*

- no common decency
- no concern for the hardship of others
- no sense of fairness and justice
- motivated by selfishness and personal convenience

MacArthur: A look at the wicked judge –

This kind of description is used to describe the most wicked person, someone who has absolutely no reverence for God and no interest in people, no concerns regarding the Law of God, the will of God and completely indifferent to the needs of people and their just causes. This man is ultimately and finally wicked. There is no way to penetrate this man's wickedness either from the viewpoint of the Law of God or from the viewpoint of the need of man. He is not moved by reverence or worship and he is not moved by compassion or sympathy. He has no interest in the first commandment, loving God; no interest in the second commandment, loving his neighbor. He is the most wicked man.

2. The Helpless Widow

- Lonely; no companionship to stand by her side and assist
- Destitute; no material resources to use for bribe, etc.
- An easy target for exploitation
- In need of protection
- No leverage whatsoever

MacArthur: A look at the widow --

Someone has defrauded her. In fact, someone has so seriously defrauded her that she is destitute. Not only is she destitute by virtue of the fact that she keeps coming and keeps coming and keeps coming which is our Lord's way of pointing out that she really was in a situation where she had to have what was rightfully hers, but we know that her destitution goes beyond the financial, she apparently has no man in her life, no man in her family, not a brother, not a brother-in-law, not a father, not a son, not a cousin, not a nephew, not any man who could come to plead her case because courts belong to men, they did not belong to women, they belonged exclusively to men. Men came to court, women did not come to court. The courts belong to the men. The only time a woman would come to court was when there was no man to plead her case. This woman is alone, she represents the destitute, the powerless, the helpless, the deprived, the lowly, the unknown, the unloved, the un-cared for, the desperate. . .

Now you need to know something else...a little bit more about the Middle Eastern culture. Women were really powerless. I guess that's a good way to say it. They were powerless in the male-dominated culture...still largely true in Middle Eastern culture today. But they were respected and they were honored. And while they had no power, they did have honor and they could get away with things that men couldn't get away with. I was reading one Middle Eastern scholar who said, "A woman could scream and complain at the top of her voice relentlessly and get away with it

because women are to be honored and respected. And if a man did the same thing, he would lose his life.” And so, even today you see pictures in the Arabic world of women who are pleading their case by screaming and yelling and this would be the crying day and night kind of relentless approach of this woman that is characterized here.

3. The Oppressing Opponent

Apparently he has robbed this widow or defrauded her interests in some way

Stedman: What is more proverbially weak and defenseless than a widow? Any writer who wants to portray some scheming rascal out to deprive someone of his livelihood usually depicts his victim as a widow. In contrast to the widow there is the judge. Who can be more hard-boiled and unyielding than a judge, and an unrighteous judge, especially? Here is a tough, hard-bitten, self-centered old skin-flint with a heart as cold as a bathroom floor at two o'clock in the morning! And the widow has a persecutor, someone who was harassing her, plaguing her, making life difficult. She appealed for help but the judge couldn't care less. He was utterly unmoved by her pleas, nothing could reach him. He was a godless judge so there was no point in appealing to him on a moral basis, there was no moving of his affections with that lever. And he had no regard for man, so that there was no political pressure that could be brought upon him to influence him. In view of the judge's hardness of heart, the case for the widow was absolutely hopeless. Nothing she could do would move this man to intercede in her case.

C. The Plot

1. The Issue at Hand = Justice and Legal Protection

- this was a righteous cause; not some unreasonable demand
- she was going through the correct channels; appropriate venue

2. The Tactic that Proved Effective = Persevering Plea for Help

What other tactics could she have employed?

Piper: Therefore, Jesus argues, if an unjust judge can be moved by persistent petitions to help a stranger for whom he has no regard, how much more "will God help his own chosen ones who cry to him day and night!"

“weary me” = to strike under the eyes – give me a black eye -- wears me out ...

(:6-8a) The Practical Application of the Parable – Argument from the Least to the Greatest

6 Eipen de o kurioj (\Akousate ti, o krithj thj adikiaj legei\ 7 o de qeoj ouv mh. poihsj| thn ekdikhsin twh eklektwh autou/ twh bowntwn autw| hmeraj kai. nuktoj(kai. makroqumei/ ep| autoijE 8 legw umih oti poihsai thn ekdikhsin autwh en taceiA

" 6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge *said; 7 now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily."

A. Listen Up – Don't miss the point of the parable

The unrighteous judge acted in a predictable fashion; the Righteous God can be counted on

to a far greater extent

B. Learn From the Character of God = a God of Justice

He will do the right thing

Our expectations related to **our view of the character of God** – take an attribute of God and relate it to prayer

- Is He really our Father – delights to give good gifts to His children
- Is He really a righteous Judge – cf. arguments made by David
- Is He really Good
- Is He really Faithful
- Is He really Merciful and Compassionate – touched by our problems
- Is He really Faithful – we can count on Him
- Is He really Gracious – or do we only get what we deserve
- Is He really Powerful – able to act on our behalf
- Is He really Attentive – listening and available – do we have free access

Piper: We must not be offended that Jesus compares God to an unjust judge. It's the same as when Jesus' own coming is compared to the coming of a thief in the night (1Thess. 5:2). The point of comparison is not that Jesus is a thief but that his coming is sudden and unexpected. So here the point of comparison is not that God is an unjust judge but that he responds with help to those who cry to him day and night.

C. Lean on the Security of Election

Such an important doctrine; a shame that many Christians reject it – used here to give us great assurance; our connection to God comes from His initiative and His eternal plan and purpose; He has caused us to be born again into His family; He is committed to His elect people

One of the marks of genuine election = we call upon God in prayer day and night

Geldenhuis: contrast between the widow and the elect

In the eye of the unjust judge she is an unknown, troublesome person in whom he takes no interest and about whose fate he does not worry. But the chosen ones of God are well known to Him and loved by Him, and He takes the keenest interest in them.

D. Live out the Practice of Persevering Prayer

“day and night”

Look at the **emphasis on perseverance**:

- At all times
- Kept coming to him
- Bothers me
- Wear Him out
- Day and night

Piper: But the argument of the parable is not that if you can wear out an unjust human judge then you may stand a chance of wearing out God so that he helps you just to get you off his back. That would contradict Luke 12:32 where Jesus says, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Stedman: It is sometimes taught that Jesus is here encouraging what is called "pre vailing prayer," which is often another way of describing an attempt to belabor God, to give him no peace, to picket the throne of heaven until we get the request we want. This is an absolutely un -Biblical and totally un-Christian attitude in prayer.

Augustine: connection between prayer and faith

When faith fails, prayer dies. In order to pray, then, we must have faith; and that our faith fail not, we must pray. Faith pours forth prayer; and the pouring forth of the heart in prayer, gives steadfastness to faith.

E. Look for the Speedy Return of Jesus Christ – God Answers on His Timetable

Why does God delay in answering our prayers ?

Why from our perspective does He delay His coming back?

MacArthur: Now there are three New Testament words for patience that are used in reference to God. One is *anemo*(?), it means tolerance. One is *hupomone*, it's the patience of the sufferer, as Christ patiently suffered. But this is *makrothume* or *makrothumia*, it's from two Greek words, *makros*, we know what macro means as opposed to micro. The technical meaning of *makro* in the Greek, *makros*, is far distant. It means long with regard to space, or long with regard to distance, remote. And that's *makro...makrothumos*. *Thumos* is anger. The word *makrothumia* means remote anger, anger removed far, far away. And our Lord is saying He is coming, He will come, He will vindicate His own, He will glorify Himself, He will judge sinners. But He has removed to a far distance His wrath for a long, long time. This describes what Exodus 34 says about God, that He is slow to anger.

God has a right to judge, but He also has a right to be merciful. God will judge in His own time. But Peter tells us the answer to this little dilemma, 2 Peter 3:9, "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." So in 2 Peter 3:15 Peter says this, "The *makrothumia* of God is salvation." What's He waiting for? He's waiting for the salvation of His elect. He's waiting until they're all gathered in. You don't want Him here any sooner than that. And when the last of the elect are gathered in, then the end will come. Yes, He will satisfy his wrath, but not until He has satisfied His grace. This, by the way, is the meaning of *makrothumia* every time it is used with reference to God. It is used with reference to God in Romans 2:4, Romans 9:22, 1 Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 3:9 and 15, 1 Timothy 1:16. In each of those cases it means that God withholds His wrath at a distance.

George Mueller – one of the greatest intercessors and man of faith of all time

Five grand conditions of prevailing prayer:

- 1) Entire dependence upon the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only ground of any claim for blessing (John 14:13, 14; 15:16)
- 2) Separation from all known sin. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us, for it would be sanctioning sin. (Psalm 66:18)
- 3) Faith in God's word of promise as confirmed by His oath. Not to believe Him is to make Him both a liar and a perjurer. (Hebrews 11:6; 6:13-20)
- 4) Asking in accordance with His will. Our motives must be godly: we must not seek any gift of God to consume it upon our own lusts. (1 John 5:13; James 4:3)
- 5) Importunity in supplication. There must be waiting on God and waiting for God, as the

husbandman has long patience to wait for the harvest. (James 5:7; Luke 18:1 -10)

Steven Cole :

- (1) God cares for us.
- (2) God never delays answers because of a lack of care or a lack of power.
- (3) God's delays are always for our good, even if the reasons are hidden from us.
- (4) God ultimately will bring swift and certain justice for His elect.

(:8b) The Perplexing Addendum to the Parable – The Eschatological Need for Perseverance

pl hn o' ui o j tou/ anqrw pou elqwn afa eurhsei thn pistin epi. thj ghjē

" *However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?*"

A. Certainty of the Return of Jesus Christ

This should be very encouraging to us; no doubt about this important future event

B. Uncertainty of the Extent of Perseverance in Faith

Doesn't say whether Jesus will find faith or not in those who initially expressed their dependence and loyalty

Need to understand the overall context – talking about the coming of the kingdom; will our faith and love endure or will we be found to have been quitters – given over to the cares of this world

Prayer and faith stand and fall together

Piper: Faith is the furnace of our lives. Its fuel is the grace of God. And the divinely appointed shovel for feeding the burner is prayer. If you lose heart and lay down the shovel, the fire will go out, you will grow cold and hard,

Piper: The test will be whether you continued in prayer and did not lose heart. God's elect will mostly be surely be saved; and, as verse 7 says, the sign of the elect is that they cry to God day and night. Those who endure to the end will be saved (Matt. 24:13).

Stedman: is it possible, it is not remotely possible that men prefer weakness to power, that they prefer anxiety to peace, a frenzy to rest, doubt to confidence, fear to faith, or malice to love? Is it possible that when the Son of man comes he will not find faith on the earth?

III. Wayne Grudem – Systematic Theology – Perseverance in Prayer (p. 387)

- Example of **Moses** – Deut. 9:25-26 | 10:10-11 – stayed on the mountain for 40 days twice
- Example of **Jacob** – “*I will not let you go, unless you bless me*” Gen. 32:26
- Pattern in life of **Jesus** – Luke 5:16; 6:12 – gave much time to prayer – 3.5 yrs of ministry – No time for prayer??
- Example of **Apostle Paul** who prayed very specifically on three occasions that God would remove a certain thorn in the flesh
- **Apostolic instruction and example:**
 - 1 Thess 5:17 “*pray without ceasing*” -- pray constantly
 - Col. 4:2 – “*continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving*”
 - Acts 6:4 – “*devote ourselves to prayer*”

IV. Additional Teaching From Jesus – Insights from Dr. Piper

- Why Pray?

- For the Glory of God (John 14:13)
Prayer glorifies God because it puts us in the position of the thirsty and God in the position of the all-supplying fountain.
We get the help and He gets the glory

- For Our Joy (John 17:13; 16:24)

- How to Pray?

- Simplicity (Matt. 6:7-8)
The readiness of God to answer and his perfect knowledge of what we need before we ask means that we should be simple in our wording and reject anything like a repetitive mantra that would imply God is aroused by our monotonous incantations.

- With Perseverance
The point is not to finally break God's resistance but to discover, by patient prayer, God's wisdom as to the way and time the prayer should be answered. He is not disinclined to help his children and glorify his name. He simply knows better than we do when and how the answer should come. Therefore, our persistence in prayer shows both our confidence that God is our only hope and that he will act in the best way and the best time in response to our persistent pleas.

- Through His Death and In His Name (John 14:13; 16:23-24)
He died for us and rose again to remove all obstacles to prayer.

- With Faith (Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 15:7)
There seem to be times when God makes clear to us that his will is to do a particular thing. In that case we may be perfectly confident that very thing will be done.
Praying in faith does not always mean being sure that the very thing we ask will happen. But it does always mean that because of Jesus we trust God to hear us and help us in the way that seems best to him.

- Not for the Praise of Others (Matt. 6:5-6)
Do not turn a God-treasuring act of prayer into a man-treasuring act of hypocrisy.

- For Whom to Pray?

Everybody

- What Should we Pray? – the Lord's Prayer

- that people would pursue the glory of God
- that God's saving, purifying, Jesus-exalting rule would hold sway in our lives and would finally come in universal manifestation and extent
- that we would do the will of God without hesitation and full of zeal and thoroughness
- for the practical provisions of body and mind that make an earthly life of obedience possible
- for the forgiveness of our daily failures to honor God as we ought
- that God would protect us from the evil one and from temptations

Demand #14: Do Not Be Anxious About the Necessities of Daily Life – Don't Worry, Live for the Lord

Main Text: Matt. 6:25-34

Memory Verse: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Matt. 6:33

INTRODUCTION:

Anxiety and Worry and Fear about the necessities of life will choke out spiritual fruitfulness. We all struggle with worry and anxiety in different ways and to different degrees.

Look at TV commercials designed to prey on our fears and anxieties

- are you fearful about being able to pay for energy needs in the future

- how are you going to have enough for retirement – How is your 401K doing?

Look at the current economic crisis – tremendous focus on whether we can keep our head above water financially

Are we going to lose our home, our job?

Situation at work – nobody can get good credit terms to purchase ...lots of speculation and anxiety

Phil. 4:6-7 *"Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace which passes understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

I. Exposition of Primary Text – Matt. 6:25-34

DEVOTION TO GOD'S KINGDOM AND CONFIDENCE IN HIS PROVIDENTIAL PROVISION PROTECTS AGAINST ANXIETY OVER THE NECESSITIES OF THIS LIFE

(:25a) The Command to Abstain from Anxiety Regarding Life's Necessities

Dia. touto legw umih(mh. merimnate th/ yuch/ umwh ti, faghte lh' ti, pihte(ð mhde. tw/ swmati umwh ti, endushsqeA

A. Context of the Command

"For this reason I say to you"

Whose voice are we listening to?

I like the song by Casting Crowns that talks about the **Voice of Truth** calling out to me – saying "Do not be afraid"

But the voice of truth tells me a different story
the voice of truth says "do not be afraid!"
and the voice of truth says "this is for my glory"
Out of all the voices calling out to me
I will choose to listen and believe the voice of truth

We have the person of Christ speaking to us – counseling us on how to deal with anxiety and fear

Stedman: "Would I use the same resources to buy up a spiritual opportunity as I would a material one?"

Zeisler: If we love and serve God, and his mastery in our lives is gaining ascendancy at every point, then we will not be serving money as a god or master. We will grow to despise it as such. But if we

are serving money and we expect it to make us happy, pay us off, provide security, and give us a sense of worth--to do what only God can do---then we will grow to despise God. We cannot have two masters. Money is an excellent servant, but it is a terrible master. Money, goods, time, energy, and riches of all kinds are intended to be the things that we use in this world to serve and glorify God.

Hendriksen: Since transitory earthly treasures do not satisfy, and setting the heart on them implies forfeiting the enduring pleasures of heaven (verses 19-21), and since the yearning for such earthly riches blurs mental and moral vision (verses 22, 23), and finally, because a choice must be made between God and Mammon (verse 24), do not continue to set your heart on the latter, that is, on earthly things, such as food and drink, to keep alive, or on clothes, to keep dressed.

Johnson: Now evidently the connection lies with that little statement, we are either slaves of God or we are the slaves of Mammon. These in the context here are the two alternatives. You cannot serve God and Mammon. And if you'll remember the message last Sunday morning, I pointed out that this word, serve, is a word that really means "slave," and of course it would be particularly meaningful in the time in which the Lord Jesus said this, for a slave was the total property of his master. His master had total ownership. And also with total ownership, total responsibility. And so in the light of the fact that we are his slaves, ideally we are serving him. We are not serving Mammon.

Well if we are his slaves, then we have no worries, because the responsibilities are his. Therefore, I say unto you, be not anxious for your life, for you are his slave. He has total ownership, and in having total ownership, he has total responsibility. So in the light of this relationship that we bear to him, why should we be anxious? As a master cares for slaves, so our God will care for us.

MacArthur: Both of these passages deal with physical commodities and material possessions. Verses 19-24 deal with luxury and verses 25-34 deal with necessity -- what we eat, drink, and wear. The first portion is directed more at the rich, those who tend to take their luxury and stockpile it for their own ends. The second is directed more at the poor who, due to their poverty and lack of substance, question or doubt God, and live in fear and anxiety about what they will eat, drink, and wear.

Now, being rich has its share of problems, just as being poor has its share. The temptation to the rich is to trust in riches, while the temptation to the poor is to doubt God's provision. But in both cases the Lord is saying, "I have a perspective for you. If you are rich or poor, your focus is to be on Me." . . .

To sum up, since earthly treasures corrupt you, since earthly treasures tend to blind your spiritual vision, and since earthly treasures tend to draw you away from serving God, therefore, don't worry about those kinds of things. That should not be your preoccupation. You say, "Well, can't we at least worry about the basics if not the luxuries?" Not at all. If you are a child of God you have a single goal -- treasure in heaven, you have a single vision -- you see God's purposes, and you have a single Master -- you serve God not money. Therefore, you cannot become preoccupied with the mundane things of this world.

B. Challenge of the Command

"do not be anxious for your life"

Nobody said this would be easy or automatic

C. Clarification of the Command – Talking About the Necessities of Life

1. Necessities of Food and Drink = that which sustains life
“as to what you shall eat”
“or what you shall drink”
2. Necessities of Clothing (and Shelter implied) = that which protects and adorns life
“nor for your body, as to what you shall put on.”

Newton: Eating, drinking, and clothing drive our society. If you do not believe this just take a quick look at the advertisements in any popular magazine. They compel us to feel an intense need to eat and drink certain products, and dress in certain ways. If Jesus could use eating, drinking, and clothing for people that barely eked out an existence, how much more so for us that stand in front of the pantry agitating over what we'll have for dinner or in front of a closet worrying about which outfit we will wear. Things control us far more than we would like to admit.

Brian Racer: Isn't there something more important (or necessary) than taking care of the body? Yet taking care of the body has always been an obsession of men. Even if we are not starving or thirsting or naked, we still give an inordinate amount of attention to our bodies. We pamper them from disease and pain, we build them up, slender them down, drape them with jewelry, keep them warm, keep them cool, train them to work and to play, help them get to sleep and a hundred other things to serve and satisfy our bodies.

(:25b-32) Five Encouraging Arguments to Help Ward Off Anxiety

A. (:25b) Argument from the Greater to the Lesser: Food and Clothing are not Worthy of Our Worry -- If you trust God with your very life, you can trust Him with all that sustains life or supports life

ουχι. η̄ yuch. pleibn̄ estin thj trofhj kai. to. sw̄ma tou/endumatojē

“Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?”

Rom. 8:32 *“He that did not spare his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”*

Piper: If you are gripped by anxiety over these things, you have lost sight of the greatness of life. Life was not given primarily for physical pleasures, but for something greater -- the enjoyment of God. Life was not given primarily for the approval of man, but for something greater -- the approval of God. Life was not even given primarily for extension on this earth, but for something greater -- eternity with God in the age to come.

Lenski: Will he who gave us our life and the body fail to give us the little food we need and the few garments we require? The most elementary logic ought to place every disciple above worry.

B. (:26) Argument from the Lesser to the Greater: Regarding Food – We are Valuable to God -- If God can take care of the birds, He will certainly take care of His own children who are far more valuable.

embleyate eij ta. peteina. tou/ouranou/ otīī oū speirousin oude. qerizousin oude. sunagousin eij

apothkaj(kai. ō pathr̄ umwh̄ ō ouranioj̄ trefeī auta\̄ ouc̄ umeij̄ mallon̄ diaferetē autw̄hē

“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”

Thinking that we are worthless can be a tremendous obstacle to overcome. Worry feeds that sense of lack of worth.

Piper: Birds don't anxiously horde things for the day of God's demise. They go about their work as though when the sun comes up tomorrow God will still be God.

Johnson: So the argument from nature, they work – they constantly work – but the birds do not worry. They are not disturbed by the contingencies of life. They trust. It's instinctive; but they do not worry.

MacArthur:

a) Job 38:41a -- "Who provideth for the raven his prey? When his young ones cry unto God...." In other words, the little birds actually look to God the Creator. It is God the Creator who gave the mother the instinct to bring the food. It is God the Creator who gave the mother the instinct to build the nest and to migrate to a new area at the exact and precise time.

b) Psalm 147:9b -- "...to the young ravens which cry out," He gives food. God feeds the birds through the process of their own instinct which the Bible calls "crying out to God." Now, if God is going to take care of irrational birds who cry out to Him through their instinct, is not God going to take care of His own children?

C. (:27) Anxiety Accomplishes Nothing – it is pointless, useless, counter-productive

tij de. ex umwh merimnwh dunatai prosqei hai epi. thn hlikian autou/phcun ephaē

"And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?"

Speaking of length of life – God has sovereignly appointed the details of our life – the minor details as well as the most important such as how long we will live; cf the obsession of our culture with trying to do everything possible to extend our life ...Instead of extending life; worry shortens life

a cubit was about eighteen inches (it was the distance from the end of the fingers to the elbow, generally speaking)

MacArthur: Charles Mayo of the Mayo Clinic said, "Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands, the whole nervous system. I have never known a man to die of overwork, but many who died of worry." You can worry yourself to death but you will never worry yourself to life...and yet that is what people do. When you worry about how long you are going to live and how to add years onto your life, you are distrusting God. That is foolish because if you give Him your life and are obedient to Him, He will give you the fullness of days.

Jay Adams: Worrying is like rocking in a rocking chair; you expend a lot of energy but you don't get anywhere.

D. (:28-30) Argument from the Lesser to the Greater: Regarding Clothing – God's Providential Provision for us is not just Temporal but Eternal

kai. peri. endumatoj ti, merimnateē katamaqete ta. krina tou/agrou/pwj auxanousin\ our kopiw/sin oude. nhqousin\ 29 legw de. umih oti oude. Solomwn en pash| th| doxh| autou/perieba|eto wj eh tou,twnā 30 eivde. ton corton tou/agrou/shmeron onta kai. aurion eij klibanon ballomenon o

qeoj ou[twj amfiennusin(ouvpollw/mal lon umaj(ol igopistoiē

"And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. 30 "But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?"

cf. difference between artificial flowers and real flowers

The issue at stake is one of faith

That is why this subject is so crucial to God; it is a reflection of what we think about our Heavenly Father; How would your earthly father feel if you constantly questioned his ability to provide or His love and concern for your basic needs

Piper: God delights to adorn things. But if his delight finds expression in adorning grass, that's here today and gone tomorrow, then surely his delight in adornment will express itself in how he clothes his children!

Piper: The verse that makes the root of anxiety explicit is verse 30: In other words Jesus says that the root of anxiety is lack of faith in our heavenly Father. As unbelief gets the upper hand in our hearts one of the results is anxiety.

E. (:31-32) Summary Argument – Children of the Heavenly King Should Not Worry Like Children of This World

mh. ou# merimnhshte legontej(Ti, fagwmenē h(Ti, piwmenē h(Ti, peribalwmeqaē 32 panta gar tauta ta eqnh epizhtousin\ oiēn gar o' pathr umwh o' ouranioj o'ti crhžete toutwn apantwnā
"Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' 32 "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

Lenski: In v. 25 the present imperative forbids the worrying already begun: "stop worrying"; now the aorist follows forbidding all worrying as such

Piper: Anxiety about the things of this world puts us on the same level with the world of unbelievers. It shows that we are really very much like the world in what makes us happy. And that ought not to be. It also shows that we don't think our Father in heaven knows our needs. Or perhaps we don't think he has the heart of a loving Father. Anxiety shows that we are too close to the world and too far from God. So don't be anxious -- the world has nothing eternal to offer, and your loving heavenly Father knows your needs now and forever.

1. Repeating the Command – *"Do not be anxious"*
2. Reviewing the Specific areas of the Necessities of Life
3. Recognizing the Major Difference in Perspective and Pursuit between believers and Unbelievers – living in two different kingdoms; two different realms
How much energy and focus are we investing in laying up treasures for eternity?
Easy for us to talk just like the world in our context at school or at work – we should use the uncertainties of the current economic crisis to testify to the certain confidence we have in

our Father's provision

4. Resting in the All Sufficient Care of our Heavenly Father
Father and children have different responsibilities
Heaven is far more important than earth
God's omniscience eliminates our need to worry about our future
He has promised to provide for His servants

(:33) Priority of Devotion to God's Kingdom and Corresponding Providential Provision

zhteite de prwton thn basileian Ithou/qeou kai thn dikaiosunhn autou(kai. tauta panta prosteqhsetai umi hA

A. Priority of Devotion to God's Kingdom

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness;"

How can we do this in practical terms?

- what priority does your career have vs developing and using your spiritual gifts for the glory of God?
- what is your basis for deciding where to live

How can we examine our lives to see whether or not we are doing this?

Brain Racer: How do I seek His kingdom? First it is by seeking His rule in your life. It's being a submissive subject of His dominion. The geographical territory will one day be enlarged from the hearts of men to the world that will be governed by Christ out of Jerusalem, His capitol. Right now He wants you to seek His rule in your life. He wants you to be a subject, obedient to His commands and directions. Secondly, we're to seek His righteousness, which is to say, to seek His character in our lives. Are these the two all consuming interests of your life?

B. Corresponding Providential Provision

"and all these things shall be added to you."

Do we really believe this promise?

Do we have additional demands upon God that do not fall into this category of necessities and indicate a lack of Contentment on our part?

What has our experience been of the Lord's faithfulness in this area?

(:34) Danger of Living in the Future = a Life of Anxiety . . . Instead of Living in the Now = a Life of Faith --

Deal with Very Real Present Challenges Rather Than Hypothetical Future Security

mh. ouh merimhshte eij thn aurion(h' gar aurion merimhsei eauthj\ arketon th/ hmera| h' kakia authjA

"Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

A. Don't Worry About the Future

Think about how we waste energy worrying about upcoming doctor or dentist visits – where we anticipate pain and discomfort –

God has not given us the strength or grace today to handle tomorrow's difficulties; don't live in the realm of the future hypothetical

B. Focus Your Energy Productively on Today's Challenges

Lenski: refers to the natural trouble, pain, and burdens incident to our present life

Johnson: worry is needless. It's blind. It refuses the lessons of life. It's wicked. It does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but it does empty today of its strength. The secret of tranquility is trust. There is an old Christian cliché: When we're worrying, we're not trusting; when we're trusting, we're not worrying. And that's generally true.

MacArthur: An old poem expresses this lesson simply:

"Said the wild flower to the sparrow: 'I should really like to know Why these anxious human beings Rush about and worry so.'

"Said the sparrow to the wild flower: 'Friend I think that it must be That they have no heavenly Father, Such as cares for you and me.'"

II. What To Do About Worry – Jay E. Adams

- Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974

- Introduction

1 Pet. 5:7 God encourages His children to cast all of their cares on Him;
Worry is the American sin

- The Effects of Worry

Worry tends to destroy the body. It can put ulcers on the stomach, sap vitality out of living and drive us to an early death. Worry makes us incapable of handling life's problems. Worry keeps us from assuming responsibilities and engaging in activities in the service of Jesus Christ.

- What Worry Is

Translated "anxiety" or "care" = concern over the future which is unknown; concern about something that one can do nothing about; tears us apart

- What to do About Worry

- recognize tomorrow for what it is

Tomorrow always belongs to God; Today belongs to us

- plan as a Christian

James contrasts how not to plan vs how to plan – lay your plans before God and trust in His sovereign disposition and providential care

- focus your concern on today

Redirect your concern – direct the energy of your body in productive activity

- work on today's task

What can I do right now? Be faithful in the present. Go to bed tired and satisfied.

- do not allow problems to mount up

Our shoulders can only carry one day's troubles at a time

- Three Steps to Defeating Worry (Phil. 4:4-9)

- pray with thanksgiving

There is never an excuse for worry;
Not just prayer for solutions; but thankful prayer;
How can I be thankful for problems? **Rom. 8:28**

- find God's solutions to problems

Talk through problems to biblical solutions; not just venting or talking about your problems

- work on the problem God's way

Matt. 25 – parable of the lazy servant – worried about whether he would gain or lose

Write down these 3 questions:

- What is my problem?
- What does God want me to do about it?
- When, where and how should I begin?

III. Additional Teaching – Insights from Dr. Piper and others

Here in our text we have the illustration of anxiety over food and clothing. Even in our country with its extensive welfare system, anxiety over finances and housing can be very intense. But Jesus says in verse 30 that this is owing to unbelief: "O you of little faith." And so this paragraph has at least half a dozen promises in it to battle that unbelief.

For example at the end of verse 32 he says, "Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be your as well." That is a spectacular promise. In everything you do at home and at work, put God's purposes first, and he will provide all you need to live for his glory. Believe that promise and financial anxiety will evaporate in the warmth of God's care.

Paul applied the promise to anxiety in Philippians like this. In 4:6 he says just like Jesus, "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God." And then in 4:19 he gives the promise like Jesus, "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

And so we follow today the pattern of Jesus and Paul. We battle the unbelief of anxiety with the promises of God.

When I am anxious about some risky new venture or meeting, I battle unbelief with the promise: Fear not for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God, I will help you, I will strengthen you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand (Isaiah 41:10).

When I am anxious about my ministry being useless and empty, I fight unbelief with the promise, So will my word that goes forth from my mouth: it will not come back to me empty but accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

When I am anxious about being too weak to do my work, I battle unbelief with the promise of Christ, My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9), and as your days so shall your strength be (Deuteronomy 33:25).

When I am anxious about decisions I have to make about the future I battle unbelief with the promise, I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you (Psalm 32:8).

When I am anxious about facing opponents, I battle unbelief with the promise, If God is for us who can be against us! (Romans 8:31).

When I am anxious about being sick I battle unbelief with the promise that tribulation works patience and patience approvedness and approvedness hope and hope does not make us ashamed (Romans 5:3-5).

When I am anxious about getting old, I battle unbelief with the promise, Even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save (Isaiah 46:4).

When I am anxious about dying, I battle unbelief with the promise that none of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself; if we live we live to the Lord and if we die we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose again: that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living (Romans 14:9 -11).

When I am anxious that I may make ship wreck of faith and fall away from God, I battle unbelief with the promise, He who began a good work in you will complete it unto the day of Christ (Philippians 1:6). He who calls you is faithful. He will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:23). He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

S. Lewis Johnson: The Infidelity of Anxiety

The word, anxiety, is an interesting word, and for those of you who are Latin students, you may remember that lying back of our English word “anxiety” is the word ang ustia, and usually found in the plural form of angustiae. It means something like, “constrictedness,” “narrowness,” “contractedness.” The Latin verb ungo means, sometimes, “to throttle,” “to choke,” and it is derived from a Greek word, ungo, which means much the same thing.

Perhaps we’re most familiar with the expression angina, and angina pectoris, which, of course, is heart disease – a particular kind of heart disease – which refers particularly to that kind of

illness in which there are spasms of pain in the chest, with feelings of suffocation, usually due to anemia of the heart muscle.

Anxiety is the feeling of contractedness, of constriction, a kind of feeling in which we get the idea that we are being threatened. And so this feeling of anxiety is this indefinite sense of being threatened. And, strikingly – as most of us know who have experienced anxiety – it is not so much the object that is important, but the feeling itself. And often, the feeling so overshadows the reasons for it, that it's difficult for us to even explain the reasons for our anxiety. . .

But it's shocking, to say the least, that people should be so disturbed in our day by the lesser evils, the contingencies of life. And so, it's the fear of the contingencies, the fear of the things of life, that have gripped our society, which is perhaps insight into the shallowness of our thinking. I think this is best caught and most beautifully caught in one wise comment, "I'm not so much afraid of the end of the world as I am the end of the month." [Laughter] All of us know that anxiety, but it's a sad thing that that grips us more than the fact that the time is coming when society and life as we know it is going to end, and men are going to be faced with the fact of a God who judges.

MacArthur: William Inge said, "Worry is interest paid on trouble before it is due." A. S. Roche said, "Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained." William Ward put it this way, "Worry is faith in the negative, trust in the unpleasant, assurance of disaster and belief in defeat...worry is wasting today's time to clutter up tomorrow's opportunities with yesterday's troubles."

I believe in wise planning, but if you are having trouble trusting in the future the Lord says, "Don't worry about that." It's fine to save for the future, it's fine to plan for the future, but it's wrong to worry about those plans because God will take care of them. If you have a choice between using money now for one of God's purposes and saving it for the unknown future based on your own feeling, then to keep it for the future is to disobey the moment. . .

Jesus gives three reasons why you shouldn't worry.
One, it is unnecessary because of your Father; (:26-30)
two, it is uncharacteristic because of your faith; and
three, it is unwise because of your future.

Brian Racer:

Worry is the equivalent of saying, "God, I know You mean well by what You say, but I'm just not sure You can pull it off." Worry is the sin of distrusting the promise and the providence of God, yet we do it all the time, don't we?

William Inge has said, "Worry is the interest paid on trouble before it's due." **A. C. Roche** said, "Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained." And **William Ward** put it this way: "Worry is faith in the negative, trust in the unpleasant, assurance of disaster, and belief in defeat. . ." Worry is wasting today's time to clutter up tomorrow's opportunities with yesterday's troubles. **Vincent**, in his word studies, has called anxiety "a dividing care, distracting the heart from the true object of life. "

Newton: The emphasis in the Sermon on the Mount is that God is "your Father" (5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 9, 15, 18). He is not a distant, cosmic Being of some power and ability (as in Deism and some forms of modern liberalism). He is not a force that operates within the universe (as in New Age theology). He is not a disinterested deity that tolerates our existence while he humors himself (as in

the Greek pantheon of gods). He is "your Father" that feeds the birds and clothes the wildflowers, and who cares infinitely more for you as his child. If he cares for temporal things how much more for you that are made in his image, and redeemed by the blood of his Son? As a child of God you have a higher value than the temporal elements of creation, and therefore you have the assurance that the Father will "much more" care for you.

Demand #16: Humble Yourself by Making War on Pride

Main Text: Matt. 23:1-12

Memory Verse: "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." Matt. 23:12

INTRODUCTION:

This passage came to my mind last Sunday before I realized it was the subject matter for this week. I was talking about the issue of addressing a Christian leader in the community as "Father xxxx". Is that any different than addressing someone as "Pastor xxxx"?

Def of Humility: honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness.

- **C. J. Mahaney**

Pride is when sinful human beings aspire to the status and position of God and refuse to acknowledge their dependence upon Him (contending for supremacy). True greatness is serving others for the glory of God.

Christ addresses this subject of Humility as it applies to spiritual leadership. We all can make the applications to our own lives as well.

I. Exposition of Primary Text – Matt. 23:1-12

SPIRITUAL LEADERS SHOULD BE CHARACTERIZED BY HUMBLE SERVANT LEADERSHIP THAT EXALTS JESUS CHRIST RATHER THAN BY AMBITIOUS SELF-PROMOTION

(:1) Context for Teaching on Servant Leadership

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying,"

Tote o' Vhsouj el a,hsen toij ocloij kai. toij maqhtaij autou/ legwn(

S. Lewis Johnson: this message that he gave against the scribes and Pharisees was delivered on the conclusion of the day of questions, and it apparently was delivered in the temple, because in chapter 21 verse 23, reference is made to the fact that the Lord Jesus was asked these questions in the temple and then in chapter 24 verse 1, as we begin in this very next chapter, the reading of the Olivet discourse, Matthew writes, "*And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple.*" So evidently, these words these strong unsparing words against the scribes and Pharisees were spoken in the temple.

MacArthur: And beginning then in verse 1 of Chapter 23, the Lord gives His last sermon to the people of Israel. This is it. His ministry to them is over. This is the last public speech and it is a denunciation of these false religious leaders and a warning for the people to stay away from them. It is a very severe serious presentation, but a very necessary one. They are **false shepherds**, they are wolves in sheep's clothing, they damn people, and they must be avoided. And our Lord pulls no punches in making that abundantly clear. . .

There are **five elements that false spiritual leaders lack** and I believe the Lord gives them to us right here. They lack authority, they lack integrity, they lack sympathy, they lack spirituality, and they lack humility. Now conversely, beloved, those are things true spiritual leaders possess: authority, integrity, sympathy, spirituality, and humility. So it's a study in contrast.

(:2-3) Contrast of Ambitious, Proudful, Hypocritical Spiritual Leaders

A. The Religious Establishment Seizes Positions of Authority and Control

"The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;"
Ἐπι. τῆς Μωϋσέως καθεδρᾶς ἐκαθίσαν οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι

A position as teacher of the law of Moses; speaking *ex cathedra*

Called and gifted and sent by God vs. self-appointed false prophets;

Our authority is the Word of God

Should a local church have a "chair of the Apostle Paul" or of the "Apostle Peter" where one man takes the position of interpreting God's Word for the congregation from that respected chair ...

Should that be the picture of NT leadership?

S. Lewis Johnson: The thing that ultimately came to be characteristic of the system of the scribes and the Pharisees was legalism. Legalism breeds in unregenerate hearts. It is natural to men who do not understand the nature of the human heart and who seek out of that misunderstanding, to obtain redemption by their own self effort. . .

Well the Lord, in addressing these men, first of all, speaks about their attitude. He says, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Now Moses' seat was evidently an expression used to refer to the seat at which the most prominent Pharisee or scribe sat in the meetings in the synagogue. We'll say scribe because it was the duty of the scribes to settle questions of law and the word of God. So there would be in one, incidentally, there were many synagogues, but in the synagogue there would be one place where the chief teacher would sit and that came to be called Moses' seat, because Moses had sat and judged the children of Israel according to Exodus chapter 18.

Phil Newton: We have something of this sort in the many universities that have a "chair of philosophy" or "chair of ancient history." Typically, it is named after someone of teaching renown or one that has endowed the chair or position in a particular academic discipline. So one of my alma mater's has "The J. Wash Watts Chair of Old Testament" and "The Chester L. Quarles Chair of Missions." The one serving in that position has the responsibility, in these cases, to bear the teaching mantles of Professors Watts and Quarles. When scribes and Pharisees claimed to sit "in the chair of Moses," they implied that the mantle of authority upon Moses was now upon them. Some even claimed that the authority increased as it was passed on from generation to generation. They were taking Moses' place as Lawgiver and Judge in Israel.

B. Hypocritical Leaders Never Walk the Talk

1. The Proclamation of Truth Still Has Value

"therefore all that they tell you, do and observe,"
παντα οὐκ ὄσα ἐὰν εἰπῶσιν ὑμῖν ποιῆσατε καὶ θρεῖτε

Only applies to legitimate truth; not their man-made regulations and additional rules

Phil Newton: God's truth is always true whether it comes from the holiest of men or a donkey. His truth is powerful regardless of the one delivering it.

2. The Pattern of Hypocrisy Must be Rejected

"but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them."
κατα. δε. τα. ἐργα αὐτῶν μὴ ποιεῖτε ἰεγουσιν γὰρ καὶ οὐ ποιοῦσιν

Hearers admonished not to be hearers only, but doers in the book of James;
Proclaimers must be doers also as well

Example of the Apostle Paul: 1 Thess 2:10-12

Godliness and Positive Training of a Father with Vision

- Modeled Godly Conduct

“You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers.”

- Three Primary Activities = exhorting, encouraging, imploring

“just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring”

- Impartiality and Personal Attention

“each one of you as a father would his own children”

- His overriding Ambition

“so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

These teachers had no integrity; could not be trusted; did not have an example worthy of following

(:4-7) Characterization of Their Blatant Abuse of Power – Exposing 3 Areas of Deficiency

A. (:4) Lording it Over the Flock vs Setting the Example for Loving, Sacrificial Service

1. Demanding Burdensome Service from Others – Insensitive, Demanding

“And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders;”

desmeupusin de. fortia barea ikai. dusbastakta kai. epitiqueasin epi. touj wmoij twh anqrwpwn(

contrast burden of Jesus which is light – Matt. 11:30

Phil Newton: When teaching ignores God's provision through Christ, and sidesteps the sufficiency of God's grace, then beware of its rottenness and flee.

2. Excusing Themselves

“but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.”

autoi. de. tw/ daktu, w/ autwh ourqe, ousin kinhsai auta

B. (:5) Prideful Motivation – Seeking Man's Approval Rather Than God's

1. Looking for the Praise of Men

“But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men;”

panta de. ta. erga autwh poioucin proj to. qeaqhhai toi j anqrwpoi j\

2. Concentrating on External Signs of False Super Spirituality – Fake Piety

a. Spiritual Rituals and Ostentatious Piety

“for they broaden their phylacteries,” Deut. 6:8

platunousin gar ta. ful akthria autwh

(small leather boxes with tiny scrolls with scriptures on them, tied to the arm and

head with leather straps) – Aid in remembering the Word of God

b. Spiritual Garments

“and lengthen the tassels of their garments.” Num. 15:38
kai. megal unousin ta. kraspeda(

Aid in remembering the commandments of God

S. Lewis Johnson: they went out of their way to let people know they really were the teachers of the word of God, very much like people who go around in clerical garments letting you know that they are the clergy. Incidentally it is possible for a man to be a godly man in such clothes but it's difficult.

MacArthur: They lacked spirituality. Now by this I mean a very simple point. Everything was for the outside, not the heart. All of their religion was for show. All of it was for fleshly gratification. They got ego satisfaction out of their religious parading and piosity and pompousness and ostentation. They wanted to show on the outside how pious they were so they could get the homage and reverence of the people. . .

It was all externalism. Jude in verse 19 of that marvelous epistle that deals so much with false spiritual leaders says this, these are they who separate themselves. What a remarkable statement. They separate themselves. They want to be considered a spiritual elite. They want to dress differently. They want to appear very pious. Sometimes they may wear a backwards collar or a fancy robe or a funny hat or all kinds of stuff all over them. And they want to appear different than other people. They want to make a display of their piosity. They want to separate themselves. They want to be creating some kind of separated identification as if they are greater than just normal folks.

Remember the self exaltation of **Diotrephes – 3 John 9-10**

“I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words . . .”

C. (:6-7) Ambitious, Political Self Promotion – Contrast the Role of a Servant

It's all about them . . . wanting to be the center of attention

1. First in Honor

“And they love the place of honor at banquets,”
filousin de. thn prwtoklisian en toi(j) deipnoi(j)

2. First in Power

“and the chief seats in the synagogues,”
kai. taj prwtokaqedriaj en tai(j) sunagwgai(j)

3. First in Loyalty

“and respectful greetings in the market places,”
kai. tou(j) aspasmou(j) en tai(j) agorai(j)

4. First in Teaching

“and being called by men, Rabbi.”
kai. kaleisqai upo. tw(h) anqrwpwn(-Rabbi)

(:8-10) Caution (Caveat) Against the Use of Grandiose Titles of Exaltation – Warning Against 3 Danger Areas

A. (:8) Over Reliance on Academic Credentials

"But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers."
umeij de. mh. kl hqhte(-Rabbi)\ eij gar estin umwh o didaskal oj(pantej de. umeij adel foi, esteÅ

Do we really look to One Teacher? Reference speaking to their great scholarship
Do we function as brothers? Or as a hierarchy?
Degrees just put barriers between those with a certain gift and others who have not had the time or privilege or gifting to pursue such a degree.

B. (:9) Relationship Dependencies

"And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven."
kai. patera mh. kaleshte umwh epi. thj ghj(eij gar estin umwh o pathr o ouraniojÅ

Do we only acknowledge dependency on One Father?
Do we see the great chasm between earth and heaven?

C. (:10) Shepherding Abuse

"And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ."
mhde. kl hqhte kaqhgtai(oti kaqghthj umwh estin eij o CristojÅ

Do we follow One Leader?
Do we exalt the Head of the Church = Jesus Christ

Christ was not saying that leadership did not matter – in fact we are commanded to show respect for our leaders – how should we do that while avoiding these tendencies described here??

Plurality of Elders is the biblical pattern for leadership

S. Lewis Johnson: We should recognize we are all brethren, we are all equal under God. I am not your father in the spiritual sense. God is your Father. I am not your professor, your teacher. The Holy Spirit is your teacher. I am not your ultimate leader. The Lord Jesus is your ultimate leader. I am simply a member of this congregation, and God gives spiritual gifts of teaching or evangelism or pastor-teacher, and these are simply gifts given to men who are equal, and we are all equal, we are all brethren and sisters. We should never forget that.

MacArthur: So they wanted to be called teacher, source of knowledge. They wanted to be called master as it were or leader, source of all direction. They wanted to be called father, source of spiritual life. You know something? All of that was what they sought. I have a real problem with that. I don't want to be called any of that. I just don't want to corrupt my own soul unnecessarily with those kinds of things and have my ego react and respond to those.

And I'm not saying that everybody who is called doctor somebody or who has a Master's Degree in something or is a professor of somewhere is necessarily corrupt. I just think we not to seek those things. That's what our Lord says here. But they love that. Oh that's exactly what they wanted. Now, the word father is interesting. That's found its way into religion hasn't it? Primarily in the Roman Catholic church and the Anglican Episcopal church. If you were in the church of England today and you're a bishop, your proper title is Right Reverend Father in God.

(:11-12) Calling to Humble Servant Leadership

A. Spiritual Leadership is All About Humble Service

"But the greatest among you shall be your servant."
o de meizwn umwh estai umwh diakonojÅ

Luke 22:24-27 – did not learn the lesson all that well

B. The Way Up is the Way Down

1. Wage War Against Pride

"And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled;"
oÅtij de uywsei eauton tapeinwqhsetai

2. Work at Humbling Yourself

and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."
kai oÅtij tapeinwsei eauton uywqhsetaiÅ

Is. 66:2 *"This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."*

God doesn't help those who help themselves . . . but those who humble themselves

MacArthur: So what is a true spiritual leader? What is a true spiritual leader? Divine authority where does that come from? Word of God. Integrity, his life matches his message. Sympathy, he's filled with grace and mercy and pity and care. Spirituality, it's the heart he's concerned about not the outside, not the show. Humility, instead of lacking humility he manifests the heart of a servant who seeks to be humble and let God lift him up.

II. Humility: True Greatness – C. J. Mahaney

- Sovereign Grace Ministries, 2005

3 sections:

1) The nature of humility and pride.

Humility is our greatest friend and pride our greatest enemy.

2) An exposition of the greatness of humility and servanthood as expressed in Christ and His Kingdom.

3) several practical ways to begin "mortifying" pride and cultivating humility based on Mahaney's own experience.

Mahaney makes the issue a communal one. Beyond simple discussions of "fellowship" and "accountability," Mahaney offers specific guidelines on how to receive correction from others, how to respect and accept others and how to develop a servant heart

III. Interesting Articles from the Internet

When I started with WBC back in June '99 I did an introductory series on my view of the church

and the role of the pastor in it. One of the things I spoke about was what I preferred to be called. There is a long, venerable tradition in the church of using various titles for men in the ministry, Reverend, Pastor, and so on. If they have an advanced degree then "Doctor." In some of the high, more liturgical churches they have titles like "Father," "Bishop," and so on.

I don't care to make a big issue of this, but I am asked often, especially by new folks coming into the church how I prefer to be addressed. My personal preference is to be called by my name, "Tim," when addressed by other adults. Children and younger folks can call me "Mr. Crater." I have no objection at all to being referred to as the pastor of our church, or to being labeled as a minister or clergyman. Those are useful descriptions which inform people of what I do, what my profession is. "His holiness" has a nice ring about it, but I think I'll pass on such titles too, even when I'm being spoken about and not to. (I'm jesting, of course!)

In addition to it being my personal preference, I am somewhat constrained in this area by the Lord's own instruction on the use of titles for those in leadership in his church. In Matt. 23:6 -10 He spoke of such things in His rather heated and severe verbal trouncing of the Scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of His own day and culture. One can easily imagine His face being beet-red and the veins in His neck bulging as He delivered this scorching rebuke to those who would end up having Him crucified. This is not Gentle Jesus Meek and Mild here, but an irate Messiah unloading on those who had plundered, misled and abused the people of God.

Here He excoriates them for loving the seats of honor, both at social events and synagogue meetings (v. 6), for loving respectful greetings and being called "Rabbi" (v. 7). Then He outright commands the church that it should not call or be called "Rabbi," but to remember that all of us are brothers and we have One Rabbi/Teacher--Christ (v. 8). He also says not to call anyone on earth "Father," meaning I presume, a spiritual father as opposed to our physical dads. That title spiritually is reserved for the Father in Heaven alone (v. 9). He even bans calling someone "Teacher," that is, using it as a title in direct address as opposed to mere description of one's function.

Perhaps there's something here I don't see, but until I see it I'm a bit hesitant to use such titles or to cross the spirit of His teaching here. Now, I'm not on a crusade to end the use of Rev. and Pastor, etc., and I don't go apoplectic when people use them with me. I realize they are accustomed to do so, think I expect them to do this, and usually are sincere and mean well. As occasion permits, I'll convey my preference to them. I don't even like being addressed as "Brother Tim," which some have done in years gone by. But just so you'll know, I like my name and it's more biblical than titles. Timothy was a pastor under Paul and his name is a combination of two Greek words -- "timon," meaning "honor, honoring" and "theos," meaning "God." Given Matthew 23, I think I can best live up to it by not embracing titles in my work. So, just call me "Tim."

http://www.woodbridgebible.com/articles/mar_00.htm

Church Leaders and The Use of Honorific Titles

"But you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them" (Jeremiah 45:5)

by Darryl M. Erkel

http://www.batteredsheep.com/honorific_titles.html

When I was a pastor of a "traditional" church (and even when I was a pastor of what was considered a "loosely organized" unconventional church) I did not want anyone to use the term "Pastor" as a part of my name, as in "Pastor Dave". This was not because I did not see myself as a pastor but because 1) it didn't make sense 2) I thought it was something Jesus told us to watch out for or avoid doing and 3) it only helped put me in a special class called "clergy" and put those without out that term as a part of their name in a category called "laity".

It doesn't make sense...

If we need to use the term "Pastor XXXX" then we should equally refer to others by their function or profession; Jeweler Bill, Musician Bob, Housekeeper Terry, Best Damn Automechanic John, etc. In the bible the term pastor always referred to a function - it was never used as a title. (BTW - Apostle was never used as a title either; Paul never referred to himself as Apostle Paul. That's something we do/did. Whenever Paul refers to his apostleship, it's Paul, an apostle.

Something Jesus told us to avoid...

The way read the scripture about calling no one on earth "Teacher", or "Father" or "Leader" - I think Jesus was talking about this very thing. Seeking honor or esteem in a "earthly" way just like the world does. It's not that there aren't teachers, leaders, or fathers - it's that we aren't to insist or seek to be called that.

Clergy Class...

The biggest reason I think the "Pastor XXXX " is unhealthy is because it emphasizes a special class of Christians called "clergy" and then by default another class called "laity". Even if we don't use the term "clergy" it still creates or accentuates the division. If every Christian has a gift (which I think they do and more than one) then why should one class of gifts be singled out for "entitlement". Besides I think the term is over-used and miss-used. Many people with the title are not pastoring anybody; many others would be more accurately named in one of the APEPT gifts (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher).

I think the leaders in God's church should be humble servants seeking to honor the only one worthy of many titles, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. Isn't it amazing that we can call Him, simply, "Father" or simply, "Jesus"?

<http://davesraveblog.blogspot.com/2007/04/reverend-pastor-sir.html>

Demand #17: Humble Yourself in Childlikeness, Servanthood, and Brokenhearted Boldness

Main Text: Matt. 18:1-6

Memory Verse: “unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Matt. 18:3-4

INTRODUCTION:

How does the world measure Greatness? Think about any realm where the discussion can revolve around Who is the Greatest:

- Sports – pick one – football, baseball, basketball, tennis, ice hockey, soccer . . .
- Business
- Entertainment
- Field of Education
- Politics
- Innovation / Inventions

We like to know **what criteria** will be used in the evaluation process. How would you like a contest where you invested valuable resources to compete along with many other people. At the appropriate time the judging took place and first place was awarded to Mr. X – but the reasoning behind the judgment was never explained. You would find that pretty unfair and frustrating.

The baton of spiritual leadership is about to be passed into the hands of the disciples. They have just been instructed again regarding their Master’s impending cruel death. You would think they would be focused on caring for His needs. Instead their heart of selfishness and pride is revealed in their ambitious striving for the #1 spot in the kingdom. “Tell us the rules,” they cry out. “If we have left all to follow You, we need to know where we stand in the pecking order.”

I. Humble Yourself in Childlikeness – Matt. 18:1-6 (Parallel: Mark 9:33; Luke 9:47)

GOD MEASURES GREATNESS BY THE STANDARD OF HUMBLE DEPENDENCE RATHER THAN ACHIEVEMENTS OR WORLDLY RECOGNITION OR SOCIAL-ECONOMIC STATUS

(:1) Ambitious Pride Focuses on Independent Self Exaltation

A. Context for Teaching on Humble Dependence

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying,”

En ekein| th| w|f|a| prosh| qon oi` maqhtai. tw| llhsou/ legontej(

At least a temporal connection between this teaching and the previous incident about taxation;

Carson: just as royal sons are exempt from the taxes imposed by their fathers, so too Jesus is exempt from the tax imposed by his Father. In other words Jesus acknowledges the temple tax to be an obligation to God; but since he is uniquely God’s Son, therefore he is exempt (v. 26). The focus of the pericope is thus **supremely christological** and, unlike 22:15-22, says nothing about responsibilities to Caesar. . . Jesus has just been declared God’s unique Son (v.5); yet his glory is veiled as he moves toward betrayal and death, thus establishing a pattern of humility for his followers (18:1-5). . . (vv.5-9) Jesus’ disciples must deal as radically with pride as they were earlier commanded to deal with lust (5:29-30).

The **issue of Greatness** should focus on the **unique Majesty of the Royal Son of God** – not on the dependent subjects of His kingdom – who need to be humbly performing service and still viewing themselves as unprofitable servants – look at how the context highlights the Greatness of Christ:

- “*Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*” (16:13) Passage has tremendous implications for Roman Catholicism – this is where the succession of Peter should naturally be taught; with Christ departing from the scene, will Peter now take over the visible leadership of God’s people on earth? Apparently this position of primacy had not been established back in Matt. 16:17-19 or that would have been the end of the debate.

- “*He was the Christ*” (16:20)

- Transfiguration: “*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him.*” (17:5)

- Ability of Jesus to heal vs the inability of the disciples because of the littleness of their Faith; they were big in their opinion of themselves (Pride) – but not like a child in terms of unquestioning dependence and faith and humility

- Incident about paying the Temple Tax – Jesus is in the unique position of being the Son of the King – “*the sons are exempt*” – not talking about civil taxes to the Roman govt.; This was a Jewish religious tax for supporting the service in the house of God

Conclusion of **Piper**: **How do we humble ourselves?**

Is not the most effective way of bridling my delight in being made much of, **to focus on making much of God?** Self-denial and crucifixion of the flesh are essential, but O how easy it is to be made much of even for my self-denial? How shall this insidious motive of pleasure in being made much of be broken except through bending all my faculties to delight in the pleasure of making much of God! Christian Hedonism is the final solution. It is deeper than death to self. You have to go down deeper into the grave of the flesh to find the truly freeing stream of miracle water that ravishes you with the taste of God’s glory. Only in that speechless, all-satisfying admiration is the end of self.

B. Question That Exposes Lack of Humble Dependence and Failure to Properly Respond to the Unique and Supreme Greatness of Christ

"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Tij ara meizwn estin en th/basileia| twh ouranwht

You have all of the 12 gathered around Jesus in the dwelling place of Peter or the place where Jesus customarily stayed while in Capernaum; familiar home territory; know all of the places

You would think there would be some reluctance or shame on their part to even admit to such a question or debate on the subject of Who is #1 – Mark 9:33-34 indicates they were ashamed and Jesus had to pull this out of them ...

Signs of pride:

- Do I continually think about myself?
- Do I continually talk about myself?
- Do I use the pronoun “I” more than “YOU” or “WE”
- Do I remember every service I may have rendered?
- Do I feel rejected if someone doesn’t know how much I do?

Bruce Ball

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=87749&Page=2>

(:2-3) Humble Dependence Required for Salvation

What?? I thought all that was needed was Repentance and Faith??? Now you are adding other conditions???

You cannot truly acknowledge who God is in His Holiness and Majesty and Lordship and who you are in your fallen condition of Total Depravity and Helplessness and Moral Bankruptcy and Inability to save yourself – without HUMILITY

A. (:2) Presentation of the Object Lesson (Visual Aid)

“And He called a child to Himself and set him before them,”

kai. proskalesamenoj paidion esthsen auto. en mesw| autw|

Walvoord: They had been asking the wrong question. They should have been asking, How can I best serve the King? Rather than, How can I best serve myself?

They should have been focused on the privilege of being in the kingdom rather than striving for the position of preeminence

B. (:3) Explanation of the Object Lesson

“and said, ‘Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.’”

kai. eiþen(|Amhn legw umi h(ean mh. strafhte kai. genhsqe wj ta. paidia(ou mh. eise|qhte eij thn basileian tw| ouranw|

1. What Does Conversion Involve? Fundamentally a change in our relationship to God
2. How is Conversion similar to “*becoming like a child*”?
3. What is the Ongoing application of Conversion (vs. the one time conversion at the point of Justification)? Study of 1 John on Wed. night – what should characterize child of God?

MacArthur: Jesus pictures faith as the simple, helpless, trusting dependence of those who have no resources of their own. Like children, they have no achievements and no accomplishments to offer or commend themselves with.

Piper: The key to humility is not merely feeling the absence of merit (as we saw in the last chapter), but feeling the presence of free grace. Humility is not only like the servant who says, “I am an unworthy servant”; humility is also like a child at rest in his father’s arms.” . . . We must humble ourselves in both ways: like an unworthy servant and like a trusting child.

(:4) God’s Standard for Measuring True Greatness

“Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ”

o|stij ou| tapeinwsei eauton wj to. paidion touto(outoj estin o meizwn en th| basileia| tw| ouranw|

A. What is Involved in Humbling Ourselves like a child?

1. Total Inability

2. Complete Dependence

Piper: For a strong, self-confident, self-sufficient, intelligent, resourceful, controlling person, Jesus' demand was devastating. Jesus knew that children were not models for imitation in his day. The reason he chose them is because of their powerlessness and their low social standing. His demand is that we end our love affair with power and status and self sufficiency and rights and control. . . Children may have all kinds of faults, but in a normal, healthy family they trust their daddy to take care of them. They do not lie awake wondering where the next meal is coming from. They do not fret in the stroller that the sky is turning gray. The child is, by its very position, lowly . . . and lives by instinctive confidence.

B. Do we still want to be the “greatest in the kingdom of heaven”?

Focus our thoughts on the Greatness of Christ

Respond as His servant – without taking thought for how we might benefit

(not saying that rewards is not a proper motivation – how does this harmonize?)

(:5-6) Our View of the Greatness of Christ Must Be Demonstrated in How We Treat the Least Significant of Christ's Followers --

What is the connection of vv.5 -6 to what went before?

A. (:5) Humility Eliminates Favoritism in How We Treat Other Believers

"And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;"

kai. oj ean dexhtai eh paidion toiouto epi. tw/onomati, mou(eme. decetai

In fact we should seek out opportunities to care for those who are the most needy = Reverse Favoritism

Hiebert: There is a spiritual unity between the humble believer, Christ the sent one, and the Father who commissioned Him.

B. (:6) All Believers are a Valued, Protected Species

"but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea."

}Oj dV ah skandal ish| eha tw/ mikrwh toutwn tw/ pisteuontwn eij eme(sumferei autw/ i|ha kremasqh/ mu,| oj onikoj peri. ton trachl on autou/ kai. katapontisqh/ en tw/ pel agei thj qal asshj

“little ones” -- **Piper:** emphasizes that they are not great in the eyes of the world. They are not strong. They are not self-sufficient. Instead, what marks them is that they “believe in me.” That is, they trust not in themselves but in Jesus.

millstone – used for grinding grain; so large it took a donkey to turn it

Hendriksen: The millstone is the top -stone of the two between which the grain is crushed. The reference is not to the hand-mill but to the much heavier stone drawn by a donkey. In the middle of the top-stone, whether of a hand-mill or of a donkey-drawn mill, there is a hole through which grain

can be fed so as to crushed between the two stones. The presence of this hole explains the phrase “*that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck.*”

Hendriksen: However, it is not merely the lesson of trustful humility that the Master is here teaching his disciples. The sinful yearning to be greater than one’s fellowmen and to rule over them is not a merely passive attitude. It is a very active drive. Therefore also its opposite and antidote can be nothing less than the similarly active effort to love all, that is, not only to become like the children but also to love them and to protect them; indeed, to exercise this same loving attitude toward all, gladly forgiving all.

How could we cause others believers to sin?

Conclusion: Hendriksen: his translation of a Dutch poem:

Make me, O Lord, a child again,
So tender, frail, and small,
In self possessing nothing, and
In Thee possessing all.

O Savior, make me small once more,
That downward I may grow,
And in this heart of mine restore
The faith of long ago.

With thee may I be crucified –
No longer I that lives –
O Savior, crush my sinful pride
By grace which pardon gives.

Make me, O Lord, a child again,
Obedient to thy call,
In self possessing nothing, and
In Thee possessing all.

II. Humble Yourself in Servanthood – Luke 22:24-30

Piper: Service means doing things out of love that are costly to ourselves but aim to bring temporal and eternal benefit to others. . . . The heart of a saved sinner who seeks to follow Jesus does not ask, “How can I have maximum prestige or applause?” It asks, “How can I do the greatest good for people who need my help, no matter what it costs me?”

III. Humble Yourself in Brokenhearted Boldness – Matt. 10:24-26

Piper: Humility: Five Implications for Bold Truth-Telling

- 1) humility begins with a sense of subordination to God in Jesus.
- 2) humility does not feel a right to better treatment than Jesus got.
- 3) humility asserts truth not to bolster ego with control or with triumphs in debate. It speaks truth as a service to Christ and as love to the adversary.
- 4) humility knows it is dependent on grace for all knowing and believing and speaking . “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). This will create a demeanor that is neither cocky nor

timid.

5) humility knows it is fallible, and so considers criticism and learns from it, but also knows that God has made provision for human conviction and that he calls us to persuade others.

***** **Misc Notes**

Kevin Higgins

Jesus was going to deliver, but not in the way they expected. His was a spiritual kingdom that was not of this world and there would be deliverance from the yoke of bondage, but not from the Romans. Jesus had been trying to tell His closest friends these things as He advanced toward the cross, but they just weren't getting the point. In their minds Jesus was the King who was about to set up His kingdom right here on earth, and even better – they were His right hand men who were going to be the princes in this kingdom! In fact, Jesus had just told them that He was giving to them the keys to the kingdom of heaven and that they would have His authority to conduct kingdom business! They were going to be running the show! They just knew that Jesus was grooming them to run His kingdom when He threw off the shackles of governmental and religious oppression. He had been slowly turning over to them the responsibility of teaching and preaching and they were even performing the same miracles as Jesus! Listen to them, “Man, look at us! Look at what I can do and what I get to do!”

The disciples must have been greatly enamored with their own greatness and importance as time went on,

1. It Is Human Nature to Consider Self First (1)

The disciples had proven repeatedly that they were not too concerned with the needs of others. Remember when Jesus was speaking with the woman at the well?

2. The Lord's People Are of Little Use without Biblical Change (2 -3)

So why call this kid? Think about it. Here is this little boy who is a nobody. He has nothing, can do nothing, and for all practical purposes knows nothing. All he did was exactly what Jesus told him to do, and that was come to Him. He called the kid and he came. The disciples were going to have to be converted, that is, they were going to have to have a change of mind and a change of heart, recognize how completely bankrupt they were, how completely dependent they were upon Jesus for their power and ability and everything else if they were going to be of any use to Jesus.

3. True Greatness Is Marked by Humility (4-6)

Denn Guptill

Children Haven't Lost Their Ability to Forgive Have you ever had to ask one of your children to forgive you? Actually you probably needed to at some point or another even if you didn't actually do it. And the wonderful thing about children is they are willing to forgive.

Watch children play and even if they've been hurt by the words or actions of another child and declare for the entire world to hear “I hate Sally and I'm never going to play with her again.” But all it takes if for Sally to say “I'm sorry.” And they are back together again, best friends as if there had never been a problem. And sometimes Sally doesn't even have to say “I'm sorry.”

So how come adults can't be like that, even as Christians? Why do we want to hold and nurse a grudge, allowing it to fester and grow until it's all consuming? Forgiving isn't simply something we

do for others, it something we do for ourselves as well. If you aren't willing to forgive then you are allowing yourself to wallow in self pity and bitterness that will eventually destroy you.

Dan Brooks:

(:5-14) Treat one another with the same care we would treat little children

Issue of taxation has just been addressed; all 12 disciples were there to hear the answer; "at the same time" – an argument had been underway; they go to the highest authority around to get the answer; all of the disciples are interested in this answer; might have expected the answer to be "Peter;" consumed with rank and position; what individual is greatest? It's a divisive question; toddler or younger; at least one who can walk ; Mark 9:36 – "took him up in His arms" – rules out an older child; probably a child Peter was familiar with – took place in house of Peter; uses a visual aid; "turn or be turned"; change inwardly; look at the warning – the seriousness of this matter; certainly spoken for sake of Judas; but not speaking to Judas alone; all the 12 are included and all of us are included; there is a prerequisite for making it into the kingdom of heaven; a saved person will repent and believe every day of his life until the work of justification will be consummated in glorification; Woe to those who think they are beyond the point of repentance over selfish, ambitious attitudes; OT term -- shuv – concept carried forward into NT; Turn from something to something else; God has not called us to seek the preeminent positions of glory; applies to Christian leadership very directly; what characs of children would apply: weak, dependent, underdeveloped, very limited in strength and knowledge, unskilled, vulnerable, immature; simplicity or frankness about them, a trustfulness about them ... but chief charac Jesus has in mind is *Humility* ...to cause your own heart to bow down; make your ambition small; it was a little child; Jesus held that child in His arms; maybe Jesus was seated at this moment;

How did that child portray a bowed heart;

- went to Christ immediately when He was called
- did not hesitate to climb into the arms of Christ – sense of trust; did not turn and run away
- let Christ use him just as the Savior wished

God is not threatened by your lack; He wants you freely to confess it; children are not supposed to provide for themselves; not angry that we have not accomplished more; must acknowledge our eternal dependence upon Him; trust God utterly; expect everything from Him and nothing from self; isn't our God Good and Magnificent; isn't this word of the Savior both liberating and convicting; looking behind = who is gaining on us; look ahead to see if we are picking up any ground; we want the best seat; The Question should not matter! When Jesus Christ holds you, position and rank should not matter; vs. 5-6 speaking of His family of believers; He never stops viewing us as His little ones; receive as a guest; welcome; demonstrate hospitality; put value on another person; Jesus putting great value on others; look at contrast between vs. 5 (receiving) and vs 6 (causing others to sin); "Offend" – reference to Peter's offence -- Mat 16:23 – a stumbling block; an occasion for others to sin; "scandalize" – he who thinks and wills in human fashion sets himself in opposition to God's thoughts and wills;

How do we cause others to sin?

- Gen. 3 – Eve offered Adam what God has clearly forbidden; outright transgression and inviting others to participate
- passively consent in what is wrong; Aaron – while Moses is on the mountain; Israel decides they cannot wait and indulge in idolatrous worship; forgiveness of God = ended up anointing Aaron as first high priest
- careless exercise of liberty – things that are truly indifferent; matters of conscience; Rom.

14:20-21

Fear of water or drowning; in the depths; not just the shallows; feeling of horror at not being able to breathe; what happens to a person who drowns – you submerge the face; a diving reflex puts the body into energy saving mode; reduction in heart rate up to 50%; restriction of blood to extremities; shifting of blood to chest cavity to avoid collapse of lungs; ...

David Silversides:

1. Christ doing good to unworthy disciples

Condemnation of hierarchical systems of church government; disciples had some awareness of the unworthiness of their argument; Christ saw all the pride and vanity of their heart; He sees the filth of sinful ambition; how can we cherish proud thoughts while at the same time having some sense of the shame of such pride? We put aside the shameful feelings and indulge the proud thoughts; beware of vagueness about our thoughts; Beware of thoughts where you shy away from having them pinned down and defined in such a way as you would see your sinfulness;

Don't be selective in preaching the truth of God's Word

2. The necessity of a childlike spirit

3. Prevailing Pride is a sign of being unregenerate

Conversion here does not have to refer to initial conversion

Disciples (except for Judas) were genuine believers; born of the Spirit; made progress in humility

Deepening sense of unworthiness

True Christianity addresses pride; all false religion leaves pride intact

Dependent on the sovereign grace of God even for the willingness to depend upon Christ

Salvation is both necessary and it is entirely of God

A child progresses and becomes independent of his parents; but a child of God progresses and becomes even more consciously dependent on his heavenly Father – He must increase and I must decrease

Commands of Christ

Demands 18 & 19

Do not be Angry

Matthew 5:21-22 ESV

(21) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'

(22) But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

All of us could easily agree that murder is a horrible crime and it is justly condemned in Scripture. God's attitude towards murder is very clear.

Genesis 9:6 ESV

(6) "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

The Scribes and Pharisees would have totally agreed with Christ's statement in Matthew 5:21, however, they would miss the point. Often, we attempt to justify ourselves with statements that draw upon extremes like "at least I have never committed murder; there are lots of people worse than me." This type of outward righteousness misses the point of Scripture. MacArthur, in his commentary on Matthew, states:

In saying, **But I say to you**, Jesus was not contrasting His teaching with that of the Old Testament (cf. [Matt. 5:17-19](#)) but with that of rabbinic tradition. He was saying, in effect, "Let me tell what the Scriptures themselves say, what God's truth is on the matter. You cannot justify yourselves because you have not committed the physical act of murder. Murder goes much deeper than that. It originates in the heart, not in the hands. It starts with evil thoughts, regardless of whether or not those thoughts are brought to consummation in action."

Jesus is teaching us that God is not just interested in our outward behavior; He is interested in the condition of our heart. Anger, when unchecked, can be devastating. That is not to say that there is no such thing as righteous anger. Jesus himself became angry. Again turning to MacArthur:

We know from other Scripture, and from Jesus' own life, that He does not prohibit every form of anger. It was in righteous anger that He cleansed the Temple of those who defiled it ([John 2:14-17](#); [Matt. 21:12-13](#)). Paul tells us to "be angry; and yet do not sin" ([Eph. 4:26](#)). Although the principle is often abused and misapplied, it is possible to have righteous anger. Faithfulness to Christ will sometimes demand it.

Clearly, Jesus' intent was not to state that there is never a place for anger; rather, He is warning us that the anger we typically allow to grow in our hearts and minds puts us on a slippery slope towards sin. The word used for anger in this passage means to arouse to wrath or provoke. MacArthur describes it this way:

Orgizō (to be **angry**) has to do with brooding, simmering anger that is nurtured and not allowed to die. It is seen in the holding of a grudge, in the smoldering bitterness that refuses to forgive. It is the anger that cherishes resentment and does not want reconciliation. The writer of Hebrews identifies its depth and intensity as a “root of bitterness” ([Heb. 12:15](#)).

Jesus demands that we do not allow sinful anger to take root in our hearts and lives, even if we do not express it visibly or physically. As Piper states:

What makes it [anger] rise when it does, and with the strength and duration it rises, is a combination of the evil we observe and the condition of our mind and heart. Jesus' demand, therefore, is not that we master the expressions of our anger with self-control, though that is often what duty requires. His demand is that there be a change in our condition. He is calling for a deep inward transformation of mind and heart that does not give rise to the anger we should not have. . .

Therefore, what we say in this chapter about the command not to be angry is rooted in the other teachings of Jesus. He is not interested in mere psychological and emotional changes. He is interested in newborn disciples who live by faith in his saving work and present help.

If we are going to meet this high standard, we will need a guide on determining when anger is legitimate and when it is sinful. Piper looks at it from five perspectives: love, proportion, providence, mercy and servanthood.

Love and Anger

It might seem strange to discuss anger from the perspective of love. When we think of love, our thoughts are probably drawn to great themes like those expressed in 1 Corinthians 13 rather than the topic of anger. We know that love is a high calling and the mark of every true Christian.

[1 John 4:8 ESV](#)

(8) Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

However, Christ commanded us to show love to those, who from a human perspective, would cause us to become angry or vindictive.

[Matthew 5:44 ESV](#)

(44) **But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**

[Luke 6:27-28 ESV](#)

(27) **"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,**

(28) **bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.**

Jesus is not excusing the one who persecutes, hates, curses or abuses his brother but He is demanding that we love. After all, there is no greater love than laying down your life for your friends (John 15:13) and Christ far surpassed this by dying for us when we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). Legitimate anger is able to divorce itself from revenge, vindictiveness, malice, and a desire to see the offender crushed and destroyed. We must learn to hate the sinful act but love and pray for the sinful actor. Jesus' anger was directed at hardhearted unmerciful actions, injustice, greed and a complete disregard for God's Holiness and God's Law; yet even in this anger, He loved. Can't you feel his love and compassion when He states:

Luke 13:34 ESV

(34) **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!**

Piper summarizes his discussion on love and anger this way:

If we assume that anger *always* involves feelings of vindictiveness and vengeance and hostility, then by definition good anger is impossible. But that is not the only way godly people have experienced anger. Jesus' own experience of anger tells us that good anger does exist. Therefore, we should define it so that it may be governed by love. In other words, we should assume that with Jesus' help we can be angry with someone and at the same time pray for him, bless him, and do good to him. This anger would be a strong displeasure with what they have done—and even with the corrupt heart from which the deed came—but at the same time we would desire their good and pray for it and work for it. Such anger would not have to be evil.

Proportion and Anger

While love emphasizes our response towards the person committing the act, proportion governs our response to the act itself. If we allow ourselves to become enraged at a minor offense or minimize the consequences of a major offense, we are not allowing anger to be expressed in proper proportions. God's response is always timely and in correct proportion to the offense. Consider these words from one of Christ's parables on stewardship:

Luke 12:47-48 ESV

(47) **And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.**

(48) **But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.**

In both cases, a wrong was done but in the first instance, the servant clearly knew he was doing wrong and willfully continued. In the second instance, the servant did not know the extent of the wrong he was doing and his punishment was adjusted to be appropriate for a lesser offense.

When we see angry responses that are disproportionate to the offense, it can be very uncomfortable to watch. Consider a parent beating a child for a minor spill or an angry supervisor venting his rage at the first likely target to cross his path. If we are to be obedient to the command to be angry but not sin, we must be careful to not let our anger go beyond the actual seriousness of the thing that is prompting the anger in the first place.

Another interesting aspect of keeping things in proportion is not excusing something that God has clearly called a serious offense. While there are times we are to show mercy and forgiveness, it is not always appropriate to let a serious offense go unchallenged or treat it lightly. Piper addresses the issue this way:

It is less obvious that too little anger might be a fault as well. The absence of anger in the presence of evil is not necessarily a fault. Jesus clearly tells us not to be angry with our brother (at least in some circumstances), which implies that there must be situations in which anger would seem to be natural, but we should not have it. How that is possible we will see in a moment. But for now we must also say that there are *bad* reasons for not getting angry as well as good ones. A person may be undiscerning or insensible about the seriousness of sin, the offense that it is to God, and the damage it can do to people. The absence of anger in such a case is disproportionate to the seriousness of evil and is not good.

Providence and Anger

Piper begins his discussion of this issue by giving a very simple definition of the complex topic of God's providence.

One of the greatest truths that Jesus taught to help us be free from sinful anger is the truth of God's all-encompassing providence—that is, his wise and sovereign control over all things for the good of his children. The rise and strength of our anger should be governed by our trust in God's providence—that he is ruling over the evil that makes us angry and will not let anything befall us that is not ultimately good for us.

Time and time again we are informed, instructed and exhorted to look beyond our circumstances and trust in God's providential care for us. Christ made this point when He turned our attention to a simple sparrow.

Matthew 10:28-31 ESV

- (28) And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.
- (29) Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.
- (30) But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.
- (31) Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Paul reminds us that God works things together for our ultimate good.

Romans 8:28 ESV

(28) And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Piper points out that the truth of God's providence should have a profound impact on our anger:

The point is, first, that the smallest details of life on earth are governed by God—not a bird falls to the ground apart from him. And the second point is that God is near, and his acquaintance with our situation is total—even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Conclusion: Nothing will befall you apart from his wise and loving providence over your circumstances. Don't fear. And, by implication, don't be angry in a way that contradicts your confidence in God's care over your life. God's providence should change the way we experience circumstances that would otherwise be totally infuriating.

Perhaps nothing illustrates this principal better than Jesus command to rejoice when we are persecuted for His name.

Matthew 5:11-12 ESV

(11) "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

(12) Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Notice in verse 11 that we are blessed when we unjustly suffer for Him. The Word Study Dictionary states this about the term translated blessed:

. . . To be *makários*, blessed, is equivalent to having God's kingdom within one's heart ([Mat 5:3](#), [Mat 5:10](#)) . . . *Makários* is the one who is in the world yet independent of the world. His satisfaction comes from God and not from favorable circumstances.

From a human perspective, what is more infuriating than to suffer unjustly? Suffering when we deserve it is painful enough! Again, it is important to note that this command does not excuse or condone the person or group that is causing the unjust suffering; it is governing our response to our circumstances. We are to rejoice because we know that one day, God will right all wrongs and we will receive a reward for our faithful service. We find similar exhortations elsewhere in Scripture. Peter and James encourage us to bear up under various trials [Strong's: putting to *proof* (by experiment [of good], *experience* [of evil], solicitation, discipline or provocation] because it will help us become mature in Christ.

James 1:2-4 ESV

(2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

(3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

(4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

1 Peter 1:6-7 ESV

- (6) In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,
(7) so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4:12-16 ESV

- (12) Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.
(13) But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.
(14) If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.
(15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.
(16) Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

Jesus, through His life and His suffering, set the standard for our response. He trusted in God's providence and was content to wait patiently for the day that He would be exalted by the Father. In light of this, shouldn't we be willing to set aside our anger and trust in God as well? Remember Paul's exhortation in Romans:

Romans 12:17-21 ESV

- (17) Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.
(18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.
(19) Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."
(20) To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."
(21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Mercy and Anger

Piper begins this section by stating:

Anger is not only influenced by God's providence assuring us of his present care and future reward (as we saw in the previous chapter), it is also governed by the heartfelt memory that the forgiveness of our sins is owing to mammoth mercy. Jesus teaches that living with the awareness that we are forgiven felons (because of assaults on God's honor) will break the power of unrighteous anger in our lives.

Peter asked Jesus an interesting question about forgiveness:

Matthew 18:21-22 ESV

- (21) Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"
(22) Jesus said to him, "**I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.**"

To fully understand this question and the radical nature of Jesus' answer, a little history is required. According to MacArthur:

Peter's question was: "Does forgiveness have a limit? Granted that a person who commits an offense and repents should be forgiven and restored a few times. But what if he continually falls into sin, over and over again? **How often must I forgive him?**"

Perhaps to demonstrate how magnanimous he thought he was, Peter suggested a limit of **seven times**, which was more than twice that allowed by Jewish tradition. Using references in the book of Amos (see [1:3](#), [6](#), [9](#), [11](#), [13](#); cf. [Job 33:29](#)), the rabbis had taken a repeated statement by God against neighboring enemies of Israel and made it into a universal rule for limiting God's forgiveness and, by extension, also man's. If God forgives men only three times, they spuriously reasoned, it is unnecessary and even presumptuous for men to forgive each other more times than that. Rabbi Jose ben Hanina, for instance, said, "He who begs forgiveness from his neighbor must not do so more than three times." Rabbi Jose ben Jehuda said, "If a man commits an offense once, they forgive him; if he commits an offense a second time, they forgive him; if he commits an offense a third time, they forgive him; the fourth time they do not forgive him."

Peter therefore probably thought Jesus would be impressed with the seemingly generous Suggestion of **up to seven times**. Compared to Jewish tradition, it was generous and no doubt was based on Peter's growing understanding of Jesus' teaching and personal example of compassion and mercy. Realizing that the Lord's graciousness was in marked contrast to the self-centered legalism of the scribes and Pharisees, Peter doubled their narrow limit for forgiveness and added one more time for good measure.

In light of this, can you imagine how startling it would be to hear Jesus say not seven but seventy times seven? Realizing this, Jesus followed up this response with a parable:

Matthew 18:23-35 ESV

- (23) "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.
- (24) When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.
- (25) And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.
- (26) So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'
- (27) And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.
- (28) But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'
- (29) So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'
- (30) He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.
- (31) When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

- (32) Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.'
- (33) And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'
- (34) And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.
- (35) So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Although there are many interesting points to this parable, the main idea for our present discussion on mercy and anger is that God has forgiven a debt so large we could never repay it and He expects us to forgive others who owe us much less. This same idea is reflected in the way Jesus taught His disciples to pray:

Matthew 6:12 ESV

(12) and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Piper summarizes it this way:

We should live in the astonished awareness that God's anger against us has been removed, though we have sinned against him far more than seventy times seven. The effect of this awareness is a broken, contrite, tenderhearted joy. And this brokenhearted joy governs our anger. The only good anger is the kind that is shaped by this humble heart.

Another aspect of mercy is related to not being judgmental. Jesus commanded us not to judge others in the same absolute terms He used in commanding us not to be angry.

Matthew 7:1-5 ESV

- (1) "Judge not, that you be not judged.
- (2) For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.
- (3) Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
- (4) Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?
- (5) You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Our attitude toward others should reflect the humble understanding that we are guilty of many faults (the log in our own eye). Becoming angry and judgmental at our brothers and sisters who have specs in their eyes without first dealing with our own heart issues and attitudes is wrong. Again turning to Piper:

So the point of Jesus' words about judging are to show us how the anger of judgmentalism can be broken. It is broken by a broken heart. We live in the consciousness of our own great sinfulness and in the awareness that only the mercy of Jesus can take the log out of our eye with forgiveness and healing. This awareness turns angry judgment into patient and loving forbearance and delicate correction. Legitimate

anger may remain because we are displeased that eye-specks bedevil people we love. But that anger is not the anger of judgmentalism. Good anger is governed by the experience of mercy.

Servanthood and Anger

One of the key aspects of being a servant of Christ is the willingness to take up our cross daily and follow Him (Matthew 16:24). Jesus said that we should be “slaves to all”:

Mark 10:44-45 ESV

(44) and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

(45) For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Being a good servant involves denying ourselves and willingly setting aside some of our rights so that we can be effective for Him. Piper explains:

This spirit of submission transforms the experience of anger. As “slaves of all,” the emotional experience of being required to do things we didn’t plan to do is not the same as it would be if we were *lords of all*. For Jesus’ sake the slave rejoices to serve the good of others. He says with his Master, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” (John 4:34). What we were sent to do is serve. Good anger is governed by the contentment Jesus gives in serving others, even those who do not deserve it.

What Kind of Anger is Jesus’ Prohibiting?

We have looked at five aspects that should govern our anger: love, proportion, providence, mercy and servanthood. In light of this, what kind of anger was Jesus addressing in Matthew 5:22? Piper believes it is the anger that leads to sinful actions such as slander and ultimately murder. Look at the verse again from the Literal translation:

Matthew 5:22 LITV

(22) But I say to you, Everyone who is angry with his brother without cause shall be liable to the Judgment. And whoever says to his brother, Raca, shall be liable to the sanhedrin; but whoever says, Fool! shall be liable *to be thrown* into the fire of Hell.

Notice the progression in the verse. It begins with anger and progresses through slander to character assassination. MacArthur sheds some light on the seriousness of these offenses:

Raca was an epithet commonly used in Jesus’ day that has no exact modern equivalent. Therefore in most Bible versions, as here, it is simply transliterated. A term of malicious abuse, derision, and slander, it has been variously rendered as brainless idiot, worthless fellow, silly fool, empty head, blockhead, and the like. It was a word of arrogant contempt. David spoke of persons who use such slander as those who “sharpen their

tongues as a serpent; poison of a viper is under their lips” ([Ps. 140:3](#)). It was the type of word that would have been used by the soldiers who mocked Jesus as they placed the crown of thorns on His head and led Him out to be crucified ([Matt. 27:29-31](#)). . .

Mōros (**fool**) means “stupid” or “dull” and is the term from which we get moron. It was sometimes used in secular Greek literature of an obstinate, godless person. It was also possibly related to the Hebrew *mārâ*, which means “to rebel against.” To call someone **You fool** was to accuse them of being both stupid and godless. . .

The three illustrations in this verse show increasing degrees of seriousness. To be angry is the basic evil behind murder; to slander a person with a term such as *Raca* is even more serious, because it gives expression to that anger; and to condemn a person’s character by calling him a **fool** is more slanderous still. . .

Because of the testimony of God’s Word, we know that fools of the worst sort do exist. And it is our obligation to warn those who are clearly in opposition to God’s will that they are living foolishly. We certainly are not wrong to show someone what Scripture says about a person who rejects God. Jesus’ prohibition is against slanderously calling a person a **fool** out of anger and hatred. Such an expression of malicious animosity is tantamount to murder and makes us **guilty enough to go into the fiery hell**.

As we noted earlier, anger is a power emotion and unchecked can lead to great harm. Jesus demands that we shun all forms of unrighteous anger. To be angry and not sin requires that our anger be governed by love, measured proportionally to the offense, tempered by the knowledge of God’s providence, overshadowed by mercy and voluntarily cast aside if the demands of servanthood require it. This is clearly not an easy task and it is beyond our ability if we are operating only from our own strength. Like so many of the demands of Christ, not being angry requires change in our innermost being and can only be accomplished through the indwelling work of the Spirit. As Piper notes in his conclusion:

Becoming angry is not a choice we make. It is a fruit on the branch of our lives. The question is: What vine are we a part of? And whose fruit will we bear? The demand of Jesus not to be angry is, therefore, also a demand that we abide in him as our vine. “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Demands #28-31: Love Your Enemies

Main Text: Matt. 5:43-48

Memory Verse: "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you."
Matt. 5:44

INTRODUCTION:

Think of someone in your life that you have difficulty loving For whatever the reason.

Maybe you have someone who falls into the category of an enemy – at work or at school

Does God love the wicked? Someone might say: "God loves the sinner, but He hates the sin."
Then someone else pipes up: "Whoa ... God loved Judah, but Esau He hated."

What about John 3:16? "*For God so loved the world ...*"

Yet many of us believe in Limited Atonement ... or Particular Atonement

Hoke: Who knows why someone chooses to be our enemy? And how do you respond to them when they do? Well, the tendency is to strike back. It has been called the "plan and execute" strategy - the "don't get even, get ahead" method. But what does this way of retaliating at people for their behavior really produce? Often it produces further animosity and more bad feelings. It makes the hostile person more hostile, and leaves us feeling worse instead of better. Jesus said that there was a better way. As a matter of fact, He gives us a radical solution to this ancient problem. Instead of retaliating against your enemy, you should love him by doing good to him!

CONTEXT – in the Sermon on the Mount:

Piper: Matthew 5:43-44 is the last of six statements in the Sermon on the Mount that begin, "*You have heard that it was said . . . but I say to you.*" The series of six statements begins in 5:21 If you take the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, all the commandments assume -- they presuppose -- that a profound conversion has happened -- a new birth – before our righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. We do not earn or merit our sonship or our entrance into heaven. We receive it as a free gift and gracious promise, and then we live in a way that shows where our treasure is and who our Father is. Loving our enemies is a proof that the power of the kingdom has entered your life, not a payment for the power of the kingdom to enter your life.

SONS OF GOD MANIFEST THEIR GODLY CHARACTER BY LOVING EVEN THEIR ENEMIES = THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

I. (:43) THE SCOPE OF DIVINE LOVE MUST NOT BE LIMITED TO A CERTAIN CLASS OF PEOPLE

A. Sincere Bible Experts Can be Dead Wrong – Human Tradition

"You have heard that it was said,"

Ἰησοῦς αὐτοῖς ἐρεῖ(

Don't believe everything you hear; Jesus not bashful about correcting error

MacArthur: But kingdom character, now mark this, kingdom character is to be absolutely distinct,

- Not *eros* ("passionate longing");
- Not *philia* ("warm and affectionate friendship");
- but *agape* ("unconquerable benevolence"); It is the love which is divine in origin and available only in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is more of the mind than of the emotions, but it comes straight from the heart of God.

We must recall who is our NEIGHBOR

Ultimately we are to view all men as our neighbor (**Parable of the Good Samaritan** is critical here) ... so from our perspective there is only one class of people in this sense – when viewed according to whom we should love

Not 2 commands = love your neighbor and love your enemy ... Just 1 command – view everyone as your neighbor

No Escape clause to justify hating anyone – Pharisees would use this to hate their enemies in what ways??

II. (:44-45) THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE MUST PARALLEL THE BREADTH OF COMMON GRACE

A. Christ's Teaching Stands in Stark Contrast to that of the Legalists

"But I say to you,"
egw. de. legw umih(

Emphasis on Christ – sit up and take note of how Jesus interprets God's expectations

B. Extent of Love Unlimited and Undeserved

1. Unlimited – nobody is out of bounds

"love your enemies,"
agapate touj ecqrouj umwh

Jonah had a difficult time getting this message (4:1-4)

Piper: What kind of **enmity** does he have in mind? From the context we can see that he means a wide range of feelings from very severe opposition to minor snubbing . . . So the point seems to be: don't stop loving because the person does things that offend you, or dishonor you, or hurt your feelings, or anger you, or disappoint you, or frustrate you, or threaten you, or kill you. "Love your enemies," means keep on loving the m.

[How can you love someone you don't like??? By focusing on loving **actions**; but you want your **feelings** to fall in step as well]

Zeisler: Notice that the command here is not that we like our enemies. God doesn't like his enemies in the sense of approving of their behavior or enjoying their wickedness. He doesn't applaud their inflicting pain on others. We don't need to like our enemies. The command here is that we love them and that we pray for them, wish them the best, long for their restoration, and call out to God on their behalf that he would do whatever work it takes to give them eternal life and blessing and holiness. I don't know who your enemies are. We have made reference to politics. Maybe you have strong political convictions, and you are very concerned about the course of public education, tax and spending issues, illegal immigrants, or health care. And you feel very strongly th at anyone who

opposes you should be defeated. Or it may be that your enemies are more personal. There may be someone who has destroyed a lot of your life, inflicted a lot of pain on you, abused you, lied about you, or stabbed you in the back when you trusted them. You could name the name in an instant. But it doesn't really matter where we discover people we don't like or how we came to have them in our lives. The question is whether we will become children of our Father and allow the love that he has even for his enemies to inform what we think and to change our prayers so that we long for their betterment.

2. Undeserved – in fact they deserve your vengeance
“and pray for those who persecute you”
kai. proseucesqe uper twh diwkontwn umaj(

Praying for what is best for them in light of eternity; not praying for their destruction
What about the Psalms that are imprecatory in nature??

MacArthur: And they have again confused that. They had taken the judicial code of an eye for an eye and they dragged it down and made it a way of living on a day to day basis. And the same thing is true here. They had taken the judicial act of a holy God and preserving a righteous seed, and they had dragged it down to be a justification for their personal hatreds. . . It's one thing to defend the glory of God and the honor of God, it's something else to hate people personally. And you have to understand those two in balance. The judgments and curses are always judicial, not personal. What is to be my attitude toward anybody, even my worst enemy? My attitude is to be one of forgiving love, while at the same time I pray oh God do not let your enemies continue to dishonor Your name, but take the glory that is due to you.

Hoke: This prayer does at least two things. First, it impacts them and their situation. Prayer can change things and people. When we pray for our enemies we are doing good to them. We are making a difference in their lives. Second, prayer changes us. When we pray for our enemies, we are engaging in a Godlike work. We are interceding for them as Christ intercedes for us. We are beginning to see them through Christ's eyes. Prayer causes our hearts to reach out in compassionate love for others. Perhaps this is why Jesus encouraged us to pray for our enemies.

Piper: Prayer for your enemies is one of the deepest forms of love, because it means that you have to really want that something good happen to them. You might do nice things for your enemy without any genuine desire that things go well with them. But prayer for them is in the presence of God who knows your heart, and prayer is interceding with God on their behalf. It may be for their conversion. It may be for their repentance. It may be that they would be awakened to the enmity in their hearts. It may be that they will be stopped in their downwards spiral of sin, even if it takes disease or calamity to do it. But the prayer Jesus has in mind here is always for their good.

This is what Jesus did as he hung on the cross:

Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.
(Luke 23:34)

And it's what Stephen did as he was being stoned:

Falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (Acts 7:60)

Illustration from life of **Abraham Lincoln**:

Lincoln was asked why he was pardoning Southerners at the end of the Civil War:

"Mr. President, don't you want to destroy your enemies?"

Lincoln: "Is that not what I do when I make them my friends?"

C. Agape Love is the Test of Divine Sonship

"in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven;"

opwj genhsqe uiöi. tou/patroj umwh tou/en ouranoi(

That's the message of **1 John** – 2:7-11; 3:11-19; 4:7-12; 4:19-21; 5:1-2

Children manifest the nature of their parents; are you children of God or children of the devil?? How do you live?

Piper: Now someone might take this to mean that you must first become a person who loves his enemies before you can be a child of God. But it may also mean: love your enemies and so prove yourself to be what you are -- a child of God. That is, show you are a child of God by acting the way your Father acts. If you are his, then his character is in you, and you will be inclined to do what he does. God loves his enemies -- the evil and the unrighteous -- in sending rain and sunshine on them instead of instant judgment.

D. Common Grace is the Pattern for Our Showing Love to All – 2 Illustrations from God's Common Grace as Displayed in Nature

1. Sunshine for All

"for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good,"

ofti ton h(ion autou/anate,l lei epi. ponhrouj kai. agaqouj

you would really have to go out of your way to just show love to certain people

2. Rain for All

"and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

kai. brecei epi. dikaiouj kai. adikouj

Piper: In this case love is very practical efforts to meet a person's physical needs. Sunshine and rain are the two things that things need to grow so that there will be food for human life. . .

This is the kind of thing Paul had in mind when he quoted Proverbs 25:21ff in Romans 12:20.

If your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Loving your enemy means practical acts of helpfulness in the ordinary things of life. God gives his enemies sunshine and rain. You give your enemies food and water.

Hendriksen: Now it is certainly true that men respond differently to the blessings by means of which the Father reveals his love. There is no common gratitude. It is therefore also true that those who reject the gospel use God's blessings to their own hurt. However, all this can not cancel the fact that the love of God for earth-dwellers, good and bad, is impartially revealed in the blessings of sunshine and rain and all their beneficial results. . . None of this should be regarded as a denial of

the fact that there is indeed a love of God that is not shared by all. . . But just as a human father, in addition to uniquely loving his own sons and daughters, has room in his heart for his neighbor's children, yes even for all the children in the world, so also the Father in heaven, in addition to sustaining an altogether peculiar relationship of tender concern and intimate friendship toward those who by his grace are his very own, loves mankind in general.

III. (:46-47) TWO CASE STUDIES TO DEMONSTRATE THAT BELIEVERS ARE HELD TO A HIGHER STANDARD WHEN IT COMES TO LOVING OTHERS

A. (:46) More Than Reciprocal Love – just loving those who love you

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?"

ean gar agaphshte touj agapwhtaj umaj(tina misqon eceteē ouci. kai. oi' telwhai to. auto. poioušin

John Stott: Levels of how you treat others:

- a) Return Evil for good - belong to Devil.
- b) Return Good for good - merely human.
- c) Return Good for evil - belong to God.

To whom do we show hospitality? Just our friends? Element of stranger inherent in the concept

B. (:47) More Than Relational Love – just loving those who are related to you in some special way

"And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?"

kai. ean aspashsqe touj adel fouj umwh monon(ti, perisson poieiteē ouci. kai. oi' eqnikoi. to. auto. poioušin

Zeisler: Are we doing anything more than pagans do? Is our commitment to Christian experience in any degree different from the experience of tax collectors, unbelievers, rebels against God, or secular humanists? Is there anything about us that you can't account for except by the presence of Jesus here?

Whom are we going to greet before we leave church today? We have some people who are great examples to us in this area. We need to follow their lead.

IV. (:48) BELIEVERS ARE HELD TO THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. The Impossible Standard

"Therefore you are to be perfect,"

:Esesqe ouñ umeij teleioi

Hoke: The constant call to the Christian is to be like God. It is God's purpose to conform each one of us to the image of Jesus Christ. He is calling us to surrender our lives so that God can mold us into a Christ-like person.

The word for perfect in Greek is often translated "mature" and simply means to reach a stage of

completion. Because of this, some would say that it really doesn't mean perfect. They say this because they can't conceive of God asking us to be perfect. After all, none of us are perfect. And none of us will ever be perfect in this life.

While it is true that none of us will ever be perfect in this life, this does not diminish the force of Jesus' word. He is calling us to be perfect. How can this be? How can He ask us to be perfect when He knows that we can't be perfect?

He calls us to be perfect because perfection is our standard. It must be. Imperfection can never be the standard for any believer. You see, our standard is God Himself. We must never judge ourselves by any other standard. When we do, we end up living far below what God has intended for us. While you may not hit perfection if you shoot for it, I can guarantee you that if you shoot for imperfection you will always hit it. So, while we may never be perfect in this life, our standard can never be imperfection. Our standard, our desire, is to be like God.

Jesus is telling us that He wants us to be like Him. He wants us to love with the kind of love He has. When we see that kind of love, it makes us want to be someone who loves like that.

B. The Divine Pattern

"as your heavenly Father is perfect."

wj o' pathr umwh o' ouranioj teleioj estin

Romans 5:10 that Paul said, "*While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God?*" And in verse 8, "*God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" He loved us when we were enemies, it's Godlike to love your enemies.

Piper: So when verse 20 says, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven," he was saying, "There is a way of life -- there is an authentic, deep, unhypocritical way of life -- that you must live if you want to arrive in heaven." He is not saying: I have an impossible standard of righteousness that you can never meet, and so stop trying to meet it, and trust in my righteousness. That's not what he is saying. He is saying, "If you will come to me, and trust in me, and receive the power of the kingdom, and be cleansed on the inside by the forgiveness and love of God that I offer, and bank your hope on all my promises, and let my ransoming death cover all your failures and imperfections, then you WILL be able to live this way (not perfectly, but powerfully), and your life will be the light of the world that proves you are the children of God. --
Evidencing Conversion, Not Earning Salvation

John Stott: "Looking back over all six antitheses, it has become clear what the 'greater' righteousness is to which Christians are summoned. It is a deep inward righteousness of the heart where the Holy Spirit has written God's law. It is new fruit exhibiting the newness of the tree, new life burgeoning from a new nature. So we have no liberty to try to dodge or duck the lofty demands of the law. Law-dodging is a pharisaic hobby; what is characteristic of Christians is a keen appetite for righteousness, hungering and thirsting after it continuously. And this righteousness, whether expressed in purity, honesty, or charity, will show to whom we belong. Our Christian calling is to imitate not the world, but the Father. And it is by this imitation of him that the Christian counter-culture becomes visible."

Zeisler: I want to end with a call to do something specific. Sometime this week at least once, will

you extend yourself to do something loving for a person you don't expect to love you back? I don't mean somebody you already like or you're already familiar with, nor someone who is going to be perceptive of your sacrifice and at some point come back and do something sacrificial for you. Don't choose someone who is already in the circle of neighbors. Will you greet somebody, at some risk to yourself? Will you reach out and say hello to someone, wish them well and express concern for them who may snub you, turn their back on you, reject you, laugh at you, or stare at you? Will there be anything, even once in the coming week, that will remind the world of love that is different from that which can be generated by human beings.

PIPER: WHAT JESUS DEMANDS FROM THE WORLD – Chaps. 28-31

Chapter 28: Lead Them to the Truth

Enemies in what sense? (p. 212-213)

- they are against us; they want us to fail – Love them
- people whose character or personalities or condition makes them unattractive or even repulsive – be merciful to them
- relatives or friends who take offense at something – strive to be reconciled to them
- ones you have something against – forgive them

Having enemies is to be expected

Range of enmity: (p.214)

- those who persecute us
- hate us
- curse us, abuse us
- strike us on the cheek
- take our cloak
- the one who simply ignores us – fails to greet us

Truth is the Root of Love –

- in our culture love is often contrasted with the defense of the truth
- Unbelief in his hearers confirmed that a deep change was needed in them, not in the truth
- did not put doctrinal differences aside in order to have relational unity

Love is not defined by the response of the loved

- A person can be genuinely loved and feel hurt or offended or angered or retaliatory or numb without in any way diminishing the beauty and value of the act of love that hurt him.
- They don't see my behavior as love because they are blind, not because I am unloving
- Feeling unloved is not the same as being unloved

Chapter 29: Pray for Those Who Abuse You

Love hates the evil that destroys persons

- Note about imprecatory psalms – calling down divine curses (Psalm 69)
 - the wickedness in view has resisted love
 - sometimes moral repugnance, not personal vengeance is in view
 - the hate that Jesus forbids is a hate that wills a person's destruction
 - not personal vindictiveness but judgment from the Messiah and Judge

There is no evil that hurts only you

- Everything I do affects my delight in Jesus and my ability to display him as valuable
- To minimize or deny the existence of evil, rather than hating it, makes one partner to the destruction of human persons

What is involved in Praying for those who persecute you? (p. 225)

- To bless is to desire someone's well-being and turn it into an expressed longing directed to

God

- It is both an action = doing good towards them; and a heart desire (not merely behavior)
- Pray for the elements (the aims and longings) mentioned in the Lord's Prayer (p. 226)
- Example of the prayer of Jesus on the cross (p. 227) – prayer, forgiveness, mercy
- Don't set limits on forgiveness – “seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21-22)

Why do they need forgiveness if they don't know what they're doing?

- they are still guilty for not knowing what they are doing
- they are hard ad resistant and have a guilty blindness

Chapter 30: Do Good to Those Who Hate You, Give to the One Who Asks

The opposite of forgiveness is not alienation

- the opposite is holding a grudge
- even though you sincerely offer forgiveness it might not always result in reconciliation
- Jesus offered forgiveness continually, but not all were reconciled to him
- we must make all reasonable efforts to be reconciled – recognize that not every offense taken is warranted or can be addressed

Resisting reconciliation imperils the soul – despising a brother or treating him with contempt

- Matt. 5:23-24

Love Greets people outside our group

- daily acts of courtesy in how we treat others are in view

Do good to those who hate you

- practical acts of helpfulness in the ordinary things of life (sun and rain)

Doing good through healing

- preaching the kingdom and healing went hand in hand
- ministry of healing was one of the primary attestations of Jesus' messiahship

Turn the other cheek, and give to the one who asks

- The challenge I feel as I face these radical demands is how to let them have their full impact on my heart and life and yet not take them more absolutely than Jesus intended. My fear is that if I make any qualification I will minimize their intended force
- Illustrative of the kind of thing love often does, rather than the exact thing love always Does
- The requirement that we always comply with someone's demand, and even give more than what is demanded, would undermine, it seems, the principle of justice in the economic order that Jesus himself approves

Doing good is not always identical with giving to those who ask

Sometimes we have competing candidates for our love – what if two people demand the same thing from you at the same time?

Hyperbole in the frequency the action is required ... not in the kind of action Jesus calls for

Chapter 31: Show That You Are Children of God

How is it possible to love like this?

Jesus is our treasure, our security, and our honor

- we need to be radically free from the love of money and from the need for earthly security and honor
- Jesus is calling for a change of heart that looks to Jesus and his reward rather than what this world can give

Dealing with a skilled liar

- Jesus did not seem to be concerned with being taken advantage of

- when things are less clear, the spirit of Jesus seems to me to call for freehanded giving
- Love like this in the security and help of our heavenly Father
- love your enemies and so prove yourself to be what you are = a child of God
 - cf. John 15:8; Matt. 5:16
 - being children of God has set us free from anxiety. We do not fear that our treasure of security or honor can be lost by the ill-treatment of our enemy or by the loss of earthly possessions. The intimate knowledge and tender, sovereign care of our omnipotent, all-wise, heavenly Father frees us for the radical kind of risks and losses that enemy-love demands.

Your reward will be great

- Sons are heirs, and heirs of God are heirs of everything
- As you have received mercy freely, give it freely (Luke 6:36; Matt. 10:8)
- Freely you received love when you were enemies of God; now freely give love to your Enemies

Demand #38: Do Not Take An Oath – Cherish the Truth and Speak it Simply

Main Text: Matt. 5:33-37

*Memory Verse: “But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.”
Matt. 5:37*

INTRODUCTION:

Here we have an expansion on the topic of **Integrity** which was the subject I spoke on last weekend at the Singles retreat – 3 messages from the Psalms. **Psalm 15:4** What characterizes a believer vs. an unbeliever: “*one who swears to his own hurt and does not change.*” -- Truth telling – sticking to your word even when you are going to have to pay a price . It is that type of *swearing* that we are going to look at today – the topic of **invoking vows**. We need to have a lifelong commitment to **speak the truth** on all occasions.

Christ had some strong words about lying for his opponents – the leaders of the Jewish religious establishment . . . the ones who thought they had a lock on understanding the Mosaic law:

John 8:44-45 “*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.*”

Christ characterizes Himself as one who speaks the truth – How about you?

In light of the **upcoming election** – how truthful have the candidates been?? You have watchdog websites checking every claim and statistic quoted to see if they can find any discrepancies. You have people making promises regarding their approach to campaign finances and then switching gears when it is to their advantage. You have intentional misrepresentations on both sides of the fence. Sad .. we have come to expect that our politicians lie and misrepresent the truth . . .

James Freeman Clark has said, “The difference between a **politician** and a **statesman** is, a politician thinks of the next election, and a statesman thinks of the next generation.” It would seem, at least, to an amateur observer that we do not have many statesmen today, although we have a great number of politicians.

Cf. how many peace treaties are broken – not worth the paper they are written on; look at all the energy and money we spend on writing up detailed contracts to try to bind people to keep their word

Cf. athletes lying about taking steroids . . . Olympic athlete just got out of jail – took a substance called the Clear; stripped of her medals

What is our motivation for Lying: [brainstorm]

- so as not hurt others
- to protect our image
- out of fear
- out of convenience

Why do we fail to keep our commitments?

ALWAYS SPEAK THE TRUTH AND KEEP YOUR WORD WITHOUT ANY UNNECESSARY OR DECEPTIVE SWEARING

You should not need anything but your character to prop up your words.

People tell all kinds of stories: **Illustration:**

Four high school boys were late to their morning classes one day. They entered the classroom and solemnly told their teacher they were detained due to a flat tire. The sympathetic teacher smiled and told them it was too bad they were late because they had missed a test that morning. But she was willing to let them make it up. She gave them each a piece of paper and a pencil and sent them to four corners of the room. Then she told them they would pass if they could answer just one question: Which tire was flat? -- Paul Harvey

[3 P's of Outline taken from MacArthur]

I. (:33) Principles of the Mosaic Law – OT Teaching on Vows

"Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.'"

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Jeffries: Jesus in Matthew 5:17-48 does not take issue with the Mosaic law; His contention was with the centuries of scribal, rabbinical and Pharisaic tampering which had added layers of man-made doctrines and traditions to the 10 Commandments which God had delivered to His people at Sinai. As we have said, Jesus began His discourse on the law by declaring that He had not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law -- to "fill it full of meaning." That process, we have seen, often required that Jesus deal first with the popular "understanding" of the specific laws about which He taught and which had been tainted or slanted by generations of "creative" religious teaching.

MacArthur: Now He comes to a fourth illustration of their sinfulness in verse 33. Here He says, "You think you're telling the truth, but I'm telling you you're nothing but a group of liars." That's the thrust of it. You see, the key to what He says in the Sermon on the Mount is in verse 20; that sums up the whole of chapter 5. He says, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will in no case enter the kingdom of heaven. The standard of the scribes and Pharisees is too low."

A. What is a Vow?

1. Nature of a Vow = binding obligation

Generally a promise made in expectation of the return of some divine favor or blessing; almost like cutting a bargain with God – although it could be unilateral or open-ended – e.g. it is up to God how He will choose to bless

"Oaths are solemn declarations invoking God as a witness to statements and promises, inviting Him to punish anything false." – **Gen. 24:2-3**

Bonhoeffer: "It is an appeal made to God in public, calling upon Him to witness a statement made in connection w/an event or fact, past, present, or future."

MacArthur: An oath is simply this: it is making a statement and calling God to witness to the truth

of that statement, and invoking a curse from God if, in fact, you're not telling the truth.

Don't take the name of the Lord in vain ... but you can swear by His name – **Deut. 6:13**

2. Parties involved

- Much more than a promise made from man to man; a promise witnessed and protected by God; or involves a commitment made to God;

Zondervan Pictorial Encycl – “The vow is a pledge or oath of a religious character, and a transaction between man and God, in which man dedicates himself or his service or something valuable to God.”

- Pagans understood what was involved in offering up vows to Deity – **Jonah 1:15-16**

3. Made for what purposes – Special, serious occasions

a. Consecration for service

- Hannah – if God gives me a son, I will dedicate him back to the service of the Lord
- Nazarite vow – separating yourself to God for His service; cf. John the Baptist

b. Thanksgiving for deliverance – connected with sacrifices

Many instances in the Psalms – related to answered prayers and deliverance

c. Commitment to carry through on repentance and change your sinful practices – practice of marrying outside of the faith **Ezra 10:1-5**; practice of usury to take advantage of fellow Jews – **Neh. 5:1-13**

4. Voluntary – not commanded; you can refrain from making a vow
Deut. 23:21-23

5. Nothing wrong with swearing an oath – example of God – **Heb. 6:13-20**
An oath was a solemn thing never to be entered into casually.

MacArthur: That is the reason God makes an oath; not because you have to have an oath from Him to trust Him, but simply to emphatically state the urgency and the singular significance of that which He has said, setting it apart from other things. So we see, then, that an oath is simply calling God to testify to the truth of something.

If the Apostle Paul, in **Romans 9:1**, says, "*I speak the truth in Christ; I lie not. The Holy Spirit bears me witness,*" if Paul takes oaths in the epistles (and that's only one of many),

Cf. "*Verily, Verily I say unto you ...*"

6. Only Swear by the Name of God – **Jeremiah 12:16** swear by God's name rather than that of idols; Deut. 6:13; Is. 65:16; Deut. 10:20

What about **Foolish Vows**?? Cf. Jephthah who promised to sacrifice to God whatever should first

greet him upon his return if only God would grant victory in battle against the Ammonites (**Judg. 11:30-40**); Also - **1 Samuel 14:24-35**

Emphasis is on the folly of making such vows ... rather than whether you should repent so as not to compound one sin with another

Numbers 30 – entire chapter where Moses lays out some case law regarding vows

B. Prohibitions Against False Promises

Eccles. 5:1-7

Very easy to make rash and false promises that we forget after the crisis is over – cf. sick people making all kinds of commitments they fail to live up to; foxhole religion – “Lord, just bail me out of this mess . . .”

Don’t be quick or impulsive to make commitments to God

God is very real; not some type of dreamy, make-believe world where we can mess around

Prov. 20:25

“It is a trap for a man to say rashly, ‘It is holy!’ And after the vows to make inquiry.”

Promising something to God in consecration or as an offering – don’t go back on this

Lev. 19:12 *“You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the Lord”*

Matt. 26:69-75 – Peter swearing a false oath regarding not knowing the Lord – calling God as witness; inviting God to curse him if he is lying

Matt. 15:5 Example of a false type of vow – one used as a smokescreen to get around a legitimate obligation

Pharisees had twisted this prohibition to allow for taking oaths under every other name but that of the Lord

C. Necessity of Keeping Your Commitments

1. Solemnly Binding

“Pay what you vow” – **Eccles 5:4**

Associated with the Fear of the Lord

Connected with God choosing to bless or curse the fruit of your labors

“pay your vows to the Most High” – **Psalms 50:14**

Understand the difference between mortal and immortality

Associated with who God is in His Majesty

Num. 30:2 again *“When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”*

2. No Delay in Performance -- **Deut. 23:21-23** again

II. (:34-36) Perversion by the Pharisees – Using Vows to Subvert the Truth – Exposing the Abuse of Vows

"But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. 36 "Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

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S. Lewis Johnson: If, for example, we were to take his words in verse 34, “swear not at all,” and take them boldly by themselves, then of course we should have some serious problems, for in the Old Testament, believers are called upon to swear by the name of the Lord. And in the New Testament, we find the apostles themselves swearing. The Apostle Paul swears by the name of God. . .

Therefore, as we interpret these words, we must realize that the Lord Jesus Christ’s words were directed toward the abuses of the Old Testament or biblical prescriptions. In the time of our Lord, there were two types of practices that were deceptive. In the first place, there was a great deal of frivolous swearing, totally unnecessary swearing. Men were often saying, “By my life, such-and-such is true.” That was totally unnecessary, and consequently, our Lord’s words, “swear not at all” do have their application to that type of swearing.

But it is the evasive swearing that he has particularly in mind. You see, it was the belief of the peoples of those days, that if you called upon the name of God in an oath, then that undertaking must be carried out. But if you could evade the use of the name of God, and swear by Jerusalem, or swear by one’s head, or swear by the Temple, then oaths that were based upon these things were not as binding as the others. And so in this way, one might swear and not be held, totally, to his word. So, oaths with God’s name were binding, but others were not.

MacArthur: So He is not removing it all, He is saying, "Swear not at all in the manner to which you have become accustomed, evasively trying to cover your lies, because it is God who touches every place in His universe." Secondly, He says, "You'd better keep it for solemn occasions. You'd better not do it as a way of life; that just shows you come from the evil one."

A. Frivolous Use of Vows -- Oaths are Unnecessary and Counterproductive when Expressing Commitment

- Not speaking against making commitments

- how about marriage covenant -- "Before God and these witnesses, I take you,"

- how about church covenant --

- how about testifying in court – reference to private oaths here??

"I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God."

Anabaptists and Quakers made this prohibition one of their distinctives

B. Deceptive Use of Vows -- Subtle Trickery of Expression Never Excuses You from Binding Commitments

- very similar to “cross my heart and hope to die” ... “swear by your mother” ... keeping your fingers crossed

Phil Heiliger: the Jews took this OT command to mean that only vows with the sacred formula of "By the Lord" had to be obeyed. They set up a hierarchy of oaths, swearing by a number of different things that varied in importance. Thus they tried to give varying degrees of validity to their lies. They might swear by earth, the temple, etc. In so doing, they thought they were not technically swearing by God -- but He is Sovereign over all!

Cf. people who start some sentences with "Honestly"
"to tell you the truth ... " what were they telling me before??

How do people swear in wrong ways today?

- Frivolous
- Impulsive
- Using God's name in vain .. "By God ..."

When do we say one thing but mean something else? Where do we mislead people?

III. (:37) Perspective of Jesus Christ – Emphasis on Consistently and Simply Speaking the Truth

"But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; and anything beyond these is of evil."

estw de. o' logoj umwh nai. nai(ou' ou\ to. de. perisson toutwn ek tou/ponhrou/estina

- A. Speak the Truth Consistently – in every situation
- B. Speak the Truth Simply – without adding on any fancy formulas or oaths to back it up

Just tell the truth! Just keep your word! Don't try to deceive people with trickery or complexity ..
Our character should be marked by honesty and integrity

Phil Heiliger: With God, Word and Deed are always connected. We often try to separate our word and deed so that we say one thing and do something else.

Why do we feel that our "Yes" and "No" responses need reinforcement??

Because our experience testifies as to how inconsistent and deceitful we have been.

Cf. jury I served on for federal drug racketeering charges – they had audio tapes; all the goods; all the lawyer could resort to was trying to confuse the issue

("Evil" is probably a better translation than "the evil one," although Jesus said the devil is "a liar and the father of lies" [John 8:44].)

Zeisler: I used to think when I first became a Christian that all prayers ought to end with the phrase "in Jesus' name, Amen," sort of like an e-mail address; if you didn't put that in there, God wouldn't receive it and it would bounce back to you because you hadn't addressed it right. That thinking came, of course, from the Lord's words: "Whatever you ask in my name will be done for you" (John 14:14). But what he meant was that to pray in Jesus' name is to pray with full consciousness of who he is-his character, promises, glory, mercy, and love. When we pray in his name, it means that his glory and his personality fill every utterance. It doesn't matter what verbal formula we begin or end with.

Conclusion: Importance of simply telling the truth;
There's one thing you ought to keep after you give it ... and that's your word.

Miscellaneous Notes

William Barclay: Here is a great eternal truth. Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which God is involved and in others of which he is not involved; there cannot be one kind of language in the Church and another kind of language in the shipyard or the factory or the office; there cannot be one kind of standard of conduct in the Church and another kind of standard in the business world. The fact is that God does not need to be invited into certain departments of life, and kept out of others. He is everywhere, all through life and every activity of life. He hears not only the words which are spoken in his name; he hears all words; and there cannot be any such thing as a form of words which evades bringing God into a transaction. We will regard all promises as sacred, if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God."

Duke Jeffries:

a. The question of which "formula" is used in making a vow is totally irrelevant in the kingdom of God. The real implication is that Christ's disciples are expected to keep their promises irrespective of any attached oath.

b. "The very existence of a vow introduces a double standard. It implies that a person's word may not be reliable unless accompanied by some sort of verbal guarantee. To be under the rule of God (that is, in his kingdom) is to be absolutely trustworthy and transparently honest. To depart from this is to fall under the influence of the evil one."

- **Robert H. Mounce:** Matthew (Volume 1, New International Biblical Commentary)

c. "Jesus taught that our conversation should be so honest, and our character so true, that we would not need 'crutches' to get people to believe us. Words depend on character, and oaths cannot compensate for a poor character. The more words a man uses to convince us, the more suspicious we should be." - **Warren W. Wiersbe:** Be Loyal

d. James 5:12

APPLICATION

1. How far should we take Christ's prohibition of swearing?
 - a. The Anabaptists during and after the Reformation and conservative Quakers to this day refuse in any situation to submit to an oath.
 - b. Many Christians feel Christ's teaching in Matthew 5:33-37 should cause believers to refuse to swear on the Bible in a court of law.
 - c. It is interesting to note Jesus' own behaviour in just such a situation. It is recorded in Matthew 26:59-65. Some scholars point to this passage as evidence that our Lord's prohibition refers only to personal relationships and not to submitting to whatever oaths or vows might be required of citizens in legal proceedings, upon joining the armed forces, or when assuming a position of great responsibility.

Steve Zeisler: On the radio you hear car advertisements that talk about magnificent cars for very low payments-the most amazing cars in the world! And then at the end someone comes on and says something about "tax and license not included," talking so fast you can't understand what he's saying. But he's basically denying everything said by the first person who talked slowly and was getting you to buy the car.

Abraham Lincoln – stories about why he was called **Honest Abe**

In managing the country store, as in everything that he undertook for others, Lincoln did his very best. He was honest, civil, ready to do anything that should encourage customers to come to the place, full of pleasantries, patient, and alert.

On one occasion, finding late at night, when he counted over his cash, that he had taken a few cents from a customer more than was due, he closed the store, and walked a long distance to make good the deficiency.

At another time, discovering on the scales in the morning a weight with which he had weighed out a package of tea for a woman the night before, he saw that he had given her too little for her money. He weighed out what was due, and carried it to her, much to the surprise of the woman, who had not known that she was short in the amount of her purchase.

<http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/presidents-day/abraham-lincoln/short-stories/why-lincoln-was-called-honest-abe.html>

MacArthur: The truth knows no degrees, no grades, only black and white. Half-truths are whole lies. The Bible says that you are not to lie. There are six things the Lord hates, even seven. The first is a proud look and the second is a lying tongue. Proverbs 12:22 says, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." You see, only the wicked engage in lying, and Psalm 58:3 says, "The wicked go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." In Psalm 64:2, he says, "The wicked delight in lies." Jeremiah 9 says the world lies; in Jeremiah 23, it says that false prophets lie. In Isaiah 57, hypocrites lie. In I Timothy 4, apostates lie. What is the end of all liars? All liars shall find their part in the lake of fire, which burns forever (Revelation 21 -22).

Commands of Christ

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's

Matthew 22:15-21 NASB

- (15) Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said.
- (16) And they *sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any.
- (17) "Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?"
- (18) But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "**Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?**
- (19) "**Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax.**" And they brought Him a denarius.
- (20) And He *said to them, "**Whose likeness and inscription is this?**"
- (21) They *said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He *said to them, "**Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's.**"

Benjamin Franklin once wrote: "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." While you may disagree, you have to admit that taxes are the source of a lot of debate and controversy. All of us pay them in one form or another, most of us dislike them and a few of us may actually hate them. Things were not that different in Jesus' day, which is why an unlikely group of conspirators got together to try and trap Jesus with a question about taxes.

Roman rule was imposed not invited. Even though the Jews had been on their own land since returning from the Babylonian exile, they had not experienced true political autonomy. As a result, most Jews resented Rome. Religious Jews, including the Pharisees, hated the polytheism and Emperor worship that was common throughout the empire. Zealots took this hatred to the extreme. *Easton's Bible Dictionary* defines this group as:

A sect of Jews which originated with Judas the Gaulonite ([Act 5:37](#)). They refused to pay tribute to the Romans, on the ground that this was a violation of the principle that God was the only king of Israel. They rebelled against the Romans, but were soon scattered, and became a lawless band of mere brigands.

Herodians were an exception. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* describes them as:

... "that party among the Jews who were supporters of the Herodian family as the last hope of retaining for the Jews a fragment of national government, as distinguished from absolute dependence upon Rome as a province of the empire." Supporters of the family of Herod, who held their dominions by the grant of the Roman emperor, would be in favor of paying tribute to the supreme power.

It would take exceptional circumstances for these two factions to be brought together for a common purpose and apparently, their hatred of Jesus was much stronger than their hatred and mistrust of each other. As Dr. John MacArthur states in his commentary on Matthew:

Any **Herodians**, even if they were Jews as these men were, would have had strong allegiance to Rome, and it was doubtlessly for that reason that the Pharisees asked some of them to accompany their disciples as they confronted Jesus. Should Jesus fall into their trap and make the expected objection to paying Roman taxes, the Herodian Roman sympathizers would serve as credible witnesses. Although the Pharisees despised **the Herodians** as irreligious traitors, it well suited their purpose to enlist these men's help in entrapping Jesus.

Just as the Pharisees's praise of Jesus would not have been taken seriously neither would anything they said in support of Rome. The Pharisees were highly religious and fiercely nationalistic, and some of them probably were Zealots. But they perhaps despised the Romans more for their paganism than for their military oppression. In any case, their hatred of Rome was no secret, and were they to report a seditious statement or activity to the governor, they would themselves have become suspect. **The Herodians** were therefore useful, even if dishonorable, co-conspirators, and they would make perfect pro-Roman witnesses against Jesus. Although the Pharisees and Herodians violently disagreed about religion and politics, they wholeheartedly agreed about Jesus and were not loath to make common cause against Him.

United in their common hatred of Jesus, these men devised a trap. Both groups knew that how Jews felt about taxation and they also knew that Rome would never tolerate anyone teaching that it was wrong to pay their taxes. Therefore, these men decided to ask Jesus to state His position on paying the poll-tax. As Dr. MacArthur explains:

Poll-tax translates *kēnsos*, taken from the Latin (i.e., Roman) *censere*, from which is derived the English *census*. Of the many taxes the Romans exacted from occupied territories, none was more onerous to Jews than the **poll-tax**, a tax payable yearly by every individual and therefore sometimes called the head tax. Among other things, it was for the purpose of collecting the **poll-tax** that Rome took a periodic census, such as the one that had required Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem just before Jesus was born ([Luke 2:1-4](#)).

Paying for the support of the occupying forces and providing the many beneficial services for which Rome was famous required an enormous amount of money, necessarily supplied by taxation. Consequently a land tax of one tenth of the grain and one fifth of the wine and oil produced was assessed annually, as was a one percent income tax on wage earners. Customs taxes on merchandise were collected at all ports and major crossroads.

. . . Although the **poll-tax** may not have been the most costly tax for most people, it was the most resented by Jews. Perhaps it was because they considered themselves as personally belonging to God rather than to Caesar. It was the census tax that incited the insurrection of Judas of Galilee in A.D. 6 that was instrumental in the deposing of Herod Archelaus and his replacement by a Roman governor. Judas's rallying cry was that, because God was their only God and Lord, the census tax would not be paid to Rome. As Gamaliel reminded the Sanhedrin when Peter and the other apostles were being questioned in Jerusalem, the rebel Judas "perished, and all those who followed him were scattered" ([Acts 5:37](#)). It was the nationalistic, anti-Roman sentiment of Judas on which the Zealot movement was built and that was behind the rebellion of A.D. 66 that eventuated in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple four years later.

It was therefore not by accident that the Pharisees had instructed their disciples to induce Jesus to make a statement about the **poll-tax**. If He gave an answer favorable to the tax, He would become despised by the Jewish multitudes who until then highly admired Him. In that case, the Jewish leaders would then be free to arrest and have Him executed without interference from the populace. But they presumed He would answer otherwise and openly declare that the tax was both unjust and ungodly and should not be paid to the oppressive, pagan **Caesar**, thus incurring the wrath of Rome as an insurrectionist.

The Trap

Now that the plan was complete, it was time to spring the trap. The disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians approached Jesus with flattering words. They called Him teacher and declared him truthful, godly and self-determined which was all true even if they themselves didn't believe it. They probably began with flattery because they themselves always sought the praise of men.

Matthew 23:2-7 NASB

- (2) saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;
- (3) therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say *things* and do not do *them*.
- (4) "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with *so much as a finger*.
- (5) "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels *of their garments*.
- (6) "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues,
- (7) and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

Obviously, Jesus was not swayed by their hypocritical flattery and saw them for what they were. Again turning to Dr. MacArthur:

But by His divine discernment **Jesus perceived their malice**. It was not possible to blind-side Jesus, because "He Himself knew what was in man" ([John 2:25](#)). He omnisciently knew the question they would ask and the reason for asking it even before it

came to the minds of the Pharisees who concocted it. He knew the men who posed the question were not the ones who devised it; and that the words of praise they had just showered on Him were not motivated by admiration but **malice**. He knew their flattering tongues were tipped with poison. He also knew exactly the right answer.

Before answering their question, He threw a question of His own in their faces: “**Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?**” He let them know that their wicked scheme was transparent to Him, that He knew their purpose was to test Him, not to seek His wisdom, and that He was hereby exposing them as the **hypocrites** they were. Although He had never seen them before, He knew they were emissaries of the Pharisees as surely as if He had overheard the plot. That demonstration of omniscience was in itself another marvelous testimony to His deity.

After rebuking the conspirators, Jesus asks to see the coin used to pay the poll-tax. They eagerly show Him one and He asks whose likeness appears on the coin. Although the answer should have been obvious, the conspirators respond. They probably thought Jesus was about to fall into their trap but Jesus was laying the foundation for a completely unexpected answer. Dr. MacArthur explains:

. . .The specific **coin used for the poll-tax** was the **denarius**, which amounted to the daily wage for a soldier or common laborer in Palestine.

Although several coinages, including Greek and Hebrew were used in Israel at the time, and exchange from one to the other was easy only the Roman **denarius** could be used to pay the **poll-tax**. It was a silver coin, minted expressly by the emperor, who alone had the authority to issue coins in silver or gold. All such coins, including the **denarius**, bore an engraving of the emperor on one side and an identifying inscription on the other.

That fact made the coins especially offensive to Jews for several reasons. For one thing, the emperor’s picture was a reminder of Roman oppression, and for another, the Mosaic law specifically forbade the making of images ([Ex. 20:4](#)). In modern Israel, certain extremely orthodox Jews strictly forbid the taking of their photographs, because the resulting picture is considered a graven image.

If the particular coin in Jesus’ hand was minted by Tiberius, one side bore an engraving of his face and the reverse an engraving of him sitting on his throne in priestly robes, with an inscription designating him as the high priest. Several emperors, including Julius Caesar, had even accepted appellations of deity for themselves, thereby demanding religious as well as political homage. . . And the idea of a divine emperor was inconceivably repulsive to Jews.

Although any child would have known the answer to His question, Jesus held up the coin and asked, “**Whose likeness and inscription is this?**” Thinking that He was at last about

to speak the fatal words against Rome, the men eagerly replied, perhaps in unison, Caesar's. Because Jesus had claimed deity calling Himself God's Son, the disciples of the Pharisees confidently expected Him to denounce as a false god and blasphemer the Caesar **whose likeness and inscription** He was holding up before them.

The Unexpected, Penetrating Answer

Matthew 22:21-22 NASB

(21) They *said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He *said to them, "**Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's.**"

(22) And hearing *this*, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

Jesus, the master illustrator and teacher, has just used a coin to proclaim a great truth. God is the supreme authority over all things but He has delegated some of His authority to earthly rulers and we should obey them when they are operating within the realm of their divinely appointed work. John Piper captures this moment well in *What Jesus Demands from the World* when he states:

One can picture his hearers holding their breath as he says, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Perhaps a smile of devious success began to come over the faces of his adversaries. This sounds very much like a capitulation to the supremacy of Rome. I wonder how long Jesus paused between the two commands. Perhaps long enough to let the words work their way into the mind: "Caesar has a scope of ownership and authority. Comply with that." As that begins to sink in, Jesus adds one short but massive qualification: "Render to God the things that are God's." The smiles that were forming on the adversaries' faces pause. This is not what they were expecting. It is not what anybody was expecting. Jesus has called for a kind of allegiance in two directions: to Caesar according to his ownership and authority, and to God according to his ownership and authority.

Jesus' command has several practical implications for us. First, we are to be good citizens, even if we disagree with or don't like our government. This event happened just a few days prior to the crucifixion. Jesus knew He was heading to a Roman cross and His executioners would be Roman soldiers yet, He commanded that we render to Caesar (government) what is lawful for them to ask for. As Dr. MacArthur explains:

The profundity of that statement is often missed because of its simplicity *Apodidōmi* (**render**) means to pay or give back, implying a debt. It carries the idea of obligation and responsibility for something that is not optional. Jesus' answer to the original question ([v. 17](#)) was therefore, "Yes, it is entirely lawful and right to pay the poll-tax to **Caesar**, because that tax is Caesar's, belonging to **the things** in his domain."

Jesus did not use the word give, as had the disciples of the Pharisees in asking the question. For them, as for most Jews, paying any tax to Rome was not considered a legitimate duty and

was done only with the greatest reluctance. Now Jesus declared that the payment not only was perfectly legal but morally obligatory.

Jesus here declared the divinely-ordained obligation of citizens to pay taxes to whatever government is over them. Paying taxes is a legitimate duty of every person, but is specially binding on believers because they are specially bound to God's Word. Jesus made no qualifying exemptions or exceptions, even under rulers such as the blasphemous, pagan, idolatrous government that in a few days would nail Him to the cross. The government that executed the Son of God was to be paid taxes by God's people. The state has the divine right to assess taxes that are within its sphere of responsibility and its citizens have the divine obligation to pay them.

The Apostles also taught that Christians should be good citizens, even while they and the Christians they were teaching were being persecuted and martyred by their government. Consider these passages:

Romans 13:1-7 NASB

- (1) Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.
- (2) Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.
- (3) For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;
- (4) for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.
- (5) Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.
- (6) For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.
- (7) Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

1 Peter 2:13-17 NASB

- (13) Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,
- (14) or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.
- (15) For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.
- (16) *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.
- (17) Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Being good citizens and submitting to legitimate governmental authority is God ordained, God honoring and an obligation for every Christian. However, earthly authority is delegated authority and it has its own limits and boundaries. That brings in the second part of Christ's statement concerning rendering to God that which is God's. In a very real sense, even that which

belongs to Caesar belongs to God which is why Piper states that earthly authority is warranted, limited and shaped by our allegiance to Christ, the supreme authority. As a prelude to the great commission, Jesus said:

[Matthew 28:18 NASB](#)

(18) And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

He alone chooses the scope of the authority He grants to governments and officials and there are certain things that will never be delegated. Piper explains it this way:

. . . Jesus is demanding absolute allegiance to himself and his ownership and authority. All other allegiances are relativized by this supreme allegiance. All other allegiances are *warranted* and *limited* and *shaped* by this first allegiance.

They are *warranted* because the subordinate authorities in the world, like Caesar, are owing to God's authority. Jesus said to Pilate, who seemed to have authority over Jesus at his trial, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11). Pilate has authority because God has given it to him. Therefore, such human authority is warranted because it is indirectly God's. When Jesus said, "Render to God the things that are God's," the term "the things that are God's" included Pilate's authority, because it was, indirectly, God's. God had given it to him. He would not have it without God. Therefore, Jesus acknowledges the legitimacy of human authority. It is legitimate, but not absolute. It is *from* God, but it is not God.

. . . All our earthly allegiances are *limited* by what God's supreme authority accomplished through Jesus (see John 5:27; Matt. 28:18). We should do what Caesar says since he has his authority by God's design. But we should not do all that he says. If Caesar says, "Caesaris Lord!" we do not imitate him. If he commands us to bow under his lordship, we do not do it. *Jesus* is Lord. His followers bow to him as supreme and to no one else. Even though human authority is ultimately from God, it does not act according to God's word. Therefore, it may demand what God forbids.

. . . All our earthly allegiances are not only warranted and limited by the supreme authority of God but are also *shaped* by that authority. In other words, even the duty we properly render to Caesar is rendered differently because Caesar is not absolute. We render obedience to Caesar where we can, not because he is Lord, but because our Lord Jesus bids us to.

Put simply, when submitting to an earthly authority would cause us to disobey God, our choice is clear, we obey God. The people of God have faced these challenges before and no doubt, they will again. During the Babylonian captivity, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego faced a time when obedience to earthly authority would have clearly violated God's law and they had to take a potentially costly stand.

Daniel 3:1-18 NASB

- (1) Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which *was* sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.
- (2) Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent *word* to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.
- (3) Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.
- (4) Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and *men of every* language,
- (5) that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.
- (6) "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."
- (7) Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language fell down *and* worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.
- (8) For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.
- (9) They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever!
- (10) "You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image.
- (11) "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.
- (12) "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, *namely* Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."
- (13) Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king.
- (14) Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?"
- (15) "Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, *very well*. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"
- (16) Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.
- (17) "If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.
- (18) "But *even* if *He does* not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

No earthly authority is worthy of worship. In fact, to worship anyone or anything other than God is idolatry. When faced with the choice between obeying the king or violating God's clear

command in Scripture, the child of God is to render to God the things that are God's and take a stand. The apostles faced a similar challenge.

Acts 5:14-29 NASB

- (14) And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their number*,
- (15) to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.
- (16) Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.
- (17) But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy.
- (18) They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.
- (19) But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said,
- (20) "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life."
- (21) Upon hearing *this*, they entered into the temple about daybreak and *began* to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent *orders* to the prison house for them to be brought.
- (22) But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back,
- (23) saying, "We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside."
- (24) Now when the captain of the temple *guard* and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this.
- (25) But someone came and reported to them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"
- (26) Then the captain went along with the officers and *proceeded* to bring them *back* without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned).
- (27) When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them,
- (28) saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."
- (29) But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

Dr MacArthur summarizes this point this way:

But even more importantly, Jesus went on to say men must render **to God the things that are God's**. He was not separating secular human society from religion, saying, in effect, that one owes allegiance to human government in regard to material things and allegiance to God in regard to the spiritual. Scripture never makes such a dichotomy because all things and every area of life belong to God. Jesus was still talking about Caesar, saying that **the things that are God's** do *not* belong to Caesar and should never be offered to him, but only **to God**.

As a representative of human government, Caesar had the right to assess taxes, but as a representative of human religion, as emperors frequently were, they had no right to command worship. Men are to pay taxes to the head of a government as a human ruler

but never homage to him as a god. His realm is social and economic, and to the extent that he steps outside that realm, his authority ceases and men's obligation to him ceases. When the Sanhedrin, which had political as well religious authority in Jerusalem, gave the apostles "strict orders not to continue teaching in [Jesus'] name," Peter replied for all of them, saying, "We must obey God rather than men" ([Acts 5:28-29](#)).

Jesus surprised and astonished the conspirators who tried to trap Him. In so doing, He acknowledged that God rules supreme and deserves all honor, glory, respect and obedience. God has chosen to delegate some of His authority to earthly officials and institutions for the purpose of creating orderly societies. Our responsibility is to be good citizens and render appropriate obedience to government institutions whenever giving such obedience does not cause us to disobey a clear command of Scripture, even if we consider the government unjust, unfair, or unredeemed. The children of God have been in the world but not of the world since the fall of mankind and that is the way things will continue until Christ returns to establish His rule and reign upon this earth. Obeying this command honors Christ and sets a godly example in an ungodly society. Piper concludes his thoughts on this topic this way:

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Let this demand exalt the supremacy of God and his Son Jesus over all earthly powers. Let it bind our hearts in absolute allegiance to the kingship of Jesus. Let it warrant and limit and shape the way we render allegiance to "Caesar." And let it free us to live in this world as citizens of another kingdom—not escaping, not conforming, but living out the radical difference that King Jesus makes in every relationship, including our relationship with the state.

Demands #47-48: Be Salt and Light

Main Text: Matt. 5:13-16

Memory Verse: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." v.16

*SALT AND LIGHT -- IMPACTING THE WORLD AROUND US . . .
OR GOOD FOR NOTHING?*

BIG IDEA:

AS THOSE INDWELT BY GOD, WE SHOULD HAVE A POWERFUL INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD

- TO COUNTERACT DECAY BY STANDING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS ... AND**
- TO SHINE THE TORCH OF TRUTH AND LIFE TO THE DARKNESS AROUND US OUT OF A MOTIVATION TO BRING GLORY TO GOD**

INTRODUCTION:

(Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster)

On January 28, 1986 America was shocked by the destruction of the space shuttle Challenger, and the death of its seven crew members. One of those who died that day was a female schoolteacher -- privileged to be selected as the first civilian in NASA history to "ride the rocket" into the last frontier. It was to be the Challenger's 10th mission -- we had come to take for granted the safety of these missions.

The temperature that day at ground level at Pad 39B was 36 degrees F, that was 15 degrees cooler than any other previous launch by NASA. The boosters started rumbling according to play. But 0.68 seconds after ignition black smoke started coming from the bottom right booster. Apparently the burning of one of the O-rings in the booster caused the smoke. O-rings are rubber "rings" that are used to make airtight seals. If one of the O-rings breaks air can get in and gas can get out -- a very combustible combination -- and one that proved tragic in this instance. A terrible explosion just seconds after liftoff and the impact was not only felt but actually seen around the world on the TV broadcast.

What people had trouble coming to grips with was how could such a small and seemingly insignificant component -- a tiny O-ring -- cause such a huge catastrophe?

If you are at all like me, you wrestle at times with feelings of being insignificant. It's a huge world out there and we often ask: What can little old me accomplish for the Lord? What's my mission? Why doesn't Christ just come back and kickoff the big celebration? What am I doing here?

CONTEXT / REVIEW:

Christ certainly knew His Mission -- Matt. 4:23-25; Matt. 9:35 teaching / preaching / healing. Remember the Beatitudes from Matt chapter 5 -- the Sermon on the Mount. As members of the kingdom we should be progressing in a number of key character areas ... as we pursue the blessedness that is associated with conformity to the righteousness of God. We learned **what type of people we have been called to be.** Finished with the reality of **persecution.**

Today we are going to look at the very simple instructions that Jesus gave to His disciples to help them focus on their true mission -- This is how we are going to find significance in our life here on

earth -- **What have we been called to do?**

2 major points:

- 1) You are the **Salt of the earth**
- 2) You are the **Light of the world**
 - Significance of the Metaphor -- Why did Christ pick these 2 simple phenomena
 - Underlying Assumption: Why is the world in such desperate need of salt or light
 - Try to come to grips with our Mission as Salt or Light -- What are the implications for us
 - Look at the Pathway to Ineffectiveness -- what would negate the type of powerful impact we are supposed to have on the world

Big Idea:

AS THOSE INDWELT BY GOD, WE SHOULD HAVE A POWERFUL INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD

- **TO COUNTERACT DECAY BY STANDING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS ... AND**
- **TO SHINE THE TORCH OF TRUTH AND LIFE TO THE DARKNESS AROUND OUT OF A MOTIVATION TO BRING GLORY TO GOD**

I. (:13) SALT -- THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT WORKS THRU BELIEVERS TO COUNTERACT THE DECAY AND ROTTENNESS IN THE WORLD AS WE TAKE A STAND FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS METAPHOR OF SALT

Must first understand how salt was used at the time of Christ ...

In our contemporary society, we may miss the real value of salt. Many ancient societies understood the value of salt far better than we. The Romans believed, for instance, that salt was very valuable. Sometimes Roman soldiers even received their pay in salt. How would you like that ... Go home be warmed and filled! Some have said that it was from this practice that the phrase "*not worth his salt*" originated.

Primarily in the days before refrigerators, salt was rubbed on to the meat to keep it from going bad so quickly; it was a preservative ... cf. the American Indians and the early settlers with their practice of salting the meat to preserve it

This seems to be the main emphasis in this passage; the fact that salt also is used to enhance the taste seems to be suggested by vs 13 "*tasteless*" ... but the context seems to argue more for a rendering of: if the salt has lost its **distinctive essence ... its effectiveness ...**

interesting word: "*moronized*" -- we get the word moron; I have a VP at work Bob Marano with an "a" -- he gets upset when you misspell it so it looks like moron ...

I don't think Jesus is talking about believers giving the world some pizzaz; although by virtue of counteracting the process of decay we do make the world a more palatable place -- both for ourselves and for others -- bringing out the true meaning of life

B. UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION: Apart from the impact of believers as salt and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in restraining sin, the world would be much more ROTTEN

How rotten would it be? lots of examples where God sets something good in motion and man wrecks it with a downward spiral of increasing wickedness

- 1) Look at the Fall -- God saw all that He had made and behold it was very

good ... Until man chose to disobey and go his own way .. Happened very quickly!
What type of offspring did Adam and Eve raise? the kind where brother murders brother!
Doctrine of **Total Depravity** ... Sin Nature .. Man incapable on his own
of even responding to God; dead in his trespasses and sins apart from
God's redeeming grace

2) Look at the Days of Noah -- Gen 6: 5, 11-12

"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually... Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth"

Noah = a good example of trying to function as Salt and Light in his culture;
called a preacher of **righteousness** (good example of putting the Sermon on
the Mount into practice) – so we know we can't measure our effectiveness by the results but
by how well we please the Lord

3) Look at the Days of Sodom and Gomorrah -- Gen. 18

God couldn't find 10 righteous people there; He was merciful to hustle Lot out before
bringing judgment; his wife was so attached to the world, so compromised, she looked back and
was turned into a pillar of salt; Lot not very effective as salt and light

4) Look at the nation of Israel -- Removal of the Shekinah Glory from the
Temple -- Ezekiel 10-11; all that God had done to plant the nation, cultivate it, look for
it to produce good fruit ... What was the output??

5) Look at Romans 1 -- the account of progressive wickedness
how does that play out in the Roman Empire; what about in the United States?

6) Look at the description of the Last Days in 2 Pet. 2

7) Look at the description of the Tribulation Period in the Book of Rev. -- what happens
when all the believers are removed at the Rapture and God starts over with the 3
Witnesses? picture of Babylon in Rev. 18:2-3

What is the consistent thread as we look at these different time periods throughout the history of
man? Man's natural depravity has a tendency to **cycle downward** in spirals of increasing
wickedness ... no matter how good things were at the beginning ... Not to say that there cannot be
revivals for a period of time ... but when you look at the overall trend...

Does that mean I am a pessimist when it comes to what kind of impact can we expect the gospel to
have on the world?? I would say that I am a realist .. I am certainly not of the postmill camp that
see the kingdom gradually taking over the world and things improving until we reach some type of
millennial fulfillment of the OT promises and then Christ returns

Look at our culture today? How rotten has it become ... just in our lifetime
and all of this is with the presence of some measure of salt ... let's look at our Mission as the salt of
the earth

C. COMING TO GRIPS WITH OUR MISSION AS BELIEVERS - THOSE INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT -- TO BE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

"You are the salt of the earth"

Why do I throw in the ministry of the Holy Spirit here? Not mentioned in the text in Matt 5 ... It is primarily the Holy Spirit that performs this ministry of restraining evil; of sanctifying and purifying; cf. **1 Cor. 7:14** -- very interesting passage

IMPLICATIONS:

1. Salt has no impact unless it **touches the meat -- Called to be Radically Associated with Unbelievers**

what type of contact do we have with non-Christians? with our culture? Christ came and spent quality time building into the lives of His disciples; general teaching time reaching out to the multitudes; and personal outreach by rubbing shoulders directly with the publicans and sinners to the extent that the Separatist Pharisees blasted Him for it

cf. book title: *Out of the Saltshaker & into the World*

If salt just hangs around all day with salt, it will not fulfill its intended function; O-rings in the box are worthless ... they have to be applied to where a seal is needed

Where does my life touch non-Christians? What type of an impact am I having there?

cf. quote from book -- **p.124** -- John Stott -- **rabbit hole Christianity**

Probably more of us need to change our approach in this area than any other

Our schedules are structured around doing things with other believers ...

We know that ... but are we committed to changing that??

As we head this direction we must remember a second key implication:

2. Salt has no impact unless it retains its **distinctive essence -- Called to be Radically Different from the World**

As Christians, do we stand out as different from the world?

emphasis on the ministry of the **HOLY** Spirit

Some Christians wrestle much more in this area ... they have plenty of contact with unbelievers ... but they have become worldly so there is no distinction

Look at the **music artists** who try to appeal to the more popular crowd ... cf. Amy Grant; What kind of testimony do you end up with??

Do we laugh at the same jokes? some uncomfortable moments at work

Do people change what types of jokes they will tell around you ...

Do we use the same vocabulary as unclean vessels?

Oh pardon my French

do people change their vocabulary around you??

Problem: That's what nonbelievers at work think a Christian is: someone who is not allowed to laugh at dirty jokes and can't use coarse language ... (I) (we) are giving the wrong impression.. What about the heart attitudes of how we treat other people, how we love others and are concerned for their well-being ...

- What about mercy triumphing over judgment?
- What about having pure motives rather than a selfish agenda?
- What about pursuing the ministry of a peacemaker as a reconciler?
- What about a servant type heart as we help others?
- What about loving our neighbor as ourself?? something the Pharisees couldn't stomach

It is much harder to bring this type of understanding home to those we are trying to reach for Christ

Do we watch the same TV shows with all of their sexual innuendos?

Do we have the same value system ... the materialism of the world ...

Are we friends of the world or friends of God?

Problem with some of the seeker church mentality: if it thinks that it can sneak an entrance into non-believers hearts by being as much like them as possible without crossing the line ... and thus attract them (or trick them) into Christianity ...

so we present a service that differs very little from the style of entertainment the world finds attractive

so we use a vocabulary that has been cleansed from any words that might offend the conscience or stir up conviction -- no mention of sin, of hell, of God's holiness and justice and righteousness

so we present a very man-oriented type of message ... more of a manual on how to be happy and fulfilled as a person ... manology ... rather than theology which presents truth from God's perspective with a vision of glorifying God ...

Where is the **power** there to counteract the **decay and rottenness** of the world??

2 Pet 2:9 *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."*

Are we authentic? Are we the real thing? --- We can only impact the world if we are yielded to the Holy Spirit

Consequences of being salt

3. Salt is not always welcomed with open arms -- it carries a bit of a **sting, a bite** to it -- **Called to be Radically Committed to Righteousness**

speaking the truth in love ... but there is something of a confrontational tone at times;

not just going with the flow; fitting in with the crowd

That is why the context speaks of persecution ...

"all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"

4. Implications in terms of **Political Activism** here in the United States?

But Are we **Called to Be Radically Immersed in Political Activism?** Difficult Question

...

Defining the arena ... no question that our personal relationships with others are primarily in view

...

But what about our responsibility to our larger community and overall culture?

I might not be the best one to respond here ... always a danger of our perspective being distorted by our own sin or our own blind spots in certain areas ... Not an easy question

Safe Question: **What would Jesus do?**

certainly would not characterize Him as a political activist; however, our form of govt. is vastly different

cf. the **Moral Majority** -- even Dr. Jerry Falwell tempered his approach and expectations in this area

cf. our family joking about "*being on Alert*" -- many causes seek to cast a millstone of a guilt trip around your neck if you do not support their cause by doing X, Y, and Z

I am different than Karen on this issue ...

cf. Pietistic approach; almost isolated from the world you live in ...not advocating that; not criticizing the efforts of those who feel called to such a political role;

However, not going to be intimidated into some type of legalistic response by way of obligation;

How does my Lord want me to function as salt in the context in which He has put me???

D. PATHWAY TO INEFFECTIVENESS = LOSING OUR DISTINCTIVENESS

conformity to the world around us -- friendship with the world = enmity to God;
failure to develop biblical convictions or lack of backbone to stand by them;
unwillingness to expose wickedness for what it really is

"but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men."

Do we want lives that are characterized as good for nothing ... or lives that really have an impact for Christ?

Illustration: Impact of ministry of Dwayne Nicodemus

A Peanuts cartoon, showed Peppermint Patty talking to Charlie Brown. She said, "Guess what, Chuck. The first day of school, and I got sent to the principal's office. It was your fault, Chuck." He said, "My fault? How could it be my fault? Why do you say everything is my fault?" She said, "You're my friend, aren't you, Chuck? You should have been a **better influence** on me."

While Peppermint Patty was seeking to pass the buck, she was in a very real sense right. We should be a good influence on our friends. We certainly do have an influence, for good or for bad.

remember our simple outline?? Salt and Light

II. (:14-15) LIGHT -- THE INDWELLING PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST WORKS THRU BELIEVERS TO PROVIDE A BEACON OF LIGHT IN A CONTEXT OF DARKNESS IN THE WORLD (AS WE SHINE THE TORCH OF TRUTH AND LIFE TO A WORLD LOST IN DARKNESS)

A. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS METAPHOR OF LIGHT

Remember the claims of Christ -- presented first by John the Baptist .. the one who came announcing the King; and then reiterated by Christ Himself

Luke 1:76-79 Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, prophesying about his ministry of being the forerunner to Christ

"For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways ... the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

John chapter 1

"In Him (Christ) was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man."

Remember **John 8** -- Jesus confronted the Pharisees with this same claim:

"I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

One of my all-time favorite illustrations ... you've probably heard it before ... but humor me ... Think about the difficulty of navigating large ships out in the open seas and then bringing them safely into harbor in all types of nasty weather and conditions of poor visibility. It's amazing that more ships don't ram into one another or end up on the rocks ...

* * * *

In the darkest part of the night, a ship's captain cautiously piloted his warship through the fog - shrouded waters. With straining eyes he scanned the hazy darkness, searching for dangers lurking just out of sight.

Then His worst fears were realized when he saw a bright light straight ahead. It appeared to be a vessel on a collision course with his ship. Just then this American vessel he was piloting received a radio message from the Canadians he was about to crash into:

Canadians: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the south to avoid a collision.

Americans: Recommend you divert your course 15 degrees to the north to avoid a collision.

Canadians: Negative. You will have to divert your course 15 degrees to the south to avoid a collision.

Americans: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

Canadians: No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.

Americans: THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS LINCOLN, THE SECOND LARGEST SHIP IN THE UNITED STATES' ATLANTIC FLEET. WE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY THREE DESTROYERS, THREE CRUISERS AND NUMEROUS SUPPORT VESSELS. I DEMAND THAT YOU CHANGE YOUR COURSE 15 DEGREES NORTH. I SAY AGAIN, THAT'S ONE FIVE DEGREES NORTH, OR COUNTER MEASURES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THIS SHIP.

Canadians: This is a **lighthouse**. Your call.

* * * * *

Something about lighthouses that seem to appeal to everybody. (Mom paints them)

- They are perched up on some prominent precipice where they can have maximum utility ..
you don't find any lighthouses hidden away in some cave or valley
- They are very simple in their mission -- provide a beacon of light to those out in the darkness who need that critical help for navigation and safety

cf. all the Christian ministries that have sprung up around this theme ... lighthouse ministries

Key Question: How can we help others see Jesus??

Not many songs in the hymnal about salt; but plenty about light:

"The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin, the light of the world is Jesus;
Like sunshine at noonday His glory shone in, The light of the world is Jesus.
Come to the Light, tis shining for thee; sweetly the light has dawned upon me;
Once I was blind, but now I can see; The Light of the world is Jesus."

(That's our testimony and that's the message we take to the dying world around us.)

"Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all He brings, Risen with healing in His wings" (Hark, the Herald Angels Sing)

"Silent Night! Holy night! Son of God, Love's pure light" (Silent Night)

"Fair is the sunshine, Fairer still the moonlight, And all the twinkling starry host: Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer, Than all the angels heaven can boast. " (Fairest Lord Jesus)

"Make me a blessing, Make me a blessing, Out of my life may Jesus shine"

Perhaps the most famous and the most appropriate ...

"This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine
Hide it under a bushel, NO ... I'm going to let it shine ..."

B. UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION: Apart from believers, the world would be completely DARK
No light, No Life

- Ignorance ... but the problem is primarily one of the heart, not of the mind
- Blindness .. Satan has blinded their minds so they are unable to see
- Lack of Direction -- cf. Pharisees: *"the blind leading the blind"*
- Darkness associated with wickedness

John 3:19-21 *"And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."*

do a word study of "darkness" -- see what it is that Christ has delivered us from

"we have been delivered from the domain of darkness" (Col 1:13)

Our mission is to be light to the world . When the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned the apostle Paul, he told him,

"I am sending you to [the Gentiles] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:17-18).

We have been entrusted with the torch of the gospel; our very lives are to be the light that shines in the darkness and gives people an opportunity to see Jesus and be delivered as we have been
What a privilege!

C. COMING TO GRIPS WITH OUR MISSION AS BELIEVERS = THOSE INDWELT BY JESUS CHRIST -- TO BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

"You are the light of the world"

Implications for us:

1) Light needs to make itself **accessible** to those who need it

Light should be easy to spot in the darkness; Christ expresses this by saying that a city on a hill cannot be hidden.

One commentator noted: Hill cities in Palestine were impressive sites. They were built there because the cool sea breezes would act like an air conditioner in the arid climate, and also because a city on a hill was easiest to defend. It is hard to fight going up hill. The mark of Palestinian cities is that they are always in view. At night they glow in the distance. When we are the light of the world everyone will know it. We cannot reflect His light and remain obscure. We cannot hide His light. God does not call us into the secret service. Either secrecy will destroy the discipleship or discipleship will destroy the secrecy. We cannot live light filled lives in our society without standing out, without having people notice us. They may not like us; they may persecute us, but they will know we are there.

2) Light is not a respecter of persons

Not up to us to pick and choose who we think is a good candidate for the gospel; we can easily be influenced by our own prejudices; only reach out to those in our social, economic class; only speak to those who are like us; light is not that way; the beacon shines for all to see and respond to

3) Light needs to provide answers and direction

We use light so that we can see where we are going. As our lives shine forth with the righteousness of Christ, we need to be prepared to give an answer to those who want to know more about the source of this light and how it is associated with life and redemption from this world of darkness

We have been talking mostly about our

Individual Implications of this mission of being the light of the world

Apparently there are corporate implications for us as a church as well

"A city set on a hill cannot be hidden"

As a church, how is our light shining in the **community** around us? Our church doesn't have any real sense of community – it is a gathering place and we come from all over

D. PATHWAY TO INEFFECTIVENESS = HIDING OUR LIGHT

overcome by the fear of men; fear of ridicule, of embarrassment, of persecution

lack of compassion for the plight of the lost

lack of passion to be a true follower of Christ and Fisher of men

"Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it give light to all who are in the house."

cf. attitude expressed by the book: *I'm Glad You Asked*

(:16) CONCLUSION: OUR MOTIVATION = THAT OTHERS MAY GLORIFY GOD ALSO

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Jesus has much to say in the Sermon on the Mount about our heart motivation. Remember, the Pharisees majored on the externals of the law ... Christ countered with: "*Blessed are the pure in heart*" not the whitewashed sepulchres who were still rotten on the inside

key = our **good works**; not our words

Easy for us to come across as self righteous ... like the Pharisees ... conclusion of those watching our life ... he's really a good person ... he definitely deserves to go to heaven if anyone does ... Or: he sure thinks highly of himself ... We want them to see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven ... Quite a challenge ... Quite an opportunity

Remember our little O-ring that we started off talking about? Proved to be very significant in the case of the Challenger launch. It would be a tragedy if we turned out to be good for nothing and lost our distinctiveness as members in the family of God; or if we hid our light under a bushel basket;

We shouldn't have any issues regarding our significance ..

We have been called to be Salt and Light to a world that is rotten and dark;

Not being asked to do something unnatural or impossible .. but act in a way that is totally consistent with our new nature;

We have within us the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit ... the life of Christ;

What a privilege to reach out to the world around us and impact that world for Jesus Christ, for the gospel, and for the kingdom of God.

Piper: [Has a lot to say about glorifying God in chap 47] **Three observations** go a long way to answering our question. **First**, Jesus clearly commands that the goal of our lives should be so to behave that God gets the glory. Live so that men will see your life and give your Father in heaven glory, not you. So it should be very clear that glorifying God is not merely an act of worship on Sunday. It is a peculiar kind of living.

Second, in order for God to get glory from the way we live we must be **engaged in good deeds**. It is not so much by avoiding gross sins that God's people display His glory, but rather in the pursuit of good deeds, acts of generosity, works of kindness, ways of love. Since it is God's goal to be glorified in His people and since Jesus says this happens when His people do good deeds, we would expect the Bible to tell us that God's goal in redeeming a people is that they might do good deeds. And this is exactly what we find. Paul says in Titus 2:14 that Christ "*gave Himself for us to redeem*

us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds." Christ died that we might do good deeds and so bring glory to our Father in heaven.

God created us for His glory, says the prophet. We bring Him glory through our good deeds, says the Lord Jesus. So we are not surprised when we hear the apostle say, God created us for good deeds. Ephesians 2:10: "*We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good deeds, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*" Created for His glory, and created for good deeds, because it is by our good deeds that God gets glory.

Thirdly, It is possible to be a kind of do-gooder that brings no glory to God. There are philanthropists and benefactors and others who for one reason or another spend time and money to alleviate suffering, but who may not even believe in God let alone do it all for His glory. So when Jesus says, let your light shine that men may see your good deeds and glorify God, the light must include more than the mere action of the good deed. You are the light of the world! (5:14) Not just your bodily motions but your attitude and your motivation also. There is **a spirit** from which the good deeds must flow if they are to bring God glory and so be pleasing to Him.

Ted Engstrom: The Pursuit of Excellence

He goes on to make two points about light. One is that you can't miss light. It is easy to spot, and He expresses this by saying that a city on a hill cannot be hidden [talked about that] When we are the light of the world everyone will know it. We cannot reflect His light and remain obscure. We cannot hide His light. God does not call us into the secret service. Either secrecy will destroy the discipleship or discipleship will destroy the secrecy. We cannot live light filled lives in our society without standing out, without having people notice us. They may not like us; they may persecute us, but they will know we are there.

Second, we use light to help people see. Light helps people see. If we buy a new lamp, we don't cover it up. Rather, we put it in a strategic spot so that it can illuminate everything in its area so people entering the room can see. It's not that you notice the light itself, it's that because of the light you can see everything else clearly. The light Jesus was talking about was probably a shallow clay pot containing oil with a wick hanging out. Because they didn't have matches to re-light them, they generally kept them going all the time. They had a porous clay measuring bushel that they put over it for safety or when they were going out or to bed. Otherwise, they used the lamp for light because that was its purpose. When He talked about salt, Jesus implied that the culture was rotting. When He talks about light, He implies that the world is covered with moral and spiritual darkness. The only way people can have their eyes opened so that they can see what really matters in life is for us to become light. In so doing, we bring a moral and spiritual influence that enables people to see what is there, and to find their way to God.

Commands of Christ

Demands 49 and 50

Make Disciples of All Nations

Matthew 28:18-20 ESV

- (18) And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
- (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
- (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

This portion of Scripture is often referred to as the Great Commission. Matthew records Jesus' final command to His disciples prior to ascending to heaven and being caught up in the clouds. This command, like so many others we have studied, appears overwhelming and beyond our abilities and to some it may appear a bit presumptuous. What right does Jesus have to order His followers to go into the entire world and turn people from other belief systems to Christianity? He has the right because God gave Him "all authority in heaven and earth".

Jesus' Authority

The word translated authority in Matthew 28:18 comes from the Greek word *exousia* which *Thayer's Greek Definitions* defines as:

- 1) power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases
 - 1a) leave or permission
- 2) physical and mental power
 - 2a) the ability or strength with which one is endued, which he either possesses or exercises
- 3) the power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege)
- 4) the power of rule or government (the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed)
 - 4a) universally
 - 4a1) authority over mankind
 - 4b) specifically
 - 4b1) the power of judicial decisions

4b2) of authority to manage domestic affairs

4c) metonymically

4c1) a thing subject to authority or rule

4c1a) jurisdiction

4c2) one who possesses authority

4c2a) a ruler, a human magistrate

4c2b) the leading and more powerful among created beings superior to man, spiritual potentates

4d) a sign of the husband's authority over his wife

4d1) the veil with which propriety required a women to cover herself

4e) the sign of regal authority, a crown

Basically, a person who has authority in a certain area can make demands of those he has authority over and have every right to expect his demands to be done. This type of authority was what the centurion described during his encounter with Jesus.

Matthew 8:5-10 ESV

- (5) When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him,
- (6) "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly."
- (7) And he said to him, **"I will come and heal him."**
- (8) But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.
- (9) For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."
- (10) When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, **"Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith."**

Most of us are familiar with authority. We either have it ourselves or we are subject to others who have authority over us. In our experience, authority is limited and confined to specific areas of life. However, Jesus was given all authority in heaven and on earth. All authority relates to the comprehensive scope of Jesus power while the phrase heaven and earth show the comprehensive dominion of Jesus authority. In essence, Jesus has the right and the power to command anything to anyone, anywhere and fully expect His command to be obeyed. As Piper states in *What Jesus Demands from the World*:

The phrase "heaven and earth" is meant to include everything. Therefore, everyone and everything is subordinate to Jesus. Every human. Every angel. Every demon. The devil himself. And all the natural world and what happens in it.

Consider the following examples from Jesus' ministry (adapted from Piper):

- Jesus has authority to forgive sins, which only God can do; and so he was accused of blasphemy (Mark 2:7-12).
- He taught the people and handled the Jewish Scriptures with authority:
 - “They were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22; Matt. 5:17-18).
 - He rebuked the devil (Matt. 4:10) and commanded unclean spirits: “He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him” (Mark 1:27).
- Jesus commanded the forces of nature:
 - He healed all kinds of diseases (Matt. 4:23)
 - He turned water into wine (John 2:9; 4:46)
 - He calmed the storm: “He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:39).
- Jesus had authority in the matter of life and death, both his own and other's—and ultimately in the matter of eternal life.
 - He raised people from the dead (Mark 5:41-42; Luke 7:14-15; John 11:43-44)
 - He ruled over his own death and resurrection: “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again” (John 10:18).
- He holds full sway in the final judgment. He said that God the Father “has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man” (John 5:27).
- God has “given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom [God has] given him” (John 17:2).

How Jesus Lays Claim on the World

Since nothing is outside of the scope of Jesus' authority, He has every right to demand that every nation, tribe and tongue give allegiance to Him alone but He chooses to fulfill this command through His followers. After establishing His authority in verse 18, He commands that His followers make disciples as they are going. The going or traveling is assumed. Making disciples is the emphasis, and the term therefore ties the command to Jesus authority. John MacArthur puts it this way in his commentary on Matthew:

The transitional word is **therefore**. “Because I am sovereign Lord of the universe,” Jesus was saying, “I have both the authority to command you to be My witnesses and the power to enable you to obey that command.” . . .

Jesus' supreme command, therefore, is for those who are His disciples to become His instruments for making disciples of all nations. Jesus' own earthly ministry was to make disciples for Himself, and that is the ministry of His people. Those who truly follow Jesus Christ become “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). Those who become His disciples are

themselves to become disciple makers. The mission of the early church was to make disciples (see Acts 2:47; 14:21), and that is still Christ's mission for His church.

Piper agrees and states it this way:

The way Jesus pursues this universal claim on every soul is by sending his followers to make disciples from all the nations. After saying that all authority in heaven and earth is his, he says, "therefore . . ."

What follows is a commission that his followers go and make disciples. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). In other words, Jesus does not lay claim on a person directly from heaven. He lays claim on people through his followers. He laid down the principle while he was still here: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me" (John 13:20; Matt. 10:40). It is true that he said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18), and "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice" (John 10:16). Yes, he is doing it himself. But he did not mean that he would do it *directly* from heaven without emissaries. We know this because when he prayed for the future church in John 17:20, he described them as "those who will believe in me through their word."

Although Christ has the authority and the power to accomplish His will without human agency, He chooses to act through His followers. Fortunately, Jesus gave a promise that empowers us to fulfill His command. He promised that He would always be with us. As we are going, He is going with us. As MacArthur states:

Idou (Io) is an interjection frequently used in the New Testament to call attention to something of special importance. *Egō eimi (I am)* is an emphatic form that might be rendered, "I Myself am," calling special attention to the fact of Christ's own presence. Jesus was saying, in effect, "Now pay special attention to what I am about to say; because it is the most important of all. I Myself, your divine, resurrected, living, eternal Lord, **am with you always, even to the end of the age.**"

The phrase "the end of the age" not only ties to the promise of His presence, it also indicates how long the command is to remain valid. Those of us who are called by His name will continue to be responsible for carrying out His commission until He returns in glory at the end of the age. There will come a time when the disciple making process is over but until that day comes, our job is to remain dedicated to our task. Warren Wiersbe in his Be Series on Matthew expresses it this way:

The phrase "the end of the age" indicates that our Lord has a plan; He is the Lord of history. As the churches follow His leading and obey His Word, they fulfill His purposes in the world. It will all come to a climax one day; meanwhile, we must all be faithful.

Implications

Scorn and Ridicule

The Great Commission has several implications for us. First, we have to face the fact the many people don't want to become disciples. We live in a world that values tolerance and unconditional acceptance and scorns the idea of objective truth. Jesus' command to make disciples will offend many because they believe their religion, or lack thereof, is just as valid as Christianity. Piper explains it this way:

He [Jesus] claimed that he is the one and only Lord of the universe and that every person from every nation and every religion or non-religion should be his disciple. This claim is now given to his emissaries to make disciples among all the nations and all the religions of the world. Jesus sends his followers to go make disciples of all nations, no matter what their religion is—Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, animists, atheists, agnostics. He sends his followers, backed by his universal authority, to go and call all people in every nation and every religion to turn to become the disciples of Jesus.

This means that in times of relativism (like our own), when people do not cherish objective, unchanging truth, followers of Jesus will be accused of arrogance. . .

This is the mandate and promise that sustain Jesus' emissaries: "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Luke 10:16). The followers of Jesus will be scorned for saying that all authority belongs to Jesus and that everyone must become his disciple or forfeit eternal life. But Jesus knew that would happen: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). That is why he enclosed this radical demand to make disciples between the double assurance (1) that all authority really is his and (2) that he will be with his emissaries till the end of the age.

No Prejudice or Bigotry

Jesus commanded us to go to all nations. Notice He didn't say go to all the people groups you happen to like or agree with. He didn't say go to people who look like you, act like you, talk like you, dress like you or have the same type of political system as you do. Jesus said go to all nations. The term nation conveys the idea of ethnic groups. There is no room for prejudice and bigotry in the church or the church's mission to make disciples. Piper expresses it this way:

Wherever there is a distinct people group that has no disciples of Jesus, the demand of Jesus is resoundingly clear: "Go as my emissaries with my authority and my word and my love and my power and make disciples there." There is no partiality with Jesus in this mission. He is not western, and he is not eastern. He is utterly committed to ethnic diversity and unity in the truth of his supremacy. In fact, the word from which we get "ethnic" is the word for "nations" in Matthew 28:19.

God's Roundabout Way of Pursuing the Nations

The concept that the Gospel would go to all ethnic groups was quite radical for the early church. Remember, the first Christians were Jewish Christians and the idea that Gentiles would have a part in the Kingdom was beyond their comprehension even though the foundation for this truth was laid all the way back with God's covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-3 ESV

- (1) Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.
- (2) And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.
- (3) I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God reiterated this promise in Genesis 18:18, 22:18, 26:4 and 28:14 but it remained a mystery until the Holy Spirit revealed it through the apostles.

Galatians 3:8 ESV

- (8) And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."

Colossians 1:24-27 ESV

- (24) Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,
- (25) of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,
- (26) the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.
- (27) To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Jesus' earthly ministry focused on the nation of Israel but they, for the most part, rejected Him and now the Gospel is going to the Gentiles as well. As MacArthur explains:

Jesus' initial instruction to the disciples was for them to go only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" ([Matt. 10:6](#); cf. [15:24](#)). God's design was to offer salvation first to the Jews and then to use them as His missionaries to the rest of the world. The gospel is the "power of salvation to everyone who believes," but "to the Jew first" ([Rom. 1:16](#); cf. [John 4:22](#)). But when Israel as a nation rejected the Messiah-King who was sent to her in Jesus, the invitation for salvation went directly to the entire world.

Jesus compared Israel's response to God's call to a wedding feast given by a king for his son. When the favored guests refused to accept the king's invitation and maligned and even killed some of the messengers, the king had his army destroy the ungrateful and wicked guests. He then sent his servants out to the streets and highways to invite to the feast anyone who would come ([Matt. 22:1-10](#)). The picture was of an apostate Israel who refused her Messiah and thereby forfeited the kingdom that He offered to them.

At the end of His earthly ministry, Christ had only a small remnant of believers, and it was to part of that remnant that He gave His commission to evangelize the world. The first sermon of the Spirit-filled church was preached by Peter and directed to Jews and Jewish proselytes who had come to worship in Jerusalem ([Acts 2:22](#)). But God later had to dramatically convince Peter that the gospel was also for Gentiles ([10:1-48](#)).

As he traveled throughout Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece, even the apostle Paul, “the apostle to the Gentiles,” normally began his ministry in a given city at the Jewish synagogue (see [Acts 9:20](#); [13:5](#); [18:4](#)). But his message was always for Gentiles as well as Jews. At his conversion on the Damascus Road, the Lord said to him,

Arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness,... delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to life and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me. ([Acts 26:16-18](#))

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, indicates that Israel’s rejection of Christ is because of a partial hardening of their hearts until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in:

Romans 11:25 ESV

(25) Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

The fullness Paul talks about is pictured in The Revelation:

Revelation 7:9-10 ESV

(9) After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,
(10) and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

As Piper notes, God’s plan and purpose for the Gentiles will succeed:

During this time—the times of the Gentiles—the sovereign promise of Jesus stands firm: “And this gospel of the kingdom *will* be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). There is no *maybe* here. The mission that he gives to his followers to go and make disciples of all nations *will* come to pass. “I *will* build my church” (Matt. 16:18). “I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I *must* bring them also, and they *will* listen to my voice” (John 10:16). “Thus *it is written* [and cannot be broken!], that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins *should be proclaimed in*

his name to all nations" (Luke 24:46). The mission to make disciples of all nations *will* succeed.

However, it is important to realize that the partial hardening of Israel will end and God's plans and promises for Israel will succeed as well. As Paul notes in Romans:

Romans 11:24-29 ESV

- (24) For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.
- (25) Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.
- (26) And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";
- (27) "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."
- (28) As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.
- (29) For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Israel and the Gentiles comprise the all nations of the Great Commission and Jesus will ensure that every aspect of God's plan will succeed.

Bringing it all Together

Jesus demands that we make disciples from every nation. He bases this demand on the all encompassing authority His Father gave Him and empowers His followers to fulfill this demand by promising to be with us always. Because of His power and His presence, we can overcome every difficulty, face scorn and ridicule, and overcome prejudice and bigotry. Our obligation is clear and so is our reward. The day will come when we will stand around God's glorious throne with the elect from every nation, tribe and tongue and raise our voice in praise and adoration to the King. However, until that day comes, we must continue our labors. As Piper states:

The certainty of success is guaranteed (Matt. 24:14). Jesus will see that it gets done. But it is in our hands to do it. We do it by prayer and by the word and by suffering for others. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2). We must earnestly pray that God will do what he promised he would do. Promises do not make prayer superfluous; they make the answer certain.

Then we must open our mouths and speak the truth of Jesus to all nations. "What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops" (Matt. 10:27). "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23). "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). And don't be ashamed, Jesus says, because "Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in

heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33).

Finally, in all our praying and speaking we must be ready to suffer. “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21). Jesus was sent to suffer. We will not be able to make disciples of all nations without taking up our cross and following Jesus on the Calvary road of sacrificial love (Mark 8:34). This is the light of Jesus that the world can most clearly see.

Explanation of Study Resources

We believe God works mightily in community. One of our aims, therefore, in producing study aids for our resources is to provide context and opportunity for community growth and discipleship. That's our hope for this study resource for *What Jesus Demands from the World*. While nothing in the resource requires study within a group context—indeed, we hope that this resource can also be of benefit for individual study and reflection—nevertheless we highly recommend seeking out others to join you in the study, reflection, and meditation upon what Jesus demands from the world. The following sections explain the Reading Guide for *What Jesus Demands from the World*, and provide recommendations on structuring a ten-week group study.

Study Guide

The study guide contains questions covering your reading. Five questions are provided for each chapter. These questions are aimed at deepening understanding of the reading, provoking further study and thought, and stirring personal reflection and application of the themes and biblical truths covered. The final question in each chapter generally will aim more at personal reflection and application of the demand discussed in the reading.

The questions appear in the order they are discussed in the book. This enables you to answer these questions during your reading. You may, however, choose to answer the questions after the reading as a means of review and reflection. As you read, note which questions you find particularly fruitful or challenging, along with questions you need to think about more (see Group Meeting below).

The ten-week study we suggest (see Group Study Schedule below) would have the individual working through 5–6 chapters a week, approximately 30–40 pages. Each person should decide for themselves what pace to work through the weekly reading and study material.

Group Study Schedule

We suggest a group study of *What Jesus Demands from the World* lasting ten weeks. A ten week study would require covering 5–6 chapters per week. The following schedule breaks down the material covered each week (the weeks appearing with stars cover 6 chapters):

- Week 1: Introduction to the Study
- Week 2: Chapters 1–6 (pp. 37–61)**
- Week 3: Chapters 7–12 (pp. 62–104)**
- Week 4: Chapters 13–18 (pp. 105–145)**
- Week 5: Chapters 19–24 (pp. 146–189)**
- Week 6: Chapters 25–29 (pp. 190–229)
- Week 7: Chapters 30–35 (pp. 230–273)**
- Week 8: Chapters 36–40 (pp. 274–306)
- Week 9: Chapters 41–45 (pp. 307–342)
- Week 10: Chapters 46–50 (pp. 343–375)

Because of the varying numbers of chapters from week to week, it will be very important for the group facilitator to remind the members of which chapters to cover for the following week. We suggest providing the above schedule to each member of the group on a small sheet of paper and having each person in the group use it as a bookmark.

Group Meeting

We believe that the group meeting is an extremely valuable time for discussion, reflection, internalization of the material covered, and prayer.

Below are our suggestions for structuring the group meeting time. Feel free to adjust as your group's need and time-allotments allow.

Week 1

Use this meeting for introducing the book and the plan for study as well as introducing the members of the group to one another. Time-permitting, have each member share their testimony and what they hope to learn and be challenged in by reading and reflecting upon *What Jesus Demands from the World*. Have the group discuss the following questions and issues:

- List as many demands of Jesus as you can think of.
- What do you think of when you hear the word “demand”? How do you react when hearing that Jesus demands things? How do you react when hearing he demands things from the whole world?
- Why do you think John Piper chose the title, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, for this book?

Weeks 2–10

Ideally the group would discuss each demand covered over the course of the past week’s reading (5–6 demands per meeting). In a one-hour meeting, allowing 8–10 minutes to discuss each individual demand, discussion of the reading would take about 45–50 minutes per meeting. Do not be afraid to linger on a particular demand if the Spirit seems to be moving in a special way during discussion.

We recommend opening discussion of a particular demand by having the group restate the demand. Don’t simply repeat the verse or repeat something Piper says in the chapter; rather make an effort to say the demand in your own words.

Many of the questions from the Study Guide may be helpful and fruitful questions for group discussion. However, there will not be time to cover all the questions covered during the reading. Therefore we suggest that while answering questions in the Reading Guide, you should be mindful of questions that would stir meaningful discussion during the group meeting. Such questions may be questions you feel are particularly suited to your group’s context or questions you are wrestling with and struggling to answer. Be prepared to bring these questions up for discussion during the group meeting. If you (particularly the group facilitator) feel that other questions instead of the questions in the Reading Guide would be of more benefit to your group, please do not hesitate to lead your group in those directions. Our hope is that the Reading Guide will be a resource that gets you started and that launches other creative and worthwhile efforts to deepen knowledge, faith, and love.

We also want to encourage extended times of group prayer during your group meetings. We suggest using at least the final 5–10 minutes of the group time for prayer. You may choose to pray as a large group, or to break into smaller groups. You could break into small groups that change from week to week, or maintain the same smaller prayer groups throughout the study. Whatever you may choose, we hope that prayer for one another will be an integral part of your time together, both during the group meetings and throughout the week as you progress through this study.

We pray deep blessings for you and your group during this study. May the God and Father of Jesus Christ be greatly magnified in your time together, as you learn to obey all that Jesus has commanded you. Amen.

Chapter 1—You Must Be Born Again (pp. 37–39)

1. Why should Nicodemus have known what Jesus was talking about when he told him of the need to be born again?
2. What does it mean, according to Piper, to be born of water and the Spirit?
3. What does it mean to be spiritually dead, and how does this affect one's ability to see the kingdom of God? Who is spiritually dead?
4. How can someone obey the command to be born again when rebirth is the work of the Spirit who "blows where it will" (p. 39)? How is this connected to the quote from St. Augustine that appears in the introduction: "Command what you wish, but give what you command" (p. 26)? How many of the commands discussed in this book must be viewed in the same way?
5. Have you obeyed this command? How do you know?

Chapter 2—Repent (pp. 40–43)

6. What two things "show us that repentance is an internal change of mind and heart rather than mere sorrow for sin or mere improvement of behavior" (p. 40)?
7. What is the essential nature of sin? What was Jesus' view of sin?
8. Who is excluded from the demand to repent? Why?
9. How are the kingdom of God and the universal need for repentance related? Why is the need to repent so urgent?
10. Is the repentance that Jesus demands from all people a one-time thing or an ongoing way of life? Why? What things in your life do you need to repent about? How will knowing that repentance is an inner change of mind and heart affect how you seek to obey Jesus' demand for repentance?

Chapter 3—Come to Me (pp. 44–47)

11. Why is Jesus' *demand* to come to him not *burdensome*?
12. What makes Jesus' demand hard? To what could we compare Jesus' demand to come to him?
13. Why don't people come to Jesus? Explain the various levels involved in answering this question. How is it that anybody comes to Jesus?
14. Why is prayer necessary for us if we are to come to Jesus?
15. In what areas of your life are you striving on your own, refusing to come to Jesus to bear his light load? Why?

Chapter 4—Believe in Me (pp. 48–51)

16. From what desperate situation must we be rescued?
17. How has God provided a source of rescue for the world? What have we done to bring this about?
18. What does believing in Jesus really mean?
19. Why is the fireman illustration that Piper uses at the beginning of the chapter an insufficient illustration of Jesus' demand to believe in him?
20. Describe your belief in Jesus. How does it match or fall short of the description of belief in this chapter?

Chapter 5—Love Me (pp. 52–55)

21. What is wrong with the statement, "Love cannot be a feeling because it is commanded, and you can't command the feelings" (p. 52)?
22. What are two things Jesus said that show us the love he commands is more than merely good deeds or will power? How do these two statements show this?
23. What must we have in order to love Jesus the way we ought? How do we obtain this?
24. How does seeing Jesus for who he really is cultivate love for Jesus in our hearts? Where can we see Jesus for who he really is?

25. Explain how Jesus' demand to be loved is in itself an act of divine love. Describe your love for Jesus. Does it consist both of true affection for his worth and of the obedience to his commandments which spring from such affection? Does it tend toward one rather than the other? Explain your answers.

Chapter 6—Listen to Me (pp. 56–61)

26. What reasons for listening to Jesus does Piper list? Can you think of any others that Jesus said?
27. How do Jesus' words lead to eternal life?
28. What hinders so many people from being willing to listen to Jesus and truly hearing him and believing the truth of his words?
29. Explain what Piper means by a "non-listener" by describing what it means to have "no place" for Jesus' word, to not be "of the truth," and to not be "of God."
30. How do you listen to Jesus? How much do you listen to Jesus? How much do you listen to Jesus compared to how much you listen to other competing "voices"?

Chapter 7—Abide in Me (pp. 62–67)

31. Reconsider the demands discussed earlier in this book: believe in Jesus, repent, come to Jesus, listen to Jesus' word, etc. Do you, or did you, think of obedience to any of these things as one-time events? Why or why not? How does the command to abide in Jesus show that obedience to Jesus demands is a lifetime affair?
32. What is the main point in the analogy of the vine in John 15? What does "abiding" in Jesus mean?
33. Why is abiding in Jesus not the same thing as bearing fruit or keeping Jesus' commandments? Explain John 15:10.
34. What does it mean to abide in Jesus' love or abide in Jesus' word? How has Jesus shown us that we will not abide in him apart from his keeping hand?
35. How is it that "we are not idle in the battle to abide in Jesus" (p. 67)? How do we actively and responsibly abide in Jesus in such a way that his keeping hand remains ultimately responsible? Are you aiming and striving to abide in this way? Explain.

Chapter 8—Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me (pp. 68–74)

36. Are we expected to follow Jesus now that he has departed from the earth? How is our following different from the following that the twelve disciples did?
37. What does following Jesus mean? What did Jesus come to do? What does it mean that there are no neutral followers?
38. What was the divine design for Jesus' life? How does this affect what it means for us to follow Jesus?
39. What types of unique suffering and pain fall upon followers of Christ? How does joy abound even in such suffering? How is the suffering of following Jesus really a battle for joy?
40. What might following Jesus look like in your life? What types of "ruptures" has or would following Jesus create for you? How is God moving on your heart now?

Chapter 9—Love God with All Your Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength (pp. 75–82)

41. What is meant by the sentence, "God would not be honored by groundless love" (p. 76)? What does this imply that we must do if we are to love God?
42. How is Jesus the litmus test for our love for God? Why can Jesus be this litmus test?
43. Why does Piper say we must see and savor God as "compellingly beautiful" (p. 77)? Why should we think that love for God most essentially involves the affections, not behavior?
44. How can we balance Psalm 73:25, "There is nothing on earth that I desire besides [God]," with the need to love other people?
45. Are you loving God with *all* your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Can anyone? What implications does this have for our relationship with God? Where do your faculties and capacities fall short of

treasuring God above all things? Pray over these things, asking for forgiveness and new affections to love God more.

Chapter 10—Rejoice and Leap for Joy (pp. 83–91)

46. How does the command to rejoice in Christ not contradict in any way Jesus' demand to renounce all other things and deny one's self?
47. What is it that cuts the stranglehold of sin? How do you think it does this?
48. Based upon the whole context of Jesus' life and ministry, what do you think the future reward is that Jesus promises those who rejoice and leap for joy in him as they suffer for his name? How do we experience that reward now?
49. Explain how the demand to rejoice in Jesus is a means to glorifying Jesus.
50. What are some areas in your life where you are pursuing the fleeting pleasures of sin rather than the superior pleasure of joy in Christ? What do you need to break the allurements of that sin? What are some Scriptures that would help you in this fight? Who are some specific people in your life that could help you in this fight?

Chapter 11—Fear Him Who Can Destroy Both Soul and Body in Hell (pp. 92–98)

51. How does Jesus describe hell? What can we learn about hell from these descriptions?
52. Describe the fear that we are to have of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell. What is this fear to be like and not like?
53. How is it possible to fear God and to trust God at the same time?
54. What does the horror of hell tell us about the seriousness of sin? What does the seriousness of sin tell us about the worth and value of God?
55. Examine your fear of God. Do you tend toward an unhealthy fear of God rooted in a lack of trusting in his goodness and Christ's work? Do you tend toward a nonchalant attitude toward God's holiness and wrath and power? Explain. What would help you to cultivate a healthy fear of and trust in God?

Chapter 12—Worship God in Spirit and Truth (pp. 99–104)

56. What is worship, its distinct qualities and characteristics? What types of things are worshiped in the world?
57. How is Jesus greater than the temple in Jerusalem? What does it mean that Jesus is the new "temple," and how does this fulfill all that the temple pointed to? What implications does this have on worship?
58. Explain how we worship God "in truth" and how we worship God "in Spirit."
59. Why are we able to understand worship of God as service to God?
60. "Consider what you are worshiping. Then ask Jesus to open your eyes to the *truth* of God's supreme worth and to awaken your *spirit* to treasure him above all" (p. 104). Write out your prayer.

Chapter 13—Always Pray and Do Not Lose Heart (pp. 105–112)

61. What are the two great purposes of God that Jesus came to accomplish, and how does prayer correspond to these purposes?
62. Describe the five ways we are to pray and explain why we should pray in these ways.
63. For whom should we pray? What does this imply about the people for whom we pray? Who is excluded from our prayers?
64. How does the Lord's Prayer reveal the astonishing nature of prayer?
65. Consider the gift of the Lord's Prayer. Pray it for yourself and for others this week, journaling the ways in which you see God working in your life and their lives to answer this prayer.

Chapter 14—Do Not Be Anxious About the Necessities of Daily Life (pp. 113–119)

66. How does Jesus taking away our fear and anxiety exalt his power and authority?
67. What is the positive way of saying, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow”? Why is this the positive counterpart?
68. List eight reasons Jesus gives for not being anxious in Matt. 6:25–34.
69. Which of the eight reasons not to be anxious given in Matt. 6:25–34 is most meaningful to you? Why?
70. Memorize Matt. 6:25–34 this week.

Chapter 15—Do Not Be Anxious About the Threats of Man (pp. 120–124)

71. What very specific thing does Jesus have in mind “that is threatened by fear and advanced by courage” (p. 121)?
72. Why should it be comforting to know you are being maligned as Jesus was maligned?
73. How does the knowledge that all things will be revealed in the end create courage?
74. What does “Fear not, you can only be killed” mean?
75. Do you find it comforting that God knows and wills any harm that befalls you? Why or why not? When have you feared to speak the truth of Christ? When have you spoken it courageously? What opportunities lie before you this week to speak the truth of Jesus Christ with courage and in love?

Chapter 16—Humble Yourself by Making War on Pride (pp. 125–129)

76. Explain how boasting and self-pity are two different expressions of pride.
77. What is a “disposition of merit” (p. 127), and how does it contribute to a boastful heart?
78. Why are prideful people loveless?
79. Define humility (for help, see p. 129).
80. What is your struggle with pride like? In what ways does pride manifest itself in your heart and in your actions? How do you aim to battle this pride in your heart? Find five verses in the Bible to help you battle pride this week.

Chapter 17—Humbles Yourself in Childlikeness, Servanthood, and Brokenhearted Boldness (pp. 130–137)

81. Why is the statement, “I am an unworthy servant,” an incomplete picture of humility? What did Jesus have in mind when he demanded that we humble ourselves like a child?
82. Why does lowliness lead to service?
83. What does Jesus say true service means? How did Jesus demonstrate what this service should look like?
84. How can humility co-exist with boldly proclaiming Jesus as the *only* way to heaven?
85. What does knowing that you can’t make yourself humble make you feel? Why should the truth that you can’t make yourself humble be connected to prayer? This week ask a close friend to help you examine your heart and discern areas in your life where you need humility. Pray for the gift of humility this week and meditate on the Scripture in this chapter (and others) that describe humility.

Chapter 18—Do Not Be Angry—Trust God’s Providence (pp. 138–145)

86. Why is it true that no one *decides* to get angry?
87. Why isn’t Jesus, in his ministry and teaching about anger, not after just psychological and emotional changes? What is he ultimately after?
88. Why might the absence of anger be wrong in some circumstances?
89. How would our anger contradict confidence in God’s care over our lives?
90. Think of the last time you were angry. Were you trusting God’s gracious providence in your anger at the time? If so, how did your trust shape or influence your anger? If not, how did your anger manifest sin and unbelief in your heart?

Chapter 19—Do Not Be Angry—Embrace Mercy and Forgiveness (pp. 146–152)

91. According to Matt. 18:26–35, what is the solution to the problem of sinful anger over repeated offenses done to us?
92. Describe how mercy should govern our anger.
93. How does Jesus' demand to take up our cross and follow him relate to our battle against sinful anger?
94. How would you describe the anger that Jesus condemns?
95. Why can't we obey the demand discussed in this chapter in our own power? What is the solution to this dilemma?

Chapter 20—Do the Will of My Father Who Is in Heaven—Be Justified by Trusting Jesus (pp. 153–158)

96. Why does Jesus tell the wealthy man in Mark 10 that he lacked “one thing” but then tell him to do three things? What was the “one thing” the man lacked?
97. What is the first way mentioned by Piper that Jesus is the path to perfection?
98. How does Jesus solve the problem of God's wrath upon sinners?
99. What does the word “justified” mean in Luke 18:14? What did the tax collector do to get justified? Did he deserve justification? Why or why not? What does that tell us about our part in justification?
100. Are you relying on your own effort to be right with God? What should you do if you find that you are? What should you do if you think that you are not? What should you do if you don't know? Discuss these questions and try to find biblical answers this week with a wise and mature Christian (perhaps a leader in your church or a close and respected friend).

Chapter 21—Do the Will of My Father Who Is in Heaven—Be Transformed by Trusting Jesus (pp. 159–165)

101. How is the need for new birth different from the need to trust Jesus for perfection?
102. What is a “healthy tree” (p. 161)? What creates a “healthy tree,” or how do you become a “healthy tree”?
103. How should a Christian view the Old Testament law?
104. What does it mean to “keep the commandments, but only as they come through the filter of their fulfillment in Jesus” (p. 165)?
105. Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) this week. Think of how Jesus came to fulfill his demands and how they then filter through to us as demands for daily living. Write out your thoughts.

Chapter 22—Strive to Enter through the Narrow Door, for All of Life Is War (pp. 166–173)

106. Describe the striving that Jesus had in mind when he commanded, “Strive to enter through the narrow door” (Luke 13:24). What is “striving”? What are we striving to enter?
107. How can pain present a danger to your soul? How can pleasure and prosperity be a danger to your soul? Why does Jesus most often focus on the danger of prosperity and pleasure rather than the danger of pain?
108. What danger did Jesus warn us of most often? Why?
109. What are “healthy eyes” (p. 171). Explain how “healthy eyes” relate to money.
110. What are some specific, practical ways you can “strive, wrestle, fight” (p. 173) to see God, not money, as the supreme treasure?

Chapter 23—Strive to Enter through the Narrow Door, for Jesus Fulfills the New Covenant (pp. 174–180)

111. What would characterize a false prophet or a false Christ?
112. How should we obey Jesus' command to “watch” and “stay awake” (Matt. 24:42; 25:13)? How does this help us in understanding the way in which we “strive to enter by the narrow door”?
113. What makes the demands to strive from Jesus seem burdensome?
114. What is new about the new covenant? How does the new covenant ensure the obedience of God's people?

115. How would you characterize your “striving”? Are you? Is it burdensome? If so, why? How will you trust Jesus in your striving?

Chapter 24—Strive to Enter through the Narrow Door, for You Are Already in the Kingdom’s Power (pp. 181–189)

116. What is the “secret of the kingdom” (p. 182)? Does this surprise you? Why or why not? What implications does this have for our striving “to enter through the narrow door”?
117. What would a presumptuous response to the presence of the kingdom look like? Why shouldn’t we be presumptuous in our joy?
118. Why might we not take Jesus’ demand to strive seriously? Why might we not sense the urgency of it?
119. Look over the nine things to remember which help us in our striving on pp. 184–189. Where are these truths taken from? What does this tell you about the importance and function of Scripture in the fight of faith?
120. Which of the nine truths listed on pp. 184–189 is most meaningful to you? Why? Meditate upon this truth this week and pray that God would use it to help you strive to enter through the narrow door.

Chapter 25—Your Righteousness Must Exceed That of the Pharisees, for It Was Hypocritical and Ugly (pp. 190–195)

121. What does “out-Pharisee the Pharisees” (pp. 190–195) mean?
122. Why do you think the elder son in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) wanted to remain in the position of a “deserving servant” rather than a “freely loved son”? What light does this shed on the tendency of the human heart?
123. Why do you think money, the praise of man, and illicit sex are some of the most common pitfalls people fall into and the dangers that Jesus warns of most often?
124. Why is it that people who are greedy, arrogant, and sexually promiscuous can still look religious?
125. How have you participated in hypocrisy? Consider some areas in your life where you have acted or are acting hypocritically. What goes on in your heart at these moments? What are you trusting in and what are you pursuing in being hypocritical? How can you battle this sin in these specific areas?

Chapter 26—Your Righteousness Must Exceed That of the Pharisees—Clean the Inside of the Cup (pp. 196–204)

126. What made the Pharisees’ practices so hellish in Jesus’ eyes?
127. Explain the way in which Jesus cares about our behavior. Why can’t we ever say that Jesus is concerned only with our deeds? What does it mean that “true righteousness . . . is decisively and essentially internal” (p. 201)?
128. How does the righteousness demanded by Christ exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees?
129. Why does Piper say that the Pharisees’ ugly “righteousness” which Jesus rejected is both *easy* and *hard* to exceed?
130. Review the six antitheses between an “external” and an “internal” reading of the law. Based upon these reflections, would you say your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees? Why did you answer the way you did?

Chapter 27—Your Righteousness Must Exceed That of the Pharisees, for Every Healthy Tree Bears Good Fruit (pp. 205–211)

131. What is impurity according to Jesus? What is purity? How might these definitions change what you would otherwise think is impure? Would it reduce or enlarge the number of things that you could consider impure?
132. Describe how vigorously we must pursue purity.
133. What question has Piper been trying to answer throughout this book? What do you think his answer is thus far?

134. What does it mean to think of our assurance in terms of *location* and *demonstration*?
135. Examine the fruit of your life that you regularly and habitually bear. Is it good fruit? How would you know? On what basis should you judge good and bad fruit?

Chapter 28—Love Your Enemies—Lead Them to the Truth (pp. 212–220)

136. Why might having enemies be a sign that one is being a faithful disciple?
137. What does Piper show to be the root of love? Is this surprising to you? Why or why not? Why is it so essential to recognize this to be the root of love?
138. How might one use truth unlovingly? Have you ever seen someone doing this? Have you done this? Describe the situation.
139. Describe the modern conception of love. Who tends to have absolute say in what is and is not loving in today's world?
140. What does Piper warn us of in the last section of this chapter? What has been his main point that makes this warning necessary? Which side do you tend to err on: speaking and/or pursuing truth unlovingly, or abdicating truth in hopes that you will be more loving if you do? How can you work toward cultivating more balance between the call to love and the need for truth?

Chapter 29—Love Your Enemies—Pray for Those Who Abuse You (pp. 221–229)

141. What are the “imprecatory” Psalms? Describe how Piper understands the imprecatory Psalms. What factors are important in his understanding for our understanding of Scripture and as it relates to Jesus’ demand to love our enemies? Should we imitate this type of imprecation? Why or why not?
142. What are some sins in your life which you think are your own personal or private sins that do not really affect other people? Why is there no such thing as a private sin that does not harm anyone else but our own self?
143. What is the first loving behavior toward our enemies that Jesus mentions in the Sermon on the Mount? What do we learn about the nature of love from this?
144. How does Jesus’ prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” illustrate both forgiveness *and* mercy?
145. Is there anyone in your life against whom you are harboring bitterness or anger or hatred? If yes, who? This week pray the blessings talked about in this chapter for these people, and ask God to soften your heart and to create in you true affection and love for them?

Chapter 30—Love Your Enemies—Do Good to Those Who Hate You, Give to the One Who Asks (pp. 230–241)

146. What is the opposite of forgiveness? Why is this the opposite of forgiveness? Why is it so important to seek rather than resist reconciliation?
147. God “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45) without waiting for repentance. How should this knowledge influence the way we live?
148. What is hate? What are some ways that hate can manifest itself? How does it feel to be hated? How would you respond if you saw a person doing good in Christ’s name to someone who hated them?
149. Describe why the demands in Luke 6:29–30 are real and radical, yet not absolute descriptions of what love must do in every situation.
150. Think of an example in your life right now where you have the opportunity to “turn the other cheek” or “give your other tunic” or “give to the one who asks.” Try to biblically weigh what would be the most loving thing to do in this situation. Ask advice from others. Search relevant Scriptures. Act upon your convictions you come to over the course of the coming week.

Chapter 31—Love Your Enemies to Show That You Are Children of God (pp. 242–248)

151. What is Jesus after in his demands to turn the other cheek and to give to the one who asks and to not withhold our tunics? Why? How does this help us define love?

152. Thinks of some circumstances where what love calls for might not be clear. What does Piper say should be our default in situations where we are not sure what love calls for? Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?
153. Why is Jesus not saying, in Matt. 5:44–45, “You must first become a person who loves his enemies before you can be a child of God”?
154. How do we obtain the ability to love our enemies the way Jesus demands?
155. Think of the three sources of power for love that Piper talks about in this chapter. Have these truths, or other biblical truths, been a source of life and power to love others, even enemies, in your life? If so, describe. If they haven’t, why do you think they haven’t produced Christ-honoring love for enemies?

Chapter 32—Love Your Neighbor as Yourself, for This Is the Law and the Prophets (pp. 249–255)

156. What observations help us see the weightiness and magnitude and seriousness of Jesus’ second commandment in Matt. 22:39?
157. Why can’t we say that the “Golden Rule” in Matt. 7:7–11 is proof that Jesus was simply a moral teacher whose teaching wasn’t primarily about God?
158. Explain how the second commandment (to love your neighbor) is the fulfillment or demonstration of the first commandment (to love God).
159. How can love of neighbor both be the law and the prophets (Matt. 7:12) and be what the law and the prophets hang on?
160. When Jesus tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves, who does he have in mind? What is his primary concern and ultimate goal in this demand? Are you failing to be a good neighbor to anybody in your life?

Chapter 33—Love Your Neighbor with the Same Commitment You Have to Your Own Well-being (pp. 256–262)

161. Explain why Jesus assumes we love ourselves. Is he right? Why or why not? How is this profoundly counter-cultural for 21st century America?
162. When does self-love become sinful pride and selfishness?
163. Why is the second commandment threatening to our desires to be happy? How is this threat averted?
164. What, according to Jesus, is to be the new form of our self-love?
165. Reflect upon the various expressions of neighbor-love that are listed in the final section of the chapter. Describe how an authentic love for God will overflow in love for neighbor in each of these ways. Which people in your life could you put some of these suggestions into practice for?

Chapter 34—Love Your Neighbor as Yourself and as Jesus Loved Us (pp. 263–268)

166. To what does Jesus change the lawyer’s question in Luke 10:29? What implication does this have on our lives?
167. What was the lawyer’s question really an attempt at doing? Why does Jesus refuse to address such a question?
168. What role does Jesus’ death play on our obedience to the command to love?
169. What’s “new” about the new commandment? How is the new commandment harmonious with the “old” commandment?
170. How was Jesus “loving himself perfectly” (p. 268) when he died for us? Is it loving for him to pursue his own joy? Why or why not? Should you follow this example (i.e., pursuing your own joy in your loving others)? Why or why not?

Chapter 35—Lay Up for Yourselves Treasures in Heaven by Giving Sacrificially and Generously (pp. 269–273)

171. What did Jesus say about the widow's offering in Mark 12:41–44? What does this tell us about the value of a gift and the state of our hearts in giving?
172. Why is Jesus so concerned about our use of money?
173. What does worship mean?
174. How could a person "serve" money? What does this tell us about how we should "serve" God?
175. What do you think the way you use your money and the way you use your possessions communicates about what or whom you "serve"? Ask a couple close and trusted friends to evaluate you in these areas this week.

Chapter 36—Lay Up for Yourselves Treasures in Heaven and Increase Your Joy in Jesus (pp. 274–280)

176. Why do you think the following two claims are controversial: "a selfish spirit will keep us out of heaven" and "there are degrees of reward, or degrees of joy, in heaven, depending on how sacrificially generous we were on earth" (p. 274)?
177. Explain why a person with a selfish spirit will not be saved.
178. Does saying that a person with a selfish spirit will not be saved contradict the doctrine of justification by faith alone? Why or why not?
179. What does Jesus mean when he says, "With the measure you use it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:37–38)?
180. Explain why the controversial things talked about in this chapter do not mean we "earn" or "merit" more reward in God's kingdom by being more generous? Should we then *want* and *desire* more reward in heaven? Should we be motivated to be more generous after reading this chapter? Why or why not?

Chapter 37—Lay Up for Yourselves Treasures in Heaven—"It Is Your Father's Good Pleasure to Give You the Kingdom" (pp. 281–289)

181. What is meant by "prudential self-regard" (p. 281)? Why is the desire to enlarge the measure of our joy in heaven not prudential self-regard?
182. What must be our ultimate concern and aim when we seek to love others? How does our own joy fit into this aim?
183. How do greed and fear relating to money enslave us? How is Luke 12:32 the key to liberation from this slavery?
184. What does Jesus promise the Father will give to his little flock? What does this mean?
185. Memorize Luke 12:32 this week, carefully reflecting upon each part of the verse as you memorize.

Chapter 38—Do Not Take an Oath—Cherish the Truth and Speak It Simply (pp. 290–295)

186. List five practical, everyday ways that objective truth really matters in your life.
187. Why is "religious hypocrisy a hellish form of lying" (p. 291)?
188. How valuable is truth to Jesus? Explain why.
189. What is a verbal evasion? Why do people feel the need to swear by something to reinforce their word? What does this reveal about their view of truth and of God?
190. Do you find yourself swearing by things when you make promises? Do you think such a tendency reveals a small view of truth and of God? Why or why not?

Chapter 39—Do Not Take an Oath—Let What You Say Be Simply "Yes" or "No" (pp. 296–300)

191. How is lying grounded in selfishness and ill will? How is truth rooted in love?
192. What function do oaths have in the world?
193. What factors must we consider when deciding whether or not Christians should ever use oaths? How would you answer the question, "Should Christians make oaths?"
194. Why is Piper afraid that in this chapter he may be taking "some of the edge off of what Jesus said" (p. 300)? Why does he want to avoid taking the edge off of Jesus demand for truth?

195. Do you ever swear by something (e.g., “I swear to God,” or, “on my Bible,” or “by my life”) when making promises? If yes, why do you do so? What is really going on in your heart at such moments? Do you find that people often do or do not trust a simple yes or no from you? What does this communicate about your integrity and character?

Chapter 40—What God Has Joined Together Let No Man Separate, for Marriage Mirrors God’s Covenant with Us (pp. 301–306)

196. Why did God create marriage? Which marriages does he create? What implication does this have on each couple’s marriage?
197. What is the ultimate reason divorce and remarriage are so serious?
198. What does Jesus root his view of marriage in? What does he do with the Mosaic law?
199. What does it mean to confuse care and compassion with compromise? What does this have to do with Jesus’ view on divorce and remarriage?
200. Reflect on the challenge upon the church “to mingle tears of compassion with the tough love of obedience” (p. 306) in the realm of pursuing a biblical vision of marriage and in our dealing with divorce and remarriage. How should you do this in your context? What would this look like for you and for those around you?

Chapter 41—What God Has Joined Together Let No Man Separate, for Whoever Divorces and Marries Another Commits Adultery (pp. 307–316)

201. What, as it relates to divorce and remarriage, is remarkable about Deut. 24:1–4?
202. What are the implications for divorce and remarriage of Luke 16:18 and Mark 10:11–12? Why is this word from Jesus a “hard saying”?
203. Explain why Piper doesn’t think Matt. 5:32 affirms the lawfulness of remarriage after divorce in some cases. What does Jesus assume about the divorced woman in his culture? On what basis does Jesus oppose remarriage after divorce?
204. How does Piper understand the exception clause in Matt. 19:9? What led him to this understanding of Matt. 19:9?
205. Review and study the key texts discussed in this chapter—Deut. 24:1–4; Luke 16:18; Mark 10:11–12; Matt. 5:32; 19:9. What do you think the strengths of Piper’s interpretations are? What do you think the weaknesses are? What questions about these texts do you still have?

Chapter 42—What God Has Joined Together Let No Man Separate—One Man, One Woman, by Grace, Till Death (pp. 317–322)

206. How does the response of the disciples in Matt. 19:10 confirm that Piper was on the right track in the previous chapter?
207. Why do we need *grace* to be single or *grace* to be married?
208. What isn’t the main question for someone who has lied, killed, stolen, or illegitimately left a marriage? What is the main and most important issue for such individuals? Why is this so, and why is this important to remember?
209. Explain Piper’s advice for those who are in already existing second marriages? How does he support this view?
210. Why does Piper say, “Jesus’ standards are high because marriage does not and should not meet all our needs” (p. 322)? How could a married person (even one who seeks a divorce) make a god out of marriage? How could a single person make a god out of marriage? Does such idolatry dwell in your heart? Explain why you responded the way you did.

Chapter 43—Render to Caesar the Things That Are Caesar’s and to God the Things That Are God’s (pp. 323–328)

211. What was the trap the Pharisees were laying for Jesus in the question of Matt. 22:17?

212. Why shouldn't we understand Jesus' response as evasive?
213. Why did Jesus "not draw excessive attention to his universal ownership and authority" (p. 326) during his earthly ministry?
214. How does Jesus' authority *warrant* all other allegiances?
215. Why is the heart of rebellion inside us more dangerous than the demands of Caesar outside us? What implications does this have on your view of authority? How might this understanding change the way you interact with specific authorities in your life?

Chapter 44—Render to Caesar the Things That Are Caesar's as an Act of Rendering to God What Is God's (pp. 329–335)

216. What implication does Jesus' supreme, absolute, universal lordship have on our submission to authorities? Why do you think this doesn't contradict what was said in the previous chapter?
217. Explain what "a principle of freedom and what would be for the greater good" (p. 331) is. Describe how this should affect our relationship to authorities over us.
218. Explain how the non-resistance of Matt. 5:38–42 and the active love of Matt. 5:43–48 relate. How do we pursue both? What are both demands aiming at most fundamentally?
219. What are the implications of being "people of the cross" (p. 335) both in our non-resistance and in our civil disobedience?
220. Do you tend to err on the side of acquiescence or presumption in your submission to authority? Reflect upon the last two chapters over the course of this week and pray for grace and wisdom to better understand how Jesus must warrant, limit, and shape the specific allegiances in your life.

Chapter 45—Do This in Remembrance of Me, for I Will Build My Church (pp. 336–342)

221. Why is Jesus' plan for and provision for the church foundational to his demand to observe the Lord's Supper?
222. Why are the sayings, "The kingdom creates the church," and, "King Jesus builds his church" (p. 337), two ways of saying the same thing?
223. What does the promise of the Holy Spirit have to do with Christ building his church?
224. What is significant about the fact that 12 apostles were specially selected by Christ? How were they used in Christ's work of building his church?
225. Why are the Spirit and the Word inseparable for the advancement of Christ's cause on earth? How should this understanding affect your Bible reading and ministry this week?

Chapter 46—Do This in Remembrance of Me—Baptize Disciples and Eat the Lord's Supper (pp. 343–349)

226. What does it mean to treat "an unrepentant 'brother' like a 'Gentile and tax collector'" (p. 344)? Why is such treatment of the unrepentant "brother" not an excuse to cease loving him or to act hostile toward him?
227. What is baptism and what does it mean? Who instituted it? Why is it significant to recognize who instituted it?
228. What is the Lord's Supper? How does it relate to the Jewish Passover? Who instituted it? Why is it significant to recognize who instituted it?
229. What's Piper view on the nature of the cup and the bread of the Lord's Supper? How does he defend his view?
230. Why do you think Piper so closely connects his discussion on the nature of the church (both in this chapter and in the previous chapter) with his discussion of the Lord's Supper and baptism? Do you think of these things in such close connection? Why or why not?

Chapter 47—Let Your Light Shine Before Others That They May Glorify Your Father Who Is in Heaven (pp. 350–355)

231. Why did Piper choose the phrase, “manifest holiness of God” (p. 351), to describe Jesus’ first passion? What connection does he want us to make with this phrase? Why?
232. How did Jesus display the glory of God? What was the supreme manifestation of God’s glory in the life of Jesus, and how was this so?
233. What is the Father’s response to Jesus’ passion to glorify the Father? What is the supreme passion of God the Father and God the Son?
234. How can the Father’s aim to glorify the Son and the Son’s aim to glorify the father also be their love toward us?
235. What is the supreme passion of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit? How were they pursuing this passion in creating the earth? In the flood? In redeeming Israel from Egypt? In saving sinners in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? What should be our supreme passion and pursuit in life? Do you generally think of your life in these terms? Why or why not?

Chapter 48—Let Your Light Shine Before Others—the Joyful Sacrifice of Love in Suffering (pp. 356–362)

236. When we “let our light shine” (see Matt. 5:16), why would people give glory to God and not to us?
237. What is most “salty” in this world? Why is this so remarkable and why does it draw so much attention to Jesus?
238. What is an “ulterior motive” (p. 359), and why is it considered a bad thing? Why isn’t our passion for the glory of God not an ulterior motive for our love?
239. What will be our eternal vocation? How does this relate to Jesus’ glory and our love for others through eternity?
240. Describe how the glory of Jesus shines through in specific areas of your life.

Chapter 49—Make Disciples of All Nations, for All Authority Belongs to Jesus (pp. 363–368)

241. What is authority? What does Jesus have authority over? How was this demonstrated in his life?
242. What does the word “therefore” tell us in Matt. 28:19?
243. How does Jesus exert his church-building power today? How long will this work last?
244. What is the implication of Jesus’ demand to make disciples? What are we saying about Christ’s lordship and authority? What are we saying about truth? Why might the world oppose our mission of making disciples?
245. What does Jesus mean by “nations” in Matt. 28:19? What “nations” are around the area in which you live? Are there disciples of Jesus in the nations surrounding you? How are you and your church community pursuing this reality among the nations in your area?

Chapter 50—Make Disciples of All Nations, for the Mission Cannot Fail (pp. 369–375)

246. Why might we think that God has attempted to reach the nations in a roundabout way?
247. In what ways did Jesus signal that the Gentiles would inherit the blessings of Israel?
248. Why did Jesus think he would one day inherit the nations and reign over them, granting them all of Abraham’s blessings? Where did Jesus get his understanding about his inheritance and Abraham’s blessing? What does this tell you about what formed Jesus thinking about his mission? What does this tell you about the nature of the Old and New Testaments?
249. What is the full mandate and mission Jesus gives to the church? How does it relate to this book?
250. In what three ways are we to accomplish the mission Jesus gives to the church? Describe each way. Why is the success of this mission certain? Write a prayer of consecration and supplication, thinking of specific ways to advance this mission in your own life, and asking for help and wisdom and joy for the task.