

PREACHING FROM GOD'S WORD FOR A YEAR

52 NARRATIVE SERMONS

Written for: The Pioneer Evangelism Series

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How to use this book-

Praise the Lord! If you are leading a church, you are probably a very busy person. Most of us who lead churches have to work another job, take care of your family, and try to minister to several bodies of believers at one time. For others, God has allowed them to be part of a church that can provide so that they do not have to work another job. No matter what your life situation is, leading a church is a lot of work!

There is no substitute for studying the Word of God on your own. It is a blessing to study God's Word in order to teach a group of people God's truths. However, for many pastors, it is difficult to prepare studied sermons each week for your people. It is our hope that the sermons in this book will help save time as you minister to your people. We also hope that these sermons will give you excellent Spiritual Truths from God's Word. These are spiritual truths that this author was able to find in God's Word. If you want to learn how to Study God's Word and observe other Spiritual Truths for yourself throughout the Bible, you can look in the section called "How to Study the Bible".

Our prayer is that you can teach these truths to your church and help them grow in Christ. You can also teach these truths to the lost and allow the Lord to work on their hearts unto salvation.

You have 52 sermons in this book. Some of these sermons actually take several weeks to complete. Do not feel like you must rush through this book. The idea is that you will have enough sermons to easily preach for one year to your people. Sometimes you might feel like you need to preach one of these sermons again to your people to help them understand God's truths in a deeper way. Remember to use these sermons as the Spirit leads.

How is this book organized? First of all, it is important for you to understand that these sermons are designed so that all you have to do is read them. They are organized in way that you can read step-by-step what the sermon says to your people. You may want to change up some sections of each sermon depending on your people, but basically all you have to do is follow the outline and your people should understand the message.

- 1) At the beginning is a Table of Contents. Use this table to help you find a message on a topic you will preach to your people.
- 2) The book is basically divided into three sections.

Section 1: **GREAT MEN OF THE FAITH.** This book only begins to look at some of the great men in Scripture. My hope is that you will study in depth many other great men from Scripture. This book begins to examine the lives of Adam, Noah, and Abraham.

Section 2: **PRACTICAL THEOLOGY.** In other words, we try to study some very important truths that teach your people how to know God better as well as truths that teach how to grow your church. In that section, you can study prayer, the Holy Spirit, the church, and evangelism.

Section 3: **THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.** This section deals with Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. This section deals with **CHARACTER ISSUES** that people face daily.

Section 4: **GREAT LEADERS OF THE BIBLE.** This section deals with two of the greatest political **LEADERS** of the Bible- Joseph and Daniel.

When preaching through the lives of men like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph and Daniel, be sure to preach continuously through these men. In this way, you can teach the story in an organized and clear manner. Do not skip around from person to person. For

example, begin with the first sermon on Adam and preach all of the sermons that talk about Adam, and then move onto Noah, Abraham, etc. Your people will understand those men's lives as well as the Truths from their lives better.

- 3) Each sermon is divided into several sections. These are
 - a. Purpose- To show you the basic theme of the sermon.
 - b. Text- To show you where to find the sermon in the Bible
 - c. Introduction- Some, BUT NOT ALL, sermons have an introduction. This just gives you some opening remarks to share with your people.
 - d. Bible narrative- Most of these sermons are written as a story or narrative. In other words, we have simply taken the Bible chapters and simplified them into a story. You should read or retell the Bible narrative to your people. These should be written in *italics*. Occasionally in these narratives there are words that are not in italics. These phrases were added by me to clarify an important point in the passage. Those phrases were not taken from Scripture. We tried very hard to rarely include those explanations.
 - e. Bible text- On the Sermon the Mount Stories, we did not put them in story format. These are taken word from word from the NKJV Bible.
 - f. Spiritual truth- Every sermon will have several spiritual truths. These are truths about God and about ourselves that we can learn from Scripture. These are your TEACHING POINTS in the sermon. Under each spiritual truth, you have several key points.
 - i. Bible narrative (or text)- This shows you where that Spiritual truth is found in the chapter.
 - ii. Explanation- This gives a brief explanation of each Spiritual Truth
 - iii. (Bible texts)- Almost all of the sermons have many Bible texts that you can look up for further study. You should try to include as many of these as possible in your sermon. You may not have time to teach ALL of these, but it is good for you to be able to reference them. They will help illustrate each truth from other sections of Scripture.
 - iv. Illustration- These are stories both from the Bible and from our modern day world that help to further apply this Spiritual Truth to our life. Remember, this book contains illustrations that this author has included. Many times, it would be better you put your OWN ILLUSTRATIONS in the story. For example, in one sermon I give my salvation testimony. Instead of telling my story—tell your story. Illustrations help bring excitement to a sermon and make it more personal. This book will go to many areas in the world. Many of my illustrations may not be applicable to your nation. If they are not clear for your culture, please change them.
 - v. Application- How to apply this spiritual truth to our daily life.
 - g. Decision- This gives you a guideline on how to transition to an invitation to grow in Christ, join the church or accept Christ. This is only a guideline and you should always include more in your invitation than what is included in this book. ALWAYS GIVE A MOMENT OF DECISION FOR YOUR PEOPLE AND FOR THE LOST.

Feel free to change anything in this sermon to make it more personal or more applicable to your people.

How to Give an Invitation-

An invitation is the **MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE SERMON**. It is the moment where you will finish the sermon and then make the call for people to come to Christ. When giving an invitation remember the following ideas.

- 1) The best way to finish a sermon is to **FINISH**. Many pastors do not know when to stop speaking. How should you finish a sermon? Simply finish your final Spiritual Truth, apply it to your people, and then begin the invitation or the section entitled **DECISION**. In the invitation you want to give people the opportunity to:
 - a. Get saved- **NEVER, NEVER, NEVER** preach a sermon without giving someone an opportunity to give their life to Christ.
 - b. Rededicate their life to Christ- Many believers have become apathetic to the cause of Christ. Maybe they are struggling with sins they cannot control. Allow them an opportunity to recommit their life to Christ. This is not getting saved again (**ONE CAN ONLY GET SAVED ONCE!**) This just helps them get their life Christ-focused again (See Romans 12:1-2)
 - c. Join the church- Give someone an opportunity to join your fellowship of believers if they have come from another church
 - d. Get baptized- Many people have already been saved, but have never followed up with believers baptism.
- 2) The most important part of the time of **DECISION** is to give someone an opportunity to be saved. How do you give them an opportunity to get saved? Read through the section entitled **DECISION** to your people. During your reading, talk about who Jesus is. Say that He is God. He was born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a perfect life. He performed many miracles. He died on the cross was buried and rose from the grave. Then say that **HE IS ALIVE TODAY AND WANTS TO LIVE IN YOUR HEART!** Tell the people that because He is alive, we can give our lives to our Living Savior and Lord Jesus. How do we do this? We have to understand three things.
 - a. That we are sinners and we cannot save ourselves
 - b. Only Jesus Christ can save us—no other person, church, action, idol or god can save—only Jesus
 - c. We have to confess with our mouth and believe in our heart that Jesus is Lord. (Romans 10:9-10). How do we do confess Christ as Lord? We tell Jesus that we believe in Him and we want to **REPENT** of our sins and ask Him to be our Lord. To repent of our sins means that we **TURN** from our sins and give control of our life over to Him.

Often we tell people who are ready to give their life to Jesus that they can say a prayer to Jesus. Many times you might need to pray the prayer with the person. You, the leader, could have them repeat the prayer after you. They can pray something like this:

“Dear Jesus, I know that I’m a sinner, but I know that you love me. I want to make you the Lord and Savior of my life. I know that only you can save me. No other

god, church or action can save me—only you. Thank you for saving me today. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.”

After someone prays to receive Christ, you, the leader, need to counsel them about joining your fellowship of believers, about reading their Bible, about sharing their faith and about prayer.

How to Study the Bible

PASTORS- THIS WOULD BE A GOOD SERMON TO TEACH YOUR PEOPLE. IN OTHER WORDS, THE FIRST THING YOU CAN TEACH YOUR PEOPLE IS HOW TO READ THE BIBLE FOR THEMSELVES.

You can find spiritual truths anywhere in the Bible as you meditate on God’s Word .
How do you study God’s Word?

- 1) Begin with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the Truth to you. It is through the Holy Spirit that we learn all Truth (John 16:13).
- 2) When you finish praying, begin to read. We suggest starting with the Book of John, Proverbs, Psalms or maybe one of Paul’s Epistles. However, you can start anywhere. All of the Bible is good to study! You may want to read an entire chapter or you may just want to read a few verses. This is not a race. You do not have to finish the Bible in a year or in a month. Take your time.
- 3) Let the Lord speak to you. Spiritual truths need to be personal. They need to be ideas that can be applied to your own life or to the life of the church body. Don’t read a passage waiting for the Lord to tell you something about someone else. Let Him touch your life first and then you will be able to teach with more passion to others. When you meditate on a verse, and it really touches your heart, this might be the Holy Spirit trying to teach you.
- 4) As you meditate on the verses, there might be one verse, or one story, that really touches you. For some reason, this verse will simply stand out to you. You might have read the passage 20 times, but today you need to dwell more on that one verse. Stop. Ask God to help you apply that particular verse or section to your life. Think about what happened in that verse and see what you or your church is going through that might be similar to that situation. Or, look and see what that verse is teaching you about the Father that you’ve never thought about before. Take your time. The Lord may be highlighting something from Scripture that can be applied to your life.
- 5) Confirm- If you are newer in the faith or newer to the Bible, confirming your spiritual truth with other Scriptures might be more difficult. However, you want to make sure that what you have learned actually agrees with what the Bible says. After all, someone can take any verse out of Scripture and make it say just about anything they want. God will never tell you to do something that is in direct contrast with other parts of His Word. Study other parts of Scripture to make sure you are teaching sound doctrine. This step will become easier as you have more time and experience in the Word.
- 6) Apply- As you’ve gotten your spiritual truth and confirmed it with Scripture, then you can apply it to your people’s hearts as well as your own. If you are going to teach this principle, try to find examples and illustrations that are applicable to this truth. Your people will not learn unless they understand how this truth applies to them. You have to be able to teach your

people how this truth that God has revealed affects you, them and the world that they live. If they understand how the truth affects them, then it will be easier for them to apply the truth.

- 7) Close with prayer- Always thank God for all He has shown you, and ask for His help as you show your people what you have learned.

NEVER FORGET TO ASK GOD TO HELP YOU TO TRAIN OTHERS TO STUDY THEIR BIBLE. Remember God wants you to raise up more leaders for His Kingdom. There will be many men and women in your church that you can train to study Scripture so that **THEY** can teach others.

You can use these ideas above to daily get spiritual truths from the Bible. Using these ideas from a daily devotion time with the Father, you never have to rely on others' pre-written Bible studies or sermons again. You will probably still use others' Bible studies from time to time, but you will never **HAVE TO RELY PRIMARILY** on others' studies for your church again. The only book that you will need to guide your church is the Bible. Let God teach you **DAILY** through His word, so that you can teach others.

Other great Bible resources in the Pioneer Evangelism series are:

- 1) **“The Good News of Jesus” by Christy Brawner, “New Life” by Dr. Wade Akins and “The Gospel of John” by Waylon Moore-** These are wonderful Bible studies that you can use to evangelize a lost person for Christ.. I want to **ENCOURAGE** every pastor to get these studies in the Pioneer Evangelism series so that your people can learn how to evangelize using Bible studies. They are clear and easy to teach. In the sermons in this book you will learn two ways to lead people to Jesus. Using those Bible studies to evangelize is a third method to lead someone to Jesus and is this author's favorite way to evangelize.
- 2) **“Beginning a New Life in Christ” by Christy Brawner-** This is a wonderful Bible study to disciple a new convert in Christ. It is a simple, clear and powerful study that can be used to teach a new believer many of the profound truths a follower of Christ must know.
- 3) **“What is a Church” by Jeff Brawner-** This study will help if you are starting a church or if you are strengthening an existing church. It will show a group of believers what are the true purposes of a church and help them begin to minister as a church should.

You can find many of these materials also at pioneerevangelism.org

Thanks- I would like to give a special thanks to several people.

My wife, Christy, who helped me immensely in writing this book.

My mom, Mary Bob, who checked the grammar and format of the book

Wade and Barbara Akins, who promoted this book and gave input on how to make it more readable, fruitful and concise.

Dr. Steven Miller (the sermons on Daniel), Henry Blackaby (particularly sermon 21), Dr. John MacArthur, and Warren Wiersbe- whose books on many of these topics had a huge impact on these sermons.

My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ- Who makes all things possible through Him who strengthens me.

SERMON 1

Purpose of the sermon- To teach your church about God’s purpose in creation. God had a purpose in everything He created and His ultimate creation, YOU, were created for an even higher purpose.

Bible text- Genesis 1:1-31 (if possible read this passage to your people before telling the story, illustration and application. If it is not possible to read the passage, then skip to the sermon. This will hold true for all of the sermons in this book.)

Sermon

I. God Is Always Near – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning God created everything in the universe. He created the heavens and the Earth. The Earth was without form, or in other words, it was unfinished. Darkness was over the Earth. The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters in the unfinished world.

Explanation

From the very beginning God was always present. There has been and always will be one great God. It was this God that created everything that we see around us. In the very beginning, the Earth that we live on was without form. It was unfinished. It was completely enveloped in darkness. However, even when everything was dark, the Bible tells us that God was present.

Application

In this world we can feel so alone sometimes. Sometimes we feel like the spiritual darkness of the world around us is overwhelming. The Bible tells us that from the very beginning of creation, God was present. God is still present today as well. When things look dark and difficult, remember that the same God that was present at the beginning of creation is near you today. He sees all, hears all, and knows all. You are NOT alone. The darkness you feel in this world is no match for the God who created the universe and who still loves you today.

II. What God Created Was Good in His Eyes – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 1:3-25

God then began to create the Earth and the universe in six days. On the first day he created light. He separated light from darkness and called the light, Day, and the darkness, Night. God saw that the light was good, and this completed the first day.

On the second day God created the sky. He separated the waters which were under the ground with the waters that were to be in the sky. God then placed the waters into one place. He called where the waters gathered together, Seas, and the dry land, Earth. God saw that all of this was good.

On the third day God created grass, herbs that bring forth seed, and trees that yield fruit. God saw that all of these things were good.

On the fourth day God created the sun, moon and stars. He created these things to give light to the Earth. God saw that this was good as well.

On the fifth day, God created everything that lives in the sea and every winged bird. God saw that this was good and blessed it.

On the sixth day God also created every living creature. He created cattle, every insect, and every beast of the earth. God saw that all of these things were good.

Explanation

After God created the heavens and the Earth, He began to create beautiful details in His mighty work. God created everything we see around us in six days. He created day and night, the sky, the seas, the grass of the field, the sun, our moon and all the stars, and all of the fish, birds and land animals. In other words, He created EVERYTHING we see.

Illustration

What God created He calls good. The world we see around us was originally created for good. God was pleased to create the cows and animals around us. He saw that the plants and trees that were created were good. He saw that the sun, moon and stars were all pleasing to him. He created a good world. It is important to remember that God created everything we see. Everything we see can be used to give glory to God. (Psalm 19:1). In other words, everything we see points that there has to be a CREATOR.

The world does not seem so “good” today. There are hurricanes, earthquakes, death, and diseases. What happened to this “good” world? Next week we will study why the world that was so good suddenly went so bad. Once sin entered the world through one man and one woman, ALL of creation was affected. However, even though creation was affected, we can still see God’s work all around us, and we still enjoy and survive upon all of these basic creations today.

Application

Many times we are very impressed with everything man has done. Man has invented tall buildings, televisions, and airplanes. We should always remember that even though man has made some really astounding things, everything he has made originated from SOMETHING God created. Man used the things that God created as his basic building blocks in all that he did. Take a few moments tonight and look in the sky. Look at the stars. Compare God’s creation with anything that man has created. There really is no comparison!

Begin to ask the God of the universe if you can know Him. He will listen and begin to reveal Himself to you. The sun, moon, stars and Earth are incredible creations, but none of these great creations of God compare to His ultimate creation—YOU!

III. You Are God’s Ultimate Creation – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 1:26-31

On the sixth day, God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” God said he would give man authority over the fish, birds, cattle, over all of the earth and all of the creeping creatures on the Earth. So God created man in His image. He created both male

and female. God blessed them and told them “to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” He told man that he had given to both him and the animals every green plant to eat. God saw that all of this was good.

Explanation

God’s final creation was man and woman. We are God’s greatest creation. Why? We are His greatest creation because we were created in His image. God decided to make men like Himself. We are not God, and we can never be God. However, He gave us the ability to think, reason, feel and choose as He does.

Everything God created, including us, was created first of all to GLORIFY God. The first task of creation is to glorify Him. However, he also created the plants, animals and earth to help YOU AND ME, His ultimate creations. He gave us the plants of the field to eat, the animals to serve us; the sun, moon and stars to give us light and heat. These were all gifts to help his ultimate creation—YOU! All of creation not only points to Him, but was created to benefit us. If we are so important to God, than how can we glorify Him?

Application

You were created for a purpose. God gave you the gift to choose. You have the choice to accept or reject God. You have the choice to learn more about God or not to be interested. The Bible says that you are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:14) He created you especially unique and perfect in his eyes. None of us are perfect. We all have flaws. Some of us are too short; some are too tall. Some are too large, and some are too skinny. Some people were born with handicaps, and some were born healthy. No matter how you were created, you were created for a purpose in life—one single purpose. You were created to know Him- God. No other creation can experience that. You were created for one purpose- to know God the Father and Jesus Christ, the one He has sent. (John 17:3) Once you begin to know Him and experience His love, you will begin to value yourself and others more. You will be able to understand that God is always near. God will change everything in your life.

Decision

Maybe you are here today and are depressed. You do not feel that you are a person of value. Remember that you are the greatest of all of God’s creations. He saved you, his greatest creation, for last. God created the sun, our moon, and the entire universe before He created man, because you are the only creation made IN HIS IMAGE. Even though life can be difficult, isn’t it time you realized that you were created for a PURPOSE. Your purpose is to know the Creator God. Do you know God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ? If you have given your life to him, remember that you are a person of value.

If you haven’t given your life to Him, do you feel like you are living a life without purpose? Isn’t it time you know God through His Son Jesus Christ? God sent Christ to Earth to die for your sins on a cross, to be buried, and to be raised three days later from the grave for your sins. Christ is alive today and He wants to live in your heart. Don’t you want to know Christ today? Would you like to give your life to Him today? For the God who created the universe, Christ is the only way to come to know Him. The Bible tells us this is God’s plan. This is God’s plan for your life today.

If you'd like to give your life to Christ today, you can do so by praying to Him. You must simply do three things:

- d. Admit that you are a sinner, as everyone is, and you cannot save yourself
- e. Confess that only Jesus Christ can save you—no other person, church, action, idol or god can save—only Jesus
- f. You have to confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord. How do you do that? Tell Jesus that you believe in Him, you want to REPENT of your sins and ask Him to be our Lord. To repent of your sins means that you TURN from your sins and give control of our life over to Him.

Would you like to give your life to Christ as Lord today? Pray this prayer with me . . .

SERMON 2

Purpose of the sermon- To teach your church about the first sin of man—pride.

Bible Text- Genesis 2-3

Sermon-

I. God Gives a Command to Protect – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative -Genesis 2:1-17

After the Lord finished the creation of the heavens and the Earth, He rested on the seventh day. The Lord had created Adam from the dust of the Earth, and He breathed the breath of life into his nostrils. God created a garden in Eden and placed Adam there. The Lord God commanded Adam to eat from any tree in the garden except for one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He told him, “If you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Explanation

God finished all of His work in creation and rested on the seventh day. Part of His creation was the Garden of Eden. In that garden there was one special tree. That tree gave Adam and Eve the capability to know right from wrong. At this stage in creation, God had given Adam and Eve the ability to think, (Genesis 2:19-20), love (Genesis 2:18) and choose (Genesis 2:17). All of these were attributes of God. However, in his grace he held back the KNOWLEDGE of right and wrong. Why did God hold back this knowledge?

Illustration

“Mommy why is the sky blue?” “Mommy how does this work?” From the very beginning, we, as children, strive to learn. We want to learn more and more about the world around us. We want to learn how things work and why things are the way they are. Sometimes parents feel like they are going crazy because their kids ask so many questions. God has created in us the desire to continue to learn. Sometimes we learn things that are good for us; sometimes we learn things that will hurt us in the future. In the same way, God knew that it would be in the desire of man’s heart to learn and know about the world around him. Is it bad to learn things? No, after all, the man who wrote Genesis, Moses, was a privileged member of the Pharaoh’s household in Egypt. He most assuredly had studied many things in his life. However, the very first command written in Scripture was to avoid eating from a tree that would give knowledge. Why would God say such a thing? God was trying to protect Adam and Eve from unclean knowledge that would only cause shame in their lives and in the lives of billions of people for generations to come.

Application- To be well educated is very important to many people in the world. For example, in India, people strive very hard to be well educated. There is nothing wrong with learning many things from a variety of topics. However, we should remember that God is the source of all knowledge. (John 14:26) If we learn to base our studies on Him, He will help us avoid many problems in life. Adam and Eve wanted to learn REGARDLESS of what God said. We should strive to learn to please God.

II. God's Commands Bring Freedom from Shame – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - (Genesis 2:18-25)

The Lord saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone in the garden. He had many cattle and birds in the garden with him, but he needed a helper comparable to him. God caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam. And he took a rib from Adam's side and closed up the flesh. From that rib, God created woman, Adam's wife. Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." They were both naked and were not ashamed.

Explanation

God saw that Adam was alone. Although he was surrounded by animals, none of them were an equal creation to him. He was lonely. So, God created a woman from Adam. Once she was created, they lived in the Garden in perfect innocence. They had not committed sin yet.

Illustration

Children are basically free of shame. Mothers can bathe their young children, and the child feels no shame at being undressed in front of others. In the same way, a husband and wife, (after being married some time), feel no shame at being undressed in front of their mate. There is no shame involved in innocence.

Application

Adam and his wife felt no shame because they were living lives pleasing to the Lord. They had not yet eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Consequently, they felt no shame at being naked. They were not IGNORANT of their nudity, but they were unashamed of their nakedness.

When we follow the Lord and obey His commands, we can experience freedom from SHAME. In your day to day life, are you living with shame? What has caused your shame? Why can you not get rid of your shame? You will find that the very thing that caused so much pain to Adam, shame, is the very thing that is hindering your walk with the Lord right now.

III. Pride Causes Us to Break God's Commands – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - (Genesis 3:1-7)

So the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field. He asked Adam's wife if she could eat of every tree of the garden. She replied that they could eat of any tree except for the tree in the middle of the field. In fact, she said that they couldn't even touch it, or they would die. The serpent said to the woman that they wouldn't die. However, if they eat of the fruit their eyes will be opened and they "will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, was pleasing to the eyes, and could make her wise, she ate of it. She also gave fruit to her husband and he ate. Then their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked.

Explanation

Although Adam's wife ate of the fruit first, Adam was just as guilty. Note the difference between Adam and Eve. Eve was tricked by the cunning devil, the serpent (Rev. 12:9), but Adam

took the bite conscious of his decision. They were equally guilty. Why did they do this? Adam and Eve chose to disobey God because they wanted “to be like God.” PRIDE is the root cause of all of our sin in the world. We want to be able to be equal to God.

God did not want to stop Adam and the women from knowing about good and evil because he wanted them to be ignorant. He was protecting them from the consequences of knowing good from evil. However, Adam and his wife’s pride and selfish desire to eat “good food” that was “pleasing to the eyes” and that would “make one wise” caused them to forget God’s loving warnings.

IV. The Result of Pride Is Other Sins – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - (Genesis 3:8-19)

God was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, but Adam and his wife hid from Him. God called out to Adam asking where he was. Adam told God that he was afraid because he was naked and so he hid himself. God asked Adam who told him that he was naked. God wanted to know if Adam had eaten of the tree. Adam then said that the woman that God gave him had given Adam the fruit. Then God asked the woman, and she said that the serpent had deceived her, and she ate. God then told everyone the consequences of their actions. He cursed the serpent. He told the woman that her childbirth pains would greatly increase and that her desire would be for her husband. To Adam, God told him that he would now have to toil and struggle as he tried to raise crops. This toil was very different from what he had experienced before in the lush garden.

Explanation

Look at a quick list of sins that occurred because of Adam and the woman’s pride.

1. Broken fellowship with God- Genesis 3:8- “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God . . .” Adam and Eve hid rather than ran to the Father.
2. Fear- Genesis 3:10- “So he said, “I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid” Adam said that He was afraid.
3. Shame- Genesis 3:10-11 “I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked?” Adam and his wife, Eve, now experienced shame from their nudity.
4. Blame- Genesis 3:12- “Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate.”
Genesis 3:13- “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” Both Adam and Eve immediately blamed someone else for their sin.
5. Thanklessness – Genesis 3:12- “The woman whom *you gave to be with me* (italics added). . . .” The woman was supposed to be a great gift for Adam’s loneliness, but instead Adam seemed to be thankless for her at the moment.
6. Lessened joy Genesis 3:16-19- For both Adam and Eve, God told them that basic things in life such as childbirth and crop rearing would never be the same.

Sin always multiplies in our lives. We think that one little sin will not affect us. However, one sin always brings more. Adam and Eve’s sin of pride caused fear, shame, blame, thanklessness, broken fellowship and loss of joy. Yours and my sins cause the same things in our

lives. Sin takes away the JOY of life. Sin might be pleasurable momentarily, but in the end it always causes more pain.

V. God Provides a Remedy to the Consequences of Our Pride – Fifth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - (Genesis 3:20-24)

Adam called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all those who are alive. God made for Adam and Eve tunics of skin, and He clothed them. God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil." So He sent Adam out of the garden to till the ground in case Adam chose to eat from the other special tree of the garden, the tree of life, and live forever. God put an angel at the east end of the garden with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life.

Explanation and Application

In the garden there was also one more special tree- the tree of life. Adam and Eve had allowed pride to move them to disobey God. Now they had sin in their lives, and they were living under the consequences of that sin. God, the Father, wanted to protect them from that sin and not allow them to live forever. Many people want to live forever, but to live forever in our sin would be a horrible life for all of us. God knew this and protected Adam. He provided a way for Adam to not live forever in sin. He protected him from the tree of life.

God also did something else. God sacrificed some animals and made coverings for Adam and Eve. Why? First of all God was meeting a practical need. Adam and Eve were ashamed in their nakedness. The animals provided a covering for them. Secondly, throughout Scripture we can read that God always requires a sacrifice of blood to cover our sins. Beginning in Genesis 3, all through the Old Testament, these blood sacrifices point men to the only true sacrifice that will cure them of all of their sin- the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Decision

Maybe you are here today and feel consumed with pride. Maybe you are consumed with some of the consequences of your pride- fear, shame, blame/guilt, a thankless heart, a joyless life, or broken fellowship with God. God loves you, and He has provided a remedy for your sin. Just as God sacrificed the animals for Adam and Eve, Jesus Christ gave Himself up on the cross to be the sacrifice for your sins. The animals were a sacrifice to cover Adam and Eve, Jesus Christ was the perfect sacrifice to "cover" yours and my sins. Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried, and He is alive today, and He wants to live in your heart. He doesn't want you to live forever separated from Him because of your sin. He wants you to give your life to Jesus, be free from the consequences of sin, and begin your personal journey with Him today.

PASTOR, YOU CAN INSERT YOUR TESTIMONY HERE!

Won't you give your life to Jesus today? If you would like to give your life to Christ, pray this prayer with me today . . .

SERMON 3

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your church about being FAITHFUL when everyone around you is not.

Bible Text - Genesis 6

Sermon –

I. The Wicked World – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Genesis 6:1-7

Now the number of people on the Earth began to multiply. The “sons of God” began to look upon the women of the Earth because they were beautiful. These sons of God took women as wives. This made the Lord very sad, and He placed a judgment on men. He would only give men another 120 years left on the Earth. God saw that man was very wicked and that every thought of his heart was for evil. The Lord was sorry that He had made men, and He grieved in His heart. So God said that He would destroy both man and beast from the Earth.

Explanation

The number of people on the Earth began to grow significantly. As men grew stronger they began to reject the Lord. Some people think that the “sons of God” were fallen angels that indwelt in man and took wives. Other people feel like the sons of God were just a group or race of very strong men who had completely forsaken God. Either way, the Bible describes a world that had totally forgotten about its Creator.

Illustration

Are men truly evil in what they think and do? The Bible says “the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it?”(Jeremiah 17:9). That means that in our heart and in our thoughts we think and desire evil. In fact, we are born with the desire in our heart to do wrong. Think about how many times in your life you have had to struggle to make the right choice. In your mind you knew what you should do, but your heart told you to do something else. Everyone in the world, Christian or not, struggles with sin. The difference is that those who have given their lives to Christ have already been forgiven for their sin, while the world that has rejected Christ still lives in its sin.

Maybe sometimes you become discouraged because those around you are choosing to not follow the Lord. They live immoral lives and do not seem to feel any shame. You must remember that without Christ these people are going to obviously follow what their hearts tell them to do, and the heart always tells us to do the quick, easy, and usually wrong action.

Application

How about your life right now? Are you struggling with a temptation that you feel you can't control? Is your heart telling you to make the easy, simple but WRONG choice? The Bible tells us that the sin of these men in the early days of the Earth made Him sorry he created them. Their sin grieved the Lord. Do not let your heart guide you in your decision making, pray that the

Lord guides you in all that you do. Do not base your decisions on what those around you are doing, because the millions around you without Christ will certainly choose the wrong path.

II. The Just Man – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Genesis 6:9-10

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a “just man, perfect in his generation.” Noah walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Explanation

Noah was a good man. The Bible describes him positively in three ways.

1) Noah was a just man.

In other words, he was a good, moral man. Noah lived an upstanding life, and he modeled that life in front of his three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. The Bible says that Noah was 600 years old when God decided to judge the world with a flood. For six hundred years, Noah had proven to be a just man. That is a long time to be a “just person.”

2) Noah was perfect in his generation.

In other words, Noah was upstanding even when his fellow man was not. It is very easy to be good and moral when all those around you are good and moral. A few years back a man was on an airplane. As he was about to take off, the pilot came on the intercom and told the passengers that the runway was damaged and they couldn't take off. They would have to wait almost 24 hours until the next flight. What happened when the crowd heard this? Many on the plane were believers in Christ. They didn't cheer with joy, but they didn't get angry either. They accepted the news and went back to the terminal and waited. They spent the next 18 hours talking, sleeping, laughing but never truly complaining. One man said that because everyone around him was reacting so well, it was easy to have a good attitude about what was going on. What would have happened if the people on the plane had reacted poorly? What if everyone had gotten angry and began to demand that the airline do something? Would it have been equally as easy for this one man in the crowd to react positively? Certainly it would not have been as easy to react honorably if everyone else was angry and bitter at the airline. When one is surrounded by Godly people, it is easier to act well. What happens when no one around you acts in a way that honors the Lord? That is the situation that Noah faced. Noah acted morally and honorably when THE WHOLE WORLD did not.

3) The Bible says, “He walked with God.”

In other words, this was a man who had an intimate relationship with the Father. This was the same phrase used to describe Enoch, (Genesis 5:24). Enoch had such a devout relationship with the Father that he never physically died. Instead, God took him directly to heaven. Noah was this type a man. He truly walked with God. Noah did eventually die, just as you and I will. However, we should all strive for that loving relationship with the Father.

Application

When the world around you refuses to accept God, remember the example of Noah. Wouldn't it be an honor for God to describe you as someone who is “just” and “perfect in his generation”? Noah was FAITHFUL to his God even when literally EVERYONE ELSE IN THE WORLD was not. Noah was faithful to pass on to his sons the lessons he learned through his

relationship to God. Maybe you live in India or Tanzania or Brazil. Maybe everyone around you in your village refuses to truly serve God. Maybe you are the only believer. Remember that from the beginning of time there were men just like you. There have always been men who were totally surrounded by those who denied the Lord. Perhaps you find yourself in a situation like Noah's. You may be surrounded by people who do not follow the Lord. Strive to remain faithful like Noah.

III. Our Gracious God – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - (Genesis 6:8-14)

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a “just man, perfect in his generation.” Noah walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. The Earth was corrupt before God and was filled with violence. God told Noah that the end of all flesh was near because the earth was filled with violence. Then he told Noah to “make yourself an ark.”

Explanation

Noah was a good man living in a corrupt world. The world had gotten so bad that God prepared to destroy it. However, in this passage, we begin to see how God was preparing to save Noah. While he was about to destroy the Earth, he prepared Noah by telling Him how to build a boat. God was providing a way of safety for His servant. Why did God do this?

The Bible says that Noah “found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” The Bible paints a vivid picture of how Noah was a just man. However, Noah was not saved by God on the ark because he was a just man. He was saved on the ark because he experienced the grace of the Lord. It was not Noah's works that saved him, but God's grace. God provided a way out, a salvation, for Noah, and He wants to provide a way out for you.

God wants to pour out His grace on your life. He wants to help you to know Him and have eternal salvation with him. At the same time, He can guide you into becoming someone who can walk with God as well, so that you can be a moral example to those around you.

Decision

Are you struggling with being faithful to God? Are you a believer in Christ, but you feel so alone because those around you are not following him? Ask God to help you be faithful like Noah. Ask God to pour out his grace upon you.

Maybe you are listening, and you have decided that you want to be like Noah. You want to walk with God and be a just man.

Remember that before you can be a just man in the eyes of the Father, you must be a SAVED man through His Son. Noah was saved from the destruction of all mankind by grace. In the same way that God saved Noah, God wants to save you (Eph 2:8-9). He wants to save you by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today you can let Jesus Christ take control of your life. You can ask Him to save you. Then God will save you for all eternity by Grace. Not by anything that you have done, but as a free gift. Won't you accept that free gift today? How can you give your life to Christ today, let me show you how . . .

SERMON 4

Purpose of the sermon - To show how God can ask us to do things we don't understand, but that He provides a way for us to accomplish His tasks

Bible Text - Genesis Chapters 6, 7, 8

Bible Narrative- Genesis 6: 12-21

God looked at the Earth, and it was corrupt. All flesh had corrupted His ways upon the Earth. God told Noah that the Earth was filled with violence. He told Noah that He was going to destroy both man and the Earth itself. He told Noah to make an ark of gopher wood. Noah was to make rooms and seal the ark both inside and out with pitch. The ark was to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. The ark was to have a window and a giant door, and the ark was to have three levels.

God said that he would bring a giant flood that would destroy every living thing on the Earth. However, God said He would establish a covenant with Noah. He would allow Noah, his wife, his sons and their wives to enter the ark. Moses would take every living thing into the ark. Two of every type of animal, male and female, would enter. All birds, cattle and insects would come to him to enter the ark in order to keep them alive. Noah would also take all the food that was to be eaten for him and for the animals.

Sermon

I. God Asked Noah to Participate in the Impossible – First Spiritual Truth

Explanation

Can you imagine being Noah? Can you imagine having to face what He had to face? Noah was the only man that walked with the Lord among all of the people of the Earth. Because of man's unfaithfulness, God told Noah that judgment had come. Now all of the men and women that had rejected Him would die. Because of this, God asked Noah to do four seemingly impossible things.

A. God told Noah that he would have to watch people die (Genesis 6:13)

Bible Narrative- He told Noah that He was going to destroy both man and the Earth itself.

If Noah was the only man that was walking with the Lord on Earth, He probably faced some pretty serious persecution. These wicked people had probably not treated him well. However, even though these people hadn't treated him justly, Noah still had to have difficulty knowing that all of those people would die. No one likes to see people die. Noah, being a man, may not have understood all of the reasons why the other people had to die. He may not have liked the thought of what was going to take place. However, he trusted God and accepted His judgment.

B. God told Noah to build an enormous ark. (Genesis 6: 14-16)

Bible Narrative- He told Noah that He was going to destroy both man and the Earth itself. He told Noah to make an ark of gopher wood. Noah was to make rooms and seal the ark both inside and out with pitch. The ark was to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. The ark was to have a window and a giant door, and the ark was to have three levels.

Explanation

God told Noah to build an enormous ark. Can you imagine what Noah thought? First of all, Noah was an old man. In Genesis 7:6 we learn that Noah was 600 years old when the floods came. That means he was close to 500 years old when He heard that he had to build the ark. How can someone have lived that long? It would be impossible for a man who is five hundred years old to be alive today. We must remember that before the flood, the Earth was different. The flood changed everything from the oceans to the land to the atmosphere. Because the world was different, man could live a very long time.

Even though times were different, Noah was still an old man. He certainly couldn't have looked forward to all the work He was about to do to build the ark. He must have thought that if God was asking him to do the impossible.

After all, think about our world today. Can you imagine YOUR grandfather getting up and building a giant boat like Noah did?!

C. God told Noah he would destroy the Earth by a flood of waters. (Genesis 6:17)

Bible Narrative- God said that he would bring a giant flood that would destroy every living thing on the Earth.

Explanation

God told Noah that He was going to destroy the world by a giant flood. This was something no one in the world had ever seen. They had never seen rain fall from the sky. The Bible says in Genesis 2:5-6 that rain had not yet fallen. There existed a mist from all of the underground water that came up and watered the Earth. Also, a canopy of water enveloped the Earth, and because of this, rain had never fallen. Can you imagine what Noah thought, "Rain, floodwaters . . . what is that? How can that happen? What does God mean?"

How about the other people around Noah? Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). Can you imagine the ridicule Noah faced as he tried to warn all those around Him of impending judgment? Surely they made fun of Noah at the idea that water would destroy the Earth.

D. God told Noah to gather all of the animals. (Genesis 6:19-21)

Bible Narrative- . Moses would take every living thing into the ark. Two of every type of animal, male and female, would enter. All birds, cattle and insects would come to him to enter the ark in

order to keep them alive. Noah would also take all the food that was to be eaten for him and for the animals.

Explanation

God also told Noah to gather up all of the animals and the food for them. Can you imagine what Noah thought at that moment? He had to ask himself, “How could one man find two of every animal IN THE WORLD? How can he catch all of the birds? How can he pick up all of the insects? How am I going to do this?”

Illustration

There was a story in the news about a dog that ran onto an airport runway in the city of London. It took three men with two cars about thirty minutes before they finally caught the dog and got it off the runway. All airline traffic stopped while they tried frantically to catch the dog! If it took 30 minutes to catch one cute, little scared dog, can you imagine Noah’s dilemma as He said, “How am I going to catch lions, tigers and elephants?”

Application

God asked Noah to do some very difficult tasks. What tasks has God given you now that seem impossible to do? Have you wondered why God would ask you to do them? If we truly stop to think about what God asked Noah to do, we would see that what God asked Him to do was far more challenging than our problems today!

II. Noah Obeyed All God Asked Him to Do – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Genesis 6:22

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

Explanation-

Noah was probably not sure how he was going to do all of these tasks. Probably all that God asked him to do seemed overwhelming. However, the Bible does not discuss how Noah may have struggled with his decision. It does not say that “Noah thought and thought and finally decided to obey the Lord.” Instead it just honors him for his obedience. It simply says, “Thus did Noah.”

Application-

Perhaps God is asking you to do the impossible. Confirm in your heart that what He is asking you to do is His will and then proceed. You cannot FINISH a task for the Kingdom of God until you START that task. The Bible didn’t give any details as to the struggles Noah faced in obeying. It only highlighted that he OBEYED. God understands your struggles, but He is looking for your obedience.

III. God Provided the Solution to All of His Requests for Noah – Third Spiritual Truth

As you look at the above story, it is obvious that God provided a solution for all of His commands for Noah.

A. God provided the solution for Noah concerning the death of all the people.

Bible Narrative - Genesis 6:18 (See the actual covenant in Genesis 9:1-3)

However, God said He would establish a covenant with Noah. He would allow Noah, his wife, his sons and their wives to enter the ark.

Explanation

Although we can't know for sure, we can assume Noah had to be concerned about what would happen after the death of all of those people. How would his family survive? After all, the world would be destroyed. There would be only them and the animals. God assured Him that he would make a covenant with Noah. This covenant assured Noah that man would still live on and that His family would continue. Noah, because he was a preacher of righteousness, must have known that God's judgment could come, and this covenant that God just established had to assure him that God was thinking of the future. In fact, in Genesis 9: 1-3, God assures Noah that since the flood was finished, God would allow Noah to be fruitful and multiply. All the animals of the Earth would be afraid of him. All the animals and all the plants were to be his to eat. God was certainly concerned with Noah and his future.

It may have been difficult to watch all of those people die, but God gave Noah hope by protecting him and his family.

B. God instructed Noah how to build an ark.

Bible Narrative – Genesis 6:14-16

He told Noah to make an ark of gopher wood. Noah was to make rooms and seal the ark both inside and out with pitch. The ark was to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. The ark was to have a window and a giant door and the ark was to have three levels.

Explanation

The Bible shows that God gave Noah step by step instructions as to how he should build the ark. He also gave Noah close to 120 years to build an ark.

Illustration

If someone told me to go build a house, I would immediately say, "I can't do it!" However, if they told me they would give me the plans and that I had many years to complete it, I would be much more confident! God told Noah to do an "impossible" task, but he guided him step by step in how to do it.

- C. Noah could not have imagined how God would destroy the Earth with water, but God showed He wasn't limited by Noah's imagination.

Bible Narrative- Genesis 7:11-12

Noah was six hundred years old. In the second month of the year and on the seventeenth day of that month, all of the underground fountains burst open and the "windows of heaven" were opened up as well. It rained on the earth forty days and forty nights.

Explanation

Noah was probably ridiculed by his neighbors at the idea that a giant boat would ever be needed. However, nobody was laughing when all of the underground water came spilling up, and water began to fall from the sky. God told Noah that He would destroy the world in a seemingly impossible way, but He showed the impossible is always certain with Him.

- D. The Bible says that Noah had to gather the animals, but in the end, God gathered them for Noah.

Bible Narrative – Genesis 6:19-20

Moses would take every living thing into the ark. Two of every type of animal, male and female, would enter. All birds, cattle and insects would come to him to enter the ark in order to keep them alive.

Explanation

At first in Scripture, it looked as if Noah was going to have to gather all of those animals by himself. However, God took care of that problem. One man could NEVER gather all of the animals in the world. So God tells him that all the animals **would come to him**. In verse 7:9 we see that all of the beasts, insects and birds "went in two and two unto Noah into the ark." Noah might have thought He had a lot of work to do, but God did all of the work for Noah.

Application/Decision

Maybe you are here today, and God is asking you to do something impossible. Maybe God is asking you to stand up for Him when you don't think you can. Maybe He is asking you to take a job that you do not think will provide for your family. Maybe He is asking you to take a role in the church that seems too hard. It all seems impossible.

Noah truly faced the impossible. God showed that all things are possible through Him. He showed Noah how to do what needed to be done, how to accomplish the tasks that were simply beyond what Noah could do. God provided a promise for the future in the midst of all of the difficulties. God wants to do the same thing in your life.

Maybe you are here today, and God is asking you to do the impossible in terms of KNOWING HIM. Maybe you think that it is impossible to know the one true God. Did you know that the Bible says in Phillipians 4:13 that, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." With Christ in your life, the impossible becomes the possible. It may seem impossible to know the one true God, but through Christ you can.

Maybe you are beginning to feel like you should give your life to Jesus Christ as Lord.

However, it may seem impossible to overcome the obstacles from your family, your friends, or your coworkers if you accept Christ.

In the Bible a rich young man came to Jesus and asked how he could be saved. After Christ told Him how to be saved, He walked away sadly. The young man's heart wasn't ready. He looked at all of the other factors around him and not at the decision that needed to be made. He was a good, moral man, but he wasn't ready to make the true decision for Christ. After this, when Christ's disciples asked how to be saved, Jesus replied, "With men, this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26) If we try to be saved on our own power, it is impossible, but like Noah, if we trust in God we can watch God do the "impossible" in our lives. He can save you today. Do not look at all of the factors around you. Trust in Him. Won't you give your life to Jesus today? If you would like to give your life to Christ today, let us show you how . . .

SERMON 5

Purpose of the sermon - To show the four ways that God protected Noah and apply them to your church members' lives.

Bible Text – Genesis 8-9

Sermon

Introduction

God saw how sin had dominated the Earth. He had to destroy mankind for they had turned from Him. However, Noah was a just man. He walked with God. (See Genesis 6:9). God told Noah to build a giant boat called an ark. He was to put his wife, his sons and their wives in the ark in order to protect them. He was also to put two of all of the animals of the Earth in the ark as well. He also was to take seven of every clean animal and seven of all of the birds of the air. In other words, the word “clean” meant that these last animals were to be used as sacrifices to God. After they entered the ark, God was going to send a great flood from the giant water pools under ground and a great rainstorm from the sky to destroy the entire world. Noah obeyed and built the ark, God helped him gather all of the animals, and the flood began. It rained for forty days and forty nights and covered the entire world to the tops of the mountains.

God takes the sins of the world very seriously. He takes them so seriously that he was forced to destroy an unrepentant world. While He has promised never to destroy the world again by a flood, He still takes sin very seriously. However, in the midst of all of that destruction, God had a plan. From Noah, all of the next generation of men would come. Let us look at how God protected Noah after the flood.

Bible Narrative - Genesis 8-9:17

God remembered Noah and all of the living things on the ark. He made a wind to pass over the earth, and the rains stopped. He closed up the great fountains of the deep. The waters stopped rising, and the ark rested on Mount Ararat. Two and a half months later, other mountains began to appear. Forty days later Noah sent out a raven that went to and fro until the waters dried. He also sent out a dove; however, the dove also returned. He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again. This time the dove returned with an olive leaf in its mouth, and Noah knew the waters had receded. He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again. She did not return. Noah looked from the ark and saw that the ground was dry. God spoke to Noah and told him to leave the ark (almost two months later), and Noah went out with his family and all of the animals.

Noah left the ark and made an altar in order to sacrifice some of the animals from the ark. The sacrifice pleased the Lord. The Lord said to Himself that He would never curse the ground again for man's sake. Even though the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, He would never destroy every living thing again.

God blessed Noah and his sons and said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." He told them that the animals would fear them and that these animals were given into their hands. They could eat anything that lives and moves, but they were not to eat of the blood. God said they should not eat flesh with its life- or its blood. He said He would hold beasts accountable as well for the shedding of blood. He told them He would hold man accountable for the shedding of the blood of man. He said, "From the hand of man's brother I will require the life of a man." He said, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God He made man.

God then told Noah He would establish a covenant with him and his descendents as well as with every living creature that is with them. He told them He would never destroy the world with a flood again.

God said that as a sign of the covenant, He would give them a rainbow. This rainbow would be the sign of the everlasting covenant between Him and all flesh on the earth.

In this passage, we see that God established some guidelines that would protect Noah. God protects you and me today.

I. God Protected Noah from the Animals – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 9:1-2

God told them that the animals would fear them and that the animals were given into their hands.

Explanation

When Noah stepped off the ark, it would have been his family against lions, tigers, bears, hippopotamus, snakes, spiders, etc. Noah could have had a tough time in those first few months fighting off all of those hungry and dangerous animals.

Application

Does this mean that God will protect us from all animals all of the time? Of course not. People are killed by poisonous snakes and hungry predators every day in all parts of the world. However, it does show that no detail is too small for God. He knew that those animals would want to have a feast on Noah. Even today, all animals have an innate fear of man. Although they attack, they still fear us. Often, God did choose to protect men from animals, and even to this day, it is man who rules the earth (Daniel 6; Jonah 1,2).

II. God Protected Noah from Other Men – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 9:5-6

He told Noah He would hold man accountable for the shedding of blood of man. He said, "From the hand of man's brother I will require the life of a man." He said, "Whoever shed's man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man."

Explanation

We see here that God has established guidelines to protect men. In the beginning, it was just Noah, his wife, and their sons and wives, but soon they would multiply in number. Remember, they multiplied so greatly in number that all of the six billion people in the world today came from one family—Noah’s family. Immediately after the flood, there was no need to set up too many rules and guidelines concerning society; however, God set up protections for the future so that as man multiplied, they could act in an orderly way. For example, God set up rules in case one man wanted to murder another. God highly values LIFE. There was no room for murder in God’s new creation.

Illustration

How did God protect life in this verse? This verse is the first mention of man being able to exact justice on another man. “*By man his blood shall be shed.*” God was not giving men the opportunity to go out and exact vengeance on people as they so chose. Instead he was establishing ORDER IN HUMAN GOVERNMENT. Government is actually established by God (Romans 13). Even when our country has rulers that we do not like, we have to understand that God set government in order to protect us. We should pray for our rulers in government (1 Timothy 2:1-2). We should not kill because we are of a different religion or a different tribe. We should not kill because someone has offended us or injured our honor. God was setting up guidelines to keep people from freely killing one another so that LIFE could be preserved.

The two other institutions that God set up in the Bible were THE FAMILY (Genesis 1:24) and THE CHURCH (Matthew 16).

Application

Do you honor life as God honors life? Do you value the world around you? Whether a person is eighty years old or still in the mother’s womb, God values life. From the very beginning he was preparing Noah to protect life. Do you value the life of someone even when they are not lovable? Do you value the life of your leaders? God does. Do you pray for your leaders even if you do not like them?

III. God protected Noah from Judgment – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 8:1

God remembered Noah and all of the living things on the ark

Explanation

God chose to spare Noah from the flood. Noah walked with God. He was an honorable and just man, but he was not perfect. Noah was not sinless (An example of a moral failure for Noah can be found in Genesis 9:21). Even though Noah was separated from God by His sins, just as every man who has ever lived is separated from Him by their sins, God chose to spare him and his family from judgment. Why? There are two reasons. First of all, God honored Noah for walking with Him. God knew Him, and God frees those who follow him from condemnation and judgment. Second of all, God chose to protect Noah. God simply chose to show His grace to a man like Noah. In the same way, he wants to show His grace to sinners like us today.

Application

Those who have given their lives to Christ Jesus are protected from judgment. You and I both deserve to be judged by God because of our sins. However, God has chosen to spare us through Jesus Christ. If you are in Christ Jesus, you are FREE FROM CONDEMNATION. The Bible says in Romans 8:1 – “There is, therefore, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” You and I do not have to walk as if we are condemned men for we are free spiritually before the Father.

IV. God Protects Us from Ourselves – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 8:21

The sacrifice pleased the Lord. He said to Himself that He would never curse the ground again for man’s sake. Even though the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth, He would never destroy every living thing again.

Explanation

God knows our heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?” In our nature we were born evil. That is a difficult thing for people to hear. We would like to think that we are good people. You may be a moral person. You may be a kind person. However, when we compare ourselves with God’s perfect goodness and morality, we fall far short. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” In other words every one of us has sinned. Our sin can fool us into believing we are better than we actually are, and sin can make us make choices that we should not make.

However, in this verse God also shows that even though we are wicked in our hearts He still sets up ways to protect us.

IV. Application/Decision

Maybe you are sitting there and thinking, “I’m a good person.” You need protection from yourself most of all. We can deceive ourselves into thinking we are so moral that we do not need God. Even the most moral man on Earth, Noah, needed to be saved by God. Of course, you and I need a Savior as well. How can we find that Savior?

Earlier we read in Genesis 9:4 where God told Noah that he should not eat the blood of an animal because it is the life of the animal. “*They could eat any food but that they were not to eat of the blood. He said they should not eat flesh with its life- or its blood.*” Why did God tell him that? He was beginning to teach Noah, as well as future generations, about the importance of blood. The Bible says in Leviticus 17:11, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood.” Why would God talk so much about blood and life? God spoke about blood because He was going to use the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ to protect us from ourselves. Christ shed His blood on the cross to be our Savior. In other words, He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. The only way that you and I can have TRUE LIFE is in the life giving blood of Jesus Christ. He is that Savior that you and I need. He is that protection from ourselves that we all long for. Christ died and three days later he rose from the grave. He is alive today and wants to live in your heart. Won’t you let him come in your heart today? If you would like to give your life to Jesus Christ today, let me show you how . . .

Sermon 6

Purpose of the sermon - To explain the consequences of losing one's honor by studying one of Noah's failures.

Bible Text - Genesis 9:18-28

Sermon

Introduction

Noah and his family left the ark. God's judgment was complete, and unredeemed man had been destroyed. God promised that He would never destroy the world by a flood again, and He gave the world the rainbow as a sign of the covenant.

Now it was time to start over. Noah began well. He set up an altar and sacrificed to the Lord. Noah was a truly just man who loved the Lord. However, even though Noah began well in his walk with the Lord, we see that temptation overcame him. Even good men fail at times.

Today we will look at one of Noah's failures. Time and time again we see that truly good men in the Lord had times of failure as well as times of victory. Whether it was Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Peter or Paul, all of these men faced failure along the way. Today let us look at the consequences of losing one's honor.

Bible Narrative – Genesis 9:18-29

Noah's sons were named Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of the tribes of Canaan. All the population of the earth came from these three men. Noah became a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. He drank the wine that was produced and became both drunk and naked in his tent. Ham saw Noah's nakedness and told his two brothers outside what he had seen. Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both of their shoulders, went backwards and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see Noah.

Noah woke up from the wine and realized what Ham had done and said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants he shall be to his brethren." He also said a blessing on Shem and said Canaan would be his servant. Japheth will be blessed through Shem and Canaan would also be Japheth's servant. Noah lived for 350 years after the flood. Altogether, he lived 950 years before he died.

The last written experience about Noah's life is this sad episode. How could a just man like Noah end up naked in a drunken stupor? What happened? First, let us remember that even though Noah failed, he was still a faithful servant of the Lord.

I. Noah Was an Honorable Man – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 6:9

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a "just man, perfect in his generation." Noah walked with God.

Explanation

It is important to remember that Noah was an honorable man. His sin did not take away from the fact that he had lived his life for the Lord. Look at some of the ways that we can describe Noah from the Bible.

- A. He was a just man (Genesis 6:9)
- B. He was perfect in his generation (Genesis 6:9)
- C. He walked with God (Genesis 6:9)
- D. He was an honorable son (Genesis 5:29) Noah's name means "this one will comfort us concerning our work."
- E. He was an obedient worker/servant of God (Genesis 6:22). After God told Noah to build the ark the Bible says, "Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did."
- F. He was a patient man- (Genesis 8:13-14) Even after all of the flood waters had receded Noah waited almost two months to leave the ark in order to wait for God to speak.

II. Even an Honorable Man Can Act Dishonorably – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 9:21

He drank the wine that was produced and became both drunk and naked in his tent.

Explanation

Noah did two things that showed both lack of honor and wisdom.

A. First, Noah got drunk. People have long debated whether it is wrong to drink or not. After all, Jesus' first miracle was to change water into wine during a wedding. (John 2:1-10), and Paul told Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach (I Timothy 5:23). Surely if Jesus and Paul worked with wine, it must be okay to drink it!

On the other hand, why put something in your body that can control you so easily? Paul told us to be wise in things that can have power over us (I Corinthians 6:12). Also, if wine will cause a brother to stumble and doubt his faith, why put the drink into your body? (Romans 14:21)

The major problem here isn't just the wine. Noah acted dishonorably first of all because he drank unto drunkenness. The Bible is very clear that we should not drink wine unto drunkenness. Ephesians 5:18 says, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." Noah was a wise, Godly man. He knew better than to drink until he was drunk. When he drank and caused himself to act so dishonorably, he SHAMED himself and his family.

- B. Secondly, Noah became naked in public. Obviously we all have to be naked sometimes. For example, we all must get naked when we take a bath! However, once again, Noah acted in an undignified manner that became public because of his drunkenness.

Application

Both of these choices caused Noah to act in a dishonorable way. If you have given your life to Christ, we have Christ IN us. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." That does not mean that we are divine, but it does mean that we have Christ indwelling our spirit who guides us along our path of life. Because of Christ, we should act in ways that brings honor to Him. It is NOT a sin to have fun. It is NOT a sin to laugh and act silly now and then. In fact, as Christians, we should show joy and laughter to the entire world. However, it is wrong to forget WHO is in us and guiding us. Are you acting in a way that glorifies Christ or do you act in a shameful manner?

III. Poor Choices Always Bring Bad Consequences – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 9:24-28

Noah woke up from the wine and realized what Ham had done and said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants he shall be to his brethren." He also said a blessing on Shem and said Canaan would be his servant. Japheth will be blessed through Shem and Canaan would also be Japheth's sermon. Noah lived for 350 years after the flood. Altogether, he lived 950 years before he died.

Explanation

Noah's sin brought three problems to his life.

A. His sin brought division in his family (Genesis 9:22). Shem, Ham and Japheth were divided in their reaction over their father's situation. Shem and Japheth chose well; however, Ham chose poorly.

B. His sin brought shame from his son (Genesis 9:23). Ham chose not to take Noah's problems seriously. He did not give his father the HONOR he deserved. Of course, his father was not acting honorably, but Ham still was ashamed of his father.

C. Noah's last words were negative (Genesis 9:24-28). It is amazing that this great man of God, who lived 950 years, had his story finished in the Bible this negatively. Instead of continuing to list great moments from Noah's life, the last story that is mentioned in Scripture is this embarrassing event.

Application

Honor is still important in our world. It is important to the Lord as well. The word "honor" is used over 200 times in Scripture. God wants us to act in an honorable way for Him. Have you been acting in a way that is honoring to the Lord in your life? When people see you, do they see Christ in you?

Decision

Maybe in your life you have talked about Jesus, but you really do not serve Him. Maybe you are more concerned with your honor than with serving the Lord. Jesus talked about this when He quoted Isaiah in Mark 7:6, "This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." Is your heart truly committed to following Jesus? Give Him the honor He deserves by

truly serving Him. You will be amazed how he brings honor and freedom from shame in your life. He will help you act more honorably.

In many parts of the world, a man would rather die than lose his honor. Did you know that Christ died FOR YOU so that you could be able to stand before the Lord without shame or guilt? He died so that all of the times we act dishonorably, our guilt and shame can be covered before the Lord so that we can spend eternity with Him. He died to give us honor as we stand before Him. Won't you give your life to him today? If you've never given your life to Christ, won't you come to know Him today and let him help you stand before the holy God without shame or guilt? If you'd like to come to Christ today, let us show you how . . .

Sermon 7

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your people God's simple pattern for how to live your life.

Bible Text: Genesis 12:1-10

Sermon

Introduction

God's basic plan for us is that we give our lives to Jesus Christ and have eternal life with Him (John 3:16). However, once we have Christ in our lives, God often presents us with moments where He can enable us to know Him in a greater way as well as possibly receive His blessings. Today, let us meet one of the greatest men in the entire Bible, Abram, and learn from his experience.

Bible Narrative – Genesis 12:1-10

The Lord said to Abram, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Abram left as the Lord had told him and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. Abram took Sarai and Lot, all their possessions, and all the people they had acquired in Haran and left for the land of Canaan. Abram arrived in the land where the Canaanites lived. Upon arrival, he came to a place called Shechem.

The Lord appeared to Abram and told him that He would give his descendents this land. Abram built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. He moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel. He sat up a tent. There was a city called Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. At this spot he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. Then Abram journeyed south for there was a famine in the land.

I. God Called Abram FROM: First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 12:1

The Lord said to Abram, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you."

Explanation

God called Abraham to do a specific task. Abraham was to leave three things that were precious to him.

- A. His country
- B. His people
- C. His father's house

God called Abram to leave his entire world. Think about what God asked him to do. He asked Abram to leave his nation. Many people take great pride in being Brazilians, Indonesians,

Japanese or Indians. They are honored to be a part of the culture where God allowed them to be born. To leave his country caused Abram to leave his **national identity**.

God asked him to leave his people. Many people may live in the nation of Nigeria, but their *people* are very different from other peoples in that same country. They might be Nigerian, but they are more specifically from the Yoruba or Ido tribe. They identify with their tribe to a greater degree than they do their nation. When God asked Abraham to leave his people, he had to leave his **cultural identity**.

God also asked him to leave his father's house. To leave his family was probably the most difficult task of all for Abraham. Whether you are American, British, Russian or Korean, all of us love our core family. Nobody wants to leave mom and dad! God asked Abraham to give up his **family identity**.

Application

God called Abraham to leave everything with which he identified—his nation, his culture and his family. This was done in order for Abram to identify only in the Lord. Our identity must be in the Lord Jesus not in who we are or where we are from.

II. God Called Abram TO: Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narratives – Genesis 12:1, 6, 10

The Lord said to Abram, “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you”. . . Abram arrived in the land, where the Canaanites lived. . . there was a famine in the land.

Explanation

God not only called Abram FROM everything he knew, he was also calling him TO some difficult situations.

A. God called Abram to an unknown land- God didn't tell him exactly where to go, Abram only seemed to know to go to the land of Canaan. Abram was going to a land far away from everyone and everything he ever knew.

B. God called Abram to an unfriendly people- The Canaanites lived in this land. This was a land of people that would become so sinful, that God would eventually have to destroy them during the time of Moses and Joshua (See book of Joshua). God was asking Abram to be surrounded by a very pagan people.

C. God called Abram to difficult conditions- After Abram picked up his family and left his country, he found that there was a famine in the land.

Application

Sometimes when God calls, he calls us to some very difficult circumstances. Many people preach that if you follow God he will bless you with wealth and happiness.

While the Bible doesn't promise wealth it does teach that He will give you joy (Galatians 5:22, 23) and meet your basic needs. People become dismayed when they realize that God has called them to something that may be difficult or unpleasant. However, whatever He may call you to; you must understand that He has a plan. That plan might require some difficult times.

III. Abram Obeyed the Lord – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Genesis 12:4

Abram left as the Lord had told him and Lot went with him.

Explanation

Abram obeyed this incredible call of God. It must not have been easy, but Abram followed God's plan for his life.

Illustration- PASTOR- REMEMBER, THIS IS MY PERSONAL STORY, YOU MAY WANT TO INSERT A DIFFERENT STORY HERE.

God called my wife and me to leave our country of America and be missionaries to Brazil for close to seven years. Initially the call was very difficult to follow, but we did obey God in the end. What was the result of that obedience? God allowed us to make many friends in Brazil, see many people come to Christ, and get to know Him better through the experience.

Application

God may not be calling you to leave your land, but He is certainly calling all of us to know Him, obey Him and seek Him in greater ways. We have a choice to obey or not to obey. Just as Noah chose to obey (Genesis 6:22), you and I should choose to follow the Lord when He calls.

IV. Obedience Brought Blessings – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Genesis 12: 2, 3

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Explanation

Examine how God said he would bless Abram if he obeyed. He told him He would:

- A. Bless him- For Abraham this idea meant one of material blessing.
- B. Make his name great- Every man and woman wants their name to be remembered. They want their name to live on after them. Abram would have a great nation after him.
- C. Protect him- In a difficult world men long for protection. Abram would need that protection as he dealt with the Canaanites and Egyptians.
- D. Bless the whole world through him- Through Abram's name all the nations would be blessed. This promise came true as Jesus Christ was born from the line of Abram. Through Christ all peoples, whatever country or nationality, can have peace and eternal life.

Application

Although God does not promise us as believers that we always will be blessed financially, will be famous, or will always be safe, He does bless us when we obey Him. He may not bless us with riches, but he will meet our basic needs. He may not make us famous like a movie star, but we will be great among those that we influence for Jesus. He may not always protect us from getting hurt, but he does promise to protect us for all eternity and never lose our salvation in Him (John 10:27-30). Aren't these things greater than what so many in this world strive for?

Conclusion

From this passage, we can see God's simple pattern for knowing Him and being blessed by Him.

A. First, He calls us to a task. Maybe for you it is a ministry or to know him deeper through Bible study. Maybe he is calling you to leave your home and start a ministry somewhere else. Either way, God will call you to do something.

B. Secondly, we come to a point of decision. In that decision, we must obey. Even though it may be difficult, God desires our obedience.

C. If we obey, blessings will follow. They may not be immediate blessings. After this initial calling, Abram had to wait 25 years before he could see a son born to him that would produce the blessings that God promised him. However, God will bless us if we obey. They may not be the blessings that we feel that we need, but they are the blessings that He KNOWS you need.

If you are a believer, and you want to know God in a deeper way, obey what He calls you to do. The blessings will come. In many ways, the blessings will be greater and more profound than what you ever could have imagined.

Decision

Maybe God is calling you today to come to Him. Possibly you are a follower of Christ and you know God is calling you to a ministry, a move, or a decision that you feel is too difficult to do. Trust that the Lord will guide you, protect you, and help you succeed to the degree that He desires. Take that first step and accept His call to whatever He desires you to do.

Maybe you are here today and you do not know Christ, but you feel God tugging on your heart to follow Him. You must follow this same pattern as well. You must obey what God is asking you to do. You must give your life to Jesus. If you obey and give your life to Christ, you will have immediate blessings! You will have a peace in your heart, the joy of abundant life, and assurance that you will go to heaven with the Father after you die. Accept Christ today, and receive the blessings that God longs to give you.

SERMON 8

Purpose of the sermon - To teach about the consequences of lying.

Bible Text: Genesis 12:10-20

Sermon –

Bible Narrative

Abram had been called by the Lord to leave his country, his clan, and his father's house and go to the land of Canaan. God told him that if he did so he would bless him, make his name great, and protect him. God also told Abram that through him all the families of the Earth would be blessed.

Abram obeyed the Lord and traveled to Canaan when he was seventy-five years old with his wife and Lot, his brother's son, and everything they owned.

There was a famine in the land of Canaan when Abram arrived, so he went down to Egypt to live. When he arrived in Egypt Abram told Sarai, his wife, that she was a beautiful woman. Because of her beauty, Abram feared that the Egyptians would kill him. He said, "Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."

We've already studied that Abram had passed a great test from the Father. God had asked him to leave all that he knew. Now that he had arrived in Canaan, he was confronted with his first true test. How would he react? In some ways, Abram performed admirably, in other ways, Abraham failed miserably.

I. Abram's Reactions to a Problem – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 12:11-13

There was a famine in the land of Canaan when Abram arrived, so he went down to Egypt to live. When he arrived in Egypt Abram told Sarai, his wife, that she was a beautiful woman. Because of her beauty, Abram feared that the Egyptians would kill him. He said, "Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."

Explanation

Abram did one thing right and two things very wrong in this moment.

First, Abram did one thing right. He recognized that his wife was beautiful. Sarai was 65 years old at this moment in their history. Yet, Abram still found his wife beautiful. Why? He thought she was beautiful because she truly was beautiful! Sometimes my wife will ask me if she is beautiful. I will always tell her, "You are beautiful to me." To me, she is perfectly beautiful. There are women in Hollywood and Bollywood that are very beautiful. They have perfect hair and perfect skin and they wear very expensive clothes. However, that does not make them more beautiful than my wife TO ME. My wife and I have shared our most intimate physical,

emotional, and spiritual feelings during our marriage. That intimacy makes me find my wife beautiful.

Application

When the last time you told your wife that she was beautiful? Honor your wife today. Let her know that she is beautiful inside and out. She is beautiful both because of whom she is AND how she looks to you. Your heartfelt words will give her great joy.

Secondly, Abram did two things wrong.

a. He did not give due honor to his wife. Abram probably felt that he had found an intelligent way to protect his family. However, his solution put Sarai in a compromising position. In the end, Abram was more concerned with his safety than with Sarai's. His solution put Sarai in MUCH more danger than him. Sarai would have to possibly be included in Pharaoh's harem for Abram's sake. She was going to have to lie to Pharaoh, a man who had all of the power in Egypt. What would have kept him from killing her just for lying to him?

b. He made her lie for him. Abram asked Sarai to tell a lie for him so that he would live. It is interesting that she did not tell a complete lie, because Sarai was Abram's half-sister. They had the same father, but not the same mother (Genesis 20:12). Abram probably thought he was being very crafty in what he was doing. He was protecting himself by only telling part of the truth.

Not telling all of the truth is an equal lie to telling none of the truth. God never honors a lie. (Colossians 3:9, Revelation 21:8).

Application

Are you a person of integrity? Are the words that come out of your mouth truthful at all times? When someone tells a lie, he is telling God He cannot protect him. That person is saying that the truth is not enough. This tells God that he/she doesn't trust Him. Lying is a demonstration of a lack of faith in our heart. Abram did not act with integrity and it could have possibly cost him his wife's honor.

II. The Consequences of Abram's Sin – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 12:14-20

So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw that she was very beautiful. The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to him. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels. But the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way." So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him, and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

Explanation

Let us examine all of the people that were affected by Abram's sin.

- A. Sarai - Pharaoh took Sarai into his house, most probably into his harem. She might have had to commit adultery because of Abram's sin. Fortunately, she never actually had to commit adultery.
- B. Abram's children - Although Abram had no children yet, his actions put God's promises in danger (Genesis 12:2). If Abram had lost his wife, how could God have fulfilled His promises to make Abram's offspring "a great nation"?
- C. The Lord - It is possible to grieve the Lord. Sin always displeases the Lord (Isaiah 59:2). Abram was to be the Lord's prophet to a lost world (Genesis 20:7). Was He acting in a Godly manner at the moment? How would this affect his testimony later?
- D. Pharaoh - Abram's sin affected Pharaoh in two ways. The Lord physically plagued Pharaoh for taking Sarai into his home. However, Abram's sin also caused Pharaoh not to see Godliness in Abram's actions. Consequently, Pharaoh, a pagan king, had to scold the Lord's prophet, Abram, for what he had done. (Genesis 12:18-19)
- E. Pharaoh's house - In verse 17, we can see that Abram's sin had far reaching effects, even causing Pharaoh's house to contract diseases.
- F. Abram himself - First of all, his sin hurt him because it made him a liar. Secondly, his sin probably caused him great fear. Can you imagine the fear that Abram felt concerning his wife's presence in the home of another man? He had to be fearful that something would happen to her physically.

Application

Your and my sins always have consequences not only for ourselves, but for those around us. Our sins will ALWAYS catch up with us. In other words, there are no hidden sins. (Numbers 32:23). They almost always affect someone else as well. Sin always has far reaching consequences.

III. Abram's Sin Did Not Take Away God's Plans for Him – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 12:13-14

He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels. But the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

Explanation

Abram's sin did not cause God to change His mind about him. In this chapter, we see God begin to keep His promises through Abram. He fulfilled His promise concerning Abram's financial blessings (Genesis 12:2) because Pharaoh blessed Abram with donkeys, servants, sheep, oxen and camels (Genesis 12:16). God also fulfilled His promise of protection not only

for Abram but specifically for Sarai by putting plagues on Pharaoh and his house (Genesis 12:17).

Application

Why did God continue to bless Abram even after he disobeyed Him so quickly? Abram was living under God's grace. Even when Abram did not deserve to receive a blessing from God, God blessed him.

It is important to note that Abram abused this grace that God gave him. As we study Scripture, we see that even though God showed Abram grace, the pattern repeats itself again in chapter 20.

- A. Abram lies - Genesis 20:2.
- B. Sarai is taken by a pagan king named Abimelech - Genesis 20:2.
- C. God protects Sarai - Gen. 20:3-7.
- D. Abram is shamed by Abimelech because of his actions - Gen.20:8-13.
- E. Abram receives financial blessing - Genesis 20:14-16.
- F. Abram prays to God and God heals Abimelech, because his family had suffered because of Abram's sin - Genesis 20:17-18.

Why would God still bless a man like Abram that failed Him? Abram was living under God's grace. Abram had already shown that he would be a follower of the Lord. We will see throughout his life that Abram repented of his sins and truly attempted to do better in his life. God understands our failures and is ready to forgive (I John 1:9). Our failures do not take away His grace. We should learn from our failures but not live in fear when we commit them.

Decision

If you've already given your life to the Lord, do not be like Abram in these chapters. Abram did not act in a manner worthy of the Lord, and two kings, Abimelech (chapter 20) and Pharaoh (chapter 13), did not see a good witness for the Lord because of his actions. Be honoring to the Lord in your actions. If you've already failed him in some way recently, what should you do? Repent of your sin and remember that you are living under God's grace. You are already forgiven! You cannot lose your salvation by your failure. You are living under his grace.

Would you like to live under God's grace as well? Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that by GRACE we are saved through faith. If we give our lives to the Lord, we will be saved and will live under His grace.

How do you give your life to the Lord? We have to trust God's son, Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. If we do that we will be saved (Romans 10:9-10). Have you given your life to the Lord today?

If you have not given your life to the Lord, then today is the day that you can do that. If you would like to trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and only Him, you can do that right now. You only need to pray with sincerity in your heart and say, "Lord, I know that I am a sinner, but I know that you love me. Today, I give my life to you Lord Jesus, so that I can be saved by grace as well. Save me today Lord Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

SERMON 9

Purpose of the sermon – To teach your church about the importance of faith, even after failure. The church can also learn from Abram because he placed his family’s needs before his own.

Bible Text - Genesis 13:1-18

Background Bible Narrative – Genesis 12

Abram had left his homeland of Ur and moved to Haran with his wife, his father and his nephew Lot. While Abram was in Haran, God told him to move. God told him to go to a land that “I will show you.” He promised to make Abram a great nation, that He would bless him and make his name great. He would also bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him. Lastly, He promised that all of the nations of the Earth would be blessed through him. By faith, Abram obeyed and moved to the land of Canaan with Lot and Sarai. He was seventy-five years old when he left. Upon arrival, Abram built an altar to God and called on the Lord.

In the land there were many problems. First of all, there were other groups of people called Canaanites who already lived there. Secondly, when Abram arrived, there was a terrible famine in the land. It was during this famine that Abram packed up his family, and they all moved to Egypt until the famine passed.

Before they entered Egypt, Abram told his wife, Sarai, to lie and claim she was his sister. Abram was afraid for his life because Sarai was so beautiful. He was afraid the Egyptians would kill him and take her as their own. Sarai obeyed Abram’s wishes. In Egypt, the princes of Pharaoh found her very beautiful and Pharaoh took her into his house. Pharaoh treated Abram well for Sarai’s sake. He gave Abram many sheep, servants, donkeys and oxen because of her.

However, God plagued Pharaoh and his house for taking Sarai. So Pharaoh realized what had happened and shamed Abram for what he had done and sent him away along with all of the things he had given him.

Introduction

In our study of Abram, we have already learned that by faith Abraham obeyed the Lord. He left his homeland and moved to the land of Canaan. However, even though he started his journey with the Lord so well, upon his arrival in Canaan, he failed his first test of faith. He asked Sarai to lie and embarrassed himself in front of the leader of Egypt.

In today’s sermon, we will look at what Abram did after this initial failure. Would he obey the Lord in faith now? Were there consequences from his sins of lying and faithlessness? Today let us look at Genesis chapter 13. We will study section by section how Abram proved that he was a man of honor in the sight of the Lord again.

I. Abraham Calls on the Name of the Lord – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 13:1-5

Abram returned to the southern section of Canaan from Egypt with Lot and his wife. He was very wealthy in livestock and silver and gold. He returned to the place where he had first set up his tent and had set up an altar to the Lord. It was there that “Abram called on the name of the Lord.”

Explanation

Abram returned from Egypt. Although the Bible does not tell us all of the details, we can see that Abram desired to return to a relationship with the Lord. He had allowed fear to affect his decisions in Egypt, and now he returned to the altar in Canaan to call on the Lord.

Application

Was Abram calling on the Lord for forgiveness? Maybe he was. Was he thanking God for allowing him to return? Maybe he was thanking God as well. Was he praying for REPENTANCE? It seems by his actions after this moment that he certainly was. What is repentance? Repentance is simply turning from your sins in the past and placing your trust in the Lord. Abram had failed in the area of FAITH with the Lord. Although the Bible does not say for certain that Abram repented at this moment, and he certainly failed again in his life in this area (See Genesis 20), he certainly met with God on this day and a change occurred. By observing Abram’s actions in the rest of this story, we can see that Abram’s actions reflected the faithful man that he was. A change had come over him. However, before we can study these changes, let us study the problems that resulted from Abram’s actions in Egypt.

II. The Problems from Egypt – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 13:5-7

Lot also had flocks and herds and tents. In fact, the land could not support the herds of both Lot and Abram. They both had too many possessions for the land. Soon the herdsmen of Abram and the herdsmen of Lot began to quarrel. The Canaanites and the Perizzites were there in the land as well.

Explanation

Think about all of the problems that occurred as soon as Abram returned from Egypt. In fact, many of the problems that Abram experienced in life came from Egypt.

A. Wealth- Abram received his wealth in Egypt. Is it bad to have wealth? It certainly wasn’t bad for Abram to have wealth. After all, God promised that He would give wealth to him. However, the problem with this wealth is that Abram received so much in Egypt that his family couldn’t handle it, which led to conflict.

B. Hagar- Hagar came from Egypt. (See Genesis 16:1). Hagar was Sarai’s handmaiden. When Sarai saw that she couldn’t bear children for Abram, she told Abram to sleep with Hagar in order to bear him children. Abram agreed to sleep with Hagar. We should not forget that God

blessed Hagar AND her children after her. However, Abram committed the sin of adultery with her. God blessed Hagar and her children because of His graciousness, not because of Abram's sinful actions. In the end, this affair caused much strife for Sarai and pain for Abram. (Genesis 21:10-11).

C. Lot was changed. Lot still remembered the glories of Egypt (Genesis 13:10). It caused Lot to make some very unwise choices that would cause difficulty for Abram throughout his life. (See Genesis 14, 19).

Application

Abram left Egypt with many great possessions and had been incredibly blessed in spite of his failures. However, there were consequences from his actions. Most people want to have nice things and good material possessions. Abram found out that his material possessions tore his family apart.

Have you allowed a desire to receive material possessions to hurt your relationship with the Lord? Have you allowed lack of faith to cause you to make choices that have brought shame and problems to your family? Abram certainly did.

III. This Time, Abraham Places Faith First – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 13:8-9

Abram told Lot that he did not want there to be any problems between them. He also did not want their herdsmen to fight. He told Lot to look at the land before him. He said that they should separate. If Lot chose to go to the left, then Abram would go to the right; and if Lot chose to go right, then Abram would go left.

Explanation

Abram chose to be the bigger man in this situation. He decided that God would take care of him no matter what happened. In doing so, Abram showed great faith. He also:

A. Gave up his financial gain - Let us remember that Pharaoh gave Abram the herds and servants - not Lot. Abram did not have to give up any of his land (Genesis 12:16).

B. Gave his choice to the younger person - Abram was older. He was the leader of the family. He could have told Lot to leave and Abram would take the nicer land. Instead, he gave the young man first choice.

C. Chose family first - Abram didn't fight with Lot. Instead he told Lot, "For we are brethren." Abram could have chosen his needs first, but instead, he decided to keep the family peace first.

Application

Abram decided that he would allow his faith to guide his decision. His actions this time were far different from his choice to go to Egypt. In acting faithfully, he had to make some choices that were very selfless. Are you facing issues with your family right now? Do you need

to make a choice that puts the other person first and keeps peace in the home? Try to act like Abram, and your family problem may get resolved far more quickly than you can imagine.

IV. Lot Chose Without Faith – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative- Genesis 13:10-13

Lot looked and saw the land of the Jordan. This was a great plain with plenty of water, but also contained the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, where the men were exceedingly wicked. Lot chose to go east and dwell in the cities. However, Abram chose to stay in the land of Canaan.

Explanation

Lot accepted Abram's offer and chose first. However, he made two mistakes:

A. Lot chose with his eyes - Lot looked around and saw what was pretty and fertile. The Bible does not say that he prayed or asked his elder relative what he should do. He selfishly looked around and took what he wanted.

B. Lot ran toward sin - We do not know the details of what happened in Egypt, but after that journey Lot longed to be back in a city. Therefore, he chose to go to live in an extremely sinful environment. In fact, soon after this chapter God had to destroy Lot's home, Sodom and Gomorrah because they were such sinful places.

Application

Are you facing some important decisions right now? The world may tell you to make a very "wise" choice on a certain issue. The world might tell you to put what is best for you before anything else. Of course, putting yourself first always seems to be the simple solution. You must decide if you are going to choose with your eyes, like Lot, or make the choice Abram made - a choice of faith.

V. Abraham's Choice Pleas'd God – Fifth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 13:14-18

The Lord told Abram to look around because all of the land in every direction would go to him and his descendents forever. He told him his descendents would be as numerous as the dust of the Earth. The Lord told him to stand up and Abram pitched his tent in a grove of trees. There he built an altar to the Lord.

Explanation

God told Abram that He was going to bless him. Abram would not only receive the land he had just been allotted, but God would give him all of the land in every direction.

Abram still faced many difficult times in his life. This event with Lot certainly did not make everything easy in his life from that moment on. In fact, in a sermon on Sodom and Gomorrah, we will see several consequences from Abraham's failures in the past. However,

Abram's choice of faith brought pleasure to the Lord. God promised him that, in the end, he would be greatly rewarded for putting his faith in Him.

Application

God wants you to live by faith as well. Is he telling you to make a choice of faith in your home, at your school, or at your work? Will that choice seem foolish to the world, but wise in the eyes of God? Pray for wisdom in what choice to make, and He promises to give you that wisdom (James 1:5).

Decision

Today, God may be telling you to put a family member's needs first. Maybe this person has been difficult to live with, but you sense that God is telling you to make peace with this person. Follow God's lead and watch how He both blesses you and makes your home a happier place.

Maybe God wants you to make a choice of faith to join this church. Many would say that it is foolish to join a group of Christians. After all, maybe your family or friends will think you are crazy to be part of a group that has so few followers where you live. However, maybe at this moment you know in your heart that God wants you to make a decision today. Make that decision by faith and He will bless you. Give your heart to Jesus Christ as Lord today; join this church and see the blessings He gives both to you and your family.

Let us show you how to give your life to Christ . . .

SERMON TEN

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your church about how God prepares us along the way for greater tasks in our lives.

Bible Text - Genesis Chapters 12, 15, 17

Sermon -

Introduction

McDonalds is a famous restaurant found in many large cities around the world. Thousands of young students get the first jobs of their lives at McDonalds. There once was a young man named David from an interior town who got a job working for this famous food chain. David started out like every other kid. They put him in the back of the restaurant in order to clean up the store. However, David did a very good job cleaning and over time, his manager noticed his work. After a while, the manager gave him a little more responsibility, and his job was to prepare the food. David worked very hard at preparing the food; he rarely complained, and took seriously the task that was given to him. As the manager watched David, over time, he felt that he could give David MORE responsibility. So, he gave David a little better job and allowed David to begin to spend most of his time working with the customers. David performed that job very well and he handled the added responsibility. Over time, the manager was pleased with David and gave him an even better job. He told him that he wanted him to be a manager just like him. This was better pay, but much more responsibility. David, now that he was a mature worker, accepted the offer and became another manager at the restaurant. Thus, David, through a step-by-step process, progressed from performing the most menial tasks to handling the responsibility of the entire restaurant.

God worked in much the same way with Abraham as he did with David in this story. As we continue our study through the life of Abraham, we can see that God took Abraham through a step-by-step process. In each step, he tested Abraham's faith a little more, but at each step he revealed a little more of his ultimate plan for him.

I. **God Begins to Reveal Himself to Abram – First Spiritual Truth**

Bible Narrative - Genesis 11:27-12:4

Abraham had a father named Terah. Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot, and Abram's wife Sarai from their homeland of Ur. He journeyed far north to a place called Haran. Haran was a city between the Tigris and Euphrates River. The Lord told Abram to get out of his country and go to another land that He would show to him. God said that he would bless Abram, make him a great nation, bless those who bless him, and curse those who curse him. God also told him that all the families of the Earth would be blessed by him. So Abram obeyed and departed as the Lord had told him.

Explanation

Abram was beginning his journey with God. God told Abram in a very general way what He was going to do. God did not go into great detail about where Abraham to go or what he was to do when he got there. God just told him to go. God also told him about many of the blessings that would happen to him. He talked about material wealth, protection, and how Abram would bless others. God gave Abram the task that the Lord knew he could handle at that time, and Abram obeyed.

In the same way, when we first come to know about Jesus, we begin to hear about all of the wonderful blessings of following the Lord. We think about the assurance of spending eternity in heaven, the joy that Christ promises us now, the fellowship of having a family in a church that will love us. These are all things that we want in life. They are all TRUE promises of God for us. God begins to reveal Himself to us in our lives and we give our life to Him. He does not reveal to us ALL the details about the responsibilities of our lives in Him at the beginning because we are not READY.

Application

Maybe you are sitting in this room and you feel a burden on your heart. That is the Lord beginning to work in your life. He is beginning to show you that He wants you to KNOW HIM. He wants you to give your life to Him today. He won't reveal all of His plans for you yet, but He wants you to take that first great step today.

II. God Reveals More of His Plans to Abram – Second Spiritual Truth

Introduction

God had already told Abram that He would make him a great nation. Abram was seventy-five years old when God first told him to move. Abram had no children when he moved. Now, in chapter fifteen, Abram still didn't have any children. How could he be a great nation if he had no children to pass on his family line? On top of that obvious problem, Abram faced many other problems. After that initial move Abram faced a famine (Genesis 12:10), problems with powerful leaders (Genesis 12:20), family fights (Genesis 13:8), and a war (Genesis 14). He had certainly been through some difficult times!

After all of those events in which Abram had acted poorly in some instances (Genesis 12:20) and acted very honorably in others (Genesis 12:10, 13:8, chapter 14), God revealed more of his plans to Abram.

Biblical Narrative - Genesis 15:1

After these things, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision. He said, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

However Abram told the Lord that there was nothing He could reward Abram with because he was childless. The only person who could be his heir would be one of his servants. The Lord then told him that his servant would not be his heir, but that someone who would come from his own body would be his heir. He told him he would have many descendants. Abram would have so many descendants that they would number like the stars in the sky.

Then Abram "believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." Then the Lord proclaimed to Abram that He was the Lord who brought him out of Ur. He

brought him from Ur in order to give Abram the land in Canaan.

Abram asked Him how he could know that he would inherit the land. God told him to bring some animals for a sacrifice. Abram cut them in two and laid them across from one another. That night God put Abram in a deep sleep and revealed to him His future plans for his descendants. He said that they would be taken away to another land for four hundred years. However, they would leave that land with great possessions. However, Abram would live out his years in peace.

When the sun had gone completely down and it was dark, a smoking oven and burning torch passed through the pieces of the animals Abram had sacrificed. God then made a covenant with Abram that all of the land from Egypt to the Euphrates was his.

Explanation

Once again God reveals himself to Abram. This time God tells him even better news. He specifically tells Abram that he will have his own child. The nation will be from his own flesh. God had already mentioned that Abram would have descendants (Genesis 12:7), but now the Lord was affirming that even in Abram's old age, he was still going to have children. God also told him specifically where all of his descendants' land would be.

This must have been an incredible moment for Abram. He was between 75 and 85 years old. Now he knew that he would have a child for himself. He would not have to pass everything that was his to one of his servants; instead, he would have children with whom he could leave his inheritance. They would be so blessed that they would become a great nation that spread from the border of Egypt to part of the Euphrates.

Illustration

Earlier in this sermon we learned that God only showed Abram what he could handle step by step along the way of his life. God continued this pattern in this chapter. This time God reminded Abram that he would have a child, but more importantly he revealed that THE LORD would handle all of the details before him.

How did he do this? In Abram's day, when two men wanted to make a covenant, they would cut animals in half and then walk through the two severed pieces together. This was a sign that they both were participants in the covenant. However, God put Abram in a deep sleep, instead of Abram walking through the animal pieces as a covenant to the Lord, God put a smoking oven and a burning torch in Abram's place. This was a sign that the covenant did not rest on Abram's work, because God didn't allow him to walk through. **God** would do the work in this agreement.

Application

Is your journey similar to Abram's? For example, maybe now you already know the Lord and have given your life to Him. You have already taken that first step in your relationship with Him. God has shown you the blessings of salvation, and He has begun to show you some of the responsibilities of walking with Him as well.

However, now you are beginning to realize just what it takes to follow Him on an even DEEPER level. Maybe He is asking you to begin to teach others what you know about Christ, but you do not feel you are ready. God only reveals His plans to his children as they are ready. Has He been preparing you? It took the Apostle Paul 10 or 11 years after his conversion to go

on his first missionary journey, but look at how God took care of all of the details when he went! God has taken His time on you (maybe only months not years), preparing you for this day. However, take comfort in the fact that just as God promised Abram that HE would take care of their agreement, God will do the work in your ministry as well if you allow Him.

III. God Reveals the Final Stage in His Plan – Third Spiritual Truth

Introduction

Abram was now ready to hear the final stage in God's plan. He was now 99 years old. Even with all of his faith, it must have seemed impossible for him to actually produce an heir.

Bible Narrative - Genesis 17

Abram was ninety nine when the Lord appeared to Him again. God proclaimed to Abram that He was God. Therefore, Abram should walk with Him and be blameless. The Lord made His covenant with him. God told Abram that his name was changed to Abraham. Abraham would be the father of many nations. He told him that kings would come from him and that the land of Canaan would be his possession.

God told Abraham that he and his descendents should keep God's covenant and that the sign of that covenant would be circumcision.

Finally, God told Abram that Sarai would now be called Sarah. She would give Abram a son become a mother of nations.

Abraham laughed in his heart because Sarai was ninety years old. He wanted Ishmael, his other son, to be blessed. However, God confirmed that although he would bless Ishmael, Sarah would be the mother of his heir. So Abraham had himself and every man of his household circumcised.

Explanation

Now that Abraham had walked with the Lord for 24 years God revealed the most incredible promises to him. However, God also revealed the most incredible responsibilities for Abraham as well. God confirmed His covenant with Abraham and said that even kings of nations would come from him. Even better, God promised that Abraham's barren wife, Sarah, would have a child. God even gave him the boy's name - Isaac. Even though Abraham had tried to take matters in his own hands and had a child named Ishmael through their maidservant, Hagar (see Genesis 16) God's plans would not be changed.

However, God required two actions for this to occur. First of all, it would take great faith for Abraham to believe that his 90 year old wife could bear him a child.

Secondly, Abraham and the men in his home had to go through the excruciating ordeal of being circumcised. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Abraham to have to tell his men that they were to be circumcised? I can imagine that some of his servants probably put up a little bit of a fight before doing that!

Abraham had walked with the Lord a long time. If God had told him 24 years earlier that his barren wife would have a child, he would have to undergo circumcision, he would be one of the greatest men that ever lived, and kings would come from him, these promises and responsibilities would have been too much for him. He was not ready. He was not mature in his

walk with the Lord. However, God waited until he was ready, until Abraham had proven himself a man of faith, and God revealed His ultimate plans.

Application

As you walk with the Lord, if you walk by faith and obedience, God will assign you with greater and greater tasks. Your responsibilities will grow. However with those responsibilities and tasks there are greater rewards. You might get to lead more people to Jesus, train more people in the basics of the faith, lead men in various ways, or plant more churches. When you first begin to think about Christ, you typically aren't ready to imagine doing those things. However, over time, He will show you His greater plans and grander tasks for your life.

In the same way, when we first come to Christ, we are not ready to imagine that as we grow in our responsibilities with the Lord, we also grow in the blessings. Just as God blessed Abraham, He wants to bless you as well. He might not bless you with riches; however, you will be amazed as He blesses you with wisdom, self-control, love, and understanding of Him. Men that walk with these traits not only are blessed to have God, but they lead more blessed, productive lives.

Decision

Pray that God can guide you and prepare you to know Him in a greater way. Pray that He will reveal Himself in a greater way. Pray that you will have the patience as He molds you into the servant He wants you to be.

Is God already calling you to a greater task in your faith? If so, be like Abraham and obey. God will guide you step by step along the way. He will not give you more responsibility than you can bear. You will be amazed at how you grow in the faith and in your understanding of Him.

Are you like Abram was at the first part of this sermon? Are you just beginning to seek and know the Creator God? God wants you to know Him today. He wants you to know Him through Jesus Christ His Son. Jesus Christ came to the Earth, lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and was buried and three days later rose from the grave. He is alive today and wants to live in your heart. No other god can say that. No other man can claim to have risen from the grave. Jesus Christ proved who He is by conquering death.

Do you feel like the Creator God is working on your heart to know Him? Come to Christ today. Give your heart to Him and watch God begin to show you greater plans, blessings, tasks and purpose for your life.

Let us show you how to give your life to Jesus today . . .

Sermon 11

Purpose of the sermon - To teach about the Lord's timing and how we react

Bible Text: Genesis 18

Introduction

In this passage we see the Lord pay one of his most important visits to Abraham. After all of these years, the Lord's timing was complete. He was to announce that the day of the birth of Isaac had come and that the day of judgment of the pagan cities around them had arrived as well. From this passage we see that the Lord's timing is always true, and He seeks to see our reaction when His will is about to come to fruition. Today let us look at both Abraham and Sarah and how they each of them reacted differently to amazing news from the Father.

Bible Narrative - Genesis 18:1-15

Abraham was resting at the door of his tent during the heat of the day. He lifted his eyes and looked to see that three men were standing by him. He ran to meet them, bowed to the ground and asked them to stay with him. He asked if he could have water brought to them to wash their feet and enable them to rest. He wanted to feed them before they went on their way. The men replied, "Do as you have said."

Abraham then hurried to Sarah and told her to make some cakes of bread. He told a young servant to prepare a calf for the men. Then he brought the food to them and they ate. The men asked where Sarah was. Abraham replied that she was in the tent. Then one of the men said that he would return in the next year and, behold, Sarah would have a son.

Sarah was listening in the tent door behind them. She laughed within herself and said, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?" The Lord asked Abraham why Sarah laughed. He asked if there was anything too hard for the Lord and reminded them again that Sarah would have a son the next year. Sarah said that she did not laugh, for she was afraid. However, the Lord said, "but you did laugh!"

Sermon

I. God Announced News of Great Joy – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 18:9-10

The men asked where Sarah was. Abraham replied that she was in the tent. Then one of the men said that he would return in the next year and, behold, Sarah would have a son.

Explanation

So many times in Scripture we assume that the focus of important stories is on the man; however, in the first half of this story, the focus is on the woman- Sarah. God was consistently concerned about Sarah throughout her life. When Abraham lied to the Pharaoh about her, God protected them both and blessed them because of Sarah (Genesis 12:16-17). When Sarah's handmaiden, Hagar, ran away, God told her to return and submit to Sarai (Genesis 16: 9) even

though Sarah hadn't treated Hagar well. Now, we have the Lord returning with two angels announcing that the date of Isaac's birth would be the following year. All of the promises of twenty five years earlier were about to be fulfilled. He would remember Sarah in her old age and bless her with a child.

Application

The Bible is filled with God's promises not only for Sarai's life, but your life as well. God promises peace, protection, joy, wisdom and love through Christ. Do you believe that you are worthy of receiving those promises that God has promised to those who love Him?

II. Sarah Reacted Poorly – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible narrative – Genesis 18:10-15

Sarah was listening in the tent at the tent door behind them. She laughed within herself and said, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?" The Lord asked Abraham why Sarah laughed. He asked if there was anything too hard for the Lord and reminded them again that Sarah would have a son the next year. Sarah said that she did not laugh, for she was afraid. However, the Lord said, "But you did laugh!"

Explanation

How did Sarah react? After all, the Bible says that she laughed within herself. In other words, on the outside she looked like she believed, but in her heart she did not believe. God knows our heart. He knows our true deepest thoughts and our deepest desires. We cannot fool God. We can do things on the outside for the world to see, but He is more concerned with our true commitment in our heart.

Application

a. God is concerned with the inward actions of your heart just as much as He is concerned with your outward actions. For example, Jesus said that the Jewish people had been commanded not to commit adultery. However, he said that if you look at a woman with lust, you have already committed adultery with her *in your heart*. Jesus told his followers that the law said they should not murder, but whoever was angry with his brother without cause would be in danger of judgment. In other words, just having anger in your heart was sin. (See Matthew 5) The Bible consistently talks about the battle for your heart. While the rest of the world can be impressed or fooled by our outward actions, God looks at the inward intent as well.

b. Sarah reacted poorly. Many times we put on a show for our fellow church members. We pretend to be walking with the Lord when we really are not. In our hearts we might be holding bitterness or anger against our brothers and sisters in Christ. In our hearts we might be lusting after other women. In our hearts we might say that we believe the Lord, but we really don't.

Sarah didn't react well, but God still loved her and still blessed her with a child. God does not base His will on our reactions. He is working in this world today, and His will shall be accomplished. God is looking for how we react to what He has to say in our lives.

Now let us take a look at ABRAHAM and see how he reacted.

Bible narrative – Genesis 18:16-33

Then the men got up and looked toward Sodom. The Lord said, “Should I hide from Abraham what I am doing?” The Lord said that Abraham was to become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the world were to be blessed by Him. The Lord said that He knew Abraham so that Abraham would teach his children to do righteousness and justice in order for the Lord to bring about what He said He would do..

Then He told Abraham that the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah was very great and that He was going down to see if what He was told was true. If it wasn’t true, He would know. The two other angels went toward Sodom, but Abraham stood and talked to the Lord. Abraham asked Him if He would destroy the righteous people with the wicked ones. He asked the Lord if there were fifty righteous people, would he still destroy the cities. Abraham said, “Shall not the Judge of all of the Earth do right?”

The Lord said that if he found fifty righteous people he wouldn’t destroy the cities. Abraham then said that he was “but dust and ashes” to speak before the Lord, but what if the Lord found forty- five righteous people. The Lord replied He wouldn’t destroy the city for the sake of forty-five. Abraham asked about forty righteous people. The Lord said He wouldn’t destroy it for forty. Abraham then asked if God would spare the cities for thirty righteous people and then he asked concerning twenty people. The Lord replied that He wouldn’t destroy the cities if thirty or twenty people were found righteous. Then Abraham asked that the Lord not be angry, but what if there were ten righteous people in the city. The Lord replied that he wouldn’t destroy the cities for ten people. After that the Lord went His way and Abraham returned to his place.

III. God Announced News of Great Judgment - Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 18:20-22

Then He told Abraham that the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah was very great and that He was going down to see if what He was told was true. If it weren’t true, He would know. The two other angels went toward Sodom, but Abraham stood and talked to the Lord. Abraham asked Him if he would destroy the righteous people with the wicked ones.

Explanation

While God announced news of great joy to Sarai, He announced to Abraham that the time of judgment had come for Sodom and Gomorrah. He told Abraham that Sodom’s sins were very severe and that the time had come for judgment.

Application

Why did God tell him these things concerning Sodom and Gomorrah?

A. In the Bible we read that God told Abraham these things because He had a RELATIONSHIP with Abraham. In verse 18-19 we read that God didn’t want to hide these truths from Abraham because He KNEW him. The Lord also formed a relationship with

Abraham, and the Lord intended for Abraham to teach his future generations about a real and personal relationship with the Lord.

B. God wanted to tell Abraham of this destruction to give him the OPPORTUNITY TO REACT. Abraham was to be the light for God among nations that were completely dark in sin. As God's prophet, God wanted to see if Abraham had concern for both Sodom and for Lot.

1. The city of Sodom- Abraham had fought in a war on Sodom's side to protect Lot, but it was obvious that Abraham already wanted to distance himself from Sodom (See Genesis 14:22-24). Maybe Abraham already knew of the sinful acts of Sodom. Maybe he already looked upon the people with disdain. Would he rejoice in God's judgment of this wicked people?

2. Lot- Lot had already dishonored Abraham and chosen selfishly concerning their property (Genesis 13). Would Abraham be concerned that Lot would be destroyed along with Sodom in the coming judgment? Did Abraham desire harm or revenge on Lot?

IV. Abraham Reacted Properly – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Look at the various ways that Abraham reacted properly.

A. In his view towards God

Bible Narrative – Genesis 18:25

Abraham asked Him if He would destroy the righteous people with the wicked ones. He asked if there were fifty righteous people, would he still destroy it. Abraham said, "Shall not the Judge of all of the Earth do right?"

Explanation

Abraham did not become angry at God; instead, he maintained a right view of the Father. He knew that God is a Just God. He is the Holy God. He must judge sin because of His holiness. However, He always makes decisions, even decisions of judgment that are perfectly fair.

Application

Many times it is difficult to think about God in terms of judgment. We like to reflect on God as a loving God and not as the God that brings judgment on people. We should act as Abraham did. Although Abraham did not enjoy God's judgment, he knew that God, in his wisdom, would judge the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah properly.

B. In his intercession for Sodom

Bible Narrative – Genesis 18:24-26

Abraham asked Him if he would destroy the righteous people with the wicked ones. He asked if there were fifty righteous people, would he still destroy it. Abraham said, "Shall not the Judge of all of the Earth do right?"

Explanation

Abraham reacted properly to God's judgment on Sodom. He interceded for a lost and pagan city. Although he had little reason to love Sodom, he still showed compassion by requesting that God's judgment not fall on them.

Application

Maybe you live in a city or village full of pagan people. Every Christian in the world is far outnumbered by a lost world. We live in a world that does not like nor respect our beliefs. However, we should be like Abraham and intercede for their salvation so that God's righteous judgment does not fall on them.

C. In his intercession for Lot

Bible Narrative – Genesis 18:23-32

Abraham asked Him if he would destroy the righteous people with the wicked ones. He asked if there were fifty righteous people, would he still destroy it. Abraham said, "Shall not the Judge of all of the Earth do right?"

The Lord said that if he found fifty righteous people he wouldn't destroy it. Abraham then said that he was "but dust and ashes" to speak before the Lord, but what if the Lord found forty-five. The Lord replied He wouldn't destroy the city. Abraham asked about forty righteous people. The Lord said He wouldn't destroy it for forty. Abraham then asked if God would spare the cities for thirty righteous people and then he asked concerning twenty people. The Lord replied that He wouldn't destroy the cities if thirty or twenty people were found righteous. Then Abraham asked that the Lord not be angry, but what if there were ten righteous people in the city. The Lord replied that he wouldn't destroy it for ten people. After that the Lord went His way and Abraham returned to his place.

Explanation

Abraham was not only interceding for Sodom, but also for Lot and his family. In a humble manner (he said he was but dust and ashes before God), he asked for God to spare the city if 50, 45, 40, 30, 20 and then finally 10 righteous people could be found. Why did Abraham ask for God to finally spare ten righteous people? Abraham hoped that Lot, his wife, his four daughters, their husbands, and their children (the children are not mentioned in Scripture but it's a possible assumption that there were some) could be found righteous. If you count up all of Lot's family, that would make ten people. Unfortunately for Sodom, Lot had not only lost the battle of trying to convert Sodom, but he could not even bring 10 people of his family to know the Lord. Therefore, Sodom's fate was sealed.

Application

Abraham could have been embittered against Lot, but here is an example of a Godly man still pleading for his extended family, even when his family had mistreated him. Has your family been unkind to you? Be like Abraham, forgive, forget, and pray for them. It is hard to be angry toward someone you are praying for. If you already have Christ in your life, He is there for you to help you overcome the pain. God's presence in our lives is enough to allow us to forgive even our family members.

Decision

Maybe you are here today and you are consumed by anger or bitterness at a certain person who has hurt you. Perhaps you are trying unsuccessfully to overcome the pain alone. Only Jesus can truly cure you of bitterness. Only Jesus can cure our broken hearts. You can give your life to Jesus today and ask him to come into your life. He will empower you to be able to

make decisions like Abraham. He will empower you to trust Him with the hurt in your heart and to have faith in Him in a sinful world. How do we know Christ can do these things? Because Jesus died on the cross for your sins, He was buried, and He is alive today and wants to live in your heart. Christ can heal you of your problems today and give you eternal life for tomorrow because He is the living Lord and Savior of the world. Won't you let him come into your life to help you today? Let us show you how . . .

SERMON 12

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your people that although God is patient with us, He takes sin very seriously. There are consequences to our sin.

Bible Text: Genesis 19

Introduction

In the previous message, we learned that Abraham had interceded for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as well as for Lot and his family. Abraham pleaded for mercy for Sodom if only ten righteous people could be found.

Today we see that those ten people were never found. Sin had completely overtaken the city, and greatly influenced Lot and his family. That sin brought a consequence from God. Although God is a loving God, He also is just (Genesis 18:25). Sodom now had to face the judgment of the Father.

Bible Narrative – Genesis 19:1-29

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening. Lot was sitting at the city gate. He rose to meet them, bowed, and asked them to spend the night in his home. The angels replied that they would spend the night in the city square. Lot insisted that they stay and they went to his house. There they made a feast, baked some bread, and ate.

The men of the city, from every quarter of the city, came and told Lot to bring the men out so that they could have sexual relations with them. Lot went out the door to them and pleaded with the men to stop. He offered his two virgin daughters to them to do as they wished. However, he asked them to not touch the men since they had come under his protection.

The men told Lot to get out of the way. They said that Lot had come to their city and was always acting as a judge. Now they would deal with him worse than the men. They came after Lot, and as they were about to break down the door, the two men (the angels) pulled Lot inside the house. They struck the sexually impassioned men with blindness so that they became exhausted trying to find the door.

The angels told him to get his family—sons, daughters, sons-in-law—out of the city because the outcry against the sin had reached the Lord, and the Lord had sent them to destroy the city. Lot tried to warn his sons-in-law, but they thought he was joking.

The next morning, the angels told Lot to hurry and told him to take his wife and two daughters out of the city. Lot lingered, so the angels grabbed all of them by the hand and brought them out of the city. The angels told them to escape to the mountains and not look back.

Lot told the angels they had been merciful to them, but he asked if they would please let him live in a small city nearby. The angels said that because of Lot they would not destroy the city called Zoar so he could live there. The angel told him to hurry because he could not destroy the city until Lot entered Zoar.

When the sun rose, Lot entered the city and the Lord sent fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord destroyed everything—the plains, the inhabitants and what grew on the ground. Lot's wife disobeyed the angels' warning and looked back and she became a pillar of salt.

Early in the morning Abraham went back where he had talked with the Lord. He saw the smoke like a furnace rising from the plain. When God had destroyed the cities, the cities where Lot had dwelt, he remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of destruction.

This is one of the saddest stories in all of Scripture. We see how sin had completely taken over the cities and influenced a righteous man named Lot. However, in this story we also see God's grace toward man and especially toward those who follow Him. Before we study God's grace in this situation, let us examine how sin controlled three groups of people.

I. The City Was Controlled by Sin – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 19:4-9

The men of the city, from every quarter of the city came and told Lot to bring the men out so that they could have sexual relations with them.

Lot went out the door to them and asked them to please not do this. He offered his two virgin daughters to them to do as they wished. However, he asked them to not touch the men since they had come under his protection.

The men told Lot to get out of the way. They said that Lot had come to their city and was always acting as a judge. Now they would deal with him worse than the men. They came after Lot, and as they were about to break down the door, the two men (the angels) pulled Lot inside the house. They struck the sexually impassioned men with blindness so that they became exhausted trying to find the door.

Explanation

Sodom had become completely consumed by sin. The Bible says that men from every section of the city came to have sexual relations with the two angels that appeared as men. Lot, a righteous man in the eyes of God (2 Peter 2:7-8), recognized that these two men needed protection. Lot may even have been spiritually aware enough to understand that these two visitors weren't men but were actually angels. Either way, he acted honorably toward the visitors.

The men of the city were so blinded by their lust that they knew when the men had entered town and had already gathered a crowd to have sex with them. We can notice two things about the level of sinfulness among the men.

- A. Sin was everywhere in the city - The Bible details that the men came "from every quarter of the city." In other words, men came from every section of the city to have relations with the angels. Many cities have sections of town that are really decadent and dangerous, but sin had pervaded every section of Sodom.
- B. Sin had intensely impacted the men - The men had become so consumed by their lust for homosexual sex that even though they had been struck by blindness by the angels, they WERE STILL TRYING TO FIND THE DOOR! In fact, they tried so hard to fulfill their desire that they searched until they were exhausted.

Illustration

Wherever you go in the world, there are cities that seem to glorify all types of sex. Whether it is heterosexual or homosexual sex, so many places in the world seem to be given over totally to inappropriate sexual behavior. Cities around the world abound with prostitutes (both male and female). Cities around the world seem to want to live for their own pleasures and forget about God in the process.

What is the key difference between Sodom and Gomorrah and many of our cities today? The answer is simple. God's patience has not run out on our cities yet.

Application

Do not become discouraged when you see the sins of the cities around you. Remember that decadence has been a problem since the beginning of time. However, do not fall into the trap that Lot and his family had. Do not compromise who you are in Christ because of the sin around you.

II. Lot's Family Was Controlled by Sin – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narratives – Genesis 20:14, 16, 26

*So Lot tried to warn his sons-in-law, but they thought he was joking. . .
Lot lingered, so the angels grabbed all of them by the hand and brought them out of the city . . .
Lot's wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt.*

Explanation

Lot's family had become corrupted by sin. Lot tried to warn his sons-in-law of the danger, but they disregarded what he said. They showed no respect or honor to their father-in-law and were completely satisfied to stay in the city. This attitude caused the Lord to allow part of Lot's family to stay in the city to their destruction.

Not only Lot's sons-in-law, but Lot's entire family was affected by the sin around them. After the angels warned them of the destruction, they had to urge the family to hurry up and leave, even to the point of having to grab Lot and his family by the hand to get them out of the city. LOT AND HIS FAMILY COULDN'T MAKE THEMSELVES LEAVE THAT SINFUL ENVIRONMENT. In other words, they had become accustomed to the comfortable life the city offered and learned to live amidst the sin.

Lot's wife even refused to obey the angel's warning, looked back at the city, and died in the process. Lot had utterly failed to cause his family to choose Godliness over the sinful pleasures of the world.

Application

Does your family treat you with honor? Have they allowed sin to enter their lives to such a degree that they are consumed by it? Isn't it time that as the leader of your home you stood up for righteousness in the Lord? Isn't it time that you lead them by example? We must act in a way in front of our wives, husbands and children that honors God—even if nobody else acts rightly—

or they will not follow us and God when life brings great trouble. Your family may not follow you immediately, but you can begin the process of bringing your family to the Lord.

III. Lot Was Compromised by Sin – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 19:6-8

Lot went out the door to them and asked them to please not do this. He offered his two virgin daughters to them so they could do as they wished.

Explanation

Although the New Testament tells us that Lot knew the Lord and that he was righteous (2 Peter 2:7, 8), Lot had been changed by sin. Even though he had changed, Lot was still an honorable man in some ways.

A. He showed hospitality to the angels (Genesis 19:2).

B. He sat at the city gate - Sitting at the city gate meant he was a man of some importance in the city. In Biblical times, the important men of the city sat at the gate and discussed the problems of the city (Genesis 19:1).

C. He had obviously attempted to warn the city of its sin in times past (Genesis 19:9). Lot had at least tried to tell the people of the Lord or at least of the need to be righteous, although he had obviously failed.

However, in the end, Lot had been warped by sin. How do we know he had been changed?

A. He had chosen to remain among the sin of the city (Genesis 19:5). (Sometimes God commands us to remain in pagan areas for His purposes—see Daniel, Esther, Joseph, and even Jesus!) However, it appears as if Lot had become so comfortable in the pagan environment of Sodom that he never wanted to leave. In other words, unlike the others, he had compromised to some extent with the environment around Him. The angels had to literally drag him away from the city! (Genesis 19:16)

B. Lot's priorities were all wrong - Lot showed great hospitality, but he was willing to allow his two daughters to be raped by a crowd of men rather than show poor hospitality to the two men! Lot placed strangers' needs over the honor of his two daughters (Genesis 19:8).

C. Lot's family did not honor him anymore. This has already been discussed, but his children didn't heed his word as he tried to save them. Compromise after compromise had caused Lot to "lose face" in front of his family.

Application

Maybe you are a believer in Jesus Christ, but over time you have become accustomed to the sinful world around you. There are many believers around the world who feel that they

shouldn't "judge" people by their actions - that if someone chooses to sin, although it is wrong, it is not their place to speak against it. Many times they do not want to offend their neighbor, and, therefore, they do not stand up for the Lord. Lot paid the price of years of compromise; be careful that you do not pay for compromise as well.

IV. God's Grace Was Greater Than All of the Sin – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 19:27-29

Early in the morning Abraham went back where he had talked with the Lord. He saw the smoke like a furnace rising from the plain. When God had destroyed the cities, the cities where Lot had dwelt, he remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of destruction.

Explanation

God remembered the prayers of Abraham. God remembered that Lot was one of His children. He chose to save Lot because Lot was one of His own. He showed Lot grace. Even though he had to drag Lot out of the city, He still saved him.

Decision

God wants to save you in the same way. Maybe you are here today and you are stuck in sin. Deep down in your heart you want to leave your life of pride, lust or anger. Maybe you are ready to separate yourself from friends that cause you to sin. You may know that sin can be fun for a while, but you still live empty inside. You know the consequences of sin. Sin brings the same thing to us today that it brought Lot. Sin always brings death and destruction (Romans 6:23). Sin controls people today just as it did in the time of Sodom and Gomorrah. Don't you want to be free from the CONTROL of sin? God wants to take you by the hand and free you from the sin just as He did Lot. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) He longs to show you grace and save you in the midst of our sinful world. You will still sin, but you will be living under God's grace. You will already be forgiven for your sins, and He will give you the strength to stand up under the control of sin.

Maybe there are people praying for you as Abraham prayed for Lot. Maybe there are people who have given their life to Jesus and already have experienced His grace who are praying that you too would ask Jesus into your life. Today is the day that you can give your life to Jesus and He will free you from your sins.

Won't you give your life to Jesus today? The Bible says that Jesus came to earth, never sinned, died on the cross, rose from the grave, and He is ALIVE today and wants to live in your heart. Don't you want freedom from sin? Don't you want to experience perfect grace in God? Come to Christ today! Let us show you how . . .

SERMON 13

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your people how Godly men overcome trials.

Bible Text - Genesis 22:1-19

Introduction

After 25 years of waiting, Sarah gave birth to Isaac and God fulfilled His promise. What joy his birth must have brought to the elderly couple! Now, years later, God took Abraham through his greatest test of faith up to this point—sacrificing his son. Although Abraham had Ishmael through Hagar, Isaac was the only son of both Sarah and Abraham. Isaac was to be the fulfillment of all of God’s promises to bless Abraham’s descendants. Now, God was going to ask Abraham to sacrifice his child. Would he stand under the weight of the trial? What can we learn from this passage of Scripture? Why would a loving God ask Abraham to sacrifice his child?

Bible Narrative – Genesis 22:1-19

After these things, God tested Abraham. He told Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved, to the land of Moriah. God then told Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on a mountain. God would show Abraham which mountain.

Abraham got up early the next morning, saddled his donkey, got two of his men and Isaac, and he chopped wood for the offering. He then rose and went to the place where God had told him. On the third day, Abraham looked and saw the place from a distance. He told his young men to stay with the donkey, as he and his son would go to worship. Abraham said they would come back to them.

Abraham took the wood and put it on Isaac. He also took the torch and knife in his hand and they went together. Isaac asked his father, “My father!” Abraham replied, “Here I am, my son.” Isaac then said he saw the fire and the wood and asked where the lamb for the offering was. Abraham told him that God would provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering. So the two men continued together.

They came to the place where God had told Abraham to go. Abraham built an altar and placed the wood on it. He tied up Isaac and laid him on the altar on the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand to kill his son.

But the Angel of the Lord called from heaven, “Abraham, Abraham!” Abraham replied, “Here I am.” The Angel told Abraham not to touch his son. He said that now God knew that Abraham feared Him because Abraham did not hold back his only son from Him.

Abraham looked and there was a ram caught in the thicket. Abraham took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering. Abraham called the place, “The-Lord-Will-Provide.” The Angel called to Abraham from Heaven. He said the Lord had sworn to Himself that because Abraham had not withheld his son from Him, He would multiply Abraham’s descendants as the stars in the heaven and the sand in the seashore. Abraham’s descendants would have victory over their enemies and all the nations of the Earth would be blessed from Abraham’s seed.

Abraham returned to the two men and they arose and went to Beersheba. Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

How can we apply this passage to our lives? After all, surely God does not want to test us by physically sacrificing our children as well?! No, Abraham's trial was specific and unique to him. However, there are principles from this passage that we can apply to our lives.

I. Godly Men Face Trials – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 22:1-2

After these things, God tested Abraham. He told Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved, to the land of Moriah. God then told Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on a mountain. God would show Abraham which mountain.

Explanation

Isaac was the fulfillment of so many of the promises of God to Abraham. Abraham and Sarah loved their son. Time had passed and Isaac was probably close to twenty years old. The bond of love between father and son had undoubtedly grown stronger and stronger through those years. Now the Lord was asking him to kill his only son.

Why did the Lord ask Abraham to do this terrible act? No man wants to kill his child. As you listen to this sermon, you may think about your children. You love them so much. You think about them when you are away and love to play with them when you are near them. Parents cannot imagine hurting their own children!

Some people use this passage as an example of child sacrifice. However, let us remember that this is an example AGAINST child sacrifice. God did not allow Abraham to kill his son. God did not want Abraham to kill his child. God tested Abraham in order to for Abraham to come to know Him better.

Abraham had been through many trials in the past. He had the trial of leaving his home (Genesis 12), of facing a famine (Genesis 12), of family feuds (Genesis 13), of going to war (Genesis 14), of having no offspring (Genesis 12, 15, 17), of being offered riches from ungodly kings (Genesis 14:21-24). He had faced trials throughout his life. He had passed most of the trials and failed at some. Here we see Abraham face his greatest trial. This time Abraham would not fail. In fact, as we will see, he never wavered.

Application

Are you facing trials right now in your life? The Bible tells us to “count it all joy . . . when we fall into various trials.” (James 1:2) In those trials we can see and learn about God. Although I wouldn't advise praying for trials in your life, pray that God will help you prove faithful during the trials that do come.

II. Godly Men Look to the Lord and Not the Test Itself – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 22:8-10

Abraham told Isaac that God would provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering. So the two men continued together. They came to the place where God had told Abraham to go. Abraham built an altar and placed the wood on it. He tied up Isaac and laid him on the altar on the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand to kill his son.

Explanation

In this passage we see TWO men that acted in a Godly way.

A. Abraham - Abraham had every chance to fail this test. Let us look at a few times that Abraham could have failed. He could have failed:

1. When God called - Abraham could have said “no” to the Lord when God initially told him to sacrifice his son.

2. When he prepared the firewood - When we do manual labor, it gives us time to think and dwell on things. Obviously, Abraham could have stopped at any time but certainly while he was chopping at the wood. Surely his mind dwelt on the seriousness of what God was asking him to do.

3. On the three day journey - Abraham walked side-by-side for three days with the son he had to sacrifice. How many chances did he have to look at his son and question what was happening?

B. Isaac - Isaac could have failed the test as well. Many times we focus on Abraham, but Isaac had all the more reason to fail. It wasn't Abraham's body on that altar! Isaac could have failed at various moments.

1. He could have dishonored his father and not gone – Today many young people complain about spending an hour or two in a worship service. Isaac agreed to go on a three day journey to worship the Lord and was forced to carry firewood along the way! He was carrying the very firewood that was to burn his body. Isaac honored his father by going on the journey to worship the Lord.

2. He could have not allowed his father to tie him up - Abraham was an older man. He had sent his two servants away. It was just he and his twenty-something-year-old son. Although the Bible calls him a “lad,” he was still old enough physically to force his father to stop. Isaac trusted the Lord as well and allowed himself to be tied down on the altar.

Both of these men could have failed in this test of faith, but both men chose to trust in the Lord. Although Isaac acted impressively, Abraham is the focus of this passage. Abraham never wavered in his faith during this trial. Why did he assume God would handle the situation? Two books in the Bible describe what Abraham was thinking during this trial. In this chapter in Genesis we see that Abraham assumed that God would provide another sacrifice instead of Isaac (Genesis 22:8). In Hebrews we see that Abraham even thought that if there weren't another sacrifice, God would raise Isaac from the dead! (Hebrews 11:17-19). That is true faith in God!

Application

Abraham had grown from many tests throughout his life. The end result of those tests is that he withstood one of the most difficult trials in all of Scripture. He had grown spiritually so much through the years that he passed this trial WITHOUT WAIVERING. Consequently Abraham had become one of the greatest men of faith to ever live. God wants to guide you to make you a person of faith as well.

III. God Himself Is the Solution to All of the Tests in Life – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 22:13-14

Abraham looked and there was a ram caught in the thicket. Abraham took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering. Abraham called the place, “The-Lord-Will-Provide.”

Explanation

God DID provide. He, through the Angel of the Lord, told Abraham not to touch his son and provided a ram in Isaac’s place. God had provided another substitute offering for Isaac. On that day, Abraham called the place, “The Lord will provide.” Why did he name the location? He named it because Abraham had one more personal example that in a time of great trial, God provides the solution.

Decision

This passage is one of the most vivid illustrations of Christ in the Bible. Instead of having Abraham to sacrifice his son, God provided a ram to be sacrificed. A ram is a male sheep. That ram was the substitute for Isaac on that altar.

In like manner, Christ is pictured as “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) You and I are sinners, and the penalty of our sin is death. (Romans 6:23). That word “death” can mean physical death as well as separation from God for all eternity—hell. Because the penalty of sin is death, God takes sin very seriously. God does not want you to die in your sins. Because the penalty of sin is death, SOMEONE must die for yours sin. The Ram died for Isaac; Christ died for you.

Christ was the sacrifice on the cross for our sins. He took your punishment for your sins. Consequently, the Bible says that if we confess that He is Lord and give our lives to Him He will save us (Romans 10: 9, 10, 13). God loves you. He provided a way for you to be free from your sins. He wants you to come to Him today.

If you are already a believer, watch and be amazed at how God will take care of your needs even in your darkest hour. You have already placed your faith in Christ for your salvation, and now you can place your faith in Him for your day-to-day needs. Renew your FAITH in Him, not your salvation in Him (there is no need to renew your salvation for you are already saved forever), and watch how He works in your life.

If you have not given your life to Jesus, today is the day for you to make the greatest decision of your life. Today is the day for you to give your life to Jesus Christ as your ONLY Savior and Lord. No other god, person, idol, place, or church can save you, only Jesus Christ. If you would like to turn from your sins and give your life to Christ, let us show you how today . . .

SERMONS 14 and 15

Purpose of these sermons - To give your church an example of a model church.

NOTE TO PASTOR - THIS SERMON REQUIRES MUCH INTERACTION. YOU CAN PROBABLY PREACH ONE SUNDAY THROUGH ALL SEVEN OF THE PURPOSES OF THE CHURCH. THEN YOU NEED TO GO THROUGH ONE MORE SUNDAY AND TAKE TIME TO GO THROUGH EACH AGAIN. THE SECOND TIME, STOP AFTER EACH POINT AND HAVE YOUR CHURCH DISCUSS HOW THE MEMBERS CAN SPECIFICALLY APPLY EACH PURPOSE – DISCIPLESHIP, FELLOWSHIP, PRAYER, WORSHIP, MINISTRY, MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM.

Bible Text – Acts 2:42-47

Background Introduction

Pentecost had just occurred. The Lord sent the Holy Spirit to 120 people who were in an upper room. The people began to speak in the languages of people all over the world. Those in Jerusalem heard a great sound and gathered to see what was occurring. Some assumed that the 120 were simply drunk. Peter, with the other eleven disciples, stood up and explained what happened to the crowd. He told them that God was pouring out His Spirit on His people. He told them that Jesus, whom they had crucified, had risen from the grave. Jesus was both Lord and Christ. The people were under great spiritual conviction after Peter said these things, so they asked what they should do.

Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Then they would also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter continued to preach and three thousand men were added to the church that day. After they were baptized, the Bible describes what the new believers and the apostles did as a church together. It says:

Bible Narrative – Acts 2:42-47

And they learned from the apostles and fellowshiped with one another, breaking bread and praying with one another. Then great awe came upon every one of them as great signs and wonders were done by the apostles. Everyone who believed came together and shared all things, and they sold their possessions and divided everything among themselves and gave to everyone who had need. So meeting daily, in one accord in the temple, and eating together from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simple hearts. They praised God and had favor with all of the people in Jerusalem. The Lord added great numbers of people to the church daily to those who were being saved.

Introduction

We can learn many things about what a church should be and how it should act from these short verses. Today we will look at seven important actions of the church based on these verses. If you want to have a strong, well-rounded church, you need to try to have all seven of these PURPOSES in your church as well.

I. Lead Your Church to Be Focused on Discipleship – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Acts 2:42

And they learned from the apostles. . .

Explanation

At the time of the start of the church the New Testament hadn't been written yet; however, the books of the Old Testament had been written. Believers could study the Old Testament in order to learn more about how to live. Even though they didn't have the New Testament yet, the new church had the apostles- men that had walked, talked, eaten and worked with Jesus. The apostles knew Jesus and His teaching. This early church began to learn much about God by learning from the apostles.

Application

A good church will devote itself to studying about God. We should all have the desire to learn about Him. How can we do that? There are two ways. First of all, we can study the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that the Bible has been inspired by God and it is PROFITABLE for us to study it. A strong church will make time to study God's Bible together and allow His Holy Spirit to teach our hearts.

The first way a church can be discipled is through BIBLE STUDY. How can you study the Bible? First of all, your pastor can teach you from Scripture. Secondly, you can come together to have Bible studies led by your pastor or a lay person. The Bible never teaches that your pastor is the only person who can teach others. Certainly, other Godly men and women besides the pastor can lead Scripture study. Thirdly, you can study the Bible alone or with your family in your home. The first page of your pastor's sermon book teaches how to learn from the Bible and get spiritual truths from God's word. Be sure to learn how to have a quiet study time with the Lord in your home.

A church can also be discipled from Godly MEN AND WOMEN by walking, talking, eating, working and laughing with them. Spending time with Godly leaders is a great way to be discipled in Christ. Even though all of the original apostles are gone, God still uses pastors, evangelists, deacons, elders and other Godly men and women to teach others. As long as these leaders base what they teach on the Bible, we can learn much about Jesus through the wisdom of our leaders today.

Take a few minutes this week or next week to figure out ways your church can disciple one another in Christ.

II. Lead Your Church to Be Focused on Fellowship – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Acts2:42

And they learned from the apostles and fellowshiped with one another, breaking bread and praying with one another.

Explanation

The early church began with 120 people in a room, and then it grew to 3,000. It grew so fast that three hundred years later it was the state religion of the Roman Empire.

How did the church grow from a small group of people in one room to a religion that millions followed around the world? Men who wrote about Christianity and the early church tell us the church grew because of the love the people had for one another. This fellowship in the early church was what helped the church multiply around the world.

Application

A good church devotes itself to fellowshiping (or spending time) with fellow believers. Are your church members friends with one another? Do they enjoy spending time with one another? Are they concerned with each others' needs? Do they intimately know one another, or are all of their relationships simply surface relationships? Pray that your church can be a true family of God. Make an agenda of when your church can spend time with one another. Find ways to come together for all types of reasons. For example, the Bible mentions twice in this passage (vs. 42, 46) breaking bread together. Eating together is always a fun way to spend time with one another!

The idea of fellowship is that you will grow together in Christ because you are sharing your lives together. Of course, you should come together to worship, but you should also come together as a whole or as individuals for fun and laughter, to minister to a member who is hurting, to celebrate special days, to make plans together, to play sports together, etc. In other words, spending time together makes you a FAMILY.

What are some ways that your church can have fellowship with one another?

III. Lead Your Church to Be Focused on Prayer – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Acts 2:42

And they learned from the apostles and fellowshiped with one another, breaking bread and praying with one another.

Explanation/Illustration

“The family that prays together, stays together” This is a very popular expression in the church in my country. This expression is very true in day-to-day life. For example, it is very difficult to fight with your wife or yell at your children after praying with them.

Just like you have a physical family here on Earth, the Bible teaches us that the church is our spiritual family. If you pray together as a church, several things will happen. First of all, when a church prays together, God is with them. “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst.” (Matthew 18:20)

Secondly, prayer is our power source to the Father. How far does a car go without fuel? How hard can a donkey work without food? It is the same thing with the church. How can we expect for God to work in mighty ways, if we don't recharge our batteries with prayer? Prayer enables us to come to God with our personal needs and the needs of the church, to ask for forgiveness, and to praise and thank Him. Prayer allows us to be in intimate fellowship with

Him. Just like the church must be in fellowship with one another, prayer allows us to be in fellowship with Him.

Application

Does your church have a time set aside for praying together? Is there one morning or evening a week, at least, that all of you are praying together for each other, for the lost of the world, for your leaders? For example, in the United States church members usually meet once or twice a week to pray. In South Korea many people meet everyday to pray together. How often is appropriate for your church to meet to pray. Make prayer together a priority today

IV. Lead Your Church to Be Focused on Ministry – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Acts 2:44-45

Everyone who believed came together and shared all things, and they sold their possessions and divided everything among themselves, and gave to everyone who had need.

Explanation/Illustration

A hungry man has a difficult time thinking about spiritual things. In the same way, a lonely or depressed person usually thinks about meeting his own immediate needs before he can think about following Christ. We have a duty not only to **tell about the love of Christ** but also to **show the love** of Christ to people who are hurting in this hurtful world.

The early church sold their goods in order to give to those in need. Should we sell all that we have and give it to others? The Bible isn't teaching that idea in this passage, but it does show the SACRIFICIAL GIVING that took place among the early believers in order to be focused on serving the less fortunate.

Application

There are two ways that a church can focus on ministry. The first way is to minister to those outside the church. What are ways that you can be a minister to a lost world around you? Can you set up a counseling ministry? Could you begin a literacy ministry? Could you give rice and beans to families who have nothing to eat? How can you bless those around you?

The second way you can do the act of ministry is with your fellow believers. Be focused on those around you in your church who are struggling financially, emotionally and physically. This will bring your church together and show the world not only that you talk about Christ but also that you live for Him as well.

V. Lead Your Church to Praise – Fifth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Acts 2:47

They praised God and had favor with all of the people in Jerusalem.

Explanation/Illustration

“Sweetheart, you are so pretty.” “Honey, you are such a good mother.” “Son, I am proud of you!” When we praise others with comments such as these, it uplifts them, but it also helps us focus on what is good about another person.

In the same way, the church should praise God. Why? First of all, He deserves all praise. Secondly, it reminds us about how wonderful our Lord truly is. The Bible tells us that if we don’t praise Him, the rocks certainly will (Luke 19:40). Can you imagine someone being so incredible that even the rocks would have to proclaim His glory? Obviously rocks cannot speak, but Christ was using that image to describe the praiseworthiness of the Father.

Application

Take time as a church to praise your Father. How can you do that?

- A. Sing - Sing to the Lord songs of praise. If you cannot sing well, that is okay, neither can I! In fact, most people do not sing beautifully, but God enjoys hearing your songs of praise to Him.
- B. Giving is an act of worship. Bringing your tithes and offerings does not enrich God. After all, God owns everything already anyway! (Psalms 50:9-11). Instead, giving is an act of worship to Him.
- C. Quote Scripture – Simply reading God’s word together and enjoying what He has written is an act of worship.
- D. Give your testimony - Sharing what God has done in your life to the church is an act of worship and reminds people of the wonderful things that God does in our lives today.

How can you strengthen your worship at your church?

VI. Lead Your Church to Do Evangelism and Missions – Sixth and Seventh Spiritual Truths

Bible Narrative – Acts 2:47

The Lord added great numbers of people to the church daily to those who were being saved.

Explanation/Illustration

If a cell in your body doesn’t grow, it is on the path to dying. It is the same way with a church. If we are to be a healthy church, we need to grow. Obviously God can give the growth without us, but He chose to use us, His followers, to help make the church grow. The Bible says that we are to be “ambassadors” for Christ. “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though

God were pleading through us . . .” (II Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador is someone who is sent by a higher authority to represent him. That is what God has done through His church. He has sent the church to proclaim and represent Him to a lost world. We are His representatives. The early church knew this and was faithful to proclaim Christ as risen Lord. Because of this, the Lord added to its number daily.

Application

Is your church truly sharing with others? Are there certain people that your church refuses to minister to? Do you avoid the poor or the rich when trying to tell about your church? God longs for all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (I Timothy 2:4) God wants to use your church to proclaim Him as well. Proclaiming Christ to a lost world is called evangelism. Evangelism is sharing the good news of Christ. What is that good news? The good news-the Gospel- is that Christ died on the cross, was buried, and three days later He rose from the grave (I Corinthians 15:1-4). He is alive today and wants to live in your heart. Have you shared how Christ has changed your life to someone this week? Have you shared with someone this month? How about this year? Ask God to give you the courage to practice evangelism.

When we practice evangelism to another culture besides our own, this is called “missions”. Missions is the seventh purpose of the church. God longs for all cultures, peoples, and tribes to know Him. In fact, one day every tribe and nation around the world will be represented before God’s throne (Revelation 7:9). No matter what country your church is located, you should strive to evangelize people different than you. Maybe God would have your church send a missionary to another country to start a new church. Maybe God would have your church begin to work with another tribe or village than your own. Maybe God would have you work with people of a different caste as well as your own. Seek God’s will in how your church can be involved in missions.

Decision

Is your church fulfilling these seven purposes? Does your church specifically plan out how to evangelize the lost or disciple its own people? Do you have times of prayer, praise, fellowship and ministry? Does your church have a vision to reach other peoples and nations as well?

Is each person that is part of your church, including the pastor, trying individually to do these tasks as well? God longs for you to be involved in what He is doing around the world through His church. Won’t you be willing to be a part of His work in these seven areas – discipleship, fellowship, worship, ministry, praise, evangelism and missions?

Maybe you would like to learn how to do these things. Next week we will begin to discuss how we can fulfill all of these purposes of the church better. We will come up with good ideas about how to grow our church both spiritually and numerically by completing these same purposes that the church did in Jerusalem after Pentecost.

Maybe you are here today and you would like to be a part of a church that is achieving these wonderful things. In order to be part of a church, you must first be a child of God. How can you be a child of God? You must simply give your heart and life to Jesus Christ as Lord. Have

you truly given your life to the Lord? If not, today is the day that you should repent of your sins and make Christ Lord of your life. He will save you today if you accept Him as Lord. Won't you do that today? Let us show you how . . .

SERMON 16

Purpose of the sermon - To teach about the role of the pastor and the member in the local church.

Bible Text - Ephesians 4:11-12

Introduction

The other day I was talking to a very good young pastor. He was 28 years old, loved the Word of God, and desired to know Jesus more and more everyday. He had just gotten the pastorate of a very large church, so I asked him what he planned to do with the church. He looked at me and wasn't sure how to answer. He said, "I guess I'll just preach the Word of God."

Of course, that is a very good answer. Churches need good young men that will preach the Bible. However, is that the key role of the pastor? What is a good leader really supposed to do? Most church members would be shocked to find out what a true pastor's main job really is. Today we are going to look at what your pastor or lay leader's main job is supposed to be. You might be surprised at what it is! We also are going to look at the key job of every member of your church and why God set our responsibilities the way He did.

Bible Narrative - Ephesians 4:11-15

And He himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things unto Him who is the head—Christ.

I. Jesus Called Some to Ministry – First Spiritual Truth*Bible Narrative – Ephesians 4:11*

And He himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers...

Explanation

The Bible is very clear; God set aside some people to be the leaders of the church. He set aside apostles, those who had walked with Jesus and had been sent out by Him; prophets, those who had been sent to proclaim or preach the truth; evangelists, those whose job it was to evangelize or preach the good news; and some pastors and teachers, those who were set aside to lead local churches. These people had a definite call from God.

Illustration

One day a man asked me, "I feel like I am supposed to be a farmer; isn't that the same type of 'calling' that you got when you were called to be a pastor?" I didn't want to be an elitist

and tell the man that probably his calling was not the same as mine. However, as I've studied the Bible, there is no way around the fact that the calling to be a pastor is different from feeling a desire to work in another profession.

Some people are SUPPOSED to work in other professions. God wants to use good lawyers, farmers, teachers and bus drivers. However, none of these jobs are specifically mentioned in Scripture as being called by God. Being a pastor is a specific calling. The pastor will be held accountable for his church. It is a high calling (II. Timothy 1:9).

Application

Do you honor your pastor? Do you honor your leader? Do you remember all the many hours he spends each week studying, preparing, ministering, and loving his people? Remember, he is a human being just as you are which means he will make mistakes. However, God has called your pastor to surrender to Him in order to serve at your church.

II. What Is Today's Pastor/Lay Leader's Main Job? What Is the Church Member Supposed to Do in the Church? – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Ephesians 4:12

...For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...

Explanation

God called some men to be pastors and teachers for a specific reason. According to the Bible, their job is to "equip the saints."

Who are the saints that they are to equip? Is it a bunch of holy people that lived hundreds and hundreds of years ago? No, the Bible says that WE are the "saints" or "called out ones." (Ephesians 1:1) The local church is made up of saints. Every one of us who has Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is a saint.

I have given my life to Christ, so, actually, my name is "Saint (say your name)!" Now, everyone repeat your name with the word "saint" in front of it! "MY NAME IS SAINT (everyone says their name)!"

That is funny to listen to, but it is true. Each believer in Christ, including the pastor, has been called out or set apart by Jesus from this world. You are a saint in Christ. The pastor's job is to EQUIP THE SAINTS. In other words, his job is to equip, train, or disciple the church members. He is to equip YOU! What he is supposed to train and equip you and the church to do? His job is to train you to do THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY!!! Why? Isn't ministry just the pastor's job?

Illustration

Imagine a soccer coach who has 11 great athletes on his team. Each athlete has potential to score, pass, run, and kick in an incredible way. All of the team meets once a week for about 1-2 hours. What if on the game day the coach puts everyone on the bench, and he runs out on the field trying to play the game by himself!!! Would he be a good coach? Would they win any games? Of course not. His job is to train the players to play a great game. If he tried to do it all by himself on the field, he would fail.

Application

Don't we treat our pastors like that coach? We think that their job is to do all of the preaching, teaching and visiting because that is their job. However, even though they are supposed to preach, witness, and teach us, the Bible says that their main job is to get YOU TO DO THESE THINGS! He helps us learn how to preach, teach, minister and witness. His job is to prepare you to go out and do ministry ALONG SIDE him and APART from him.

III. Why Did God Design the Pastor's Job Like That?

Bible Narrative – Ephesians 4:12-15

...For the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things unto Him who is the head—Christ.

Explanation

We can see several reasons in this passage why God gave the pastor the job to train you:

- A. The work of the ministry - The ministry's work will grow much faster.
- B. To edify the body of Christ - When we work together we become stronger.
- C. To increase in unity - God longs for his church to be unified.
- D. To increase our knowledge - As we work for Him, we take time to learn more about Him in order to perform well.
- E. To increase our maturity - Unlike little children, we will be able to stand firm when attacks COME from heresy or the devil.

Illustration

Imagine that your pastor works very hard throughout the week at his other job to provide food for his family. However, he really wants to have a good church, so he goes out three hours a week total after work to do evangelism. Then he must visit the sick, prepare the sermons, and minister to the people of the church. It is very hard for him to do very much evangelism throughout the week beyond those few hours because he is already so busy. However, imagine that he trains 12 people to go out with him to evangelize in different homes for three hours a week. Instead of three hours of evangelism, now there are 39 total hours of evangelism occurring. Imagine much more your church will grow with 39 hours of evangelism rather than three hours!

Application-

Are you allowing your pastor to prepare you to do ministry alongside him? Are you ready to fulfill your job as a "saint" in Christ?

Some people have compared Christians with an army. If we were an army that kneeled, that would be great. At least we would be on our knees ready to pray. If we were an army that ran, that would be great. At least we would be running toward the lost. However, unfortunately, we are typically an army that sits. We sit on the pew waiting for our pastor to do the work. Are you ready to work today? Are you ready to work alongside your pastor to grow your church and plant many other churches?

Decision

Pray right now that God will allow your pastor to prepare you to evangelize, disciple and minister to others. Pray that he opens your heart to allow your pastor to train you. Even if your pastor asks you to do some things that you are afraid to do, ask God to prepare your heart to try what your leader asks.

Maybe you are here today and you are not a member of this church. You have never given your life to Christ. Today you can join this church and be used by God as well. However, before you join this church, you must first be sure to have given your life to Christ. Have you given your life to Christ yet? If not, then we can show you how to give your life to Him today . .

SERMON 17

Purpose of the sermon - To teach about the importance of the Holy Spirit.

NOTE TO PASTOR-

THERE ARE A FEW SERMONS IN THIS BOOK THAT DO NOT FOLLOW THE NARRATIVE PATTERN AS MOST OF THE OTHERS. THIS SERMON IS NOT BASED ON ONLY ONE NARRATIVE. INSTEAD WE WILL SEE HOW CHRIST INTRODUCED THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BOOK OF JOHN, AND THEN WE WILL USE VARIOUS VERSES LOCATED THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HIM. READ THE INTRODUCTION TO YOUR PEOPLE, AND THEN YOU WILL TEACH SOME SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO YOUR PEOPLE.

Bible Text – For this four part series, we will use John 13-16 as a basic guide to learn some of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

Who is the Holy Spirit? For everyone in the world, the Holy Spirit plays an important part. For a lost person, He convicts that person of sin and judgment. For the saved, He is our Counselor and guide in all we do.

Even with such important roles, it is often hard for many believers to understand the Holy Spirit. In these next four sermons, we are going to look at the Holy Spirit. Today we will study: Who is the Holy Spirit?

Bible Narrative – John 13-14

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus was sitting with all of his disciples in a room having a meal. He took some of his outer clothing and began to wash His disciples' feet. Although His disciples refused, Jesus continued until He was finished. After this, Jesus began to describe how Judas would betray Him as well as how Peter would deny Him. Then He told his disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me." He told His disciples that He was going to the Father's house to prepare a place for them. He would come back and take them to be with Him later.

Thomas then asked, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way? Jesus replied, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me."

Phillip then told Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus told Phillip that whoever has seen Him has seen the Father. He told them to believe in Him by what He says and by the proof of His miracles. He then said He is going to the Father but that they can ask anything in His name and He will do it. Jesus said He would pray to the Father, and that He would give them another Helper.

Jesus began to introduce a very important person to His disciples at this moment. He called this person the Helper. At this moment, for three chapters, Christ began to introduce the

Holy Spirit. Today we are going to learn two important aspects of the Holy Spirit. We are going to learn that He is an INDIVIDUAL and that He is GOD at the same time.

I. He Is an Individual Person of the Trinity – First Spiritual Truth

The Holy Spirit is an individual. He is not just some part of God's power or His personality. He is a unique part of the Trinity. How do we know this?

A. He has been sent

Bible Narrative - John 14:16

I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever- the Spirit of truth."

Explanation

First of all, we see that the Holy Spirit is one who is sent. God gave us the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been sent by God. Just as Jesus Christ was sent by God for our salvation (John 17:3), the Holy Spirit has been sent by God for His own specific tasks. These tasks were to be our Counselor and Giver of Truth.

God COULD HAVE taken these tasks Himself, but He chose to give these tasks to another. God could be our counselor and could be the one who teaches all truth. Instead, He sent a separate Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to do these tasks. We describe the idea of the Spirit being an individual as being the "person" of the Holy Spirit. In other words, just as God has created each person as an individual, the Holy Spirit's *person* is individual as well. The only difference is that He was never created, He has ALWAYS BEEN.

B. He has individual characteristics

Explanation

The Holy Spirit has unique characteristics. The Bible doesn't describe Him only as a power or a Spirit, but as a PERSON with a personality. For example:

1. The Spirit is described in Scripture as "Him"- "The world cannot accept Him because it neither sees Him nor knows Him." (John 14:17) The Bible chose to communicate who the Spirit is by using a word that describes a person, "he," rather than a word that describes a thing, such as "it."
2. He can be grieved - "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Eph 4:30) Just like we can make a person sad, we can make the Holy Spirit sad as well. This is another proof that He is an individual.
3. He intercedes or prays for others - "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself *intercedes for us* with groans

that words cannot express.” (Rom. 8:26-27). His prayers are another individual task in His ministry.

4. He chooses who receives gifts - “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines.” (I Corinthians 12:11) The spiritual gifts that he gives to you and me are His INDIVIDUAL task.

Application

In other words, the Holy Spirit is an individual. He is not a human of flesh and blood. However, He is a Spirit with PERSONality! He has been sent to do a task. He prays for you, chooses to give gifts for service, and can be grieved. This shows that He has a personality. This shows that this is SOMEONE who loves you and SOMEONE to be loved by you. Do you know the Holy Spirit? Do you strive to learn more about Him? Ask God to help you begin to understand who the Holy Spirit is in your life. God sent Him to help you. We strive to know the Father and Son, but we should get to know Him as well.

Of course, do not forget, the Spirit’s job isn’t to point people to Himself, but to point them to Christ (John 15:26). Seek to know the Spirit, but give the most focus on Christ.

II. He Is God – Second Spiritual Truth

The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as being a unique individual, but He is also fully God. How do we know that the Holy Spirit is not only an individual God as well? Today we will look at five reasons.

- A. The Bible uses both names to describe the same Person.

Bible Narrative – Acts 5:1-9

The early church had been born, and they were sharing all things with one another. A man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira had sold a piece of property and laid it at the apostles’ feet. However, Ananias kept back part of the money for himself.

*When He did this Peter asked, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the **Holy Spirit** and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to **God**.” Ananias heard this and fell down and died.*

Explanation

When Peter was describing to whom Ananias told the lie, he used the names of the Holy Spirit and God interchangeably. In other words, he said that Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit and to God as if they were one and the same. This is one of the key examples in Scripture that the Holy Spirit and God are one.

B. He is eternal - He lives forever, just like God.

Bible Narrative

“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.” John 14:16

*“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the **eternal Spirit** offered himself unblemished to God, cleans our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! Hebrews 9:14*

Explanation

Both Jesus and the writer of Hebrews described the Holy Spirit as eternal. Only God is eternal. Everything else is created. If the Bible says the Holy Spirit is eternal, He must be fully God.

C. He is Omnipresent- He can be everywhere, just like God.

Bible Narrative - Psalms 139: 7-10

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.”

Explanation

Only God can be in all places. Satan does not have that power. Angels cannot be in more than one place. If the Bible describes the Spirit as omnipresent - He must be fully God as well.

D. He is Omniscient - He knows everything, just like God.

Bible Narrative - John 14: 26

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

Explanation

Only God has all knowledge. Some men are very intelligent. Satan is very intelligent, but only God knows all things. If the Holy Spirit knows all things, the Bible is describing Him as God.

E. He is Omnipotent- He is all powerful, just like God.

Bible Narrative - Luke 1:35

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. . . .”

Explanation

Only God is fully omnipotent—all powerful. Other created things have power. For example, Satan has power, angels have power and some men have worldly power. However, only God is all powerful. If the Bible describes the Spirit as having the power of God, He must be fully God as well.

Application

The Holy Spirit is NOT ANOTHER GOD EQUAL TO GOD. He IS God. He is fully God and fully Spirit as well. This is one of the most difficult parts of the entire Bible for us to understand. After all, you and I cannot be one thing and another at the same time. However, God is individual and three persons at the same time. He can be fully God individually, and fully God with Jesus and the Holy Spirit as well. We worship ONE God, but He is great enough to be in the Trinity with Jesus and the Holy Spirit as well.

In India there are millions of gods but there are three principal gods - Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma. The Christian God is not like these three gods. He is not simply “the ultimate reality and He cannot just be added to these three as a fourth god to be worshipped. If your church is in a culture that worships spirits, then God is not just a “great spirit”. Unlike these other beliefs, the Bible teaches that the Christian Creator God is the TRINITY. He is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit at the same time. Each of the three are separate AND unified at the same time.

The question is, do you know the Holy Spirit? We study so much about Jesus and the Father, but how about the Spirit as well? The Bible says that He has been sent to help us. Next week we will learn about some of the things that the Holy Spirit can do in our lives. We will understand the purposes of why He has been sent.

Decision

Maybe you are here today and you already have given your life to Jesus, but you feel that you do not know the Holy Spirit. Ask God to help you come to know Him and what he can do for you today.

As we said before, in India there are millions of gods but there are three principal gods - Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma. The Christian God is not like these three gods. He cannot just be added to these three like a fourth god. People think they can add Him to their list of gods. However, the Christian God is THE ONLY CREATOR God. He is the ONLY REDEEMER GOD. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, three-in-one, is the Almighty God that wants you to follow Him. Maybe you believe in Vishnu or Shiva or Brahma. Maybe you already believe that one god can take on several forms. The Christian God does not take on forms, He IS three in one. He is the ALL POWERFUL GOD, and He wants to bless you today.

Maybe you are here today and you have never given your life to Jesus. It is IMPOSSIBLE to have the Holy Spirit in your life without Jesus. Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to His children to help us learn so many things. Jesus has sent the Spirit to point us to Him. Perhaps today is the day that you should make the decision to give your life to Jesus. Perhaps today is the day that you will begin to know the Father, Son and the Spirit. Won't you make that decision today?

Sermon 18

Purpose of the sermon - To teach about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a lost person especially when Christians witness to lost people.

NOTE TO PASTOR - TODAY WE WILL NOT BE LOOKING AT ONE BIBLE STORY AND STUDYING ALL OF OUR TRUTHS FROM ONLY ONE PASSAGE. INSTEAD, WE ARE GOING TO DO A STUDY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PUT NARRATIVE EXAMPLES THROUGHOUT THE SERMON.

Introduction

A young seminary student named Chris walked into a gas station. Of course, for Chris it was a typical busy day. He was a student and he had a job, so he was a busy man. Also, because he was a student he didn't have a lot of extra money.

At the gas station there was an older lady who did not have enough money to pay for her gas. She was upset. Although it was a financial challenge for Christ, he felt the leading of the Spirit to go ahead and help pay for her gas. He walked up to the older lady and told her he would take care of the rest of her bill. She immediately relaxed and thanked Chris. Chris then began to talk to her. He began to tell the woman about how Jesus had changed his life. The woman replied that she had been thinking about spiritual things lately. After the two talked for a while more about Jesus, she prayed to receive Christ that day.

How did that woman get saved? Was it all by accident that Chris just happened to stop at that gas station? Why was the woman thinking on spiritual things already before she met Chris?

Today, let us learn how the Holy Spirit works in a lost world among lost men. The Holy Spirit does four things in the heart of a lost man. Each of these four things is necessary for a lost person to come to Christ. As we look at each of the Holy Spirit's jobs, let this be a reminder of how He goes before us in evangelism.

I. The Holy Spirit Gives Life – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – John 6:63

It is the Spirit who gives life - the flesh profits nothing.

Explanation

The Holy Spirit gives man life. He was at the creation from the beginning (Genesis 1:2) and gives us life here on Earth (Psalms 104:30). You and I would not have life without Him.

Application

Giving life is the first step in working in the heart of a lost man. God loves the lost man; therefore, He gave him life. Remember, even the lost, who can act so badly sometimes, are still precious enough to the Father that He gave them life.

II. He Brings Goodness into a Lost World – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Romans 1:18-19

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Explanation

As you walk about the streets of your city, what do you see? You may see poverty, decay, and crime. It is very easy to become discouraged about the lost world around you.

However, try to look differently at the world around you for a moment and realize that MOST people are law-abiding. Most people try to lead a good life. Most people attempt to be good fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. How do they do that? One would think that if people didn't have Christ in their heart, they would just act completely sinful all of the time. Instead, God in His grace allows the Holy Spirit to bless the world with His goodness. He keeps men from totally destroying themselves. His "invisible attributes" of love, grace, hope and faith can be clearly seen in the world around us. . People without Christ still show love to their children. People without Christ show acts of grace as they forgive others around them. People without Christ maintain hope for a better life. All of these things – faith, grace, hope and love – are gifts from God. The world can see the goodness of the Father just by observing the goodness in the world around them.

If man were left to himself and his own desires, the world would spiral into a moral decay. However, God doesn't allow man's sinful nature to totally control the positive things in the world around them. He protects men and women from themselves. The rest of Romans 1 shows how God eventually does allow men to give in to their own desires. However, stop and observe how He has chosen so far to inhibit the domination of sin to some degree until now. Observe how God's presence and invisible attributes are clearly seen in the world around us.

Application

Realizing that God protects people from themselves should help you see the Lord and His attributes in a dark world. Do not allow discouragement or fear to take over when you look at the darkness all around you in your city. Remember that even though people may deny the Lord Jesus Christ, God STILL LOVES THEM and is protecting them even when they don't realize it. In fact, He is patiently waiting on them to come to know the truth of salvation in Him. (2 Peter 3:9)

III. The Holy Spirit Convicts the World of Three Things – Third Spiritual Truth

A. Sin

Bible Narrative - John 16:8

And when he had come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

Explanation

When Christians go out to witness for the Lord, they must remember that the Holy Spirit is the one that convinces a lost person in particular of his lostness. We cannot convict people of sin, only the Spirit can.

Illustration

In all of my years of witnessing, 99% of the time when I begin to talk about sin, the lost person agrees that he is a sinner. Why? Because the Holy Spirit already has been working on the heart of that person.

However, one time I went to an inner-city area in America. There I began to witness to a young 15 year old girl. As usual, I began to ask her if she had ever sinned in her life. She told me, “No.” So I asked her if she committed some pretty common sins. “Have you ever told a lie?” “Have you ever been angry?” “Have you ever stolen a little something as a child?” To all of my questions she replied, “No. . . No. . . No.” She did not reply in an angry manner, but she had literally no conviction of sin.

After a minute I noticed that her belly was a little large. I asked her, “Are you pregnant?” She said that she was. I asked her, “Are you married?” She replied that she wasn’t. So I asked her, “Well, does that mean you may have committed at least ONE sin?” At that point she agreed that she had sinned at least one time but she showed no remorse.

Application

That young girl was not ready to accept Christ that day. Why? She had no conviction of sin yet. As a believer, begin to pray for your lost friends. Pray that the Holy Spirit will give them a deep, heart-felt conviction for their sins. It is His job to show them their sinfulness.

B. Righteousness

Bible Narrative - John 16:8

And when he had come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

Explanation

The Holy Spirit convicts the lost of not only their sin, but their need for righteousness in this world.

Illustration

A team of twenty believers from America went to Nigeria to work with their brothers in Christ in that country. They were working in cities that were half Christian and half Muslim.

The Nigerian Christians were amazingly bold in their witness to their Muslim neighbors. Most of the Americans were stunned and honored to see believers so bold in their faith, especially among Muslims. When the Americans asked the Nigerians, “Why are you so bold among the Muslims; aren’t you afraid?” the Christian leaders replied, “Oh, the Muslims know that Christ is the true way already. They just are afraid to make the decision because of their families.”

Application

Those villagers already knew the right choice to make because they recognized the **RIGHTEOUSNESS** of Christ. It is not our job to guilt someone about not having a righteous life when he is lost and without Christ. It is the Spirit who convicts a person of their need for righteousness. He will show the lost man not only that he is not righteous, but that God **IS** righteous. Speak the truth in love about sin and lostness, but let the Spirit do the work in conviction.

C. Judgment

Bible Narrative - John 16:8

And when he had come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

Explanation

Many people, (not all people), know that they will face judgment someday. Some feel that they will face judgment from the Lord. Others feel that they will face judgment because of the way they have lived their lives. They feel that if they are not good enough in this life, they will have to be reborn again as another person or animal in order to try to live better in the next life. Some feel they cannot reach “enlightenment” without being perfect.

The Bible teaches us that we cannot be reborn as another person or animal. It does not teach us about a cycle of lives. Instead, the Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, “And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” In other words, every man will die once and then he will face judgment by God. The Bible never teaches that someone will die and live again many times here on Earth. Instead the Bible teaches that man will die and face judgment from the Lord. If he has given his life to Christ, He will spend all of eternity with Jesus.

Most people innately know that they will be judged. They know that they have done wrong many times in their life, and they know a judgment day is coming. It is the Holy Spirit’s job to show them about judgment.

Application

Notice how the Spirit works. He does all of the work for us in showing someone about sin, righteousness and judgment! The Holy Spirit shows a lost person that someday he will die and be judged (conviction of judgment), that he is a sinner today (conviction of sin); and that Christ and His teachings are perfectly righteous (righteousness).

As we evangelize the lost, we have to show them their **NEED** for Christ. If we are faithful speak the truth (Romans 10:13-15), the Holy Spirit will be faithful to touch their hearts on their need for righteousness and freedom from sin and judgment.

IV. The Spirit Testifies That Jesus Is the Truth – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - John 15:26-27

But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

Explanation

In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by me.” In order for someone to be saved, he must realize that Jesus is the Truth, not just part of the truth. The Holy Spirit tells the lost man that Jesus is the Truth. Not everybody will accept Christ as Lord and Savior, but the Holy Spirit will tell the person of the Truth of Christ.

Application

Now we see that the circle is complete. The Holy Spirit takes the lost man through everything he needs to be saved.

- a. He gives the person life
- b. He keeps him alive by protecting him from his sin.
- c. He convicts the person without Christ of his need for Jesus by showing him his sin, need for righteousness and impending judgment.
- d. He tells him that Jesus is the truth.

The Holy Spirit, in His graciousness, does all of these things, yet He still wants to use YOU to tell the message of the gospel. When you go witness to someone, understand that God is working on that person’s heart in all areas of the witness, and He is allowing you to be part of the process of your friend’s decision for Christ. This experience of witnessing is a gift from the Lord!

Decision

Are you faithfully witnessing? Have you become so discouraged in your witness that you do not think anyone around you will get saved? Commit to remembering that it is the Spirit who does the work, and God will bless your evangelistic work.

Maybe you are here today and the Spirit has been working on your heart about sin, righteousness and judgment. You realize that today you want to give your life to Jesus because the Holy Spirit is working on YOUR heart. The Bible tells us that today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Today you can follow the Spirit’s leading and give your life to Jesus. You must simply confess you are a sinner, believe in only the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of your sins and surrender your life to him today. Then you will be free from the chains of sin and judgment, and you will be righteous before the holy God. Will you do that today?

SERMON 19

Purpose of the sermon - To teach what the Holy Spirit does in the lives of Christians.

Bible Text - John 14-16, but various other passages will be used.

NOTE TO PASTOR – PASTOR, THIS SERMON IS AN INTRODUCTORY SERMON TO A VERY LARGE CONCEPT. IT GUIDES THE READER AT FIRST AS TO WHY WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT --- WE CAN'T TRULY BE OBEDIENT WITHOUT HIM. THEN IT GUIDES THE READER THROUGH A BEGINNING UNDERSTANDING OF JUST SOME OF THE JOBS OF THE SPIRIT. YOU WOULD BE WISE TO ACTUALLY STUDY EACH VERSE LISTED UNDER POINT THREE AND SPEND SEVERAL WEEKS JUST ON THIS ONE SERMON.

Bible Narrative (Highlights of John 14:1-16)

Shortly after the last supper, Jesus began to teach His disciples various things. He told His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them in Heaven. He also told them that He was the way, the truth and the life and that “no one comes to the Father but by me.” Then He said, “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

During that teaching, Phillip asked Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

Jesus then began to explain that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. He told them that anyone who has faith in Christ will do what He has been doing and will do even greater things than these. How? Because He was going to the Father. He told them that whatever they ask in His name, He will do, so that He may bring glory to the Father. He then began to tell them that if they truly loved Him, they would obey what He commanded, “And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever- the Spirit of Truth.”

Introduction

Christ's order of teaching at the end of this narrative is very interesting. He closed by saying that if we LOVED HIM, we would OBEY WHAT HE COMMANDED. Then He immediately began to teach about the Holy Spirit? Why?

Let us take a little time and learn why Christ said these things and how the Counselor works in the lives of believers.

I. The Basis of Our Relationship with Christ Is Love – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – John 14:15

If they truly loved him . . .

Explanation

Christ was talking to at least twelve men in this upper room, men who had eaten, slept, worked, and ministered with Him for years. These disciples had gone from simple followers to men who truly cared about the Lord.

This was to be Christ's last chance to teach them in a calm atmosphere before the turmoil of the Cross began. Christ used one of His last teaching opportunities to teach His disciples about love. He told His disciples earlier, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34) Christ was stressing the basis of our relationship with both Him and one another - love.

A man can tell his wife, "Honey I like you," or, "I think you are a good cook." But that does not express what his mate truly wants to hear. She wants to hear, "I love you." An expression of love shows commitment and honor to the person with whom you are speaking as no other act does.

Application

Do you love Christ? As you sit here tonight, do you feel that your actions adequately express your love for Him? Do you think on Him? Do you dwell on Him? If you have free time, are you ever thinking about Jesus in your life? Ask God to help you love Him even more. He loved you first (I John 4:14) and because of this we love Him.

II. The Expression of Our Love Is Obedience – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – John 14:15

He then began to tell them that if they truly loved Him, they would obey what He commanded...

Illustration

Jesus cried out in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?" This is the same idea as the one found in John 14:15. To say that we love Christ requires obedience to His commands.

For example, Jesus told His disciples in John 13:34 that they were to love one another, but that He would not be with them for much longer. He told them that where He was going, they could not come. Peter asked Him where He was going. Jesus replied that where He was going Peter could not follow, but that he would follow later. Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." (John 13:37)

Peter made a profound declaration of love and commitment to Christ. He not only told Christ he loved Him in that passage, but Peter wanted to express that love by following Christ wherever He went.

Of course, we know the rest of the story. Peter's heart was in the right place, but Christ

knew he would temporarily fail. Jesus responded to Peter, “Will you lay down your life for my sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.” (John 13:38) That is exactly what happened. After Christ was taken away by to be tried by the Jewish leaders, Peter denied Him. (John 18)

It is one thing to declare your love, but Christ demands obedience as well. Peter declared marvelous things to Jesus, but Jesus knew that Peter would fall short in the area of obedience.

Application

God requires our obedience. In any healthy relationship, it is just as important to show your love as it is to tell your love to the one you care about. Do you ever feel that you are trying to obey the commands of Christ but just fall short time and time again? There is no doubt that Peter loved Christ, yet he failed the Lord. Because we are humans and sinners, we will fail in the area of obedience if we rely on our own strength. For this reason, God sent His Holy Spirit to help us.

III. The Holy Spirit Helps Believers Obey – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – John 14:15-16

He then began to tell them that if they truly loved Him, they would obey what He commanded, “And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever- the Spirit of truth.”

Explanation

The Holy Spirit does many things for the believer. He has been sent to help you serve and obey the Father. He has been sent to help you know the Father as well. Today we will only begin to look at some of the things the Holy Spirit does for you and me. Here are just a few:

- A. Gives truth - John 16:13 - He guides believers into all truth.
- B. Reveals Christ - John 16:14- The Bible says He glorifies Christ and declares what Christ is to us.
- C. Teaches the saints - John 14:26 - He will teach you and help you recall all you need to know about Christ. When you need to witness or teach for Christ, the Holy Spirit is there to guide you. This is a great comfort as we teach. We can know that the Spirit will help us in our work.
- D. Gives power - Acts 1:8 - There are many great powers in the world—countries, armies, Satan and his demons—but none of them have power like the Father. The Holy Spirit promises to give us power so that we can be witnesses to the Father throughout the world.
- E. Gives assurance - Romans 8:16 - There is no need to doubt your salvation when you have already given your life to Christ. The Holy Spirit reminds us that we are God’s children. He will not let you lose your salvation. After all, He gave you your salvation. You did nothing to earn it. Once you are saved in Christ you are always saved.
- F. Unifies - 2 Corinthians 13:14 - The Holy Spirit helps the church be unified and have

fellowship with one another. God longs for our churches to be unified. If we are together and show love for one another, this glorifies Him and shows the world His love.

- G. Gives Spiritual gifts - Galatians 5:22-23 - The Spirit's fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. These are all from Him and describe Him. With these attributes, you can live a joyful life and be a wonderful servant for the Father.

Decision

As you can see, the Holy Spirit works so much in the life of a believer today. This is only a beginning list of gifts from Him. Do you long for wisdom, knowledge, unity, and power as a church? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in the areas you and your church need help.

Maybe you are here today and you have not given your life to Christ yet. Think about all of the gifts you are missing from the Father. Wouldn't you like to live in unity with your fellow man? Wouldn't you like to have true love, joy and peace? These things come from the Father through the Son. You must first give your life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Then the Holy Spirit will begin to work in your life.

How do you give your life to Christ? You must first recognize that you are a sinner and that you fall short of the glory of God. You must repent of your sins and call on Jesus as your ONLY Lord and Savior. If you do these things, your life will change, and the Holy Spirit will begin to work in your life. You will also have assurance of eternal life with the Father after you die.

Won't you give your life to Christ today? Let us show you how . . .

SERMON 20

Purpose of the sermon - This is the last of the four part series on the Holy Spirit. Its purpose is to teach your people how and why we can be filled by the Holy Spirit.

This sermon was written by a missionary named Barbara Akins.

Bible Text - I Samuel 16:7-13; 17

Introduction

Today we are going to learn how we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. Although every believer in Christ already has been sealed by the Holy Spirit in his life, it is important to understand how we can be FILLED by Him so that we may be used by God in a mightier way. Look at the life of David to learn an excellent example of how to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Background

Saul was the King of Israel. He had begun to rule very poorly, and God chose to anoint a new king. He chose to send Samuel the prophet to Bethlehem to anoint a new king. Samuel did not know who was to be the next king. Although Samuel was afraid of what Saul might do, he went ahead and followed God's will to look for a new king. The king would be one of Jesse's (David's father) sons. God led Samuel to overlook Jesse's other sons even though they looked perfect for the job externally. God said that He knew a man's heart. When David arrived, he happened to be good looking as well, but his heart was also good looking to the Lord as well. David became a mighty man of God. He became a Spirit-filled man of God as well. Let us see how that happened.

I. The Power to Live the Spirit-Filled Life Comes from God – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative- I Samuel 16:7-13

The Lord told Samuel not to look to the outward appearance when he chose the king. The Lord does not look at the outward appearance but at the heart. Jesse called several of his sons, and Samuel told him that the Lord had not chosen any of the sons that he had presented. Finally, Samuel asked if there were any more sons. Jesse said that his youngest son, David, was still in the fields tending sheep. Samuel called for him. When David arrived, it was evident that he was good looking, red headed, and had bright eyes. Then the Lord told Samuel to anoint him. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David that day.

Explanation

That day God empowered David by His Spirit. Just like every believer today, David was filled with the very power of God. God is our only source. Power does not come from money, education, or a successful position in life. We must depend only on Him.

Application

Do you believe that power comes only from God? Do you look around in jealousy at those around you, longing for all that they have? Isn't it time that you put your trust in Him— the Lord who wields all power?'

II. To Have God Is Sufficient and We Do Not Need Anything Else – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – I Samuel 17:1-54

The Philistines and the Israelites were gathered for battle. The Philistines were on a mountain on one side of a valley and the Israelites were on the other. The Philistines had a great warrior named Goliath. Goliath was 9 feet, 9 inches tall. He wore a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of chain mail that weighed 125 pounds. He wore bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders. The head of his spear weighed 15 pounds, and he had a shield bearer that went before him.

He stood before the armies of Israel and told them to bring out one man to fight him. If the man won, then the Philistines would be the servants of Israel. However, all of Israel was afraid of Goliath.

David went back and forth from the front line of battle and back to his father's land to feed his sheep. His father, Jesse, sent him to the front line to take grain and bread to his brothers and cheese to their captain. When David returned, he heard Goliath taunting Israel. Goliath had done this for forty days. David asked what should be done about Goliath. He asked who was Goliath "to defy the armies of the living God." David's older brother became angry at him for saying these things because all of the other Israelites were afraid.

The others told what David was saying to King Saul. Saul told David that he could not go up and fight against Goliath because of his youth. David told Saul that he had already killed a lion and a bear as they tried to kill his father's flock of sheep. Just like he had killed the lion and bear, he would kill Goliath because of his defiance of the armies of the living God. He then said it would be the Lord who would deliver him in the battle.

Saul told him to go and fight and said that the Lord go with him. Saul gave David all of his armor, but David chose not to fight with it. He was not used to the armor.

So David took his staff and five smooth stones from a brook and put them in his shepherd's bag. He also had a sling in his hand. He went toward the Philistine. Goliath with his armor bearer went toward David. When Goliath saw how young and good looking David was, he laughed and cursed David by his own gods.

David told him that although Goliath came at him with a sword, spear and javelin, he came to Goliath with the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom Goliath had defied. He told him that this day he would kill Goliath, cut off his head, and let the birds feed on Goliath's dead body. That way the whole world would know that there is a God in Israel. Then everyone would know that God does not save with the sword. The battle was the Lord's.

Goliath then came toward David, but David ran toward him. David took a stone and slung it and hit the Philistine in his forehead and killed him. David won with a sling and a stone, and had no sword in his hand.

David then cut off the head of Goliath. All of the Philistine army fled at this sight, and the armies of Israel chased after them.

Explanation

Goliath was prepared. He had size, strength, experience and equipment for the fight. What about David? He was not large, not particularly strong, had no equipment for this kind of fight and had no experience. David had never done this before. But David said, “. . . I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” (I Samuel 17:45) All David had was God and that was *all David needed!!* That is all we need!! When God calls us to follow Him, He gives us a God sized vision. In other words, He gives us a vision of something we cannot do on our own. However, He is sufficient. He is all we need to fulfill the task before us.

III. God Wants to Do the Impossible in Us and Through Us – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - I Samuel 17:50

Goliath then came toward David, but David ran toward him. David took a stone and slung it and hit the Philistine in his forehead and killed him. David won with a sling and a stone and had no sword in his hand.

Explanation

Who won? No, David did not win, that was impossible for David. **God won.** God wants to do that which only He can do in and through us. He wants to do the impossible in three areas:

A. Only God can transform our lives. He wants to do the impossible in us. He wants to transform us to be more and more like God. That is impossible for us to do on our own power.

B. Only God can do His ministry. He wants to do His ministry through us, that which is impossible for us to do.

C. Only God can save the lost. God, by His Spirit, works in the heart of the lost and brings them to salvation.

IV. God Does the Impossible So That the World Will Know That He Is God – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – I Samuel 17:46

That way the whole world would know that there is a God in Israel.

Explanation

There was no doubt in the minds of either the Philistines or the Israelites who it was that won that fight. Everyone present knew that there was a power much greater than David. When we allow God to work in us and through us, He is able to reveal His power and all those around us will know that there is a God.

God wants to work through you so that the world will know Him. David was filled with the Spirit and consequently he did great things for God. Would you like to be filled with the Spirit like David? Even though David was anointed by God to be King of Israel, God wants to do great things through you as well. You might not kill a 9 foot giant named Goliath, but we all have our “giants” to defeat in life. There is no formula or no process to be filled with the Spirit. However, there are four things one must do to be filled with the Spirit.

A. Be saved (Acts 2:38). First of all, we must have come to the point that we have given our life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Spirit will not dwell in you until you have given you life to Jesus.

B. You must confess all known sin in your life (I John 1:9). You may wonder why you need to confess your sin. After all, once you have given your life to Jesus, aren't your sins all forgiven? Certainly your sins are forgiven, but still our sins can grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). Take time to confess your sins to the Father. Of course the Father, Son and Holy Spirit still have the same love for you, but we want to be filled by the Spirit, and you do not want any unconfessed sin that could hinder your relationship with Him.

C. By faith, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and control you (I John 5:14-15). We know that we can ask anything in God's will and that He hears us. It is certainly God's desire for us to know Him, be used by Him, and be filled with the Spirit. Take time to simply ask him, “Fill me with your Spirit, Lord”. Remember, you already have the Holy Spirit in you because you have given your life to Christ. However, you are asking Him to take control of your life so you can be empowered by Him.

D. Obey God each moment every day (Acts 5:32). Of course, you and I will sin every day. It is IMPOSSIBLE to avoid sinning. Our sins keep us from having fellowship with the Father. Remember those sins that you just confessed to the Lord and strive to avoid those problems every day.

Is this a sure way to be filled with the Spirit? Of course not. There is no prescription that you must follow exactly to be filled by Him. However, these are good steps you can take in your walk with Him that can help lead you to be filled by Him.

Decision

If you are a believer in Christ and want to be filled by the Spirit, confess your sins right now before the Lord. Ask God to fill you today. Ask Him to help you obey so that you can be filled with the Spirit so that you can be mightily used by the Lord.

If you do not know the Lord yet, you need to realize that you are missing the great power in your life. Only the Holy Spirit can truly empower, fill, and bring joy to a lost and dying world. Only those who have given their lives to Jesus can know the true power and love from the Creator God. You can give your life to Jesus today. Confess that you have sinned against God. Tell him you want to turn from your sins. Make Christ your only Lord and Savior of your life. Then you will know the peace and joy of the Lord and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. If

you'd like to give your life to the Lord, let us pray now . . .

SERMON 21

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your people how to pray with praise and confession. This is the first of a four part series on prayer.

Bible Text - Luke 5:1-11

Background

Jesus' ministry had recently begun and the people were excited. He had cast out demons, preached with great authority, and healed the sick. The people in Israel were so excited they did not want Him to leave their region. However, after the crowd had interrupted His prayers, Jesus told them that He must go and preach the Kingdom of God in other areas as well.

As Jesus set out to continue His ministry an amazing thing happened.

Bible Narrative – Luke 5:1-11

Jesus was standing by the Sea of Galilee as the masses of people crowded around Him to hear the word of God. He saw two boats standing by the lake. The fishermen were already out of the boats washing their nets. Jesus climbed into Simon Peter's boat and asked him to push out a little from the shore. He sat down in the boat and taught all of the crowd from the boat.

When He stopped speaking, He told Simon to launch out into the deep and let down his nets to catch some more fish. Simon Peter told Him that they had worked all night and hadn't been able to catch anything. However, Peter told the Lord Jesus, "At your word I will let down the net." When they brought the nets in, so many fish were caught in the nets that they started to break. So they signaled to their partner fishermen in the other boat to come help, and they filled both boats with so many fish that the boats began to sink. When Simon Peter saw what had happened, he fell to his knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man O Lord!"

Every one with him was astonished at all of the fish. James and John were there as well. They were Simon Peter's partners. Jesus then told Simon not to be afraid because from that point on he would be a fisher of men.

When they brought their boats back to land, the fishermen gave up all they had and followed Christ.

What a wonderful moment that must have been as Peter, James and John were able to experience the awesome power of the Lord! There are many applications that can be made from this passage, but let us take a look at how our prayer lives can be a mirror image of what happened that day on the boat.

I. Desire To Be With God As He Desires To Be With You – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Luke 1:3

Jesus was standing by the Sea of Galilee as the masses of people crowded around Him to hear the word of God. He saw two boats standing by the lake. The fishermen were already out of the boats washing their nets. Jesus climbed into Simon Peter's boat and asked him to push out a little from the shore. He sat down in the boat and taught all of the crowd from the boat.

Explanation

Those people wanted to be with Jesus. They had never met anyone like Him. He had done great miracles and preached about the Kingdom of God with such power. In this moment we can see two types of people.

- A. The masses - The masses sought out Jesus. They wanted to be with Him. In love, He took the time to be with them and teach them. However, He had His most special teaching set apart for those He had chosen to be His disciples.
- B. Peter, James and John - Along with the masses surrounding Jesus, Scripture highlights three men—Peter, James and John. These were men that Jesus had set apart to KNOW HIM in a deeper way. They would become His three core disciples. Jesus could have done that incredible miracle with the fish in front of everybody, but He saved the great miracle for those three men. Others may have been there also, but the Bible highlights these three men as specifically experiencing this great miracle.

Application

It is important to understand that ANY man who desires to be with Christ can call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. However, the Lord does have a special people. God longs for some to be “set apart” for Him. The Bible calls those who are saved in Him “saints.” The word “saints” means to be “set apart.” (Ephesians 1:1) Believers in Christ are set apart to both know Him in a deeper way and spend eternity with Him. Every man has this opportunity to accept Christ, but believers are those who took the opportunity to give their lives to Christ. For those who take this opportunity, God shows them great spiritual truths. Peter, James and John were set apart by God, and He showed them incredible things.

Notice that even though Simon Peter had worked all night, He still obeyed the Lord, pushed off from shore and cast out his nets. Sometimes you and I can be so tired we don't want to spend time with the Lord. However, if we take the time to spend a few moments in prayer, He can reveal mighty things at those moments. Psalm 55:16, 17 shows how King David prayed three times a day. You might not be able to pray at three separate times, but David establishes a pattern to set apart time everyday to be with the Lord. Remember, as God set you apart from a lost world by saving you, so you should set apart time daily to be with Him.

II. Recognize God For Who He Is And Praise Him – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Luke 5:8

When Simon Peter saw what had happened, he fell to his knees and said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man O Lord!”

Explanation

Peter was not simply amazed at the catch of fish. He recognized at that moment that he was in the presence of someone far, far greater than himself. He cried out to Jesus to get away from him because Peter knew that he was unworthy to be in His presence. God’s followers recognize how holy, majestic, and awesome Jesus is when they are in His presence.

Illustration

After we set aside time to pray, we need to take a moment to meditate on just how great God is. We should praise Him not for what He has done but for who HE IS.

We can praise God simply by calling out his name. We can learn so much about Him because the names of God describe who He is. For example, we know that God is peaceful because one of His names is “Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6). Some of His names are as follows:

My Advocate (Job 16:19)	Our Help (Psalms 33:20)
Comforter in Sorrow (Jeremiah 8:18)	A Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14)
Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6)	Bread of Life (John 6:35)
Our Father (Isaiah 64:8)	My Confidence (Psalms 71:5)
God Almighty (Genesis 17:1)	My Friend (Job 16:20)
Our Guide (Psalms 33:20)	God Who Saves Me (Psalms 51:14)
Lord of the Harvest (Matt 9:38)	The Most Holy (Daniel 9:24)
King of Kings (I Timothy 6:15)	Lord of Lords (I Timothy 6:15)
Our Peace (Ephesians 2:14)	Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)
The Good Shepherd (John 10:11)	Good Teacher (Mark 10:17)
Light of Life (John 8:12)	Refuge and Strength (Psalms 46:1)

Application

When we pray, we can lift up names like these that describe our Lord and Master. Just as our spouses love for us to lift praise and tell them how wonderful they are, even MORE SO we should praise the Father. There are over 300 names found in the Bible that describe God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Find these names, like the ones listed above, and learn just how great our God is. PRAISE HIM!

III. Recognize Yourself for Who you Are and Confess Your Sin to God – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Luke 5:8

When Simon Peter saw what had happened, he fell to his knees and said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man O Lord!”

Explanation

When Peter realized He was in the presence of the Lord, he also became very aware of his sinfulness. He felt like he was unworthy to be in the presence of Jesus.

Illustration

Isaiah 6 is an incredible chapter. Isaiah was one of the greatest prophets that ever lived. As he began his preaching and prophetic ministry, he received a vision of the Lord sitting on His throne. Upon seeing the Lord, Isaiah called out that he was “a man of unclean lips.” In other words, he became very aware that he was so sinful that he couldn’t be in the presence of the Lord. (Read Isaiah 6:1-7 to your people for an incredible picture of the Lord on His throne.)

Application

In our prayer lives, we should always include confession. Confession should not take up a great deal of time in our prayers because the Holy Spirit should convict us throughout the day when we sin. When He convicts us, we can ask forgiveness immediately.

However, there should be a few specific moments in our daily prayer time when we confess to our Father. I John 1:9 tells us, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” There are sins throughout the day that we might have overlooked, and a general time of confession during our daily prayer time is very important in our relationship with Him.

Remember, you can confess your sins with confidence to God. (Hebrews 4:16). The Bible is very clear that we can approach His throne with confidence if we are covered in the blood of Jesus. Confess with a repentant heart. Remember that God wants to hear your prayers and is ready to forgive you.

IV. Receive God’s Forgiveness – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Luke 5:10

Every one with him was astonished at all of the fish. James and John were there as well. They were Simon Peter’s partners. Jesus then told Simon not to be afraid because from then on he would catch men.

When they brought their boats back to land, the fishermen gave up all they had and followed Christ.

Explanation

God told Simon Peter not to be afraid. In like manner, we don’t have to live in fear over our sins. Your sins were forgiven when you gave your life to Jesus. Yet the Bible still commands us to confess and receive forgiveness. That act of confession reminds us of the sins we have committed and helps us to appreciate that immediate forgiveness that always follows. Both Simon Peter and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:7) experienced immediate forgiveness for their sins.

Application

Confess your sins to the Father while you are praying to Him and experience the joy of the Lord's forgiveness. Just as a loving father forgives his children, God forgives His children who have given their life to Christ. (John 1:12)

V. God Speaks to His followers– Fifth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Luke 5:10

Every one with him was astonished at all of the fish. James and John were there as well. They were Simon Peter's partners. Jesus then said to Simon not to be afraid because from then on he would catch men.

Explanation

After Peter recognized that He was in the presence of the Lord and confessed his sins, Jesus lovingly told Peter His plans for his life. Peter would not only fish for food, but he would also fish for men. Christ's command was so profound that Peter, James and John dropped their nets and followed Him.

Decision

Are you taking time to pray? Are you taking time to tell Him how wonderful He is? Commit to taking time to praise Him everyday. As you praise, sometimes the Holy Spirit will bring to your heart conviction of sin. He may not do that every time- you may already have confessed what you need to confess! However, take time to praise and confess to the Lord, and take joy in how He will speak to you. Just as He spoke to Peter, James and John, He wants to speak to you as well. He wants to share His plans for your life. He wants to show you His promises for your life. Commit to taking time everyday to meet with the Lord in prayer.

NOTE TO PASTOR: NEVER FORGET TO CONCLUDE WITH AN EVANGELISTIC APPEAL AFTER EVERY SERMON. EXPLAIN HOW A PERSON CAN CONFESS HIS SINS AND GIVE HIS LIFE TO JESUS. REMIND THE PEOPLE THAT IF THEY ARE IN JESUS, THEY CAN APPROACH GOD'S THRONE WITHOUT FEAR BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE BLOOD OF JESUS COVERING THEM. WITHOUT THAT BLOOD, THEY CANNOT APPROACH WITH CONFIDENCE. OFFER FOR THEM TO ACCEPT CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR TODAY.

SERMON 22

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your people the power of thanksgiving in their prayers.

Bible Text - Daniel 6:1-10

Introduction

Do you live stressed out? Are you worried all of the time? Did you know that there is a God-given cure for our stress? One of God's cures for our stress is prayer with thanksgiving. Today we will begin our message in the Old Testament and finish it in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, we will see a great man who gave prayer a great priority in his life.

One of the most famous stories from all of Scripture is the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. Today we will look at the first part of this story and examine what caused Daniel to be thrown into the den.

Darius the Mede was the ruler of the Persian Empire. Daniel had already risen to power under Nebuchadnezzar (the leader of the Babylonian Empire) and had made him ruler over all of the province of Babylon (Daniel 2:48). The Persians conquered Babylon, and Darius the Mede was the new ruler. Darius chose to make Daniel a great ruler in his kingdom as well.

In today's story, we see Daniel face some terrible problems for his faith. Let us learn how he handled this difficult situation.

Bible Narrative - Daniel 6:1-10

Darius appointed 120 men over the entire kingdom. Three governors, Daniel and two other men, became the leaders of these 120 men. Their job was to protect Darius from loss. Then Daniel, because of his excellent spirit, did such a good job over the other governors that Darius considered putting him in charge of the entire realm.

The other governors got together and tried to bring some charge against Daniel, but they could not find any accusation because Daniel was faithful. They decided the only way to get to Daniel was to use the laws of his God against him.

All of the leaders went before the King and said, "King Darius, live forever!" They said that they had consulted together and decided to make a law that any man who prayed to any other god or man for thirty days would be thrown into the lion's den. They asked Darius to sign this into law. They wanted this because they knew that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed. King Darius signed the decree.

Now when Daniel knew it had been signed, he went home. In his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day as was his custom. He prayed and gave thanks before his God.

Daniel understood the power of prayer. He was over 80 years old when he became one of the rulers in the kingdom. Yet, even in his old age, he still placed priority in prayer. We can apply several truths to our prayer lives by studying Daniel.

I. Daniel Took Time to Pray - First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel knew it had been signed, he went home. In his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day as was his custom. He prayed and gave thanks before his God.

Explanation

Daniel was one of the most powerful men in the entire Kingdom. Obviously with his position he was a very, very busy man. However, the Bible says that it was his custom to kneel and pray three times a day.

Application

So many times people give the excuse that they do not have time to pray. Yet they waste opportunities every day and claim they are too busy. Do you look for opportunities to pray? How many hours a day do you have to drive, walk or ride a bus to work? Could you spend that time in prayer? If we think that we are busy, try running a kingdom like Daniel had to do!

II. Daniel Had the Habit of Prayer - Second Spiritual Truth

Explanation

In Daniel 6:10, we can see that he prayed three times a day “as was his custom.” He had made a habit of praying daily. Some people say that they do not need to set aside a time everyday to pray. They can just pray as they go about their daily business. Of course, we are supposed to pray as we go about our lives, but I have learned one thing about people who do not set aside a specific time daily to pray- **THEY DON’T PRAY EVERYDAY.**

Application

We are creatures of habit. We work around schedules in our lives. Our bodies like to eat and sleep around the same time schedules everyday. It is the same way with prayer. Make a habit of praying daily on a schedule. If you set aside a time to pray, you are more likely to pray everyday. This will feed your soul spiritually just as you feed your body physically.

III. Daniel Prayed Regardless of Cost – Third Spiritual Truth

Explanation

In Daniel 6:10 we see that David opened his windows toward Jerusalem. Daniel knew that people would be watching him pray. He also knew of the edict that would cause him to be thrown into a den of lions. Yet, he still prayed.

Application

Many of us don't pray because we cannot make ourselves get up earlier or go to bed later. We can't pray because we don't want to miss a television show or because "our minds are tired." Daniel prayed knowing the possibility of losing his own life. Are our reasons for not praying legitimate before the eyes of God?

IV. Daniel Wanted the Whole World to Know He Prayed – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Explanation

When Daniel opened his windows toward Jerusalem, people around him could see that he was praying. He was not ashamed to pray to his God.

Application

Maybe you live in a neighborhood where it is dangerous to proclaim that you are a believer. Maybe your husband does not want you to pray. There are times when you must be wise in how you visibly show your faith. Sometimes Paul stayed and proclaimed the gospel under persecution (2 Corinthians 11:23-28) and there are other times that he had to flee (2 Corinthians 11:32-33). In the same way, you might need to be wise and let the Spirit guide you as to when you should be public about your faith. Sometimes we should pray privately (Matthew 6:6) and sometimes you need to be more open in your actions for Christ (Matthew 5:14-16). However, Daniel knew that at this moment the whole world needed to know he was a believer regardless of the consequences. Is God telling you that you need to be open about your faith by being more public in your prayer life?

V. Daniel Prayed with Thanksgiving – Fifth Spiritual Truth

Explanation

Why did David pray with thanks in Daniel 6:10? What did he have to be thankful about at that moment? Many of the men he worked with had turned against him in jealousy, and at eighty years old he had to start his career with a new king and kingdom. On top of those problems, doing the simple act of prayer put his life in danger.

Daniel probably prayed for various reasons. Certainly he had learned the importance of thanksgiving. Also, he had learned in his life what happens when we pray in thanks.

Philippians 4:6 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:6 tell us that if we pray with a thankful heart two things will occur:

1) First of all, we can **present our requests to God**. Years ago God brought a young friend into my life named Christiano. Christiano was a beggar on the street. Over time, he got

saved. After he got saved I asked Christiano what it was like to have to beg on the street. He told me that he learned one thing, “You get more money when you smile than when you cry!” In other words, if Christiano had a joyful heart while he asked for money, he always got more money.

Now our Lord does not work in the same way as beggars and donors do. Christiano begged with a smile to get more, we should pray with joy and thanks to give more glory to Him. However, look what we receive in return. To present our requests with joy is a reminder to ourselves that we have faith in Him who gives all things. With a joyful heart, we can ask in faith that our God be in control of our lives. When we have that faith, we can do great things through Him. (Matthew 21:20-21).

2) Secondly we can receive the **peace of God**. A proper attitude in Christ brings peace in our lives. Being at peace with the Lord affects every aspect of our lives. That peace will transform our **hearts and minds**. An older pastor was talking about a time of his life when he battled depression. He faced depression for several years and couldn't shake it. Over time, he overcame that depression and found that peace of God in his life again. He said that removing that depression affected everything. The stress and anxiety not only affected his mind, but also affected his physical body. Once he overcame the depression in his life, his health, marriage, and ministry improved. Prayer with thanksgiving helps you attain peace of God.

Daniel was a man who had a habit of praying with thanksgiving. The result was that Daniel was described in Scripture as having “an excellent spirit.” (Daniel 6:3) This was one of the reasons that he was chosen over all of the other rulers of the kingdom. He was a man of thanks. His thankful attitude contributed to his excellent spirit. He did not enter depression because of his circumstances. If we pray and think positively, positive results will follow.

Application

Wouldn't you like to be a person that is described as having an excellent spirit? Haven't you ever noticed that those who seem to show that peace of God in their lives seem happier, healthier and more successful? Why are they more successful? They are more successful because people want to be near joyous people. People long to be at peace, and they will seek out people who have that peace.

Maybe you are here today and you have already given your life to Christ. However, you have become a very sad or depressed person. You no longer see the positive side of life. Begin to force yourself to pray and thank God for SPECIFIC things. Do not just pray general thoughts. Thank him for specific people, actions, places or events in your life. Over time, praying positively will have a positive effect on your life. Have the church take a few moments to list specific things they are thankful for to God. They can do this in a group or individually.

SERMONS 23-24

Purpose of the sermons - A two part series to teach your people how to pray for oneself as well as for others.

Bible Text – Nehemiah 1

I. Introduction

Nehemiah was a great man of God. He loved the Lord and he loved his Jewish people even though he lived far away from his homeland. The Jewish people had been taken over by the Persian Empire. The Persian king, named Artaxerxes, was in a city called Shushan, one of the strongholds of the Empire.

Nehemiah had a very important position in the court of this Persian King. He was the King's cupbearer. In other words, his job was to taste all of the king's food to make sure it hadn't been poisoned. The King had to trust him very much. In the first chapter of Nehemiah, Nehemiah was very concerned about the Jewish people that had returned to their homeland to rebuild their capital city of Jerusalem.

II. Bible Narrative- Nehemiah 1:1-11

Sometime in November or December, Nehemiah was in a city called Shushan. Hanani, a brother of Nehemiah, came from Judah. Nehemiah asked him about both the Jews in Judah and the city of Jerusalem. Hanani replied that the Jews who had survived the captivity were in trouble and that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down.

Nehemiah wept at this news. He mourned, fasted and prayed for many days. He prayed and praised God. He told God that he knew that the Lord always keeps His promises to those who obey His commandments. He asked God to hear the prayers of his servant on behalf of His Jewish people. He confessed both his sins and the sins of Israel against God. He said they had not kept God's commandments or the guidelines set up by Moses.

He called on the Lord to remember that He promised that if His people returned to His commandments, He would return them to their home.

He asked the Lord to hear his prayers and the prayers of his other servants. Finally, he asked the Lord to help him to prosper and to give him mercy with other men.

Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer.

In this passage we see a fine example of a man praying. We see that Nehemiah did four things in his prayers:

I. Nehemiah Praised God – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Nehemiah 1:4

Nehemiah wept at this news. He mourned, fasted and prayed for many days. He prayed and praised God.

Explanation

Nehemiah loved his people. It broke his heart that his people and his homeland were

hurting. It is natural for us to care for our homes and our people. Even when our people do many things to displease God, we still have a heart for them. The Apostle Paul had such a heart for the salvation of his people that he was willing to be cut off from Christ just to see their salvation! (Romans 9:3).

However, even though Nehemiah was hurting at that moment, he still took time to praise the Lord. Psalms 34:1-3 says, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.”

Application

When times are hard, it is sometimes difficult to see God’s plan. However, even if you do not feel like it, take time to praise the Lord. Lift up His name. You will be amazed at how praising Him makes everything seem better.

II. Nehemiah Confessed Sin – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Nehemiah 1:6

He confessed both his sins and the sins of Israel against God. He said they had not kept God’s commandments or the guidelines set up by Moses.

Explanation

Nehemiah took the time to confess his sins (I John 1:9) and the sins of his people (Daniel 9). In times of prayer, the Lord will help us recall sins that we have committed as well as the sins of our people.

Application

Has your country forsaken the Lord? Have you asked for forgiveness for your people? Have you asked for forgiveness for the sins that you personally have committed today?

III. Nehemiah Prayed for Himself – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Nehemiah 1:11

Finally he asked the Lord to help him to prosper and to give him mercy with other men.

Explanation

Nehemiah took time to ask the Lord to bless and take care of him. This is called supplication. There is nothing wrong with taking time and asking the Lord to bless you. Our God is the great God. He is all knowing and all powerful. He knows your needs before you pray them (Matthew 6:8), and He has enough power to hear the prayers of everyone in the world at the same time. You will not be burdening the Lord, and you will not be selfish to lift up your needs to Him.

Illustration

In America there was a very famous atheist named Madeline Murray O’Hare. She did not believe in God and worked very hard to remove the right for people to be able to pray in schools. In the end, the United States court system agreed with her, and it was ruled that no school system could have public prayer. It looked like Madeline had won her battle.

Madeline had a son. Over time, he began to see the bitterness that a life without the Lord brought to his mother. Her son gave his life to Jesus Christ. Madeline Murray was not very happy about that!

After her son was much older, he came to speak in my city one day. During his speech he came across as a very sad man. I wondered what kinds of pain he had to endure from his very famous and influential mother. He mentioned during his speech that he didn’t feel right praying for himself. He only felt right praying for others.

What a shame for that man! He is a person who is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalms 139:14) by the Lord. God is big enough to handle his problems. He should never have felt ashamed to pray for himself. God wants us to pray for ourselves.

Application

Take time to bring your problems and needs before the Lord. Ask him to help you:

- A. Be a good parent, child, or family member
- B. Act with wisdom
- C. Be filled with the Spirit
- C. Do well at work
- D. Be a good witness to your friends
- E. Be wise with your finances
- F. Help you with whatever problem you are facing- sickness, emotional, spiritual
- G. Bless your relationships: friends, spouse, others
- H. Be a blessed person

Those are some of the hundreds of things that you can ask God to bless you with. Take your needs to God!

PASTOR THIS IS A GOOD MOMENT TO STOP AND HAVE A TIME OF DECISION. HAVE YOUR PEOPLE LIFT UP THEIR NEEDS TO THE FATHER IN PRAYER. ALSO, TAKE TIME TO TELL ANYONE WHO IS LISTENING TO YOU TODAY THAT THEIR GREATEST NEED IS JESUS CHRIST. GIVE AN APPEAL FOR THE PEOPLE IN THE CROWD TO GIVE THEIR LIFE TO CHRIST TODAY. HE IS BIG ENOUGH TO HANDLE THEIR PROBLEMS.

IV. He Prayed for Others – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Nehemiah 1:6-11

Nehemiah prayed and praised God. He told God that He knew that the Lord always keeps his promises to those who obey His commandments. He asked God to hear the prayers of his servant on behalf of his Israeli people. He confessed both his sins and the sins of Israel

against God. He said they had not kept God's commandments or the guidelines set up by Moses.

He called on the Lord to remember that He promised that if His people returned to His commandments, He would return them to their home.

He asked the Lord to hear His prayers and the prayers of His other servants.

Explanation

Nehemiah also prayed for his people as well. In the same way, we are commanded to pray for others. This is called intercession. Ephesians 6:18 says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."

As we pray, we should always remember to confess, praise, supplicate, give thanks, but also pray for others. Intercession might seem like a very difficult part of prayer. For example, when you think about all of the people that you have to pray for, you can imagine that it could take a long time simply just to say all of their names to God!

I had a professor in college that spent two hours a day praying for others. The problem is most of us do not have two hours a day to stop and pray. We can pray throughout the day, but how do we pray for our friends and family in an organized way without spending all day praying for them?

Illustration

During seminary I was a father of a young child, a husband of a lovely wife, a youth pastor of a good church and a full time student. Needless to say, all of my friends at seminary, just like me, were all very, very busy. We typically took time to pray everyday in our homes, but it was very difficult to recall everyone's prayer needs.

One day a friend of mine came up to me and asked me to pray for a specific need. I told him I would. I left school a few hours later, went to work for the rest of the day, and finally collapsed in bed that night. The next morning I got up early and went to school.

At school the next day, my friend told me, "Thank you for praying for me yesterday." I realized right then that I had not prayed. I did not mean to forget my friend, I just accidentally had forgotten him. What would you have told him if you were I?

I decided to tell him the truth. I said, "My brother, I have to confess, I totally forgot to pray for you." He understood, laughed good naturedly with me, and then we went on with our day. He was very gracious. However, I was very embarrassed at that moment.

Application

Have you ever been in that situation? Have you ever forgotten to pray for your brother in Christ after you said that you would? Is there a way to remember to pray for your friends and still pray in as brief a time as possible?

Today we are going to learn two key helps in praying for others in as organized and brief a manner as possible.

- 1) When someone asks you to pray, either pray right then, or pray as soon as you turn around to leave. Do not forget, pray immediately! If someone asks me to pray, I always

pray as soon as the conversation is over. That way, I never have to be embarrassed that I didn't pray. I just pray a simple, quick prayer to the Lord as I'm walking away.

2) Every night, pray (intercede) for others using a chart. You can write out a chart organizing your people day by day. If you do not know how to write, that is okay as well. You can simply mentally organize who you will pray for on a particular day of the week. For example, here is a wonderful example of a chart you can use:

Note to Pastor - Ask your people to get a pen and paper and write out this chart as you explain it. Take them step-by-step through the chart. Give them time to actually write out names of people under every category. This will take at least 10-15 minutes. If your people do not know how to write, help them organize their prayer lives by day verbally. They do not have to write names down under a specific day, but you can get them to organize their prayers. For example, you can tell them to remember to pray for friends on Monday , family on Tuesday, work colleagues on Wednesday, etc.

The sample chart below lists the seven days in a week with one special section marked "daily." You will pray for each group on their day of the week. You can pray for others on that day, but do not forget to pray for that particular group on that particular day EVERY WEEK.

For example, "Daily" are your core family members you should pray for everyday.

Sunday - Pray for people with whom you are doing Bible studies as well as the leaders of your church and their families.

Monday - Pray for those whom you work with at your job.

Tuesday - Pray for your lost acquaintances and your friends.

Wednesday - Pray for people who are starting churches as well as your fellow believers in your church.

Thursday - Pray for your government leaders. The Bible commands us to do this in I Timothy 2:1-2.

Friday - Pray for discouraged believers and special church projects.

Saturday - Pray for other close relatives and your extended family.

Right now in the church service take a few minutes to fill out this chart. You might, as a church, want to change up some of the days or change the categories. That is fine as well. If you do not know how to write, begin to prepare in your mind who you will pray for on each day of the week.

If you do this, you will see several results:

- 1) You will pray for more people because you will REMEMBER more people.
- 2) You will pray in less time.
- 3) You will rarely forget to pray for specific people again.
- 4) You will have more confidence when talking with others. Imagine when someone asks you to pray for them and you can tell them, “Oh, my sister, I have been praying for you every Friday for years!” Can you imagine how that will bless that person?! Many people without Christ are moved by the fact that someone would pray for them consistently!

Decision

As a church, when you finish preparing your charts, take a few moments to pray. Ask God to help you organize your prayer life so that you can pray for yourself. Ask him to take away any guilt you might have about praying for yourself. Next, ask God to help you pray for others as well. Ask Him to help you form this habit, so you can be a blessing to others.

However, you might be here today and not have Christ in your life yet. If you don't have Christ in our heart, there is one very important prayer you need to pray right now. The Bible teaches us that Christ died on the cross so we could have a relationship with God. Do you have a relationship with God? Let us show you how you can give your life to Christ today. . .

SAMPLE PRAYER CHART FOR INTERCESSION

Daily	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
Spouse, Children, Parents and Siblings	Bible Study Peers, Spiritual Leaders and their Families	Company, Employees, Boss, Workmates	Lost People and Friends

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Pioneer Evangelists and Fellow Church Members	Public Officials I Timothy 2:2-2	Discouraged Believers and Special Projects	Other Close Relatives Extended Family

SERMON 25

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your people how to talk to others about Jesus in a non-offensive way through sharing a personal testimony.

NOTE TO PASTOR: YOU SHOULD PLAN FOR 2-3 SESSIONS TO TEACH THIS TO YOUR CHURCH.

Bible Text - Acts 22

I. Introduction

How many people in this church have friends, relatives or co-workers who have not given their lives to Christ yet? In fact, raise your hand if you know someone who does not have Christ. Probably, every hand among us should be raised. We all long to see all of our friends know the Lord, and we all know many people without Christ in their lives.

Even though we long to teach our lost friends how to know the Lord, how many of us are afraid to share the Lord with our friends? How many of us feel we do not know the Bible well enough to share our faith with our friends? There is a way that we can share our faith that is very simple and that does not take much time or preparation. It is not scary because it is something we already know well in our heart. We can share our faith by giving our testimony.

If you look in Acts 22, you can see a perfect example of how to share your faith. The apostle Paul had just been grabbed by a mob of angry Jews. If it had not been for a group of Roman soldiers that came to his rescue, he might have been seriously hurt. After the soldiers rescued him, Paul asked them if he could speak to the crowd. Did he preach to them from the Old Testament verse by verse about how Jesus was the Messiah? No. Did he ask the crowd to all sit down and do a Bible study? No. He simply told them what Jesus had done in his life. He told them his TESTIMONY.

Today, we are going to learn how to follow Paul's pattern of how to give our testimony. If time permits, we are going to practice this with one another during our service or in the next few services. Let's look at how Paul gave his defense against the angry mob and told his testimony in the process. (Note that Paul's name was initially "Saul" but God changed his name to Paul.)

Bible Narrative - Acts 22: 1-16

Paul spoke to the people in their own Hebrew language and asked them if he could give a defense of what he had done.

He told them that he was born a Jew (like the crowd he was speaking to) and that he was raised in a place called Tarsus. He moved to Jerusalem to study under a great teacher of Jewish law called Gamaliel. Paul said that he was a very strict follower of the Jewish religion. Paul said he even had persecuted Christians, had them killed, and put in prison.

He was on the way to Damascus to persecute more Christians when something happened. On the way to Damascus at about noon, a great light from Heaven shone around him. As he fell to the ground, he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Paul answered, "Who are you, Lord?"

Jesus replied, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting."

The men who were with him were very afraid when they saw the light, but they did not hear the voice. Paul asked Him, "What shall I do, Lord?" and Jesus told him to go to Damascus and he would be told what to do. Paul said that after the light went away, the men who were with him led him into Damascus.

In Damascus a man named Ananias came to him. He was a believer who was well respected among the Jews. He said, "Brother Saul, receive your sight." He told Paul that God had chosen him to see the Lord and to hear His voice. Paul would be a witness to all men of what he had seen and heard. Ananias told him to stop waiting, go be baptized to wash away his sins, and call on the name of the Lord.

Shortly thereafter, when Paul returned to Jerusalem, he was praying in the temple when the Lord told him to get out of Jerusalem. Paul replied to the Lord that he had persecuted people in all the synagogues in the area and that he even had been there when Stephen was murdered. Jesus replied that he still was to leave because he was being sent to the Gentiles.

We can learn how to tell our testimony in three steps from this passage of Scripture.

I. First, You Describe Your Life Before Christ. – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Acts 22:1-5

Paul spoke to the people in their own Hebrew language and asked them if he could give a defense of what he had done.

He told them that he was born a Jew (like the crowd he was speaking to) and that he was raised in a place called Tarsus but moved to Jerusalem to study under a great teacher of Jewish law called Gamaliel. Paul said that he was a very strict follower of the Jewish religion. He even persecuted Christians, had them killed, and put in prison. He was on the way to Damascus to persecute more Christians when something happened.

Explanation

Paul described how he had lived before Christ came into his life. He was religious but took great confidence in his religion. He was also a persecutor and even killed people.

Application

Most people have never killed anyone. Most people have committed sins that seem to be far lesser in degree, but those sins still have equal weight before God. Most of us have committed the sins of pride, jealousy, envy, anger or lust.

Whether you have lived a very difficult, sinful life before Christ, or if you lived a seemingly moral life before Christ, you should begin your testimony with your life before you were saved. You should describe things such as sinful habits, pride, loneliness, guilt or whatever you struggled with before Christ. Maybe you need to talk about the feeling in your heart that you knew you did not know the true God. Possibly you could discuss how deep down you felt as if you weren't "right" with God. Whatever, your situation, be open and honest about your life before Christ. People need to understand the NEED to be saved in Christ before they WILL be saved.

For example, this author's testimony before Christ is as follows: (PASTOR, REMEMBER, YOU PROBABLY SHOULD USE YOUR OWN TESTIMONY, BUT YOU CAN USE MINE AS A GUIDELINE.)

I was fortunate to grow up in a Christian home. My mom and dad were both followers of Christ. I went to church all of my life. I never had a time when I committed any horrible sins. I had never killed anyone or stolen from anyone. I had never run around with wild women or drunk beer until I was drunk. I was a very moral person. However, when I was seventeen years old, I began to feel an emptiness in my heart. I felt empty inside as if my life were not fulfilled. I felt afraid of what was going to happen when I die. I could not sleep well.

Explain briefly your life before you had Christ. Notice that I did not spend more than about a minute explaining my life before Christ. You might feel like you need to spend a little longer time. However, do not spend too long. Your job is to tell your story, not PREACH a long sermon to your friend without Christ. Be open and honest.

II. Second, You Must Describe How You Gave Your Life to Christ. – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Acts 22:6-16

On the way to Damascus at about noon, a great light from Heaven shone around him. As he fell to the ground, he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Paul answered, "Who are you, Lord?"

Jesus replied, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting."

The men who were with him were very afraid when they saw the light, but they did not hear the voice. Paul asked him, "What shall I do, Lord?" and Jesus told him to go to Damascus and he would be told what to do. Paul said that after the light went away, the men who were with him led him into Damascus.

In Damascus a man named Ananias came to him. He was well respected among the Jews. He said, "Brother Saul, receive your sight." He told Paul that God had chosen him to see the Lord and to hear His voice. Paul would be a witness to all men of what he had seen and heard. Ananias told him to stop waiting, go be baptized to wash away his sins, and call on the name of the Lord.

Explanation

Paul then explained how he met Jesus. Paul's testimony is incredible. The risen Lord Jesus actually appeared to him. Paul immediately recognized who He was, called Him Lord and obeyed. Paul did not say a specific sinner's prayer, like we teach many new converts to do, but he did have a heart change for Jesus at that time.

Application

Most people have not been saved through a vision. Many Muslim brothers around the world claim to have seen a vision of Christ in order for them to be saved. However, most people

have been saved through the study of God's word, the testimony of a friend, or hearing about Him in church. When you tell your testimony, faithfully explain how you were saved. Do not be concerned if your salvation experience is not as dramatic as Paul's; just be faithful to tell how you were saved and God will use that. My advice is that during this section you also include the steps to being saved: A) Admit that you are a sinner, B) Believe in Jesus Christ, C) Commit your life to Him.

This author's testimony is as follows: (PASTOR, REMEMBER, YOU PROBABLY SHOULD USE YOUR OWN TESTIMONY, BUT YOU CAN USE MINE AS A GUIDELINE.)

When I was seventeen I began to realize that I had been putting all of my faith in being a good person and in going to a good church. Although both of those things are good, neither of those things could save me. As I was still struggling spiritually, I went to a youth meeting where a man began to preach about the Lord Jesus. He talked about how Jesus could save me. That day I confessed to God that I was a sinner even though I was "moral." I confessed that I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, I repented of my sins and I committed my life to Him. I was not in a church building (I was in a religious meeting), but that day I prayed and surrendered my life to Him.

III. Describe How Your Life Is Now with Christ – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Acts 22:17-21

Shortly thereafter, when Paul returned to Jerusalem, he was praying in the temple when the Lord told him to get out of Jerusalem. Paul replied to the Lord that he had persecuted people in all the synagogues in the area and that he even had been there when Stephen was murdered. Jesus replied that he was still to leave because he was being sent to the Gentiles.

Explanation

Although Paul did not go into great detail here, we can see the beginnings of a man who now had Christ in his life. He was in Jerusalem praying in the temple to the Lord. He recognized his sinful past and all of the people he had hurt. Finally, he was commissioned by the Lord to go and preach to the Gentiles. Paul was a changed man!

Application

After you explain how to give your life to Christ, you should explain your life with Christ now. Explain how he has made a difference both in your life now as well as in your eternal life after you die. Never forget that you can offer for the person with whom you are witnessing to have that same experience right then if you feel the Spirit leading you to do so. You might lead your friend to faith in Jesus right then! There are few greater joys in life than seeing someone come to Christ.

The author's testimony is as follows: (DO NOT FORGET THAT IT IS PROBABLY BETTER FOR THE PASTOR TO USE HIS TESTIMONY, BUT MY TESTIMONY IS USED HERE AS AN EXAMPLE.)

After I gave my life to Christ, my life changed. It did not change overnight, but it did change. As I have grown and learned more about Christ, I have felt the peace of having Him in my life. I have true peace in life. I also have assurance that if I were to die today, I would spend eternity with the Lord in Heaven. The Lord has blessed me with a good family and many friends, but the greatest decision of my life was to give my life to Jesus!

Would you be interested in giving your life to Jesus today? . . . If you say yes, I can pray with you right now and you can give your life to Him.

If you are unsure, can I take time to explain in greater detail why I gave my life to Christ?

Giving a testimony is a quick and simple way to explain Christ to your friends. It is a method of witnessing that no one can debate because this experience happened to you! Remember a few quick tips when you give your testimony.

- 1) Don't preach!!!! Just tell your story to people.
- 2) Use simple, non-religious words - People without Jesus do not understand terms like "walk the aisle" or "Jesus came into my heart." Use phrases like "made a public decision for Jesus" or "I made a decision to give my life to Jesus."
- 3) Keep it short and focused - Remember, your friends might not have too long to stand and listen. Say exactly what you need to say in the testimony and do not wander off into other subjects. You cannot bore anyone into the Kingdom!
- 4) Always give a chance for them to accept Christ when possible - There are times where it might be dangerous to give an opportunity to accept Christ. However, when possible, offer a brief moment of decision for the people. You never know what God may do! If they are not ready to give their life to Christ, but still show interest, you can take them through the Roman Road. We will learn the Roman Road in the next sermon.
- 5) Evangelize with a loving Spirit. Never evangelize someone in an angry tone. Simply tell them the truth of God's love with a loving attitude and the Spirit will guide you.

Decision

Give an opportunity for everyone to practice giving his testimony with someone else in the church. Give at least 10 minutes so each pair of people can have at least five minutes to share their testimony.

At the end of this message, give your people an opportunity to publicly commit to telling their testimony to several people next week.

Also, never forget to give an evangelistic appeal at the end of this service. After all, with so many people sharing their testimony, maybe someone will realize that he needs to be saved during the service! What a great way to send off your people to share their testimony with someone getting saved in the service.

Take a moment to retell your testimony and ask if someone would like to give his life to Christ today! If they are interested, offer to pray with them and help them give their life to the Lord. This is a great sermon to give an evangelistic appeal. Do not pass up this opportunity!

SERMON 26

Purpose of the sermon - To teach another way to evangelize lost friends using six verses from Scripture.

Bible Texts - I John 5:13, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 10:9, Romans 10:13

Introduction

A few weeks ago we learned how to tell our testimony to our friends, family and coworkers. We learned that nobody can argue with our testimony because IS an experience that happened personally to each of us. We learned how to be brief, not to preach, and never ever forget to tell our testimony in love.

However, what happens if the person that you are witnessing to wants to understand more? Maybe after your testimony your friend has become curious about giving his life to Jesus, but he needs to understand WHY Jesus can save him.

Today we are going to begin our study of six verses. In these six verses, we can make a clear explanation of the entire gospel. This is a simple plan. It also only takes about 10 minutes to share with a person. It is a wonderful next step in leading someone to Jesus.

NOTE TO PASTOR – YOU MIGHT WANT TO TELL THE PEOPLE THAT THIS WILL TAKE SEVERAL WEEKS TO LEARN. IN, FACT YOU MIGHT WANT TO TAKE SIX WEEKS AND GO OVER EACH VERSE INDIVIDUALLY. THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT CONCEPT WHICH YOU SHOULD INVEST MUCH TIME. ALSO, YOU NEED TO NOTE THAT IN YOUR COUNTRY YOU MAY NEED TO DEFINE YOUR TERMS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE WORDS “HEAVEN”, “SIN” OR “HELL” MIGHT MEAN SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO YOUR PEOPLE THAN IT DOES TO OTHERS. MAKE SURE YOU DEFINE EACH TERM BIBLICALLY WHILE YOU TRAIN YOUR PEOPLE.

If I were going to witness to a lost friend, I would begin by asking some questions. If I have already told him my testimony, I might skip these two questions. However, if I need to begin without the testimony, than I would want to begin with these questions.

If I were in a non-Christian place (in other words, where most people do not know the name of Jesus), I would ask him:

1) “What is your understanding of Creator God and who He is?”

After I listened carefully to his response, I would tell him,

2) “Did you know there is a way to know the Creator God? May I share with you how to know the eternal Creator God?”

If I were in a Christian place (a place where most people may not have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, but they have heard of Him), I would ask the lost person:

1) “If you were to die today, do you know for certain that you would spend eternity with God?”

If he said yes, he knows he would spend eternity in heaven, I would ask him . . .

2) “If you were to stand at the gates of heaven and you had to explain why you were to enter into heaven, what would you say?”

If he didn’t know how to answer, I would ask him if I could share how he can know FOR CERTAIN that he is going to Heaven.

NOTE TO PASTOR – TAKE A MOMENT AND HAVE ALL OF YOUR PEOPLE PRACTICE THIS. I KNOW IT IS NOT NORMAL TO PRACTICE CONCEPTS SUCH AS THIS DURING WORSHIP SERVICE, BUT YOUR PEOPLE WILL ENJOY THIS VERY MUCH! AFTER THIS PRACTICE YOU ARE READY TO TAKE YOUR PEOPLE THROUGH THE SIX VERSES.

Now we are going to learn step-by-step one way to present the gospel to someone. You will take the person through six verses. At each verse you will read, explain, and apply the verse to his life.

I. First Take the Person to I John 5:13.

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Explanation

There is a way that we can know God and know FOR SURE that we can have eternal life. This verse tells us that one of the purposes of the Bible is for God to tell us how we can know that we have eternal life. What is eternal life?

A. To know Jesus Christ and have peace in your heart now while you live in this life. (John 17:3)

B. To live with Jesus Christ in heaven for eternity after you die. (John 14:1-3)

Application

After you have explained eternal life to your friend you can ask him, “Would you like to have assurance of eternal life in heaven after you die?”

II. Now Take the Person to Romans 3:23.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Explanation

Even though we all want to have eternal life with God, we all also have a problem. The Bible says that we all have sin in our lives. What is sin? Sin is disobedience to God. For

example, all of us at one time or another has committed sins such as lying, greed, anger, bitterness and pride.

Application

After you read the verse, ask the person, “Have you ever sinned?” and “Do you think there are consequences to your sin?” If he thinks that he has never sinned, go back over the list of sins mentioned above and ask him if he has committed any of those sins that were listed. Almost always this will remind the person of his sin.

III. After You Have Introduced Sin, Now You Read Romans 6:23.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”

Explanation

The result of our sin is death. We are all going to die. There are two types of death.

- A. Physical death - We will all physically die because of our sins.
- B. Spiritual death- Separation from God. We are separated from God by our sin here and now. This keeps many people from having assurance of eternal life after they die and from having joy here on Earth. It also means spiritual death after we die, life without Christ for all of eternity in Hell.

Illustration

Ask the person if he has a job or if he knows someone who has a job. Ask him how often he receives a salary. Then ask him why he receives a salary. He will typically respond by saying he has worked hard and earned that money. This is a good answer. You can respond that in the same way he deserves to be paid because he has worked to earn his wage, we have EARNED DEATH because of our sins.

Application

Ask the person if he understands that he deserves death, or separation from God, because of his sins.

IV. After You Have Explained the Problem of Sin, Then Take the Person to the Solution to His Sin by Reading Romans 5:8.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Explanation

Even though we have sin in our lives, God still loves us. The Bible says He doesn't want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9) but wants everyone to come to repentance. So He has provided a way to take away our sin. There is only one way to take away our sin, and that is through the blood of Jesus Christ. (Take a moment if necessary to describe Jesus. For example, He is God in the flesh, was born of the Virgin Mary, performed many miracles, never sinned, died on the cross, was buried and three days later He rose from the grave.)

The only payment for sin is death. Jesus Christ was punished, judged and condemned to death on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins in our place. SOMEONE had to die for our sins because the penalty of sin is death. Instead of you having to die ETERNALLY and be SEPARATED FROM GOD THE FATHER, Jesus died on the cross in your place. Jesus Christ was the only sacrifice that was sufficient to take away sin. People try to get to God through different ways: being good, praying to their god, going to church or the Mosque, or praying to Mary and Buddha. However, man's own efforts and the worship of other gods cannot purify us of our sins. Only Jesus Christ can save from the penalty of sin and give eternal life with the Father.

Jesus can save because He died on the cross and three days later He rose from the dead. He is alive today and He wants to live in your heart.

Application

Ask the person, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the only Lord and Savior, the only one who can save you from your sins?

V. After You Have Described God's solution, Read Romans 10:9.

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Explanation

Tell the person that in order to receive Jesus and be saved he must do two things:

A. First, to receive Jesus he must confess Christ as his only Lord. He must abandon the sinful path he is on and turn to follow Jesus. This means to turn the control of his life over to Christ. This is repentance.

B. Second, to receive Jesus a person must believe in his heart that Christ rose from the dead and is his only Savior. This means that he has to stop putting his faith in other things like doing good things, going to church, or reincarnation, other gods, and idols, and put his trust only in Jesus.

Application

Ask the person if he is ready to confess Jesus as his only Lord and give his life to Him right now. Ask if he is ready to stop putting faith for salvation in other things and confess Christ as his only Lord. Remind your friend that this is the same decision you have made.

VI. Now You Read One Last Verse - Romans 10:13

"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Explanation

This means that any person who is ready and willing can accept Christ as Lord of his life by faith.

Application

Ask the person if he would like to give his life to Christ.

If he isn't ready, ask him what is keeping him from giving his life to Christ. Explain that the Bible says that he does not need to put off the greatest decision of his life. (2 Corinthians 6:2) No time is better than TODAY to give your life to the Lord. Then, offer again for him to accept Christ.

If he is ready, ask him to say a prayer with you. Tell him that he must mean the prayer with his heart. Then pray with him. Have him repeat after you (he may be more comfortable praying with someone than by himself):

“Lord, I am a sinner. I trust in you, Jesus, as my only Lord and Savior. I give my life to You. Come into my life and save me. Transform me and take full control of my life. Amen.”

Conclusion

Ask the person if he prayed that prayer in sincerity. Then tell him that there are several things he needs to do now that he has given his life to Christ:

- 1) Join a church of believers in Christ
- 2) Start praying every day in Jesus' name.
- 3) Read his Bible every day - start in the book of John
- 4) Start telling others the decision for Christ he has made

Decision

Ask your church to bow their heads and, in a moment of commitment, pray that they will be faithful to witness. Have them pray for several specific people that they can share their faith with using these six verses. Have them commit to sharing with one person this week.

Pastor - Never forget to offer for anyone in the crowd to give his life to Christ. The people have already heard the gospel very clearly through this message. You may want to go through your testimony again. Now ask them if they are ready to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God brought them to your church for a reason on this day; today they need to go ahead and make the commitment to follow Him. Tell them that Jesus Christ is alive today and wants to live in their hearts. Tell them to re-read Romans 10:9 and confess Christ as Lord today. It will be the greatest decision they have ever made.

SERMON 27

Purpose of the sermon - To impart a passion and a strategy for evangelism. They will learn about who to evangelize in this message.

Bible Text - Acts 13:42-52

Introduction

Over the last few weeks we have learned how to witness to our friends. Today we are going to finish our study on evangelism. We are going to learn a strategy of how to go about witnessing to others. Paul gave us an excellent example of how to witness, who to witness to, and the results that you will see if you witness.

In Chapter 13 of Acts, Paul and Barnabas have set out on their first missionary journey. God had sent them from Antioch (Syria), and they arrived in a city called Antioch in Pisidia (modern day Turkey). They had just finished preaching about Jesus and the resurrection in the Jewish synagogue when we begin our passage today.

Bible Narrative – Acts 13:42-52

So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged Paul and Barnabas to preach again the next Sabbath. When everyone had broken up from the group, many of the Jews and God-fearing converts followed Paul and Barnabas also and persuaded them to continue.

The next Sabbath almost the entire city came to hear the word of God. However, the Jews were filled with envy, debated and blasphemed, and opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and told the Jews that it was necessary to speak the word of God to them first, but since they rejected it and “judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life,” Paul and Barnabas had to turn to the Gentiles. Then they quoted the prophet Isaiah by saying, “I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.”

Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the Lord. Many of them who were appointed to eternal life believed in God. The word of the Lord spread over all of the region, but the Jews caused prominent men and women of the city to persecute Paul and Barnabas and throw them out of the region. However, Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet and went to another city called Iconium. All of the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

I. If You Tell the Gospel, You Will Have Two Responses – First Spiritual Truth

A. Some will accept the gospel.

Bible Narrative – Acts 13:42

So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged Paul and Barnabas to preach again the next Sabbath.

Explanation –

There is power in preaching the word of God (Romans 1:15-17). Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel and immediate results followed. God opened up the hearts of many that were listening.

Illustration

A seminary professor had a heart for the Russian people. A few years ago he flew over to Russia with a team of volunteers to evangelize Russians about Christ. He was in a village way out in the country. There were no churches nearby. The Lord guided him to preach the word. When he finished, an old man came up to him and begged him to please come back and preach to his village again.

Why would a little old man from Russia desire to hear the word of God from a man like this seminary professor? They were from different countries and cultures. They had very little in common. It was not the seminary professor's personality that bridged the gap between the two cultures and touched that man's heart. It was the power of the Gospel. The Gospel was preached and the man begged for more.

Application

Do you believe that if you preach, teach or evangelize there will be results? A young man asked a famous preacher named D.L. Moody why he always had salvations when he preached, while the young man was having so little results. Moody replied, "Do you think EVERYTIME you preach you will have decisions?" The young man replied, "Well, of course not!" Pastor Moody replied, "That is why you do not have the results!"

You must believe that there is power in the Word of God every time you tell the message. (See Romans 1:16-17)

B. Some will reject the gospel.

Bible Narrative – Acts 13:45

However, the Jews were filled with envy, debated and blasphemed, and opposed the things spoken by Paul.

Explanation

Unfortunately, there will always be many people that reject the word of God. This must have been very difficult for Paul. The Jews, his people, openly rejected and persecuted Paul.

Application

Do you have people you love that have rejected the Gospel? Remember that countless evangelists before you have experienced the same difficulties.

II. If You Shift Your Focus in Evangelism, You Will Have Greater Results – Second Spiritual Truth

A. Strategy 1- Be honest and fair with those who reject.

Bible Narrative – Acts 13:46

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and told the Jews that it was necessary to speak the word of God to them first, but since they rejected it and “judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life,” they had to turn to the Gentiles. Then they quoted the prophet Isaiah by saying, “I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.”

Explanation

Paul tried a strategy that we do not often employ when we evangelize. Paul was very open and honest with the people who rejected Christ. He told them that it was they who “judged themselves unworthy.” In other words, he showed them that THEY were making the choice to reject salvation. Instead of making excuses for their unbelief, he boldly told them of the wrong choice they had made.

Application

Be very careful when you evangelize people. You do not want to be offensive because you might want to get another opportunity to talk to them. However, even though we do not want to be offensive, the Gospel itself is offensive! (I Corinthians 1:18) The message of salvation in Christ alone is very offensive to people who believe that there are many ways to God or who believe there are many gods to worship.

When evangelizing, speak always in love, but be prepared, IF THE SPIRIT LEADS, to be very bold when a person openly rejects the Son. This is NOT a strategy that you should use EVERY TIME, only as the Spirit leads.

B. Be prepared to FIRST target those who are ready to accept.

Bible Narrative – Acts 13:48-49

Now when the Gentiles heard this they were glad and praised the Lord. Many of them who were appointed to eternal life believed in God. The word of the Lord spread overall the region.

Explanation

When the Jews rejected Christ, Paul focused on the Gentiles. Paul could have spent the rest of his life working just on the Jews, but instead he looked to the Gentiles. What happened when he did this? Almost the whole city came out to hear the Gospel from them! (Acts 13:44)

Application

This is a very important concept. God called Paul to the Gentiles which was his main reason to evangelize those people. However, Paul employed a very important strategy. DO NOT SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE ON THE HARDEST GROUP OF PEOPLE. FOCUS ON THOSE WHO SHOW INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL. In doing this, you will see more people

come to Christ. Instead of visiting the same lady who has rejected Christ a hundred times, go down the street to a new family who is friendly to the idea of at least LISTENING about Christ. Obviously, God will lead you and guide you to who you should witness to. Some of you WILL be called to focus on those who are very hard to the Gospel. However, most of us should spend our day looking for those who show some interest. Try to sense with whom the Spirit is working and evangelize them first. If someone is showing interest in spiritual things or in learning about God, that is the Spirit working on his heart, drawing him to Christ. (John 6:44, John 16:8). Focus on individuals, families or communities that are the most open to hear.

III. If You Are Faithful to Tell the Gospel, God Will Give You Three Fruits – Third Spiritual Truth

A. You will see a greater harvest.

Bible Narrative – Acts 13:48-49

Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the Lord. Many of them who were appointed to eternal life believed in God. The word of the Lord spread over all the region.

Explanation

All of us want to see more and more people come to Christ. Paul began to preach to the Gentiles, and the Bible says that many who were appointed to eternal life believed.

Application

Paul would not have seen this harvest if HE HAD NOT PREACHED THE WORD and if he had not been open to preach to the Gentiles. Pray for God to give you the courage to share your faith when the time is right. Paul prayed for courage. (Ephesians 6: 19-20) You may not be a preacher, but you can certainly tell the message to those around you.

B. You will experience joy.

Bible Narrative – Acts 13:52

All of the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Explanation

Not only will you see a harvest, you get to experience joy. All of us want to experience joy in our lives. There are very few joys greater than seeing a loved one come to Christ. Wouldn't it be wonderful for God to use you to lead a loved one to saving faith in Him?

C. You will experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Bible Narrative – Acts 13:52

All of the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Explanation

Not only did the disciples experience joy, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Obedience to God's calling is almost always a key ingredient to being filled with His Spirit.

Decision

Every person here has someone he knows and loves who is without Christ. Wouldn't you like to see him come to Christ today? Follow the pattern that Paul set out:

- A. Be bold to speak the truth when appropriate and believe that God will give His results.
- B. Be honest, in love, with those who reject.
- C. Focus your evangelism on those who are open FIRST.

Follow this advice, and then we will see what kind of harvest God gives you.

Maybe you are here and you would like to accept Christ. You are one of those people who is not only open but ready to accept the Lord. Maybe you have not been open in the past, but you are ready today. Come to Christ. Repent of your sins. Experience the joy of being saved in Him. Won't you pray a prayer right now with me and give your life to Christ? If you don't know how to pray, let us show you how . . .

SERMON 28

Purpose of the sermon – To teach your church who is Jesus Christ.

Bible Text – John 13 and 14 but the key verse is John 14:6

Introduction

In this next sermon series, we will be looking at one of the greatest sermons that has ever been preached. During this sermon Christ talked to his followers on a plateau in a mountain. He began to tell them many truths about how to live. Through this sermon, He also showed men how it is impossible to be “good enough” by one’s own efforts to be righteous before God. There is only one way to be righteous before God—that way is through Jesus Christ.

Who is this man called Jesus? Why did he have the right to preach to thousands upon thousands of people in His ministry? Why would billions of people follow Him today?

Before we begin studying Jesus’ sermon on the mountain, today we will look at three passages of Scripture from the book of John. We will look at how Jesus is described in these chapters. The Bible used three simple words to describe Him—way, truth and life.

I. He Is the Way – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – John 13-14

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus was sitting with all of his disciples in a room having a meal. He took some of his outer clothing and began to wash his disciples’ feet.

Although His disciples refused, Jesus continued until he was finished. After this Jesus began to describe how Judas was to betray Him as well as how Peter would deny Him.

Then He told His disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust God, trust also in me.” He told His disciples that He was going to the Father’s house to prepare a place for them. He would come back and take them to be with Him later.

Thomas then asked, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus replied, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me.”

Explanation- Jesus’ earthly ministry was drawing to a close. It was the time of the Passover Feast. He was beginning to remind his disciples of truths that he had already taught them, and also further teach them truths about himself. The disciples had followed Him for several years, and he began to warn them of the trials that were coming. He warned them of trials that would come as well as failures that would occur. He assured them that even though he would go away, He would prepare a place for them in heaven. Thomas, like all men, certainly wanted to go to heaven, but more importantly, He wanted to follow His Lord. How would he know the way?

Illustration

Have you ever been lost? There is a story about a man who was lost in the Amazon jungle of Brazil. He became very afraid because he did not know how to find his way through the dense jungle. Soon, he found an Indian. The man turned to the Indian and said, “Do you know the way out of the jungle?” The Indian looked at him, thought for a moment, and then said, “I am the way.”

Explanation

Thomas asked a very honest question. He could not see the future, and he certainly couldn't see where Jesus was going. He confessed that he couldn't know the way. Jesus replied that HE is the way. In the same way that the only way out of the jungle was through a PERSON, Jesus was telling Thomas that He is the ONLY WAY to salvation. There is no other way. The way to freedom and salvation was not through doing good works, other gods, or lots of money, but through Jesus.

Application

It is easy to believe there are many ways to God. Most people want as many chances to get to God as possible! The problem is that the idea of many ways to God is simply not true. There is only ONE Creator God and He has provided only ONE way to know Him. That way is not by following a book, idol, or religious cult; it is by meeting a person—Jesus Christ.

Are you struggling to find your way in life? Maybe you are a young person and you haven't yet figured out what you are supposed to do in life. Maybe you are older and you have come to realize that life just isn't as satisfying as you thought. Perhaps you are wondering how truly to find God in life. Jesus proclaimed that there is no other path to God; the only WAY to God is through Christ.

II. He Is the Truth – Second Spiritual Truth

Jesus also claimed that He is the Truth in John 14:6. What does He mean by the TRUTH? In today's day and age, it is hard to define truth.

In John 18: 33-38 we see a story about truth from Scripture.

Bible Narrative – John 18:33-38

Jesus was on trial to be crucified. He was being led to the Roman governor named Pilate. Pilate went back into the palace and summoned Jesus. Pilate asked Jesus if He was the king of the Jews. Jesus told him that His kingdom was not of this world.

Pilate asked Jesus again if He was a king. Jesus then answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

Pilate responded, “What is truth?”

Explanation

Pilate asked a profound question in Scripture—“What is truth?” Pilate had reached the peak of power in the area of Judea. He was the Roman Governor of the land. Men were foolish to disobey him. In his position, he held the authority of the Roman Empire. He had power, and

with that power generally came wealth. This was a man who had everything. However, he was missing one thing in life. He had no idea what real TRUTH was. When Jesus claimed that He taught the truth, Pilate immediately questioned the idea of being able to know what “truth” is.

Application

Perhaps you have been taught all of your life that there is no absolute truth. For example, when I went to university there were professors and books that taught there was no such thing as absolute truth. You may have been taught that we cannot truly know anything. Perhaps you have been taught that nothing is truly real. You may have striven all of your life to find what the truth truly is.

A young Palestinian man in Israel once picked me up in his cab. We began to talk about many things. He finally told me that he had lived in Jerusalem all of his life. The Jews talked about their religion, as did the Muslims and Christians. He admitted that he did not know what to believe. He had no idea what the TRUTH actually was.

Jesus tells us the answer to our problem about knowing truth. He not only teaches the truth, but He IS THE TRUTH. Truth is Christ. It is possible to know absolute truth in this world. However, it is only possible to know truth through Christ. Christ is the answer to your struggle for truth. He longs to reveal Himself to you.

III. He Is Life – Third Spiritual Truth

Introduction

Christ also claimed that He was life. What did He mean by that?

Bible Narrative – John 6:1-35

Jesus had just fed 5,000 men from five loaves of bread and two fish. The next day a crowd was waiting for Jesus. Jesus told them that they were looking for Him not because of the miracles they had seen but because they had been fed by Him. He told them not to work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life. He said the Son of Man would give them this food.

The people asked what they must do. Jesus answered that they only had to believe on the one whom God had sent. The people then asked Christ to perform a miraculous sign such as the one Moses did when he had manna (or bread) rain down from Heaven. (God had sent bread from Heaven to sustain the Israelites on their journey through the desert.) Jesus then replied that it was His Father that gives true bread of Heaven. The people asked for this bread, and Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life.”

Explanation

Bread is so good when it leaves the oven. It is so fresh and tasty. However, over time it becomes hard. After a while, bread can get moldy and is not worth eating. Bread does not last. Jesus, however, called himself, “the bread of life.” In other words, Jesus will provide life that will last for all eternity for whoever invites Him into their hearts. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have ETERNAL LIFE.”

When Jesus called himself “life,” He was not saying that He teaches how to have a good life. He is not just a moral man and a good teacher. He IS LIFE. The only way to have a true life is in Him. There is no other way to find the Way, the Truth, or the Life, but in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Jesus used the illustration of bread. Bread is good, but it does not last. The gift of life that Christ wants to give you will never cease. Once you have Christ in your life, you have Christ forever. He will never fade, spoil or go away. He will guide you, protect you and bless you for eternity.

Decision

Would you like to give your life to Christ as Lord and Savior? Would you like to know the Way to abundant life? Would you like to find truth in a world without truth? Would you like to have eternal life? The Bible says that you must do three things. First of all, you must recognize that you NEED Christ, that you and I are sinners and that we all need a Savior. Secondly you must recognize that only Jesus Christ can save you. No one else, nothing else—no church, temple, priest, voodoo, magic, idol or god can save you, only Jesus Christ. Remember, Christ said, NO MAN COMES TO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME.” (John 14:6) Finally, you must repent of your sins and give your life to Jesus as your Lord. Won’t you do that today? If you’d like to give your life to Jesus as Lord, I can pray with you right now and help you pray and give your life to Christ. If you’d like, let’s pray . . .

SERMONS 29 and 30

NOTE TO PASTOR – DUE TO THE LENGTH OF THIS TEXT, THIS INFORMATION SHOULD BE PREACHED FOR AT LEAST TWO WEEKS (POSSIBLY MORE). THIS IS ONE OF THE RICHEST PASSAGES IN ALL OF SCRIPTURE. IT IS THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT. THE PURPOSE OF TODAY'S MESSAGE IS TO DETERMINE IF YOUR MEMBERS ARE GROWING IN CHRIST AND/OR IF THEY HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN SAVED.

Purpose of the sermons - To instruct the individual church member in how to self-evaluate one's salvation and determine if he is growing in Christ.

Bible Text - Matthew 5:1-10

Introduction

This is one of the most famous and most beautiful passages in the entire Bible. These verses begin what Christians for centuries have called Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount". Let us examine the setting for this sermon.

Jesus' ministry had recently begun. He had called His first disciples and had begun to minister throughout Galilee. He had already taught, preached and healed many people. The Bible says His fame had spread throughout Syria. People from all the surrounding areas came to Him. One day, Christ preached on a level surface on a mountainside to the people who were following Him. The beginning of the sermon that He preached, the Sermon on the Mount, is what we will study today.

In today's section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus lists many groups of people. From this list, we see that if we really want to follow God, we must do the OPPOSITE of what the world thinks we should do. The world teaches that if we are strong and do what we want, we will "inherit the earth." Jesus, however, teaches that the MEEK will inherit the earth. The world tells us to push for what we want and try to be victorious. Christ teaches us to be PEACEMAKERS in order to please God.

Many of us here today are striving to follow the Lord. Some have made a commitment to Christ, others are still thinking about it. In these ten verses, we can see Christ describing people who are blessed in the Lord. Let us study these verses. Do they describe you? Do they describe you *in the Lord*? One can tell if someone is truly saved and/or truly growing in his relationship with the Lord if he is described in these ten verses. If these verses don't describe you, then maybe you need to evaluate your salvation and/or growth in Christ.

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:1-10

Jesus saw the multitudes of people. He went up on a mountain and sat down to each to teach His disciples who had come to Him. He opened his mouth and said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”*

I. Are You Broken Over Sin? – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:3-4

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.
 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

Explanation

Jesus described a person who is “poor in spirit.” Who is this person? A man who is “poor in spirit” is aware of his spiritual bankruptcy. What does spiritual bankruptcy mean? In today’s world, when a person is bankrupt, he has reached a point that he has no money left. He has nothing to offer the world financially. Typically, this person is embarrassed because he has tried hard on his own power to make money, but he has fallen short. Now, he has no money left and his debts to others are too great to be repaid. Christ is describing a person who has SPIRITUALLY reached that point of bankruptcy. In other words, this person recognizes that his debt to God from his sin cannot be overcome without help. The Kingdom of Heaven is for those who are aware of their sin and are willing to turn to God for salvation from their sin.

Once a person reaches the point where he is aware that he is a sinner, naturally he begins to MOURN over his sin. Christ is teaching the listeners that in Him instead of mourning over their sin, they will be comforted.

How can we turn to Christ to receive that comfort? Christ began His ministry by preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17) In other words, from the very beginning Christ stressed that we must repent of our sins. Repentance is simply turning AWAY from our sins and TOWARD God. It is when we tell God, “I know that I am sinning, and I want to give these sins over to You.”

Illustration

There was once a Christian man who saved up all of his money and bought a computer. It was very expensive and he loved his computer. He was going to use it for a new job. He told his family not to eat or drink near the computer. A few days after he had brought the computer home, his teenage daughter spilled a drink on it and ruined the computer. She was devastated. She knew what she had done was bad. She mourned over her disobedient behavior.

In the same way, when we sin, a Christian feels horrible. He recognizes how he has hurt his Father. He recognizes his disobedient behavior as destructive and He mourns the sin.

The father of this little girl loved his computer, but he loves his daughter infinitely more. Although it hurt to lose a computer, he did not hurt his daughter. By grace, he consoled his daughter in his arms.

Application

Maybe you are here today and you have never truly repented of your sins. You have never told the Lord, “I can’t do this on my own! I need you to come into my life because I cannot stop my sin. For example, I cannot stop lying, being prideful or committing adultery.” What sins are you struggling with today? Christ can help you overcome whatever sins you face, but you must repent of your sins and give your life over to Him.

If you have already repented of your sins and given your life to Jesus, remember that you are **STILL** a sinner. The only difference is that you are a sinner who is **ALREADY** forgiven. However, you who have Christ, are you broken over your sin? Are you grieved when you do something to hurt the Lord? Do you still **MOURN** over disobedience to your Father?

Paul called himself the chief of sinners (I Timothy 1:15). Even though he devoutly followed the Lord, he was still broken over his sin. We can tell if we are growing in the Lord, after giving our lives to Christ, if we are broken and aware of our sins even today. That brokenness should not bring emotional depression, but it should produce a desire for us to be repentant daily before God. (2 Corinthians 7:10) As repentance occurs in Christ, we can **GROW** in Him.

Are you broken over your sin? Are you saddened over habitual sins? If you are not broken over your sin, maybe you need to evaluate your spiritual growth in Christ.

II. Are You Growing in Self Control, Righteousness and Mercy? – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Matthew 5:5-7

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Explanation and Illustrations

Jesus listed three types of people who will be blessed. We can learn three truths from these types of people and apply them in our life.

A. *The meek* – “Meek” is often confused with the word “weak.” However, “meek” does not mean a weak person in this verse. “Meek” in this verse means someone who has **self control**. Jesus said that those who have self control will inherit the Earth.

Have you ever noticed that those people that control their fleshly desires seem to get farther ahead in life? Those people that control their desire for extra sleep by getting up and going to work do better at their jobs. Those that control their desire to drink or smoke spend less money on cigarettes and beer. Those men that stay with only their wife do not spend money on or catch diseases from prostitutes? If you have self control, you will live a happier, wealthier life.

B. *Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness* – Typically, people are controlled by their hunger for food and their thirst for liquid. We work to feed our bellies and quench our thirst.

Jesus said that those who have their **PRIORITIES** correct will be blessed. In other words, instead of desiring things that will meet our needs today, we should desire

RIGHTEOUSNESS in the Lord. It is not wrong to think about providing food for your family, but God wants us to **DWELL** on Him and have our principle desire be on Him. He will provide the rest. (Matthew 6:32-33)

Illustration

I knew an old widowed lady who was very poor. She was so poor she often had no food. One day she woke up to an empty pantry. She had no food for breakfast. Usually on such a day she would grumble and go out begging. Today she decided to sit down and praise the Lord for a long life and for her newfound salvation in Christ. It had only been a short while since she became a believer.

After her prayer time, she picked up her broom to sweep her kitchen and front steps. When she opened the door to the front step she found a basket of food! She was shocked. She didn't know who had brought the food, but she knew it was from the Lord. She told me that day that she learned that God was her Provider.

C. The merciful- People who are merciful show concern for the needs of others. Our hearts tell us to meet our own needs first. However, Christ tells us that those who put the needs of others less fortunate first will be blessed. How many people around you are hurting? How many are poor? How many have suffered a loss? How many around you are physically handicapped? Jesus said that those who are merciful to them will also receive mercy from the Lord.

Application

If you have given your life to the Lord, you should be growing in the Lord now. We saw in verses 3 and 4 that an indication that Christ is in our lives is that we are growing in the Lord now. We should be broken over our sin. In verses 5-7 we saw how you should be growing in your service for the Lord. For example, we should serve the Lord in our self control, our priorities, and in our mercy to others. Jesus said that you can know a disciple by his fruit (John 15:8). Would others be able to see these fruits of Godly service in your life?

Decision

Do these verses describe you? Are you growing in the Lord? If you are now aware that your growth in Christ has stopped, wouldn't you like to remedy that today? Pray and ask God to help you grow in Him again.

Can you tell by these verses that you may not even be saved? We will be going through some more verses studying how we can evaluate if we are saved in the next sermon. However, if you can already tell that you haven't given your life to the Lord, why don't you make the decision to come to Him today?

If you'd you like to give your life to the Lord, let us show you how . . .

PASTOR, THAT IS THE END OF THE FIRST PART OF THIS SERMON. IN THE NEXT SERMON, YOU MAY WANT TO BRIEFLY REVIEW THE FIRST TWO POINTS, AND

THEN CONTINUE WITH THE OTHER THREE WAYS WE CAN EVALUATE OUR WALK WITH CHRIST.

III. Do You Desire to Be Holy? – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Explanation

Jesus said that those who are pure in heart will see God. After our deaths, we will see the Father for all eternity (Revelation 21-22). However, when Christ talks about seeing God here, He is also discussing not only seeing Him for all eternity, but SEEING and KNOWING Him now.

Illustration

Peter said, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (I Peter 1:15) Holiness means to be set apart. In other words, now that we are in Christ, we should be set apart from the things of this world. We should have not want to be around pleasures that are sinful in this world.

We should not only be set apart from the world, but we also should draw closer to Him. The closer we are to the Father, the more we will SEE Him as He truly is. Those believers in Christ that are pure in heart because they have separated themselves from sinful pleasures of the world, can know (see) God in a more intimate way. The believers that continually compromise with sinful pleasures in both their heart and mind won’t enjoy the same fellowship as more mature believers that strive for purity of heart.

When your mind is relaxed, what do you think about? Do you think about the soccer game, going hunting, or eating good food? It is not wrong to think on any of those things some of the time. However, do you also think about the Lord? Do you long to be near Him in your actions and in your thoughts?

On the other hand, is your mind filled with thoughts of anger, bitterness or jealousy toward someone who has wronged you? Is it filled with the desire to look at pornography? We live in a world that is not pure. Pornography is more and more available. In the big cities we are around people that make money tempting us to live impure lives.

We must live pure lives not only in what we do, but in our minds and in our hearts. Do you find yourself NEVER thinking about God or constantly thinking about things that dishonor yourself, your family and your God? These are signs that you are not striving to be holy.

Application

We can feel the times in our lives when we are truly walking in holiness. When we have committed our bodies, our eyes and our minds to acting and thinking on the Lord, we are closer to Him. Do you feel yourself walking in Holiness? Do you feel yourself fleeing from temptation now more than ever before? This is a sign that you are growing in the Lord. The Bible teaches that when our hearts are pure, we have the opportunity to know God the Father better- what a special privilege!

IV. Do You Love Your Neighbor? – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Explanation

Jesus tells His followers that those people who strive for peace will be called Sons of God. In other words, they will be His children if they truly try to create peace where there is much conflict.

Illustration

All over the world today there are terrible wars occurring - in Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, the Gaza Strip.

People within the same country do not get along. The Kazakhs and Russians; Japanese and Koreans; factions in Angola and Mozambique; British and Irish; Arabs and Americans, all are examples of peoples who have had tension now or in the past.

Battles do not only occur between countries and peoples but also between individuals. It is so hard to love many of those around us because sometimes they can be so unlovable. Murder, rape, kidnapping, gang warfare all occurs between individuals in major cities in the world.

Sometimes problems are not as serious as murder, but they can still make life difficult to be a peacemaker. Driving in our car on a busy street is often a perfect example of living in an unlovable world. How many times do people honk, curse and yell at you while you are driving down the road? People are just trying to get from one part of town to another to do business, and along the way people seem so angry. It is sometimes so difficult to love people who act so mean!

Application

It is not natural for us to love our neighbor first. Unfortunately, it is in our heart's desire to love ourselves first. Jesus, however, commanded us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39). Do you find yourself growing in your love for those around you? If so, this is a sign that you are growing in your relationship with God. If not, then you need to examine your relationship with Him now.

V. Do Others Around You Know That You Are a Believer? – Fifth Spiritual Truth (and are you persecuted for it?)

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:10

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Explanation

Jesus said that those who are persecuted for Him will receive a great reward—the kingdom of Heaven. Although I would not encourage you to desire persecution, persecution is a sign that you are serving the Lord. Jesus assured us that we would face trouble in this world (Matthew 6:34), but that we should rejoice when we face persecution (Matthew 5:11-12). You are in good company when you are persecuted. After all, the prophets, disciples and Christ were all persecuted as well!

If no one knows that you are a believer, how effective a believer are you? Are you committing acts that would show the world that you are a believer, even if that means you must be persecuted for them? In my country, it is rare for someone to be attacked for his faith (although it happens sometimes). However, to discuss your faith is considered “offensive” to many people. Many believers feel that it is better to keep their beliefs to themselves and not offend people by sharing their faith. In that way, they avoid a lot of problems in their walk with Christ. However, these people misunderstand part of their walk with Christ. Jesus Himself told us to expect persecution. Following Christ involves persecution to some degree.

However, there are some that have a much different situation. I met a teenage girl who became a believer when she went to a Christian church with a friend. She came home and told her mother. Her mother hit her and told her she would prefer that her daughter become a prostitute before she became a Christian. The girl was barely fourteen years old, but she was persecuted by her own mother.

Application

There are two ways to apply Matthew 5:10. The first way is to recognize in our hearts that God sees our suffering and persecution. You are not alone in your persecution. Remember, Christ Himself was persecuted!

The second way to apply this verse is to accept the risk of persecution and speak out for your faith. You can say, “I have given my life to Jesus, and He teaches us to share with others.” Will some people get offended . . . maybe so. You might face persecution; however, you will also get the chance with many people to show them who Christ is in your life.

If no one knows you are a believer and no one has ever been offended by your faith, then probably you are not growing in the Lord as you should be. There are some situations when you **MUST** keep your faith silent for a long time. However, many times we should open ourselves up, with wisdom, to people. Let them know that you are a believer, and you will be **BLESSED!**

Decision

In the crowd today there may be three types of people.

1) Maybe you are here and you already have given your life to the Lord, but you have realized that you are **NOT** growing in Him. You are not broken over sin, growing in Godly service (self-control, righteousness and mercy), desiring to be holy, loving your neighbor, or showing the world you are a believer. Today you desire to grow in Him. You can do that right now. Ask God to forgive you where you have fallen short and help you start to grow in Him. Tell Him that you want to be broken over your sin. Ask Him to show you how to love your neighbor. Ask Him to help you with your thoughts so that you can be holy. Ask Him to help you show the world you are a believer and can withstand the persecution that comes.

2) Maybe you are here today, and you realize that even though you thought you were saved, you actually truly aren't. You have never truly been broken over sin or served God. You have no desire to be holy or show the world you are a believer. Today is the day you can give your life to Christ. Do not delay, genuinely give your life to Christ today.

3) Maybe you are visiting here today and you have listened to all five of these questions. You already knew that you have never given your life to the Lord. However, today you may have begun to be broken over your sins. You may have finally realized that your sins are serious before the Lord. This makes you so sad. Today you want to make your relationship right with Him. You can do that right now. All you must do is pray to Him with sincerity and say, "Lord, I know I'm a sinner. I want to repent of my sins and make you Lord of my life. Save me today, Lord Jesus, because I know only You can save me. In Jesus' name I pray."

Are you one of these three types of people? Make your decision for Christ today. Today you can get saved truly for the first time in your life whether you are a visitor or a long time member. If you are already saved, make a decision to rededicate your life to Christ so that you can start to grow in Him.

SERMON 31

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your people how to control anger.

Bible Text - Matthew 5:21-26

Sermon -

Introduction

Jesus has recently begun His ministry. He has called some of His disciples, and His fame has begun to spread all over the region. Many, many people are now following Him. He has just begun his famous sermon that we call the “Sermon on the Mount.” In this part of the sermon, Jesus begins to talk about anger. Let us see what we can learn from the Lord today in this part of His sermon.

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:21-26

Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said of old, You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of judgment.” However, Christ said that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment. Whoever calls his brother a name such as, “You Fool,” will be in danger of judgment and hell fire.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and remember that your brother is angry toward you, leave your gift there at the altar and go. First, make things right with your brother, then come back and offer your gift.

Agree with your enemies quickly, even during the dispute, instead of allowing your adversary to hand you over to the judge and throw you into prison. If that happens, you certainly will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

In this passage, Christ talks about how man views anger, how God views anger, and how to avoid problems with anger. Do you struggle with anger? Maybe you have never murdered anyone, but have you actually harbored anger toward someone in your heart? Let us learn today how to control our anger and how to fix the situation when we have already let anger control us.

II. How We View Anger – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:21

Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said of old, You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of judgment.”

Explanation

Jesus was quoting the Old Testament (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). The Bible tells us not to murder people. Murder IS sin. Murder is a very visible act of anger. Often times our anger brings about very dramatic results such as murder.

Illustration

Genesis 4 is a good illustration of a horrible result of anger.

Two of Adam and Eve's children were named Cain and Abel. Cain was the older and Abel was the younger. Abel kept the sheep and Cain was a farmer. It was time to give offerings to the Lord. Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel brought the firstborn of his flock of sheep. God respected Abel's offering but did not respect Cain's. Cain was very angry and his countenance fell. The Lord asked Cain why he was angry because if he would do well (give the proper sacrifice), he would be accepted.

Then God warned him that if he did not do well, "Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

Cain talked with Abel and, while they were in the field, Cain killed his brother.

Application

The first sins recorded in Scripture after Adam and Eve are the sins of Cain. Cain sinned against God by not giving Him his best sacrifice. Then he sinned further by killing his brother. He committed murder!

Maybe you are here today and already have committed the sin of actually murdering someone. You can find forgiveness for that sin in Christ. If you give your life to Christ, He will forgive you. God showed grace to Cain (Genesis 4:15); God will show grace to you if you are truly repentant.

Most people have never killed anyone. In fact, most people think that only those that actually steal, kill or rape are bad people. They assume if they haven't done those BIG sins, then they are okay with God. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard someone tell me, "I'm a pretty good person. After all, I've never killed anyone or anything terrible like that!" They view sin as doing something wrong externally, but Christ sees much more than just the outside sins. Christ is great enough to see through our outward sins and see our hearts' desires. He does not want us to murder anyone, but Christ is even more concerned with the root of murder—anger in our hearts.

II. God Views Anger in Our Hearts – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:22

However, Christ said that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment. Whoever calls his brother a name such as "You Fool," will be in danger of judgment and hell fire.

Explanation

The world thinks we are doing well if we just avoid acting on our anger. If we do not kill someone or do not hit someone with our fists, the world views us as controlling our anger. However, Christ sees anger as something in our heart. It is an attitude in our heart that affects EVERYTHING in our lives. Anger can cause us to act foolish with others, ourselves, and the Lord.

Illustration- Luke 9:51-55

Christ and His disciples had set their faces to go to Jerusalem. On their way, they went through a village of Samaritans. However, the Samaritans did not receive Him. James and John saw this and asked the Lord if they could call down fire from Heaven to consume the people, just as Elijah had done (in the Old Testament).

Jesus turned to them and rebuked them.

Application

James and John were nicknamed “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17) by Jesus. Why? Here is a perfect example of two men who let anger momentarily control them. James and John wanted to be able to send fire from Heaven to kill all of those people just because they hadn’t treated Christ as they should have. Christ had been preaching a message of love, repentance and forgiveness. Christ was on His way to the cross to die for the sins of the world, including the sins of James and John, yet these two disciples wanted to seek revenge on a group of people that had mistreated them. Were James and John showing love and forgiveness?

Jesus said in Matthew that whoever is angry at his brother, without a cause, and even calls him a name is in danger of judgment. Are you angry in your heart at someone today? Why?

- Maybe you are angry because someone has wronged you. Maybe you are angry WITH CAUSE. Many people have been physically or sexually abused. Many people have been robbed or hurt by someone else. Many people have lost loved ones because of the sins of others. All of these people are angry WITH CAUSE. There is such a thing as righteous anger. Christ was righteously angry in the Temple in Jerusalem as He saw people dishonoring the Temple and preventing Gentiles from worshiping there (John 2:13-25). Becoming angry at sin or oppression against others is an example of righteous anger. HOWEVER, even such anger is dangerous. The Bible teaches to release our anger to the Lord. He is the Judge. It is okay to let go of the anger, and let God take care of us.
- Maybe you think that you are angry WITH CAUSE but the truth of the matter you are simply ANGRY. We can make ourselves believe that we have a just reason to be angry when we really don’t. For example, maybe you are angry for a much lesser reason. Maybe you are jealous of a person’s position or power. Maybe you are offended because someone didn’t speak to you or give you the honor you deserved. Maybe you are upset at a parent for not giving you all that you hoped for in life. Paul tells us to get rid of anger (Colossians 3:8).

BE CAREFUL as you try to decide whether you have righteous anger. A wise man named Ben Franklin once said, “Anger is never without a reason, but seldom a good one.” Often times, as humans, we have a difficult time seeing clearly whether our anger is righteous or not. Anger, typically no matter what type, brings illogical decisions, bitterness, frustration, and broken relationships.

I have thought back in my life at how many times I have been happy that I was angry at someone. I’ve tried to decide whether my anger was actually productive and good, or whether it

actually hurt me and others in the long run. In the end, I cannot think of one time in my life that my anger, especially my visible anger, was good for me and for others.

It is interesting to note that Christ gives us a remedy for anger in the last part of this chapter. Whatever may be the source of our anger, there is still a cure to anger in our lives.

III. The Cure for Our Anger – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:23-26

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and remember that your brother is angry toward you, leave your gift there at the altar and go. First, make things right with your brother, then come back and offer your gift.

Agree with your enemies quickly, even during the dispute, instead of allowing your adversary to hand you over to the judge and throw you into prison. If that happens, you certainly will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Explanation

Anger is not always caused by a problem between two people, but it USUALLY is. If you are preparing to be with the Lord in worship and remember that you have a friend, relative or stranger that is angry toward you, stop what you are doing and go make the situation right with your friend. If you are already in a dispute with him, find a way to agree with him and settle the problem as quickly as possible. We should observe that there are three things that we should do to start getting right with people and find the cure for our anger.

- A. *Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar* - If you want to start getting right with people, be right with the Lord. Be in constant communication with Him. Seek to be with Him in worship. It is amazing what God will call to your mind when you are preparing to worship Him. It is also amazing to notice how difficult it is to remain angry with someone when you are in prayer for him.
- B. *and remember that your brother is angry toward you, leave your gift there at the altar and go* - If you want to start getting right with people, obey immediately. We as humans can talk ourselves out of almost anything. We can tell ourselves that we really shouldn't make things right with others because **THEY WERE WRONG IN THE FIRST PLACE!** My father-in-law once told me that in 20 years of ministry in the city where he lived, he had someone actually apologize and admit to him that he was wrong one time! People can always convince themselves that they are in the right. So, if the Spirit helps you recall a situation where someone is angry with you, obey immediately. If you don't obey immediately, you might give yourself time to talk yourself out of remedying the situation.
- C. *First, make things right with your brother, then come back and offer your gift.* Take time to make things right with your brother; then come back and worship the Lord. It may be difficult to come to a friend and seek to make things right. Be prepared to ask **THE SPIRIT** to forgive you of your sin, fill you with His power and guide you as you

remedy the situation. Ask Him to take control of the situation and help you be the bigger person.

- D. *Agree with your enemies quickly, even during the dispute, instead of allowing your adversary to hand you over to the judge and throw you into prison. If that happens, you certainly will not get out until you have paid the last penny.* Sometimes it may be necessary to ask the Lord to help you apologize to a person that you are fighting and you may not feel that you have nothing to apologize for. For example, the other person may have started the dispute or they acted far worse than you in their behavior. In the last part of this passage, Christ teaches that it is better to be reconciled with your brother than be thrown into court. It is obvious that in this passage, Christ is assuming that the fight has already begun between two people. Christ teaches us that even if the fight has already begun, it is better to swallow your pride and reconcile with your brother before things get much worse. For example, there have been MANY, MANY times when both my wife and I have felt that the other person was at fault when we have had a fight. However, sometimes the only solution in a dispute is just to humble yourself and apologize to your mate (Matthew 5:8). Sometimes she apologizes first, sometimes I do. The Bible tells us that we should strive for peace (Romans 12:18). Sometimes peace only can come when we examine ourselves and realize that in a fight between two people, we are at fault as well.

Decision

Maybe you are here today and you are struggling with anger toward someone, toward yourself, or toward God. Today is the day that you can see relief from your anger. Follow Christ's simple pattern. Be in worship of God. Be in prayer for others. If someone is angry at you, go immediately and try to fix things with your friend. He may or may not forgive you, but you will have obeyed Christ. Then you have taken the first step in not being controlled by your anger.

There is much, much more to say about anger. We have only begun to look at this topic, but today if you have anger in your heart, ask Christ to help you recall why you are angry and ask Him to help you fix the situation with whomever you are angry.

If you are here today and have never given control of your life to Christ, then controlling your anger will be very difficult. You might be able to cover up your anger so the world can't see it, but often the anger will still simmer in your heart. Christ wants to come into your life today, take control, and help you be FREE of the sins in your life. Won't you give your life to Christ today? There is no other god that can help you control your anger. There is no other person or guru that can truly help you. Allow Christ to come into your life, pray with sincerity in your heart asking Him to take control, and you will be amazed at what He can do with your hidden anger, pride, lust, shame, or whatever sin you cannot control.

Let's pray and ask Him to save you today, "Dear Jesus. . .

SERMON 32

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your church the dangers of lust and how to overcome lust in their lives.

Bible Text - Matthew 5:27-30

Sermon –

Introduction

No sin seems to have power over people like lust. Lust has caused kings, presidents and powerful businessmen to fall from their positions of authority. Lust has caused millions of marriages to fail throughout the world. Lust has caused the impregnation of unmarried single girls, attacks on innocent children, and the spread of diseases among people on every continent and in every country in the world. No man or woman is completely safe from its effects.

The Lord put in our bodies the natural desire to reproduce sexually. In fact, reproduction in itself is not wrong. God told Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it . . .” (Genesis 1:28) God wants us to reproduce.

God also wants man and woman, in the context of marriage, to have sexual relations. Again in Genesis 2:24 the Bible says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” When husband and wife come together sexually, in a sense, they become one flesh. In like manner, God’s desire for husband and wife to become one flesh is ultimately fulfilled through the birth of their children. Both the man and woman’s flesh is present in the lives of their children.

How can something as beautiful as sex become a powerful tool of man’s flesh? How can the God given gift of sex in the context of marriage become destructive lust? How can we, as men and women, combat lust in our life?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins to give His listeners a true view of the difference between man’s view of avoiding lust and God’s view. Then He gives us a beginning remedy of how to cure the problem of lust in our lives.

Bible Narrative - Matthew 5:27-30

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”

I. Man's View of Adultery – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Matthew 5:27

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’”

Explanation

One of the most famous passages from all of Scripture is found in Exodus 20—“The Ten Commandments”. God gave the Israelites basic rules to live their lives as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. These rules would not save them from their sins, but the rules did guide them to a more holy life. The seventh commandment was not to commit adultery. This teaches us that sex is to occur only within the context of marriage.

Illustration

Sexual sin outside of marriage always destroys. Around the world, one of the most popular presidents of the United States was President Bill Clinton. Good looking, tall, very intelligent, and an eloquent speaker, he put most people in awe of his talent. During his tenure as president, the United States had very few military conflicts and the economy was doing wonderfully. In fact, everything seemed to be working perfectly for Bill Clinton.

That is until one day when he began a brief affair with a young lady who worked in his office. Although he had done many good things as President, the SHAME that he brought on the office of the president as well as to his WIFE was devastating. President Clinton's popularity was seriously hurt, and the problems between him and his wife were evident for the entire world to see.

Application

The most obvious example of lust is adultery. Everyone can readily see that sex outside of marriage always harms everyone. The mother, father, children and other adulterous partner always seems to be hurt by the act. The Bible is very clear—do not commit adultery! However, “adultery” is not only sex outside of marriage.

II. God's View of Adultery – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:28

“But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Explanation

Even though man can think that the actual adulterous act defines sinful lust, in the eyes of God adultery actually is so much more. God tells us that not only the act of adultery is sin, but even LOOKING at another woman TO LUST is considered sexual sin.

Illustration

A young couple in Brazil had been married for a few years. The husband was a vibrant, intelligent man with a very good job. The wife was equally intelligent with a very outgoing personality. They seemed like a good match.

Recently they got a divorce because of adultery. The young woman was devastated because she still dearly loved the man. The young man told her that he was completely addicted to internet pornography. He had even talked with women on-line in a sexual way. His addiction had become such a problem that he had lost his love for his wife.

While this man had never actually “touched” another woman, he had committed adultery in his heart. Jesus warned us about sexual sin. It is FAR, FAR MORE than simply physical adultery. True sexual sin, lust, begins in the heart. This young man had let his heart’s lust control his life, and he lost everything in the process.

Application

Are you struggling with sexual sin right now? Sexual sin can come in many forms. For example, the Bible warns us of many forms that adultery can take. It can not only be the extramarital sex (adultery) but it also can be homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27) and fornication—all sexual sin outside of marriage such as premarital sex or pornography (Galatians 5:19). All sexual sin outside of the context of marriage is very damaging.

III. The Solution to Lust - Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:29-30

“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”

Explanation

Christ teaches to take extreme measures to avoid adultery or lust. He discusses how the eye and the hand should be plucked and removed rather than fall into lust. Does Christ want us to LITERALLY cut off our hand and pluck out our eye? No. Lust begins in the heart and mind; however, it is interesting to note that our eyes and our hands are the principal parts of our bodies that we use to fall into these temptations. Instead, Christ is teaching us to take whatever measures are necessary and be aware of the severe consequences of lust. Lust can become a man’s god, and any other god other than the Lord leads straight to hell. What are some practical measures that we can take to avoid lust?

A) Flee! Flee! Flee!

This is the most important step to fighting lust. The Bible tells us to fight our temptations. However, the only temptation that it tells us to FLEE is from sexual temptation. How do you flee sexual temptation?

Location - Do not put yourself in situations where you can be compromised. For example, do not be alone in a house with a woman that is not your wife. Do not be alone near your computer or magazines that can cause you to fall into lust. Do not go to parties at work where prostitutes or dancers will be available.

Time - If you have too much free time, your mind will tend to wander. If you are busy working at your job, for your church or for your family, you won't have the time or the energy to lust as much. Flee free time. For example, do not sit around the local bar on Saturdays with nothing to do. Go home to your wife and children.

Your mind - Flee lustful thoughts in your mind. Romans 12:1-2 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." These are some very rich verses, but one part of these verses teaches to let Christ transform your mind. Your mind can quickly fall into lust. You can imagine many sexual things. When a sexual thought comes to your mind, push it out with another thought. What kind of thoughts do you use to push lust away? Look at the next tip.

B) Pray! Pray! Pray! Read! Read! Read!

When lust begins, so should prayer. Ask God to help you not to lust. Also, talk to Him in prayer about ANYTHING. Just the act of communicating with the Father will help. Along with prayer, you should also fill your mind with Scripture. Although sexual temptation is powerful, filling your mind with God's Word will help you overcome those lusts. Memorizing Scripture is especially helpful. You can try to recall a verse you have just memorized and put that in place of a lustful thought.

C) Don't fulfill the flesh.

Some people think that if they act on a small sexual desire, they will be fulfilled. Then, once fulfilled, they won't have as strong a desire the next day. Lust does not work that way. Sex is a natural desire. It is natural to your body. Your body will NEVER be satisfied. In fact, the MORE you think on sex, the MORE your body will want it.

Compare sex to eating. You may eat, eat, eat one day thinking that it will fill you up and you won't need to eat as much that evening. However, the more you eat, the more you "stretch" your stomach physically. Then you can eat a little more!

You cannot fulfill your lustful desires by acting on them; you only make them worse the next time. For example, one man described giving into your desires this way, "I've learned that if you give a pig and a boy everything they want, you'll get a good pig and a bad boy." If you feed the natural desires, they will only make you act worse.

D) Avoid the little glimpses.

Maybe you think that you would never actually commit adultery on your wife or have premarital sex, that if you look at a naked picture in a magazine or on the internet, it won't harm anything. In fact, you think it might satisfy you. It won't. Remember how Christ talked about plucking out the eye? Does He want you to pluck out your eye? No. However, He knew that the eye, especially for the male, is the door to lustful thoughts in the mind and heart.

Seeing pictures of naked people breeds desire, guilt and sin. In fact, on the radio a man told a story that describes how a little bit of “fulfillment” of fleshly desires breeds death.

Illustration

Radio personality Paul Harvey tells the story of how an Eskimo kills a wolf. The account is grisly, yet it offers fresh insight into the consuming, self-destructive nature of sin.

"First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed by frozen blood.

"Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his OWN warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more--until the dawn finds him dead in the snow!"

It is a fearful thing that people can be "consumed by their own lusts." Only God's grace keeps us from the wolf's fate.

E) Enjoy your mate.

An elderly lady discussed her sex life with her husband. She said, "When a man and a woman date, they start giving gifts, like flowers or candy. When a couple becomes engaged, they give special things--a diamond and very personal things. The most personal gift that I can ever give is myself. I have nothing more precious to give. When I marry, I want to give my husband the best that I have--my whole self as completely as I can."

God created sex for husbands and wives to enjoy one another. It is a beautiful act. For many, many centuries Christians taught one another that sex between a husband and wife should only be to make babies, not for enjoyment. However, the Bible NEVER teaches that. Instead, God wrote an entire book in the Bible, Song of Solomon, to show the beauty of sex between a husband and wife. Enjoy your mate. Constantly compliment one another and express your love to one another. Give each other kisses. Hold each other's hand. You will fill closer to one another and have a healthier sex life as well. (Proverbs 5:19)

F) Chose what the Bible says over what your friends say.

Your friends may tell you to go ahead and have sex. For teenagers and young adults, this is especially difficult. They may tell you that it will not hurt anything. After all, it is not against the law to have sex!

Your friends may say that sex is only for fun, but the Bible warns us differently. The Bible tells us in I Corinthians 6:12-20 that sex is extremely damaging. In fact, in verses 18-20 the Bible tells us that we should, "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are

not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” Your friends may tell you that it is okay, but sexual sin harms your own body in a way that no other sin can.

G) Learn to tell the difference between love and lust.

Many times men and women think that they are “in love” with someone and they give themselves to them sexually. However, they are often confused between the “love” they feel and “lust.”

The Bible has a perfect illustration of this problem in 2 Samuel 13. King David had a son named Amnon. He fell madly “in love” with a relative of his named Tamar. He asked her to be with him but she never seemed interested. One day, he forced himself upon her sexually. She begged him not to do this, but he felt as if he loved her. Once the sexual act was done, Amnon hated her.

Why did he change so quickly? Because he did not love her, he only wanted her sexually. Once that desire was fulfilled, he did not need or want her anymore. So many times, young men and women think they love someone, but when they get their sexual needs met, they forget about the person. Learn to be wise and tell the difference between love and lust, and you won’t give yourself to someone who doesn’t have your best interest at heart.

H) It is God’s will for your life to be sexually pure.

Every Christian in the world longs to know God’s will for his life. What job should he take, who should his spouse be, what decisions should he make. Generally the Bible does not tell you EXACTLY what God’s will is for every detail of your life. We study God’s word and pray and allow God to guide us on most details. (The Bible does show us that we have to follow God’s principles, give our life to Him, and then you will be in His will.)

However, when it comes to sex, we do not have to struggle to know God’s will on this detail for our life. God tells us specifically it is His will for us to be sexually pure. If you are sexually pure, **YOU ARE IN HIS WILL.**

I Thessalonians 4:3-8 says, “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.”

Decision

Do you want to be in God’s will for your life? Are you controlled by premarital, extramarital or homosexual sex? God wants you to be free from these issues. While sexual temptation is a lifelong battle, it is a battle you can win in Jesus! If you have Jesus in your life already, confess your sexual sin to Him now, ask Him for strength to flee from the temptation.

Maybe you have not given your life to Christ yet. You have tried to fulfill your life in various ways. One of those ways of trying to find fulfillment has been through meeting your sexual needs; however, you never seem to be fulfilled. God created you to be fulfilled in your life. Sex cannot ultimately fulfill you. Christ is the only one that can truly give you fulfillment.

Confess Christ as your Lord and Savior, ask Him to come into your life, and watch Him take control of the desires that you need help with. How can you confess Him as Lord and Savior? Let us show you how . . .

SERMON 33

Purpose of the sermon - To teach about marriage and divorce.

PASTOR - THIS SERMON WILL ONLY BEGIN TO DISCUSS THE TOPIC OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. USE THE SCRIPTURES THAT ARE IN THIS SERMON FOR FURTHER STUDY. YOUR PEOPLE NEED MANY MORE MESSAGES ON THIS TOPIC.

Bible Text - Matthew 5:31-32

Sermon –

Introduction

In this passage we can see some basic principles about marriage and divorce. Although we cannot possibly begin to discuss every aspect about marriage and divorce in one meeting, we can begin to learn the joys and responsibilities of marriage.

Bible Narrative - Matthew 5:31-32

“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

I. God’s view of marriage – First Spiritual Truth

Explanation

God loves the institution of marriage. It was the first institution that He created. Before churches, government, societies, or laws, God created marriage. Why did He do that?

A) Man was lonely – In Genesis 2:18 we find, “And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’” As you study how God created the Earth, you can see that everything that He created was considered GOOD. Light, the sun, moon, stars, animals and man were all considered good in God’s eyes. However, the only thing that was NOT GOOD was man being alone.

Illustration

Every night for eight years when I have put my daughter to bed, she has looked at me and asked me to lie down with her for a few minutes. Why? She asks me to lie down with her because she does not like to be alone. She does not want to lie down in that empty bed by herself. We are born with the desire to be with someone else. Some people like to be alone more than others, and all of us need some time to be by ourselves, but almost all of us want to share our lives with another person.

B) Man needed help – Again, Genesis 2:18 says, “And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’” Men and women need help, and our spouses meet that need.

Illustration

A missionary’s wife died. They had been happily married for over twenty years. He was devastated emotionally, but he was also devastated in the home. There were so many things that he could not do without his wife. She had given him advice, kept the home, and nurtured the children for years. One specific thing she did was cook for him. He had no idea how to cook. After she died he decided that he would have to learn to cook to take care of himself. So he proceeded to try to bake some bread like his wife did. He worked all day and finally pulled it out of the oven. After he let it cool, he took his first bite. The bread was so hard that he called up a pastor friend and told him that his freshly baked bread was so bad that he could use it for a brick in his new church’s construction! Over a year later, God brought another fine, Christian woman into this missionary’s life, and they were married.

No matter how self-sufficient we think we are, we need help. We cannot do it all by ourselves. God, in His grace, gave Adam, and us, a helper for our lives.

C) Man needs to share Christ’s love with someone else – Ephesians 5:25-28 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her . . . So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.”

Explanation

There is no doubt that most people in the world have no trouble loving themselves! However, Christ commands us to love someone else as much as we love ourselves. In fact we are to love our wife MORE than ourselves. Marriage enables us to show Christ’s love to our mate.

D) Man needs to create future generations – In Genesis 1:28 we find, “Then God blessed them and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’” Marriage is God’s appointed way for children to be put on this earth. It is GOOD for man and woman to come together in a sexual union in marriage in order for children to be born.

E) God honors marriage- He created marriage. Not everyone will feel the need to be married (I Corinthians 7:7-9), but for those who want to be married, God honors it. What does that mean for us today? Rejoice that God allows you to be married! He gave you a phenomenal gift in your spouse. So many men and women around the world want to be married to someone. So many people are very, very lonely in this world. God gave you your spouse – be thankful for her! She is God’s gift to you as a helper, a mother, a companion, and a love mate. Wives, view your husband as your helper, father of your children, companion and love mate. This is the other person that God has given you to get to know Him better. Husbands, you should take the lead spiritually in the home in your worship of God, but both husband and wife can help each other to strive to know the Lord better.

II. God's View of Divorce – Second Spiritual Truth

A) God's view of divorce is different from man's view – Jesus says in Matthew 5:31-32, *Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.*

Explanation

In Jesus' time many Jewish leaders had come to the conclusion that they could divorce their wives for almost any reason. If they saw another woman that they liked better, they could write a certificate of divorce for their first wife, and marry the other woman. This left many women hopeless and helpless without their mates. However, Jesus expresses a different view. He tells them that if anyone divorces his wife for any reason, other than adultery, and then remarries, that person commits adultery. Jesus is certainly describing very serious consequences when divorce occurs!

Application

In today's world people seem to be getting a divorce for almost any reason. In America, almost half of marriages end in divorce. Why?

1) A desire to put self first - Many people decide to choose themselves first over the needs of others. In life in general as well as in marriage, there is a very simple pattern that we should follow to avoid this problem. In life we should think of **GOD FIRST, OTHERS SECOND AND OURSELVES THIRD**. In English we call this **J.O.Y. - JESUS, OTHERS, YOU!**

2) Desire for personal freedom - The other day, I met a man who was a believer. He was telling a friend of his that he was married. The believer then told the man that he was a virgin when he got married and that the only woman he had ever known sexually was his wife. His friend, who did not know Jesus, was in shock and said, "You have only had sex with one woman? I have had sex with over 500 women in my life?" To this man, limiting himself to one woman was crazy. He wanted to have freedom to have as many women as possible. His freedom was more important than the emotional health of all of those women or obedience to the God the Father in the area of sexual morality.

3) Broken parents' homes - Many times marriages end in divorce because people were raised in homes that were not good, healthy, loving homes. There was a young woman in our church. She was beautiful, fun, and intelligent. When she was thirteen her father committed adultery and left his Godly wife. He had been a deacon in the church. The news crushed his wife, the church, and his daughter. The young woman grew up and married a very handsome, Godly, fun and intelligent man. Everything seemed perfect in her home. After a few years, the woman committed adultery and left her Godly husband. She had done the exact same thing her father did! Children copy what they see their

parents do. If their parent's homes are broken, then often times the children's homes will be broken as well.

There are many other reasons why marriages can end in divorce. Does your marriage have problems today? How many of your fights are caused by selfishness, a desire for personal freedom or the example your parents gave you? If you have problems, should you just give up and get divorced? Let us study what God says about divorce.

B) God prohibits divorce - Malachi 2:16 says, "For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce..."

Explanation

God hates divorce. He created man and woman to be together for the rest of their lives.

Illustration

When I counsel a young couple before they get married, I always take a few minutes to talk about divorce. The one piece of advice I always give is for them to NEVER SAY THE WORD DIVORCE to one another. We may THINK about divorce in our minds but never say the word to one another, especially in anger. In this way, divorce can never be viewed as a possibility between two people. Jesus said, "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matthew 19:6)

Application

Are you and your wife going through a difficult time today? Divorce is not the answer. Are there instances where divorce is acceptable?

1. Jesus seems to imply that in the case of adultery divorce is an option. He said, "Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality..." (Matthew 5:32).
2. Paul tells us that in a case of one unbelieving spouse with a believing spouse, if the unbelieving spouse demands to leave, then he may go. I Corinthians 7:10-16 says, "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such

cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?" The unbelieving spouse isn't saved by her believing spouse, but the believing spouse can certainly be a good influence. However, if the spouse demands to leave, that spouse is free to go.

3. Abuse - physical or sexual – is a third instance. Although the Bible does not state that physical or sexual abuse is grounds for divorce, many times counselors advise the person, usually the woman, to separate for a time from the husband. This is not divorce, but it is an opportunity for the husband to cool down and think about what he is doing. The believing spouse should continually show love and kindness to the husband, but maintain distance for some time for her own safety and the safety of the children. However, many times, a spouse can come to Christ by a husband or wife showing love and not divorcing during these times of crisis.

Decision

The book of Hosea describes a man who stayed faithful to an adulteress wife. Hosea showed true love to a woman who may not have been deserving of love. Are you in a marriage that is struggling? Do you feel like you do not love your mate any longer? Do you feel that you do not wish to be married to your mate? Ask God today to help you think of reconciliation before divorce. Ask God to show you how to love your spouse again. You will be amazed how many times He will help you and your mate through your difficult times, and God will be glorified in the process.

Are you attending this church meeting today and realizing that you and your wife have serious problems? Christ can help you overcome those problems. If you are living without Christ, you need HIM to come into your life and give you the strength, love and power to save your marriage. Would you like Christ in your life today? He wants to come into your life, help you in the areas that you struggle, and give you eternal life with Him after you die. Would you like to know how to have Him in your life? Let us show you how. . .

SERMON 34

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your church the importance of keeping one's word.

Bible Text - Matthew 5:33-37

Sermon –

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:33-37

“Again you have heard that it was said of those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”

Introduction

Are you a person of integrity? Can people trust what you say? Today’s message discusses how to be an honest person. When people see you, they need to be able to have confidence in what you say. Let us examine what Jesus had to say to us through this passage.

I. A Dishonest Person Is Known By All – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Matthew 5:33

“Again you have heard that it was said of those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’”

Explanation

In Jesus’ day, people would affirm what they said by making great oaths. They would swear by the heavens or by God’s temple or even by the Lord. In other words, these people had to have this oath for others to be assured that what they said was true.

It is sad commentary on who you are if what you say has to be affirmed by an oath. People should be able to trust what you say **AS SOON AS IT LEAVES YOUR MOUTH.**

What if you are a man who “swears falsely”? What exactly are ways that we can swear falsely or be dishonest?

A) We can make a statement that we know is false.

For example, if we say we will meet someone at 2:00, but we know we cannot arrive until much later, then we are making a dishonest statement. Or, if we tell someone we will pay them money, but we do not have the money, this is a dishonest statement.

B) We can make a statement that may be true, but we want to give a false impression to someone.

For example, a student may tell his teacher that he was sick, and for that reason he did not complete the assignment. He may have been a little sick, but that was not the reason he didn't finish the assignment. He did not finish the assignment because he put it off until the last day. Unfortunately, he gave his teacher a false impression as to why he was late.

C) We can make up a story to deceive someone.

For example, if a man goes out to drink with another woman, but tells his wife that he was out with his friends, then he has tried to deceive his wife. Of course, that man is not only a liar, but he has other marriage problems as well!

D) We can tell part of the truth instead of telling the whole truth.

Part of the truth is no different from no truth at all. In the end, no matter what way one lies, it is still wrong. No one can trust a dishonest man. A dishonest man's character will always be known by those around him.

Illustration

In Brazil there was a day laborer who could fix just about anything. He was also one of my best friends. We worked side-by-side many hours for the Kingdom. One day he noticed that my roof was bad. He told me he could fix it for 500 reais (about \$170). That was a lot of money, but I thought it was an honorable price.

My friend worked very hard. When he finished the job two days later, he told me that the cost would now be 700 reais. Sometimes with construction, things cost more than they should, so I understand a little increase in costs, but the extra 200 reais was a lot of money. I asked him why the price difference? He told me that he said 500 reais PLUS the cost of labor. He said I must have misunderstood. I had not misunderstood. My both knew what had happened.

My heart broke that day. My friend had taken advantage of me. I had not misunderstood the original price. He simply had been dishonest with me about the price. Although we still worked together, and I had forgiven him, I never could TRUST my friend as I once had.

Application

You may think that you can lie a little bit and no one will notice. Many people are "good" liars. They can lie for a while and not get caught. However, in the end, your character will always be known by the world.

II. An Honorable Person Is Trusted By All – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Matthew 5:34-37

“But I say to you, do not swear at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”

Explanation

An honorable person can be trusted. He does not need to make an oath to give his listener assurance that what he says is true.

There are two ways a person can be shown to be trustworthy. Jesus describes the first way to be trusted in the above verses.

A) A man can be viewed as honest by what he says.

Jesus discussed how the religious leaders would make great oaths.

They would swear on many things to prove their honesty. His point was that people shouldn’t need to swear on anything; their honest character should be enough.

We should avoid great oaths because if we break them we are dishonoring God. For example, if you swear “by the heavens,” then who created the heavens? God created the heavens. By swearing on something God created, you are actually dishonoring Him if you fail to fulfill your oath.

At times Scripture teaches it is acceptable to swear an oath (Numbers 5:19, 21; 30:2,3; 2) Paul even used oaths in Scripture on occasion (2 Corinthians 1:18; Galatians 1:20). However, you and I should be men and women of honor. We should not need to swear on anything. We should be so honest that every man knows that our “yes” means “yes” and our “no” means “no.” We should have a reputation that brings honor to God and ourselves.

B) A man can be viewed as honest by his actions.

It takes time to build a reputation as an honest man. People need to be able to take your word by what you say and by what you do.

There is a story about an American President named Theodore Roosevelt. Before becoming a politician, he owned a ranch and had many cattle. One day, Theodore Roosevelt and one of his helpers captured a runaway cow. In those days, there were no fences between ranches. The men who raised livestock branded the cattle to determine ownership of the cattle. They lit a fire and prepared the branding irons. Suddenly, Roosevelt realized that he and the cowboy were on his neighbor’s land. The part of the range they were on was claimed by Gregor Lang, one of Roosevelt’s neighbors.

According to the cattleman’s rule, the steer, therefore, belonged to Lang. As his cowboy applied the brand, Roosevelt said, “Wait, it should be Lang’s brand.”

“That’s all right, boss,” said the cowboy.

"But you're putting on my brand," Roosevelt said.

"That's right," said the man.

"Drop that iron," Roosevelt demanded, "And get back to the ranch and get out. I don't need you anymore. A man who will steal for me will steal from me."

That young man was going to brand the cattle and keep it for his boss. Whether it be farm animals, money, equipment or whatever, people can always be tempted to steal for their own benefit. Roosevelt's firing of the man showed the world his honest character. His integrity with his neighbor was more important than making money from a farm animal.

III. An Honorable Person Is Watched By All – Third Spiritual Truth

Explanation

Most people in the world are like that cowboy. If it is easy to steal and no one will know, we view it as "okay". We tell ourselves that the world works in this way. However, did you know that your integrity and honesty will be watched by many people? If you are honorable, you can have a huge impact on the world around you. Who can you impact? Who watches honorable people? Honorable men and women are watched:

A. By themselves –

If you have given your life to Christ, you already have the Holy Spirit in your life. You know the feeling when you have told a half/truth or a complete lie. You know how your heart feels when a lie is told. Put simply, you are actually watching yourself tell a half truth.

B. By his family –

How many parents have promised their children a treat if they act well during the day? How many children always remember exactly how many treats they were promised? Of course, parents know that children ALWAYS remember when something is promised to them. Your children watch what you say just as you watch what your children say. They will learn to be honest by your example. If you are honest, they will be honest.

C. By others -

The world is desperately looking for honest people. When they see someone act honestly, they know they have found someone who is different.

Illustration

A man named Dr. Madison Sarratt taught mathematics at a University for many years. Before giving a test, the professor would tell his class something like this: "Today I am giving two tests--one in math and the other in honesty. I hope you will pass them both. If you must fail one, fail math. There are many good people in the world who can't pass trigonometry, but there are no good people in the world who cannot pass the test of honesty." This professor understood

that he was trying to mold people who would learn the importance of honesty. Those that learn this lesson become people of integrity for the whole world to see.

D. By the Lord -

In Proverbs 6:16-19 we find, “These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”

This is a very strong verse in the Bible. God is a God of love, yet the Bible describes Him as HATING these sins. Notice how many of the sins have something to do with integrity - a lying tongue, a heart that devises wicked plans, a false witness who speak lies, and one who sows discord (causes problems). Two of these sins deal directly with lying. Two items of this list often cause lies (one who sows discord and a heart that devises wicked plans).

It is obvious that God does not like dishonesty. He longs for people to have integrity. There is a wonderful illustration in John 1 concerning integrity. When Jesus was calling His first disciples, He called a man named Nathaniel. When Jesus greeted Nathaniel the first time, He said, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”

Jesus knew about Nathaniel’s honesty before they had even met. God will not overlook your honesty; in fact, He will honor you for it.

Decision

Do you struggle with honesty? Do you struggle with trying to tell the truth in your home or in your business? Do you live in a place where everyone around you seems to tell lies? Without the power of Christ, it will be IMPOSSIBLE to be a person of true integrity in this lost world.

If you have already given your heart to Christ, but you still struggle with honesty and integrity, ask Christ to help you today. Tell Him you want to be a good witness for Him as you know that your family, the world, and the Lord are watching you.

Maybe you are here today and you have never given your life to Christ. However, today you realize that you want to be a person of honorable character. You want to be an honest person, and you want to ask Christ to help you.

Right now, where you are, ask Jesus to come into your life. Ask Him to be the God over all gods. Ask Him to save you and tell Him that you want to repent of your sins. He will save you today. He will give you the Holy Spirit who will help you overcome your struggles and give you eternal life.

If you want to give your life to Christ, let us show you how . . .

SERMON 35

Purpose of the sermon - To teach about retaliation and revenge.

Bible Text - Matthew 5:38-42

Sermon –

Introduction

There is no question that we live in an imperfect world. People act in ways that hurt us. Some of the time they hurt us on purpose. Sometimes they hurt us unintentionally. Either way, we can expect to face difficulties while working and living among those around us. Jesus assured us that we would face difficulties in this life. He said, “These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”(John 16:33)

When someone causes us harm, naturally we will want to retaliate against him. We will feel that we have been wronged, and we want to strike back at the offender to make it right. Maybe we feel that if we retaliate, we will protect our honor. However, Jesus taught that there is another way to deal with problems with our fellow man.

In today’s sermon, we will continue to look at Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Let us not forget the context of this sermon. Jesus’ ministry had recently begun. He had overcome the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, called His first disciples and begun to preach, and ministered throughout Galilee. Now He began to preach His most famous sermon during His ministry. As He spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, He taught them some basic truths about life. He discussed lust, anger, divorce, integrity, and today we will look at what He said about retaliation. Retaliation, as with all of the other life struggles mentioned above, is a heart issue rather than an external issue. The victory over the desire to “get even” with those who hurt us begins in the heart. Let us examine what Christ said.

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:38-42

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”

I. The Law Claimed Retaliation Was the Right Thing To Do – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:38

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’”

Explanation

In those days, the law prescribed that if someone hurt you, then the courts could punish the other person in the same way he hurt you (Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21). It is important to understand that the COURTS had the right to punish and not the INDIVIDUAL. The idea of retaliating in the same way and same degree was enacted for two reasons:

A) To deter future crime –

If someone understands that there is a severe enough penalty for committing a crime, he is less likely to do it. Many people have said that even today after visiting some Arabic nations they observe how safe things are in those countries. They explain that the penalty in certain nations for stealing is cutting off the criminal's hand. Consequently, very few people steal. Why do they not steal? First of all, no one wants to lose his hand. Secondly, once a person loses his hand, EVERYONE knows when they see him what happened. It is very difficult to hide a lost hand. There is a principle of SHAME when someone loses a hand.

B) To protect the criminal –

Because human nature can be so violent, God initially enacted this principle of “eye for an eye” to prevent someone from carrying out an undue level of revenge on the lawbreaker. Let me give you a silly example. When we get bitten by a mosquito, what do we do? Do we simply flick the mosquito off of our arm, or do we crush it! Most people crush it! We want to kill the bug that bit us. When someone or something hurts us, the natural desire is to lash out. (Of course, sometimes mosquitoes carry diseases and it is GOOD to destroy them before they infect others).

But in the same way we crush the mosquito, when someone hurts us we want to hurt them as well. If someone hurts us or a member of our family, the natural desire is to hurt that person worse than he hurt us. God enacted this principle of “eye for an eye” to allow for punishment of the wrongdoers, but at the same time to keep the punishment from being more extreme than necessary.

The problem was that the people in that day had forgotten the true intention of this law. Instead of being used as a means of controlling vengeful activity, the religious leaders had turned “eye for an eye” into a license for vengeance.

God enacted this law for governments and courts to be able to protect its citizens. It is certainly okay for a government to punish and protect its people (Romans 13). It is even okay for a church to judge and protect its own people against sin (I Corinthians 5:12). However, when we AS INDIVIDUALS start taking matters into our own hands, the true problems begin.

Application

Have you ever sought revenge against someone who hurt you? Maybe someone hurt you or your family, and you felt that you must seek revenge. Let me ask you a few questions if you have struggled with that issue.

A) Did the revenge make you feel better over time?

In other words, you may have felt a little better at the moment, but days or months later, did you feel better?

B) Did the punishment fit the crime?

Did you feel like you brought TRUE JUSTICE to the person?

C) Did you let your need for HONOR overcome the need for true Godly justice?

In other words, in many, many cultures it is more important to fulfill your code of honor than it is to bring true justice. Many people would rather “save face” or look good to their friends and family by enacting revenge rather than to allow the courts to bring the offenders to justice.

God tells us that we should leave retaliation to Him. God punishes those who do wrong. He said, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” (Romans 12: 17, 19). Allow the Lord to bring revenge, and you will be free from the burden, guilt and possible crime of vengeance.

II. Jesus Said Not To Resist an Evil Person – Second Spiritual Truth

Explanation

The world tells us to fight for our rights and defend our honor when wronged. Jesus, however, told us not to resist an evil person. Just as He told us that “peacemakers” would be blessed (Matthew 5:9), you and I today should strive for peace rather than retaliation. He gave three examples of when we should not retaliate. In each of these moments a person may be attacking our honor, but God wants us to act more HONORABLY by allowing Him to handle the situation.

A) When someone attacks your honor physically -

The Bible says. “*But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.*” (Matthew 5:39)

In the time of Jesus as it is today, to slap someone on the face was a huge offense. That attack showed no respect for the person who had been slapped. Jesus told the people that instead of punching back, pause and allow him to see the other cheek as well. Some people view this as cowardly. They think it is braver to fight back. However, it actually takes more bravery to stand there and wait to get hit than to strike back. Jesus did not hit back while He was being

whipped and tortured (Matthew 26). He did that for you and for me. We should follow Christ's example as well.

There are times you might have to defend yourself physically, but the idea is that we should resist the temptation to punch back in anger.

B) When someone attacks your honor financially –

The Bible says, "*If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.*" (Matthew 5:41)

In the time of Christ, people wore a tunic (like a shirt) and an outer cloak (like a coat). If two people had a fight, many times the court would ask one offender to give up his tunic, but NEVER would a person be asked to give up his cloak. The cloak kept him warm at night. The cloak was too important for the courts to force him to hand it over.

Jesus teaches his followers to show so much love to their enemies that they give not only their outer shirt but their cloak as well. Whether the person takes the cloak or not is not important. That act of love will speak volumes to the person and is a testimony for Jesus.

The Bible also says, "*Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.*" (Matthew 5:42)

In many cultures it brings great shame to ask for financial help from others. However, in some cultures, many older people are required to beg. In fact, in many parts of India, begging is seen as a sign of giving up all desire for worldly goods. It is seen as a positive action for older men to beg.

Jesus teaches His followers that we should give even when the person does not seem to deserve it. He is not only talking about begging; the idea probably can be more readily applied to a neighbor or friend who is in need. If someone seeks financial help, we should give.

Many times people ask for money and will only use it for bad purposes. God has given us WISDOM to discern when it may be unwise to give money to someone.

However, our natural tendency is NEVER to give away our money. Jesus breaks down that tendency with the words found in Matthew 5:42. Seek to give when possible, (and sometimes when it seems impossible). You should allow the Lord to judge that person for what he does with your money. Many times you can show the love of Christ by giving to those who desperately need it.

C) When someone attacks your independence –

The Bible says "*And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.*" (Matthew 5:40)

At the time, Roman soldiers could force any layperson to carry his equipment for up to the equivalent of one mile. For the people at the time, this was a great insult and caused further tension between them and the Roman Empire. It was demeaning to have someone force a person to carry their things, especially when they were under the control of that other person or country.

This type of demeaning activity still happens in this world. India was under the control of the British Empire. Mahatma Gandhi advocated resistance against the British Empire without violence. India had been under the control of Britain officially for close to 90 years and their heavy influence had been in India for hundreds of years. Indians, as all people, longed to control the destiny of their country.

While never becoming a follower of Christ, Gandhi did follow exactly what Jesus said to do in this one area of his life. Instead of fighting against the person, Gandhi advocated doing as the person wished. In fact, he advised to do more than the person asked. In India, this principle changed the course of its history and saved the country from a bloody war.

Application

Let us review some thoughts. Do we always give to whoever asks? Certainly not every time. If someone needs us to do something illegal, we do not have to do it! Do we always let someone borrow? Certainly not every time. If our family is in a dire situation, or if the person is obviously taking advantage of us, we are not required to give. Do we always let someone punch us? Certainly not every time. Sometimes it is necessary to fight for the protection of our family. Sometimes it is necessary to flee to keep from getting killed!

Jesus' purpose in this passage is for His followers to have a change of heart. Instead of immediately wanting to SEEK REVENGE when we are wronged physically, financially, or with our independence, people should remember to do two things.

A) Rest in the Lord.

Know that revenge is His job. God tells us that we should leave retaliation to Him. He punishes those who do wrong. He said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." (Romans 12: 17, 19) Allow the Lord to repay with justice, and you will be free from the burden, guilt and possible crime of vengeance.

B) Love your enemy.

Christ is trying to teach His followers to think of others before themselves (Matthew 7:12). There are two results of loving your enemies.

- 1) First of all, if you are kind to those who hurt you, then you will actually be bringing revenge on them. "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For so you will heap coals of fire on his head, And the Lord will reward you." (Proverbs 25:21-22)
- 2) Secondly, responding in love might cause the person to see the love of Christ in you and begin to follow the Lord.

Decision

Are you already a follower of Christ? Wouldn't you like your lost neighbor to come to Christ as well? Begin to ask the Lord to help you overcome any urge you have to retaliate against someone who has done something wrong to you. Maybe you need to come to a point that you must forgive someone who has wronged you in the past. It may seem difficult to do that. Ask Jesus to help you have the strength to forgive, and this will help you overcome the need to retaliate.

Are you not yet a follower of Christ? Maybe you are consumed by the desire to bring revenge on another person. Today is the day that you need to be free of this desire. If you have never asked Christ to come into your life, won't you do that today? With Him you will be able to rest in the Lord and allow His righteous judgment on others rather than taking matters in your own hands. You will also be able to love your neighbor like you never thought possible.

If you've never given your life to Him, you can pray right now and ask Him to forgive you of your sins, save you, and come into your life as your only Lord and Savior. No other god, idol, church, group or action can save you; only Jesus Christ can save. If you'd like to ask Christ to be your Lord, then pray with me right now.

Dear Jesus . . .

SERMON 36

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your people about loving their neighbor.

Bible Text - Matthew 5:43-48

Sermon

Introduction

Do you have someone that you really don't like in this world? Maybe you have a neighbor who is very rude or a teenager who does not show the proper respect to those around him.

Is there a particular group of people you do not like? Maybe there is a clan, tribe or village of people that lives close to you that your family does not like. One of the most difficult aspects of being a follower of Christ is loving your neighbor. We must love the neighbors we like and the neighbors WE DON'T LIKE as well. Let us look at what this passage teaches us.

Bible Narrative - Matthew 5:43-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

I. What Is Love? -First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:43

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor. . .'"

Explanation

Every one of us speaks a language. The person who wrote this book speaks English. The man who is preaching this sermon may speak Bengali, Swahilli, Nepalese, Vietnamese or some other language. God is so big that He knows all of the languages of the world. When the Bible was written, it was written in a language called Greek. In Greek there are four words that mean "love." Each word describes a different kind of love. When Jesus spoke of loving one's neighbor, what word did Jesus use here?

The four words are:

A) “Philia”-

This word means friendship love. This is the kind of love that two friends can have for one another. Think about one of your best friends in the world; the feeling that you have for him or her is friendship love.

B) “Storge” –

This is the love of family. Many times the bond you have with family is very, very strong. The love you may have for a father, brother or sister would be defined as “storge.”

C) “Eros”-

This is a romantic or sexual love. That feeling that you get when you begin to care for another man or woman is romantic love. “Eros” contains the idea of a physical attraction.

D) “Agape” -

This is the type of love that Jesus used in Matthew 5:43 and many other times throughout the New Testament. A great Bible scholar said that “agape” love is a love that “seeks and works to meet another person’s welfare.” In other words, this is a type of love that puts others first. This is the type of love that puts others first.

Illustration

I once had a neighbor who always parked his car in front of my garage so I could never pull my car out on our street. I talked to him many times, but he still would block me into my garage. One time I was in a big hurry and needed to leave for an emergency. I got in my car to pull out and there was this man’s car. I wanted to ram my car into his in order to get out, but I heard in my heart the Spirit reminding me, “Love your neighbor!”

Application

If you want to truly love your neighbor, you must show him “AGAPE” love. In other words, you must think about him first. Christ showed this love to you. Romans 5:8 tells us, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Even though we didn’t deserve to be loved, due to our sin, God thought so much of us that He sent Christ to die for us.

Maybe in your life you do not have a difficult time showing friendship love to another person. Maybe erotic or romantic love comes very easily to you. However, are you showing selfless “agape” love to your neighbor as well?

II. To Whom Do We Show “Agape” Love? – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:43-44

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

But I say to you, love your enemies . . .”

Explanation

Jesus described two people who should receive that kind of love from us.

- A) Your neighbor
- B) Your enemies

When you first read this word “neighbor,” your mind imagines someone who lives close to you. Even more, your mind probably imagines someone that you may like. When Jesus mentioned the word “neighbor,” the Jewish people listening would have understood this to mean someone they liked as well. However, when Jesus was telling us to love our neighbor, He meant far more than just someone we like. The Bible gives an excellent example of this deeper meaning of who is our neighbor.

Illustration

Bible Narrative – Luke 10:25-37

A lawyer stood up and attempted to test Christ by asking Him how to have eternal life.

Jesus asked him what the law said. The man replied, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus replied that the lawyer had answered correctly.

However, the man wanted to justify himself and said, “Who is my neighbor?”

Jesus then told him a parable. He said that a certain man was going from one city to another and was attacked by robbers who stripped him, hurt him and left him for dead. A priest came down the same road, walked by the hurt man, and left him for dead. Then a Levite walked by and left him for dead. However, a Samaritan walked by the hurt man and had compassion. He stopped, bandaged his wounds, put him on his animal and carried him to an inn. The next day he paid the innkeeper and told him to charge him for any additional costs. He would return and pay the rest later.

Jesus then asked the lawyer which of the three men was a neighbor to the man who had been robbed and hurt.

The lawyer replied that it was the third man. Christ replied for him to go and do likewise.

Application

This is one of the most famous parables in all of Scripture. The first two men were

obviously very religious men. A priest and a Levite were two men who followed the laws of God. However, they failed to understand how to act like a neighbor. The third man was a Samaritan. He was not liked by the Jews. His ethnic background was mixed. He was not a full blooded Jew nor was he full blooded Greek. No one accepted the Samaritans. They were of a low place in society. However, this Samaritan stopped and helped this Jewish man—he even paid the bills! Jesus was teaching that everyone must be your neighbor, even someone you do not like or someone who may not treat you with the proper respect. The Jew and Samaritan would have been enemies. Yet the Samaritan showed selfless love to the man who may not have done the same for him.

In summary, who is your neighbor? If people that you like are your neighbors, and your enemies are your neighbors as well, then according to Jesus EVERYONE IS YOUR NEIGHBOR and deserves your love!

Who do you need to show selfless love to? If you are an American, do you need to show love to an Iraqi? If you are an Indian, do you need to show love to someone from Pakistan? If you are from Africa, do you need to show love to another group of people within your own country?

Maybe you need to show selfless love to an unlovable individual. Stop and think right now about someone that you feel is your enemy. Christ demands us to love them as well.

III. How Do We Show Selfless (“AGAPE”) Love? – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 5:44-48

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in Heaven is perfect.”

Explanation

It can be very, very difficult to love those who have been your enemies. Sometimes we have experienced pain at the hands of another person, and it makes it very difficult to forgive him. Yet Christ told us that we should love our enemies.

Illustration

Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch woman who was a survivor of the German death camps during the Second World War. During that time, six million Jews died because of their nationality. Corrie was not Jewish, she was a very devout Christian woman who tried to hide

Jews in her home so that the Germans could not kill them. In the end, she was caught and put in jail where terrible things occurred. She was released from the prison the day before all of the female prisoners were put to death. After the war, Corrie began to speak publicly to audiences around the world about her experiences. Once when she preached, a man approached her that had been one of the guards in her prison. He had become a Christian, was a changed man, and had come seeking her forgiveness. When he asked for her forgiveness, Corrie began to struggle. She described the struggle she had in forgiving.

“I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion — I knew that, too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. ‘Jesus, help me!’ I prayed silently. ‘I can lift my hand, I can do that much. You supply the feeling.’”

“And so, woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.”

“‘I forgive you, brother! I cried. ‘With all my heart!’ For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then.”

Corrie Ten Boom felt the overwhelming feeling of agape love.

Application

How do we get to the point that we can forgive someone who hurt us? How could Corrie Ten Boom have shown Christ's love to the guard as she did? Christ gave us several good ideas on how to love our neighbor—even the unlovable ones!

Matthew 5:44 ,45 says, “*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven . . .*”

A) Love your enemies –

Love is a heart choice. You may think there are times when you do not feel like loving your boss. A wife may not feel like loving a husband. However, we choose to love others. Make the choice that you will love someone in Christ.

B) Bless those who curse you –

When someone says something mean to you, reply with a kind word. As we learned in last week's lesson, “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For so you will heap coals of fire on his head, And the Lord will reward you.” (Proverbs 25:21-22) In other words, a kind word can do several things. First, in this verse we can see that it can actually be more painful to the person who is cursing you. Doesn't it just drive someone crazy when they want to argue and the person refuses to argue back? It's like dumping hot coals on their head! Secondly, a kind word can defuse a

situation and possibly bring healing to a problem. “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Proverbs 15:1)

C) Do good to those who hate you -

If you want to begin to love someone, start doing nice things for them. I once read in a psychological study that you are more likely to love someone that you take care of and do things for, than someone who does things for you. Show an act of kindness to someone who has not been lovable. Your act will mean a lot to them (even if they don't say anything), and you will be amazed at the healing it brings you.

D) Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you –

It is very difficult to be angry or not care for someone that you are praying for. Even as Christ was hanging on the cross in absolute agony, He prayed for those who were cheering on His death. “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’” (Luke 23:34). He was praying for those around Him. Begin to pray daily for the person who you do not love and watch what God can do both in your life and theirs.

Decision

Jesus said something very interesting at the end of Matthew 5:43-48. He told His followers, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in Heaven is perfect.” He had given them this impossible task to love their neighbor, He was about to give even harder tasks in the rest of this sermon, and now He was telling His listeners to be PERFECT. Although we are supposed to strive to grow in the Lord and be more “perfect” in our lives, we will never attain this goal. In other words, no man can be perfect. So how do we become “perfect” as Christ commanded?

If you have been in this church for several weeks, you have seen from the Sermon on the Mount that Christ is concerned with your heart as much as your actions. The standards that He sets to be like Him in heart and action are incredible. If you look at a woman with lust, you have already committed adultery. Anger begins in the heart. If someone hits you, you must turn the other cheek. You must love your enemy. These are actions that are impossible to do on your own. Many men CLAIM to be pure in all areas; but when the truth is known, NO MAN CAN DO THESE THINGS ON HIS OWN POWER.

Christ was trying to teach His followers one simple truth. If you want to be free from lust, anger, retaliation, hate, then you need Christ in your life. Christ wants to come into your life today. He wants you to realize that you cannot live without Him, humble yourself, and ask Him to be the ONLY LORD AND SAVIOR OF YOUR LIFE.

We can pray a prayer right now and ask Him to come into your life. This prayer is between you and the Father. No man can pray it for you. Won't you give your life to Jesus today? If you would like to do this, we can show you how to give your life to Him. . . .

SERMONS 37-38

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your people how to perform three acts of worship—charity, prayer and fasting—for only the Lord to see.

Bible Text - Matthew 6:1-18

Sermon -

Introduction

“Mommy, Mommy! Watch me! Look what I can do!!!” If you have small children, you know that they constantly want you to watch them perform ANYTHING. They need you to tell them how well they are doing as they perform. They get a lot of their pleasure from others watching what they can do. As parents, we watch them perform with a smile because that is part of our job as their caretakers. We also know that it is important for them to be affirmed as they learn how to do new things.

We do the same thing in our Christian walk. Many times, we want the whole world to watch when we do something. We want the praise of MEN.

Christ continued His Sermon on the Mount discussing this desire to be seen by men. Over the next two sermons we are going to look at three acts of worship that He said we should actually try to HIDE from men when possible. In doing these three acts of worship, ACTS OF CHARITY, PRAYING AND FASTING, we should seek to glorify our Lord, not receive glory from men. At the time of Jesus, the Jewish people considered almsgiving (acts of charity), prayer and fasting to be the three most important religious activities a person could do. Today, we understand that none of these acts can bring salvation, but we also understand that all three are proper acts of worship for the Lord.

Let us observe what Christ had to say about applying these principles to our lives.

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:1-16

“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in Heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do.

For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray:

*Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom
And the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Let us look at what Jesus said about each act of these acts of worship so that we may apply His principles to our lives.

I. Acts of charity – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6: 1-4

“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in Heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

Explanation

Christ gives us guidelines on how to perform acts of charity that will bring honor to Him. What are those guidelines?

A) We should perform acts of charity –

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:2

“Therefore, when you do a charitable deed...”

Explanation

As a believer in Jesus Christ, it should just be ASSUMED that you will do acts of charity. There are several reasons not to do a charitable deed.

1) We do not do acts of charity for salvation –

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” In other words, we are saved by grace. We do NOTHING to deserve our salvation. We humble ourselves and accept that only Christ saves, but Christ does all of the WORK in salvation.

When we begin to do things for God because we want gain favor with God for salvation, we are no longer acting in faith but under our own power. More and more acts of charity, service, giving, etc will not save us. They will make us acts as a moral person, but not a saved person that is righteous before God. Only Christ can save us—not our works!

2) We do not do acts of charity for ourselves –

We do not do acts of charity to make ourselves feel good. Although doing an act of service to the Lord WILL make us feel good, it is not the primary reason why we act to serve Him.

3) We do not do acts of charity for the reward of others –

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:2 “Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”

Explanation

Christ specifically commands us to avoid performing acts of worship to Him for the eyes of others. He tells us that if we do that, then we have already received our

Illustration

A few years ago a man named Ted Turner gave over one billion dollars to the United Nations. Mr. Turner should be commended for making a generous donation to the poor of the world. However, when he gave away the money, he called all of the reporters in from around the world to announce his generous donation. He made his announcement of television for all to see. He was on the cover of many magazines. Mr. Turner is a perfect example of receiving his reward (the praise of men) rather than simply giving the money anonymously.

4) We DO serve Him for His glory and not ours -

Bible Narrative – I Peter 4:10-11

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Explanation

In other words, once you have salvation in Christ, your ministries and abilities should be used for His glory.

The more you seek to know God, the more your love will grow for Christ. Glorifying Him will bring you joy. Not only will glorifying God bring you joy, Christ also told us that the Father would reward you as well (Matthew 6:4). It is for Him to decide how to reward you, but it is always fascinating to see what way He chooses to reward us.

B) Acts of charity are done better in public than in private.

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:2-4

“Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

Explanation

The religious leaders at that time took great pride in doing acts of charity very publicly. They wanted the entire world to know what they were doing. When you do an act of charity, there is far greater honor in doing it in secret.

Jesus is not saying that every time you do an act of service that it must be in secret. After all, earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, He talked about us being the light in a dark world. He was discussing how we need to make our faith visible. He said, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) Obviously, many times we show charity to others for the world to see. Acting in a charitable manner (with the right attitude) will give glory to the Lord.

However, many times we are to serve Him SECRETLY; then GOD HIMSELF will see you and GOD HIMSELF will reward you. If we want to serve the Lord, what are some acts of charity that we can do?

1) We can do an act of charity with our time –

There is no doubt that many people are very, very busy. For example, maybe you work in the fields all day long or in a factory on the night shift. By the end of the day, you are exhausted. However, on your way home you may see someone with a flat tire or a broken cart. This person may need help but most people will just walk on by him. Most people are busy like you, and they need to go home to attend to their daily needs. However, stopping to help that person can be an act of charity to the Lord. You may even be able to share WHY you are stopping to help to that person in need.

2) We can do an act of charity with our ability –

Maybe God has gifted you with a certain ability. God can use that ability to bless someone else. For example, there is an older couple in my church who deeply love the Lord. They also deeply desire to see children come to Christ. They lead the children's ministry in our church. In fact, they have always led the children's ministry wherever they have lived. Years ago they helped start a church. At one point they were teaching over 80 children about Jesus, then they would carry many of the children home because none of the children's parents attended church. This couple was not paid to do this ministry. In fact, to this day this couple is very poor. Both husband and wife work full time. Many days they are tired but they are two of the most joyful people I have ever met. They have used their ability of ministering to children for the Kingdom of God.

3) We can do an act of charity with our money-

Obviously one of the principle ways that we can do an act of charity to those in need is through our money. Why does the Lord desire for us to give financial help to the poor and to His service? After all, God does not NEED our money. The Bible says that He already owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalms 50: 9-11). In other words, God already owns everything. If you make \$10 dollars today, He actually gave you all \$10! However, He commands us to give a percentage of our money to His Kingdom work. Your church can use the funds you give to pay the pastor, run its administrative needs, but also to serve others.

If we are to give money, how much do we give? I Corinthians 16:2 says, "On the first day of the week let each of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." We should set aside a certain amount of money for the Lord regularly. The New Testament does not tell us exactly how much to give to the Lord. Most believers practice the tithe. Abraham gave a tithe, ten percent, to Melchizedek in the Old Testament (Genesis 14:20). Jesus certainly implied that a tithe was a good thing in the New Testament (Matthew 23:23). The man who discipled me, my father-in-law, said, "Give 10% to God, save 10% and live on the rest. If you follow that pattern you will be fine." I always found that to be wise advice. So a tithe, or 10%, is a good gauge on how much to give.

However, many people believe that we should give tithes AND offerings to the Lord. In other words, we should give far above 10% if we can. While the New Testament is not clear on how much we should give, it is clear about one thing. Money

given to the Lord should be given sacrificially and in private. Let's look at the following illustration.

Illustration

Bible Narrative - Mark 12:41-44

Jesus was sitting opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. Many of the rich people put in a lot of money. Then one poor widow put in two "mites" (coins that were worth 1/8 of a cent). Jesus called His disciples over and said that the woman had put in more than all who had given to the treasury. He said that others had given from the abundance but she gave all that she had.

Jesus was more impressed with this woman's financial donation of just a few pennies than with the large amounts the rich had given. Why? Is Christ's point that the donation of the poor is more valuable than the donations of the rich? No, Jesus wants all of us to give SACRIFICIALLY and in FAITH to His kingdom as this widow did. He is not concerned with how much we give, but He is concerned with your heart. Are you giving to the Lord's Kingdom in faith? Are you praying through your tithes and offerings? Are you not giving sacrificially to the Lord in your tithes and offerings? (Malachi 3:7-9)

You have to be wise in how you give to the Lord. Sometimes people actually give TOO MUCH to the Lord. There was a missionary to Brazil who became so consumed with the needs of the poor that she literally gave everything she had away. She didn't even leave enough for her to take care of her basic needs.

God wants us to take care of our basic needs, but He also wants us to give sacrificially to Him. I have observed over the years that whether you are rich or poor you can always convince yourself NOT to give. The rich can say, "I'm afraid to lose the money if I give it away," and the poor will always say, "If I only had a little more." The end result in both cases is that the money is not given. Pray that God will guide you in how to give and how much to give.

Application

Whether it is an act of charity with time, ability or money, God honors those who serve the Lord and honors those who serve in secret. He is not concerned with how much one gives, serves or performs, but He is concerned with the heart attitude. Are you giving money to be impressive to those around you? Are you serving Him in order to be seen by your fellow man? Are you trying to impress the pastor by how much you give? (Pastor, it is better if you do not even know how much each individual in your church gives. Make them give in secret, and it will help you treat everyone equally.)

Take time today to determine how you can serve the Lord in private, and watch how He will bless you. Jesus said, "And your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." (Matthew 6:4) That does not say HOW He will reward you, but it does mean that He will reward you. The Father who knows all, sees all, and can do all will remember your private sacrifice.

Decision

Are you serving the Lord for the right reasons? If you are serving or giving Him solely for others to see, today is the day you need to repent of that sin. Serve the Lord with gladness in your heart, seek to glorify Him and not yourself.

Maybe you are listening to this message and you would like to learn how to serve the Lord Jesus. In order to serve Him, you must first give your life to Him. Would you like to give your life to Jesus Christ as Lord today? If you would like to, let us show you how

PASTOR, YOU CAN COMPLETE THE MOMENT OF DECISION HERE. THE NEXT TIME YOU PREACH YOU CAN BRIEFLY REVIEW THE FIRST PART OF THIS SERMON AND THEN CONTINUE THE SECOND HALF.

II. Acts of Prayer – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Matthew 6:5-15

“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray:

*Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom
And the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

A) Pray privately

Bible verse- Matthew 6:5-6

“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Explanation

Jewish believers at the time believed that they should pray at least three times a day. They prayed in the morning, noon and at three in the afternoon. They were to stop whatever they were doing and pray right where they are. If you notice, Muslims still practice this belief today as they pray five times daily.

In this passage Jesus was speaking directly to people who would purposely try to place themselves outside so that they could stop to pray in an extremely public place. At that time they could be seen by all as they practiced their act of worship to the Father.

Illustration

When I was a new believer I was afraid to pray in front of the church body. I knew my prayer would be seen by others. I would try to pray much more formally in front of the church body than when I speak normally. When the pastor calls on us to pray, it is easy to be more concerned with everyone watching us pray than with the words that we actually say. Forget what other people may or may not be thinking and focus on the Lord when you pray. It is normal to be nervous, but remember you are praying before God and not before the people.

Application

Whenever you are praying, pray with God’s interest in your mind first and try to completely disregard your appearance to others around you. It is not wrong to pray publicly some of the time. However, do not forget to pray privately as well, just as Daniel (Daniel 6:10) and Christ did (Mark 1:35). In fact, almost all of our prayers should be private.

B) Pray deliberately

Bible Narrative- Matthew 6:7-8

“And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”

Explanation

At the time, the Jewish leaders felt the longer the prayer the more likely God would hear and answer the prayer. They also would repeat the same phrase over and over thinking that this would gain favor with God. Many religions still do that today. The Muslims recite, “There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet.” In fact, to convert to Islam one only has to recite that phrase. Even many Christian churches may be tempted to chant or repeat the same things before God over and over again. This is not pleasing to God. He calls it vanity.

Christ spoke against this type of prayer. Instead of praying long prayers and repeating the same phrase, Christ wants you to pray deliberately with Him in mind. Christ told us to not be like the religious leaders who simply repeated WORDS but to TALK from our hearts to God. After all, God knows what we need before we even ask Him.

Illustration

The Bible describes what happens when we ask the Lord deliberately for something. Luke 11:11-13 says, “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

Just as a father loves a son, God loves you. In fact, He loves you more than a father loves his son. He longs to give you things that are in His will for you to have. Pray deliberately in His will and He will hear you (I John 5:14).

Application

Do not just babble to the Lord. Pray to Him sincerely from your heart. The Lord, who knows you better than anyone, will then be able to provide your needs.

C) Pray with order

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:8-14

“In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in Heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

*And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom
and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Explanation

If you want to be a true man of prayer, simply reciting the same prayer over and over is not communicating with the Father. Therefore, He gave us a simple pattern for how we should pray. He was not commanding us to pray exactly in this way, but this is a good example for us to follow. Notice that Christ includes several of the aspects of prayer that we have already studied in past sermons.

1. Praise - “Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be your name.”
2. Supplication (asking for personal help) - “Give us this day our daily bread.”
“Deliver us from the evil one.”
3. Forgiveness (Confession) - “And forgive us our debts”

Christ did not mention thanksgiving (or intercession) in the model prayer. Obviously we should be thankful and intercede for others as well. Christ is simply giving us a model showing us how we can pray in an organized manner.

Application

Be organized in your prayer. You do not have to follow any set phrases. Simply let the Spirit guide you as you praise, ask, confess, intercede and thank the Lord on a daily basis. However, do not forget the main point of this passage - PRAYER SHOULD BE ABOUT YOU AND GOD. IT IS NOT ABOUT YOUR PERFORMING FOR THE WORLD.

III. Fasting – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:16-18

“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do

not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

A) Take time to fast

Explanation

Jesus said, “When you fast.” In other words, it was simply assumed that His followers would fast. Fasting is a wonderful, but demanding, way to get in touch with the Father. Although fasting is not a requirement for salvation, it is an excellent way to reflect on the Lord.

How do you fast? Is it simply going without food? Going without food is not fasting. Sometimes people go without food to simply diet. Sometimes people go without food in times of famine. Fasting is more than just the absence of food. Fasting is ALWAYS accompanied with prayer when discussed in Scripture. In other words, going without food is combined with prayer. By the way, many people have done other types of fasting as well. Some people fast by having no food, but they do drink juices. Other people will “fast” from a controlling habit or pleasure. For example, they fast from television or a sport. However, fasting in Scripture seems always to be centered on depriving oneself of food for a time and prayer.

How long do you fast? Jesus fasted for 40 days! (Matthew 4) However, a fast can be as short as missing one meal. Many people attempt to fast for 24 hours.

Who fasted in the Bible? Great men and women of the Bible fasted: The Israelites (I Samuel 7:6); David (2 Samuel 12); Ezra (Ezra 8); Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1); Esther (Esther 4); Daniel (Daniel 9); John the Baptist’s Disciples (Matthew 9); Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14); Jesus (Matthew 4).

Why did they fast? They fasted in times of great sorrow, stress or persecution (Nehemiah, Esther, Jesus, David). They also fasted when a profound decision from the Lord needed to be made (Paul and Barnabas). Sometimes one can fast due to sorrow over his sin. King Ahab was so sorrowful for his sin that he fasted (I Kings 21:27) as did the people of Nineveh (Jonah 3).

Overwhelmingly all of these instances of fasting occurred when people felt the need to BE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD. Fasting is not a work that is necessary to be closer to God, but it is something that WORKS to get you closer to Him. When the natural hunger pains strike, in combination with prayer, this can be a time to turn to Him.

Do not forget, obviously, if you are pregnant or sick, that would not be a time to fast.

B) Fast for the Lord and not for men.

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:16-18

Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Explanation

When you fast, do not fast for others to see. Quietly fast and allow your heart to focus on the Lord and not on others.

Illustration

My mother-in-law fasted every Thursday for many, many years. She would not make a public show of her fast. She would simply quietly go about her day. She would make the meals as usual. She would do her ministries as usual. No one would know what she was doing. She was trying to fast to get to know the Lord for her relationship to Him and not for the applause of others.

Application

Whether it is fasting, prayer, or giving, make sure that your focus is on worshiping the Lord and not the praise of men. God knows your heart.

Decision

Have you been caught in the trap of allowing the praise of men to overshadow your worship of Him? Pastors, are you so concerned with what your people are thinking that you cannot focus on the Lord? Laypeople, has church become just a show for you? Have your prayers become dull, meaningless and repetitive because your heart is no longer in it? Have you forsaken the joy of fasting for the Kingdom? Take time now to ask the Lord to help you in all of these areas. Pray and fast in order to get in fellowship with Father, and not to receive the praise of men.

Never forget, if you are here today and you would like to start worshipping the Lord from your heart, but you have never truly given your heart to Him—today is the day you can change. Come to Christ now. Give your life to Him. Seek not the praise of men but the praise of the Father. Tell Him that you want to make Jesus Christ your only Lord and Savior. Watch what Christ will do in your life.

If you would like to do that right now, pray this prayer with me.

Dear Jesus . . .

SERMON 39

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your church about Godly use of money.

Bible Text - Matthew 6:19-24

Sermon -

Introduction

Christ taught a lot about money in the Sermon on the Mount. Why did He talk about money? First of all, Christ knew that money is important to people. In many places, the only way for someone to eat, drink, be clothed and have shelter is with money. Even where money is not used, and bartering is used, exchanging material possession is part of life in order to survive.

For this reason Christ spent a great deal of time talking about money. In fact, He talked more about money in the Gospels than He did about hell. Even though He spent a great deal of time discussing hell (because He does not want anyone to go there), He discussed money even more. Why? He talked about money because it is so important in our lives. Money can either be viewed as a tool to bless others, or it can completely destroy a person.

Let us begin to study what God says about money today.

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:19-24

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Explanation

Christ says that you have to choose between money and Him as your master. You cannot serve both. Let us look at what money can do if it is your master.

I. Money As Your Master – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Explanation

It is normal as a father, mother, son or daughter to want to provide for your family. To make money is not wrong. In fact, the Bible talks often about how good it is to use money properly. How does the Bible describe the proper use of money?

A) It is good to work hard and earn your living honestly.

“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

“A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.” (Proverbs 6:10-11) It is honorable to work hard and provide both for your own and your family’s needs.

B) It is good to be wise with your money by preparing for more difficult times.

“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.” (Proverbs 6:6-8). It is wise to save money when possible for more difficult times in life.

C) It is good to give money to the Kingdom of God.

“But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.” (2 Corinthians 8:7)

Money, in itself, is not evil. In fact, as you can see, money can be a good thing. You can have it in preparation for difficult times. It can be used to meet your basic needs. It can be used to grow the Kingdom of God.

However, the Bible says that money can become very dangerous as well. “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” (I Timothy 6:10)

Money can cause us to do things that displease God because we grow to love it more than we love Him. How can we misuse money?

A) We can save too much money for ourselves.

Although it can be good to save up money in order to prepare for the future, we can also save up money for the wrong reasons. Jesus told a story about a rich man. He said,

“Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:15-21)

The rich man had plenty of crops so he assumed he would now be well off for many years. Consequently, he thought that he could simply take life easy and only worry about eating, drinking and being merry.

Is it wrong to want to be happy and take it easy occasionally? No! However, this man was putting his faith in his possessions and not in the Lord. He was also focusing solely on the pleasures of life instead of the joys of the Lord. (Matthew 6:32-33)

Is it wrong to save money? No! However, many people today have the same attitude with money that the rich man had. In many places, people do not store crops but they store money in bank accounts. Instead of being thankful to God that they have that money for difficult times, they can horde the money for the sole purpose of eating, drinking and being merry.

B) We can buy too many treasures for ourselves.

Just like the rich man had to build bigger barns to store all of his goods, we can also buy so many things with our money that we forget to keep our focus. We can become convinced that we need a little larger house, a better car or horse, and nicer clothes. We think that if we buy a little more we can be happy. However, money and material possessions can NOT bring happiness. Years ago, one of the wealthiest men in the world, John W. Rockefeller, said, “I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness.”

Why shouldn’t we buy and store up treasure for ourselves? Jesus said “*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6: 19-21)*

Three things happen when we serve money more than the Lord.

A) Money does not last.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy...”

The things of this Earth do not last. No matter how pretty your house may be - termites, the weather, or time will eventually destroy it. No matter how nice a car you may have, eventually it will break down. Things of the Earth do not last.

B) Money can be taken from you.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;”

There is no reason to lay up too much treasure for yourself on Earth because other people will try to steal it. If you are a businessman, there is always someone who will try to beat you at your business. If you are just a regular person walking down the street, there will always be thieves lurking about to take your money. I will never forget the first time a man pulled out a gun and took my money. Many of us know how this feels. ANY POSSESSION can be stolen.

C) Money becomes the priority of your heart.

“For where your treasure is there your heart will be also.”

The love of money can cause you to change your ACTIONS and your THOUGHTS. You may begin to prioritize your time to get the money. You might stop prioritizing family, church and friends just to get more money. You might begin to start thinking and dwelling on money all of the time, as well. The Bible says, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the Earth.” (Colossians 3:2)

Application

Has money become your master? Have you let money control you actions, your thoughts and your heart? There is a better way. You can let God take control of your money and control of your life.

II. God As Your Master – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:24

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Explanation

God wants to be the master of your life. He wants to be in control of every area of your life. He even wants to be in control of your money. How can He be in control?

A) Have you given Him control of your possessions?

You need to accept that everything you own is God’s anyway. The Bible says, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in

it.” (Psalms 24:1) Give over control of your possessions. He gave you what you own anyway. He is your Provider.

B) Have you given Him control of your dreams and desires about money?

Maybe you desire to retire someday. Maybe you desire to one day own your own home or drive a car. Your mind can dwell on money to an extent that it controls you. However, the Lord longs for you to relax in Him. If you switch your focus from the material to the eternal, you will see great things happen in your life.

Illustration

The other day I was sitting with my wife talking about our financial situation. I make less money now after 12 years of marriage than I ever have in my life. I began to become very worried about our situation. My wife and I began to count up what we own and everything we have. We realized that even though I make less money, I still have more money and possessions than I have ever had! How is that even possible? It is possible because God is taking care of us. He will take care of His children. He may not give you the largest house or a new car, but He will take care of your basic needs. He meets our basic needs because He wants us to focus on Him and not on the luxuries of the world.

Do not become discouraged if you do not have the wealth a neighbor might have. Remember, Jesus chose to be born in a barn to a very poor family. Being great in God’s eyes is not determined by your wealth.

(C) Have you given Him control of your basic needs?

Maybe you don’t worry about riches, but do you worry whether He is going to take care of your basic needs in life? Do you fear that your lack of money will keep you from surviving? For example, do you fear you will not have enough money to buy food or medicine for your family?

Illustration

I once read a story about an elderly lady who lived alone in a shack. She kept to herself and seemed to have no true possessions. After she died, some people went through her small dwelling and found over \$10,000 in cash hidden in various places. She had been so afraid that she wouldn’t have enough money to survive that she hadn’t even used the money she actually had to provide for basic needs.

Fear that God will not provide for us can cause us to use money very unwisely. Remember God will provide for you and me (Matthew 6:25-34).

D) Have you given Him control of your giving?

A wise man once said, “There are two ways in which a Christian may view his money—‘How much of my money shall I use for God?’ or ‘How much of God’s money shall I use for myself?’”

Your use of money all depends on your perspective.

It is easy to say if you are poor that if you were only rich you would give a lot of money to the Lord. The truth is most people who follow Christ are poor.

Illustration

The junior Sunday School teacher asked her eight eager 10-year-olds if they would give \$1,000,000 to the missionaries. “YES!” they all screamed!!

“Would you give \$1,000?”

Again they shouted “YES!”

“How about \$100?”

“Oh, YES we would!” They all agreed!!

“Would you give just a dollar to the missionaries?” she asked.

The boys exclaimed “YES!” just as before, except for Johnnie.

“Johnnie,” the teacher said as she noticed the boy clutching his pocket, “Why didn’t you say ‘YES’ this time?”

“Well,” he stammered, “I HAVE a dollar.”

It is amazing how we can dream incredible dreams about giving money to the Lord, but when it comes time to actually give, it becomes much harder for us to give. It was easy for the little boy in the illustration to give a million dollars because he didn’t HAVE a million dollars. It was so hard to actually give that one dollar in his pocket!

It can be hard to give money to the Lord. It is hard to know how much to give. A good goal to have is to TITHE your money. In other words, give 10% of everything you earn to the Lord. You may find that you need to give a tithe AND an offering to the Lord. In other words, you give 10% of your salary, PLUS an offering for special needs that come up.

Maybe you are thinking this is too much to ask. You cannot give your financial dreams and desires to the Lord. You also can’t imagine giving over part of your money to the Lord regularly. What will happen when you give your money over to the Lord?

If you give control of your money to the Lord, He will do several things:

1) He will bless.

The Bible promises that the Lord will bless you. Remember, this doesn’t mean he will make you wealthy, but it does mean He will bless you. Malachi 3:10 says, “‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. ‘Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘And see if I will not throw open the floodgates of Heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.’ ”

2) He will provide.

He will give you what you need to survive here on Earth.

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we

drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-34)

3) He will be able to use you in the Kingdom.

I had a friend in Brazil named Luis. Luis was a single pastor who was completely committed to the Lord. He won many, many people to Jesus. One day he was offered a job making fifteen times more money than he was making at the time. I was sure he would take the job. However, Luis turned the job down. When I asked him about his decision, he said, “Pastor, I learned a long time ago that you live on what you make. If you make a lot, you spend a lot. If you make a little, you spend a little.” Luis had learned to control his desires for money for the sake of the Kingdom, and God used him mightily.

Decision

Who is in control of your life? Is it your desire for money, material possessions and the nicer things in life, or is it the Lord? God promises blessings, joys and protection if you put Him first. Remember, He knows what you need, and He will provide. My wife once said, “I have worked all over the world for the Kingdom, and I have never seen a true believer go hungry.” I believe she is right. God will meet our basic needs if we just trust in Him. Once you give your desires, needs and wants for money over to the Lord, you will be able to enjoy life more as well. Ask God to bless you financially. Ask God to help you make Him the Lord of your life. Ask Him not to allow money to take control of your thoughts or fears.

Maybe you are here and you are struggling with money. You live in fear that you won’t have enough or that you will lose the money you have. The true Creator God is not the God of fear; He is the God of love. He can take away your fear. The Bible says, “But perfect love drives out fear.” (1 John 4:18). He wants to take control of your life. Won’t you allow Him to do that today?

Are you afraid that Christians just want your money? Don’t hold on to that fear. God doesn’t NEED your money. However, if you give your life to Him, you will want to start helping the poor, hungry and lonely all around you. This church will never force you to give away your money, but if you truly give your life to Christ, you will want to give to help others. The Bible says, “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Give your life to Jesus today. Watch the joy and cheerfulness He will give you, not only in the area of money but in all aspects of life. If you want to give your life to Him today and experience true joy, you need to do three things. First of all, recognize your need for Christ. You have sin in your life—fear, jealousy, anger, lust, or greed. Second, recognize that only Jesus Christ can take away that sin with which you struggle as well as the sins that you aren’t even aware of. No other god has that power, only Jesus. Finally, surrender your life to Him. Ask Him to come into your life and take control.

If you want to do this, pray with me now.

SERMON 40

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your church how to avoid worry.

Bible Text - Matthew 6:25-34

Sermon -

Bible Narrative – Matthew 6:25-34

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?”

So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”

Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

I. Do Not Worry – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Matthew 6:25

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”

Explanation

Jesus gave His followers a list of things that they shouldn't worry about. He was trying to teach His followers to focus on the Kingdom of God and not the lesser things of the world. What did He say to not worry first about?

- A) Life - When Jesus was talking about “life,” He was probably referring to people’s fears of survival. Will they be able to survive day to day on what little they had? That is why He talked about what we should eat and drink. However, in today’s world, there are still people who worry about SURVIVAL in life. They know that they will probably have enough to eat and drink day to day. Even for those who do not live every day worried

about having enough food, they still worry about financial and professional survival. They worry about what kind of a SUCCESS we will be in this world.

Jesus taught his followers not to worry about their lives. If you rest in Him, you will find true life. "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly." (John 10:10) Christ came not only to give you eternal life, but also to show you how to have a full and more abundant life here and now.

B) Eat and drink - Jesus also said do not worry about what you eat or drink. This is an amazing command. After all, we have to eat and drink every day to survive. Christ went forty days without eating (Matthew 4), but that was because He was fasting to meet the Lord. The human body can only go so long without food and water before it gets sick. Jesus warns His followers to not worry about what to eat and drink. There are people in some countries that never have to worry about food. They only have to worry about the QUALITY of food they will eat - whether it is healthy or delicious food. Some people have to struggle every day to simply eat ANY food. This verse can be applied to both of these types of people. Christ said do not worry about food and drink. He will provide for your daily needs.

C) Body - Do not worry about your body. Again, Jesus was probably referring to people who were worried that they didn't have enough clothing and shelter to protect the body. However, can we also apply not worrying about the BODY in other areas of life? Should we not take care of our bodies and live as healthy as possible? We tend to think we can neglect the body for the sake of our religion (Colossians 2:23). However, the Bible teaches differently.

Paul said that he took good care of his body (I Corinthians 9:27). He saw the body as a temple of the Lord (I Corinthians 6:19) that would be raised again and be glorified (I Corinthians 15:44). We should care of our body God gave us. However, avoid becoming so consumed with exercising your bodies that you forget about taking care of what is important. "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." (I Timothy 4:8)

D) Clothes - Some people only have the clothes on their backs. I was talking to a missionary from Africa. Everyone he worked with only had one shirt. The people I worked with in Brazil had several shirts, but they did not have many extra clothes. However, there are people in every country of the world that spend lots and lots of money on every shirt they own. Who is Jesus talking to in this moment? He is talking to all of us. Do not worry about your clothes. Christ will take care of you. He will keep you clothed.

This passage is very difficult. How can we not worry about our clothes? How can we not worry about feeding our families? Is Jesus teaching that we should just be lazy and not be

concerned about providing the basic needs of our family? Of course not. The Bible teaches that it is good to work hard (Proverbs 6:6-11) and to provide for our family (I Timothy 5:8). We are commanded to take care of our family. However, we can become so worried about the little things in life that we forget to focus on the proper things.

Illustration

In Luke 10:38-41 we see two great women of God. Look at how they are contrasted.

Bible Narrative-

Jesus entered a village and Martha welcomed Him into her house. Her sister, Mary, also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. Martha was distracted by all the details of serving the guests. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." Jesus answered her and said, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen the good part, which will not be taken away from her."

Application

Was Jesus teaching Martha that it was wrong to work hard and serve others? No. Was Jesus teaching Martha that it was wrong to take care of the details? No. Was Jesus teaching us the same things? No. Jesus was teaching Martha to focus on Him. Mary had chosen to prioritize being in Jesus' presence. There is a time to eat and sleep and drink. Even Jesus had to do those things while on Earth. However, Martha was more focused on her WORRIES than on her MASTER. We must rest in our Master and be assured that He will take care of our life, food, water, body and clothes.

II. Why Not Worry? – Second Spiritual Truth

Explanation

Jesus gave many reasons not to worry in this passage.

A) You are of value –

"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26)

Jesus taught that God took care of the birds. Even though they are beautiful, they are not nearly as valuable to God as you are. Birds are not reincarnated people (Hebrews 9:27), but they are lesser beings than man because only man is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26).

You, on the other hand, are created in the image of God. You are NOT God. You are NOT divine. However, His loving hand has created you exactly as He desired. The Bible says that you are FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE. (Psalm 139:14). You are valuable. You are precious in His sight. One principal reason not to worry is because you are important to God. He made you special. Think about something that is special to you such as your child or a possession that has belonged to your family for many generations. Think about how carefully you take care of it. God loves all of the world, but YOU are God's special possession.

Not only does He love you, but if you have given your life to Christ, then YOU are even called a child of God (I John 5:19). Obviously, you are a priority to Him.

B) Worrying does no good –

“Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?” (Matthew 6:27)

Jesus made an obvious point. Worrying does no good. It does not make you perform better. In fact, you will find that when you worry, it keeps you from performing the best you can. A person who preaches in front of many people but gets worried about what others will think will not preach as well. A person who is playing cricket or soccer and who is worried about his performance will not play as intelligently. Worrying always decreases your performance.

Jesus used a perfect example of the pointlessness of worrying in this verse. He asked if worrying could add one single “cubit” to your height... You can worry and worry about your height, but you cannot make yourself taller. Worrying does no physical good. In fact, worry can make you sick. Dr. Charles Mayo of the famous Mayo Clinic wrote, “Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands and the whole nervous system. I have never met a man or known a man to die of overwork, but I have known a lot who died of worry.”

C) God takes care of you –

“Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (Matthew 6:30)

Do not worry because you are important to God. He is more concerned about your well being than even you are. A woman once said about the Lord and His concern for us, “Every evening I turn my worries over to the Lord. He's going to be up all night anyway!” She's exactly right. Just turn over your worries to the all powerful God who never sleeps. You are important to Him; let Him take care of your needs.

D) Some things are unimportant –

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek.” (Matthew 6:31)

Food, water and shelter are NOT unimportant. Everyone needs those things. However, people can become totally focused on the wrong things. They can be focused on wealth, power, and prestige. They can be worried that they do not have as much as their neighbor. However, Jesus said these things are what “Gentiles” worry about. In this instance, Jesus is using Gentiles to refer to non-believers.

The world can easily be focused on the wrong things. Today I saw on the internet that you can buy a HOUSE FOR YOUR DOG for \$600. Who would pay \$600 for a doghouse? The world can become convinced that it needs as many material possessions as possible.

E) He already knows your needs –

“For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” (Matthew 6:32)

The Bible says that God already knows what you need. If He takes the time to take care of the birds of the air and the grass of the field, He will take care of you. Just as a father knows the needs of his children, your heavenly Father knows your needs. He knows you need food, clothing, water and shelter. He knows what you need physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally.

F) He promises to take care of you –

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33)

The Bible says to cast your cares upon Him (I Peter 5:7) Why cast your cares upon Him? Because the Bible says that he will sustain you. (Psalms 55:22). If you seek after God, He will take care of the rest.

G) You need to focus on today not the worries of tomorrow –

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:34)

Some people just LIKE TO WORRY. If they are not worrying about something they are worried about NOT BEING WORRIED. We often create worries about both the past and the future, and it does not allow us to focus on today. Someone once said “The average person is crucifying himself between two thieves: the regrets of yesterday and the worries of tomorrow.”

Jesus warned us that today has enough trouble on its own. Focus on today and try not to worry about the future.

III. How to Avoid Worry – Third Spiritual Truth

A) Take time to see God's creation –

“Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them . . . Consider the lilies of the field, now they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” (Matthew 6:26-29)

Take time today to look at the birds of the air and the grass of the field. Look at the order that God has created. Everything works in God's world. The sun always rises and the stars always appear at night. The birds are always fed and the ocean is always filled with water. Do bad things happen in nature? Yes, they certainly do. Birds die. Droughts occur. However, God is in control of all things. What God creates works properly. He is not only the Creator, but He is the Sustainer of all things (Hebrews 1:3-referring to God the Son).

B) Pray for strengthened faith –

“Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (Matthew 6:30)

Worry is the opposite of faith. Faith involves trusting that the Lord is in control of every aspect of your life. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him . . .” (Hebrews 11:6)

Pray that God will strengthen your faith. Take your worries to the Lord in prayer and watch what He does through you. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

C) Seek the Kingdom of God first –

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33)

If you can determine that God's kingdom is the most important thing in your life, then all of your other worries tend to fall into place. It is not surprising that Christ talked about worry right after He talked about money. (Matthew 6:19-24). Why? Because so many of our worries are linked with money. We are afraid that we will not have enough money to provide for our daily needs. However, if we place our thoughts first on the Lord and His Kingdom, He promises to add all of our other basic needs to our lives. Colossians 3:2 says “Set your mind on things above, not on things of the Earth.”

D) Be content with what you have –

It is good to aspire to work hard for the Kingdom and at your job. However, the Holy Spirit teaches us in Scripture that a cure for the anxiousness of life is to be content with what you have. “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” (Philippians 4:11-12)

Decision

Do you struggle with worry and fear in your life? Are you afraid that God will not take care of you? Even believers can struggle with fear and worry. Take time right now to tell the Lord your fears and ask Him to help you overcome your worries. You will be amazed at the peace in your heart you will experience if you cast your cares upon Him. You will enjoy life more and know Him better.

If you are consumed with worry and do not see a way to control your problems, it is time for you to give your life to the Lord. The Bible says that perfect love casts out fear (I John 4:18). The only perfect love is Jesus. He IS love. He wants to come into your life. He wants to help you know the CREATOR AND SUSTAINER GOD. He wants you to have eternal life with Him.

If you want to give your life to Jesus, you need to do three things. First of all, you need to recognize that you are a sinner, just as everyone is, and you need Jesus. Secondly you need to accept that only Jesus can save you. No other God or yourself can save you—only Jesus. Thirdly, you need to repent of your sins and give your life to Jesus. Will you do that today? Will you be free from your fears and worries and make Christ Lord of your life?

If you want to give your life to Jesus, let’s pray right now and ask Him to be Lord of your life. You can pray and say, “Dear Jesus . . .

SERMON 41

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your church about the consequences of judging others hypocritically.

Bible Text - Matthew 7:1-5

Sermon -

Introduction

Several years ago I was watching television and a famous actor was being interviewed in front of a school for actors. This actor was very, very popular and the audience was extremely interested in everything he had to say. The interviewer asked the young actor what was the thing he hated most in the world. The young man paused and then said, "People who are judgmental." The crowd applauded loudly after this profound statement.

I sat there and thought about his statement. Yes, the Bible teaches us that we should not be judgmental. However, I thought his answer was really odd. The thing that He hated MOST in the entire world was judgmental people? How about murder, rape, hunger, or war? I think that if someone asked me what I hated most, there are many things that would be much higher on the list than judgmental people!

This young man was expressing something very profound without even knowing what he was doing. He hated a judgmental attitude because he did not want people to judge HIM for his actions. He wanted to be able to do exactly what he wanted to do in life with no consequences. This young man was a perfect example of how the Bible described God's people, the Israelites, during a certain time in their history. The Bible says, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6)

In other words, nobody wanted anyone to have authority over him. Everybody wanted to simply control his own life.

Today we will continue the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 7, we can read as Jesus is about to finish his Sermon on the Mount. We can imagine as he speaks to the religious leaders, the Pharisees, to teach them a little more about Him and His Kingdom. Christ teaches about "judgment" in today's lesson. It appears that Jesus is saying that we can never judge another person. Is that what Jesus is saying? When can we judge others? When can we not judge? Let us see what the Bible says on this subject.

Bible Narrative - Matthew 7:1-5

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own

eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

I. The Wrong Attitude in Judgment – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 7:1

"Judge not, that you be not judged."

Explanation

Jesus is very clear that we are not to judge others. Why did he say this? Jesus was talking to the Pharisees. They were a group of religious leaders that were very strict with the law.

The Bible is divided into the Old and New Testament. The Old Testament is filled with all types of laws that deal with everything from what a person could eat at that time, who someone could marry, what days to have festivals for the Lord and what kind of morals a person was to have. The law itself was good, but the Pharisees had taken the law to the extreme. They added to the law and made it a miserable burden for all. They had a harsh, condemning attitude toward all of those around them. They had taken their love for the law and had begun to judge their fellow Jews.

Illustration

It is easy to become judgmental. I walked into a home a few months ago. The man who lived there looked very mean. He was very large and opened the door with an angry attitude. I had gone to this home to tell the man about Jesus, but when I walked in I thought to myself, "Oh, this man will never listen to us. This visit will not work."

I had begun to judge the man before the visit even had started! We sat down and talked to the man for about 45 minutes. By the middle of the conversation, he had completely changed. He was very interested in what we had to say and was extremely cordial to us. By the end of the visit, he had accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Did I judge the man by his appearance? I certainly did. I walked in and assumed that the man was mean because he looked mean. I assumed he wouldn't be interested in the Lord. However, the truth is that he was a sinner who needed the Lord Jesus. A judging attitude ALWAYS brings bad consequences to a situation.

Jesus described some of these bad consequences to judging in this passage:

A) You will be judged.

"Judge not, that you be not judged." Matthew 7:1

We will all face judgment some day. The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." We will all face judgment. The good news is that if you have given your life to Christ you do not have to FEAR judgment. You are assured that Christ will accept you on the Day of Judgment. (Revelation 20:11-15) In other words, one day every person will be judged by God whether they have given their life to Jesus. If Christ is in your life, you have no fear because you are assured of eternal life with God.

However, when we accept Christ, one of the fruits of our lives is not only eternal life with God, but LOVE for one another as well. That love should keep us from having a judging attitude.

Jesus was speaking to a group of men that had not accepted Christ yet. They were resting on their religion and were very judgmental in all that they did. The consequence of their rejection of the Lord, combined with their judging attitude, was that they would be judged as well.

B) You will be judged in the same amount you judge others.

"For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." Matthew 7:2

Jesus also told the Pharisees that would not only be judged, but they would be judged to the same degree that they judged others. Jesus gave an example of a person who was judged for his unforgiving attitude in Matthew 18:21-30.

Illustration

"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven times.' Therefore, the kingdom of Heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in.

'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." (Matthew 18:21-30)

The king wanted to show mercy to the man. Just as God wants to show mercy to you, the king wanted to show mercy to him. However, the first servant showed an unforgiving, unloving attitude toward his fellow man. The king then judged the man severely. In fact, the king threw the wicked servant in jail just as the wicked servant wanted to do to the man who owed him. The servant's unforgiving attitude caused great judgment upon himself. In the same way, we owe God such a great debt because of our sins. How can we ever repay Him? We cannot repay the Lord. We deserve death and Hell because of our sins. In fact, our sins are so horrible to God that we deserve to be separated from Him forever. The Bible says in Isaiah 59:2, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear." However, God longs to forgive you. He wants to show you His perfect grace.

Just as God the Father longs to show grace, we should show grace that is far greater than anger, lust, unforgiveness, or a judgmental attitude.

Application

When you begin to have a judging, critical or unforgiving attitude toward others, remember what God has done for you. Remember your own sins. Try to show the other person the same grace that God shows you.

II. To Judge Rightly, Judge Yourself First! – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 7:3-5

"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Explanation

Jesus is teaching the religious leaders to examine themselves first. Sometimes we have glaring sins in our own lives that we have missed. If we search ourselves, we will see our own sins. Then after we have repented of our own sins, we will be in a better position to help others.

Illustration

A friend of mine was desperately trying to control his five kids. They were on a long trip in their van. They were typical boys and girls. They had been yelling a lot and eating a lot of

junk food. My friend and I had been driving with our families for several hours in several cars. Once, when we stopped, my friend got out of his car looking tired and a little angry. One of his sons ran out of the car with a piece of cake in his hand. The father turned around and yelled at his son and told him, “Stop eating so much cake!” I laughed to myself immediately. My friend was yelling at his son about eating cake while holding a piece of cake IN HIS OWN HAND.

Application

My friend was so busy yelling at his son about eating cake, that he didn't see the cake in his own hand! Sometimes when we judge others we miss the mistakes in our own lives. For example, we can think someone is a selfish person, but we forget about our own selfishness. Examine your own selfishness, and then you can help others with their problems.

It is interesting to note that Christ implied that you should examine yourself first, but then you should HELP OTHERS. There are instances when we CAN judge other people.

A) False teachers –

(Matthew 7:16) We can judge false teachers by the fruit of their labor and by what they teach. We are allowed to “judge” them as believers.

B) Fellow believers –

The church must be different than the world. Believers have to be accountable for their actions. Paul tells us that we are allowed to judge our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. For example, I Corinthians 5:12 says, “For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?” See I Corinthians 5:11 for examples of believers who you are allowed to judge.

How do we judge these other people however? Try to remember two principles when you are forced to judge:

A) Love the sinner and hate the sin.

Remember that we are all sinners. When you are forced to confront someone about a sin, remember to LOVE the person that you are working with. Your attitude will make all the difference when confronting the person. Jesus gave a wonderful example of this attitude in John 8:1-11.

“But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’ This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first. And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their consciences, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?'

She said, 'No one, Lord.'

And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"

Jesus did not condemn the one, but He didn't condone her sin either. Instead He said, "Go and sin no more."

B) Judge to restore your brother.

The purpose of judging your brother in Christ is to restore him IN LOVE to the proper path in order to accept him into the fellowship of believers again. This occurs when a believer is UNREPENTANT of a particular sin. The idea of this judgment is to stop someone from a habitual sin. In this case, we are not to judge for revenge but for restoration. Galatians 6:1-5 says, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load."

III. The Perfect Judge – Third Spiritual Truth

Explanation

We must be very careful when we judge our fellow believers. We have to remember that we are flawed humans. We must remember to judge with love and with the purpose to restore. We also must remember that there is one perfect judge in this world. The Lord is the PERFECT JUDGE for the sins of mankind. One day He will judge all of mankind for their sins. (Revelation 20:11-15). He will judge fairly (2 Chronicles 19:7, Psalm 58:11, Psalm 82:8).

Application

Are you a believer in Christ already? If so, have you fallen into one of two spiritual traps?

- a) You have become overly judgmental to all of those around you. Being judgmental has created a harsh or condemning attitude in your life.
- b) You have not properly judged those people who preach false doctrine. Maybe you have not properly judged a believer who is unrepentant of a particular sin? (See I Corinthians 5:11 for examples).

Pray that God will help you in this area of your life. A harsh condemning attitude is a discouragement for people who long to come to Christ and quenches the joy in your own life. An attitude that everyone in the church can sin as much as they want keeps the church from being different than the world around them!

Maybe you are visiting today and you do not yet know the Lord. Are you ready for the Lord's judgment? The Lord is patient towards you (2 Peter 3: 9). He longs for all men to repent and avoid judgment. However, a righteous God MUST judge sin some day. A righteous God cannot have sin in His presence (Isaiah 59:2). A righteous God must judge unbelief toward His Son Jesus Christ (John 14:6). God is love, but He is also HOLY. We can rest assured that the Lord will judge us perfectly because He is perfectly Holy. He will know our hearts and minds perfectly. He will judge you and me with honor and fairness. We can also rest assured that we will UNDERSTAND our judgment before the Lord. Why? Because when we are in His presence, our sins will be evident before our Lord.

However, if we have given our lives to Christ, we are already forgiven. There is no judgment or condemnation in Christ (Romans 8:1). If you give your life to Christ, His blood will cover your sins, and you will escape all judgment. You are accepted as a son of God. You are not divine and you are not THE SON OF GOD; however, you will be as one of God's children.

Decision

Don't you want to be free from sin and judgment before the Lord? Don't you want to know Christ today? Today is the day you can give your life to Christ (2 Corinthians 6:2). If you would like to give your life to Christ, you can pray a prayer and ask Him to be the only Lord and Savior of your life. Would you like to do that? Let us show you how today.

SERMON 42

Purpose of the sermon - To teach your people the true way to eternal life.

Bible Text - Matthew 7:13-27

NOTE TO PASTOR: WE ARE COVERING MANY GREAT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE IN THIS ONE SERMON. YOU COULD EASILY BREAK DOWN THIS SERMON INTO VARIOUS SERMONS AND PREACH FOR SEVERAL WEEKS.

Sermon –

Introduction

Every person in the world has a desire to live forever after he dies. Jesus closed His Sermon on the Mount with a message of how truly to have eternal life.

Bible Narrative - Matthew 7:13-27

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

I. There Are Two Ways to Eternal Life – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Matthew 7:13-14

“Enter by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

A. The wide gate that many go in –

There are only two roads to eternal life. The first road has a wide gate and a broad road. Why is it wide? Because most people will take this path. This is the path of false religions, false teachings, false pride and false hopes and dreams. Most people throughout history have taken this path. It is the path that does not follow the one true Creator God and His Son Jesus Christ. Even though Christ was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, did miracles that were witnessed by many people, rose from the grave, and has since changed the lives of billions of people throughout history, none of these proofs are enough for many people throughout history. They create their own religion or follow religions which they neither practice, believe nor understand.

In the end, most people reject the one true Creator God not because of their religion but because of their pride and desire for control. Many are too proud to give up control of their lives. They want the freedom to live their lives exactly as they want. However, in contrast to this control, at the same time they fear that they are alone in this world.

Illustrations

Remember the story of the Muslims in Nigeria? As we were preaching one night in Nigeria, a Christian man came up to me and explained why some Muslims were turning to Christ and others weren't. They were living in an area where about half of the people were Muslims and half were Christians. He said that the Muslims knew that the Christians were right about Christ, but they were afraid to make the right choice. Fear ultimately stopped them from turning to Christ and away from their religion.

In Brazil, the believers in Christ are called “crentes.” The believers are known for their upright lifestyle and for their true commitment to the Father. Even with their positive testimony, many Brazilian non-believers still reject Christ. Why? They reject Christ not because of other religions in Brazil but because they do not want to give up the sins of their lives. They do not want to give up their parties, drinking, and sexual immorality.

B) The narrow gate that few find –

However, there are millions in the world today who have turned from their sins and followed a different path. They have given their lives to Jesus Christ as their ONLY Lord and Savior. They have rejected spirits, other gods, power, or tradition and given their lives over to Him. Christ assured us that this second way would have two characteristics:

1. Narrow –

In other words, Christ is very exclusive. There is a single way to God the Father, through Christ the Son. There are not multiple ways to the Father, only through the Son. One cannot have eternal life with God through Jesus Christ and other gods. The only way to God is through Christ alone. Just this narrowness is enough to keep most from following Him.

2. Difficult –

Christ never promised an easy life with Him. There will always be persecution from the outside world and battles for self-control within each individual believer. However, He has promised eternal life with Him to those who believe in Him. Christ also promised a fuller, more meaningful, abundant life now (John 10:10).

II. Traps That Lead to the “Wide Gate” and Prevent People from Eternal Life – Second Spiritual Truth

A. False prophets –

Bible Narrative – Matthew 7:15-20

“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

Application

There are many false preachers and teachers in the world. One day two young men came to the door of my house and wanted to talk about Jesus with me. They described Jesus as the one and only Savior of the world. They wanted me to give my life to Him. Everything they talked about sounded great at first. However, they soon began to describe WHO Jesus is and WHO God is according to their Mormon religion. They claimed that both God and Jesus are created. In their understanding, God and Jesus were once men like us but now have BECOME gods. They claimed that I could become a god as well according to the Mormon religion.

However, the Bible tells us that Jesus and God have never changed. In fact the Bible says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8). God describes Himself as unchanging. “For I am the Lord; I do not change.” (Malachi 3:6) The Bible NEVER says that we can become God. It says that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4-6). He is the Trinity with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

These two young men looked very nice. They were dressed very well. They talked very convincingly at first, but they were false teachers. They will be judged by the fruit of their work. They had bad fruit.

Many teachers will try to lead you astray from the one true God. Will you allow them to mislead you as well?

B. False religiosity –

Bible Narrative – Matthew 7:21-23

“Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

Explanation

Many people believe that they will be okay with the Lord because of their religion. They assume that because they have been sincere in their religion that they will be okay. The problem with that idea is that one can be sincere and be sincerely wrong as well! Sincerity is not proof that something is a fact!

For example, I can wake up one morning and not carry an umbrella because I sincerely believe it will not rain. However, I might come home very wet at the end of the day because the weather changed in the afternoon! I may have sincerely thought it wouldn’t rain but be completely wrong. I would still have to face the consequences.

Many people believe that because they sincerely have practiced a religion they will be okay. There is only one true way to Heaven. The only way to Heaven with the Lord is to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Sincerity in worship of any other person or god will not bring salvation from God the Father.

C. Failure to follow God's Word –

Bible Narrative – Matthew 7:24-27

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

Explanation

Many people have heard about the Bible. There are actually many people who went to Christian schools for their studies. There are many people who even attended a Christian church when they were younger. They have heard some of the truths about the Bible but reject the truth of the Bible because:

- 1) Some of the people who were teachers of the Bible did not act as they should have. These teachers were poor examples for Christ.
- 2) Many people were taught the Bible when they were young but felt that it did not apply to their family or that it was a “western” religion. Some viewed the study as only a cultural experience.
- 3) They would prefer to live like most people around them—a life without Christ.

God gave us the Bible because He loves us and wants to provide us a firm foundation to base our lives upon. Jesus described a person who does not follow His word as a man who builds his house upon the sand. Even though he might build a very beautiful house, if it is built on sand, on the wrong foundation, sooner or later the house will fall.

For example, I know a young man who was raised in a Christian home. His mother made him attend church every Sunday, but in his heart he did not want to be a follower of Christ. When he grew up and left home he immediately quit attending church. He started to date and he married a beautiful girl. They went to university. He got a job that made him very rich. She went to medical school to become a doctor.

For a while it seemed that they really didn't need God. They went to parties. They drank lots of alcohol. They smoked many cigarettes. Everything seemed great until one day this young man came home and his wife said she didn't love him anymore. She said she didn't need him. She was graduating from medical school and would soon be making lots of money.

This man's heart was broken. He realized all of his worldly pleasures had caused his life to be empty, and now he was alone. His foundation had fallen. It was at this time that he

remembered his mother and everything she had taught him. He decided to take the narrow path and follow Christ. He wanted to rebuild his life but this time on something solid. This time he was going to build his life on Jesus Christ.

Application

Maybe you have heard the Bible and rejected it. You have missed opportunities to study from a book that can give you the true firm foundation of your life. That firm foundation is Jesus Christ.

III. Signs and Decisions That Point Us to the Narrow Gate and Difficult Way of Christ – Third Spiritual Truth

Do you want to know how to follow Jesus Christ? Christ also describes those who follow Him.

A) Following Godly teachers –

Bible Narrative – Matthew 7:15-20

“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

If you follow the teaching of someone who preaches that:

- 1) God is the Creator God.
- 2) He created you.
- 3) You and I were born with sin in our lives.
- 4) God wants to cleanse you and me of our sins.
- 5) Jesus is the Way to cleanse us of our sins. Christ was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died on the cross, was buried and rose from the grave proving He was both God and man as a sacrifice for your sins.
- 6) Christ will return again and final judgment will occur.
- 7) You and I must have a point in our lives where we repent of our sins and give our lives to Jesus as our only Savior and Lord,

THEN YOU ARE FOLLOWING A TEACHER WHO PREACHES THE TRUTH. He can help teach you how to give your life to Jesus. If someone does not teach these things, then He is not teaching the Biblical truth.

B) Following His will –

Bible Narrative – Matthew 7:21-23

“Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

Explanation

It is God’s will that you follow Him. If you hear about Jesus and give your life to Him, then you are following His will. Maybe you heard about Jesus through a friend. Maybe you heard about Jesus through a pastor. Maybe you heard about Jesus through a television program or through a Bible study. Maybe you were simply reading a Bible, and God began to move in your life. If you give your life to Him, you are following His will.

C) Following His Word –

Bible Narrative – Matthew 7:24-27

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

Explanation

It is by following Christ’s word that we can know Him. We can read God’s Word in Scripture. All of the Bible is God’s word (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible was written to help you to know God (I John 5:13). In the Bible Jesus, Himself, said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

True believers are FOLLOWERS of Christ. At the beginning of the series on the Sermon on the Mount, we discussed who Jesus is. He is the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE. Most people in the world believe He is a good man, a good teacher or a good example to follow. However, He is much more than that. He is the only way to know God. He is the only Way to salvation. He is the only way to have eternal life.

Application

So many people spend their lives longing to know the one, true God. Jesus is the only One who can help you get to the one true God. The Bible says, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3) Won’t you come to know the one true God today?

There is only one reality, one eternal being—God the Father, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer who wants you to know Him. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die as a sacrifice for your sins. God, who is Holy, could not allow sin, or disobedience to Him, in His presence, so He created a plan for people throughout time to come to know Him. He sent Jesus Christ to die for your sins, in your place, on the cross. However, Jesus, who is God the Son, One of the Trinity, fully man and fully God as well, rose from the grave. Death could not stop Him. He is alive today and He wants to live in your heart.

Decision

Christ did everything on the cross for you, He now only commands that you surrender your life to Him and ONLY Him. There are no other gods; there is no other way to salvation—only through Jesus Christ. Won’t you give your life to Him today? Isn’t it time you knew the Father through His Son Jesus Christ?

If you want to give your life to Him, repeat this prayer after me. “Dear Father, I know that I am a sinner, but I know that you sent Jesus Christ to die for me. I want to surrender my life to Him today. I turn from my sins and give my life to you. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.”

SERMON 43

Purpose of the sermon - To show your church an example from the Bible how a family SHOULDN'T act.

Bible Text - Genesis 37

Sermon -

Bible Narrative – Genesis 37

Joseph was seventeen years old. Joseph helped feed the flocks with his brothers. One day, Joseph brought a bad report about his brothers to his father, Jacob. Now Jacob loved Joseph more than all of his children because he was the son of his old age. Jacob made Joseph a coat that had many colors. When Joseph's brothers saw this coat, they hated him.

Joseph had a dream and told it to his brothers. Joseph said that in the dream he and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field. His sheaf rose up, while the other sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. When he finished retelling his dream, Joseph's brothers asked if he was to be their leader. They then hated him even more.

Joseph then had another dream and told it to his brothers. He said that in this dream the sun, moon and the eleven stars bowed down to him. So he told it to his father and his brother. His father, Jacob, rebuked Joseph and asked if he and Joseph's mother would bow down to him, also. However, Jacob kept Joseph's dream in mind.

Joseph's brothers left to feed their father's flock. Jacob, who was also called Israel, said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." Jacob wanted Joseph to check on his brothers. Joseph left and looked for his brothers. A man told him that his brothers had gone to an area called Dothan.

When Joseph was still far off, his brothers saw him and conspired to kill him. They said, "Look, this dreamer is coming!" They decided to kill Joseph and throw him into a pit. They devised a lie to tell their Father. They would say that a wild beast had killed Joseph.

When Joseph's oldest brother Reuben heard the plan, he told his brothers they shouldn't kill them. He said they should throw him in a pit but not kill him. His plan was to save Joseph and bring him back to his father.

When Joseph arrived, the brothers tore off his tunic and threw him in the pit. Then the brothers sat down to eat a meal. As they were eating, a company of Ishmaelites passed by on their camels, bearing spices. Judah asked what they would gain by killing Joseph. He suggested they sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites. He said they shouldn't raise their hands against him because he was their brother. The brothers listened to his counsel and sold Joseph for twenty shekels of silver. The Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt.

Reuben then returned to the pit and realized Joseph was not in it. He returned to his brothers and told them that now that his brother wasn't there, and he didn't know what to do or where to go. So they took Joseph's tunic and dipped it in blood. Then they showed their father the tunic and asked if the coat was Joseph's. Jacob knew the coat was Joseph's. He assumed a

beast had killed him, and Jacob began to mourn his son. Joseph's brothers tried to comfort him but he refused to be comforted. He said he would mourn Joseph the rest of his life.

Joseph was sold to an officer of Pharaoh's court in Egypt named Potiphar.

Introduction

If there were ever a chapter that describes a family with problems, chapter 37 of Genesis is that chapter! For the next few weeks we will be studying Joseph. Joseph was one of the greatest men of God who ever lived, but this first chapter describes his difficult start in his walk with the Lord. Let us learn from Joseph's experience how NOT to act with our family. Let us examine how Joseph, his brothers and his father all made giant mistakes as they lived with one another, and let us try to apply some of these principles to our own lives.

I. Parents, Love Your Children Equally – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 37:3-4

Now Jacob loved Joseph more than all of his children because he was the son of his old age. Jacob made Joseph a coat that had many colors. When Joseph's brothers saw this coat, they hated him.

Explanation

Jacob had 12 sons (and several daughters) from four wives. However, one of his wives (Rachel) was the most special to him. Joseph was born to his favorite wife. The Bible says that Jacob loved Joseph more than all of his other children. Jacob even made him a coat that marked him as different from his older brothers. In fact, this coat designated Joseph as the future leader of the household. Joseph was not the oldest son, so how do you think this coat made his older brothers feel?

Illustration

I have two daughters. They are constantly comparing how I treat each child. If I tell one child I love her, I must tell the other child I love her as well! It is impossible as parents always to be 100% fair every time we deal with our children. However, our children want us to be fair because they want and need to be equally loved, respected and cared for in their parents' eyes. In a world that is so harsh sometimes, children need to know that their parents love them completely. If one child feels like she is loved less than the other child, it robs them of that confidence and assurance they deserve from their parents.

Application

Parents do you love each child in your home equally? If you don't, your children can sense the difference. Joseph's brothers certainly did.

II. Brothers and Sisters, Do Not Envy Each Other – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 37:4

When Joseph's brothers saw this coat they hated him.

Explanation

God gave us the Ten Commandments. The last commandment tells us not to “covet” our neighbor (Exodus 20:17). God was telling the Israelites not to desire or be jealous of other people. Joseph's brothers were jealous of their father's love for his son.

Illustration

In many countries, people have a tradition of giving gifts on their children's birthdays. My parents told me that when we were children that they tried to spend the EXACT amount of money on each child. Why? They wanted to avoid one child becoming jealous of the other. They did not want one child thinking that the other got better gifts than the other. Guess what? They were correct to assume we would compare. We did compare gifts! It is very easy for children to immediately become jealous of one another. It is just as easy for adults to become jealous as well.

Application

Today we can be jealous of our brothers and sisters so quickly. We can be jealous if one is “better looking” than the other. Maybe we can be jealous if one is more successful in business than the other. Maybe one has more respect in the community than the other. No matter what reason you may have to be jealous of your brother or sister, remember that person is still of your same blood! There is a saying that “blood runs thicker than water.” That means we have a special bond with our family. We have an even more special bond with our brothers and sisters. One brother or sister will always be prettier or smarter than the other. No two people are exactly the same! One brother and sister has to be at least SLIGHTLY more attractive, smarter or wealthier than the other. Cherish the gifts your brother or sister has and avoid jealousy.

III. Leaders (Parents, Older Brothers and Sisters), Fulfill Your Duties – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 37:18-33

When Joseph arrived, the brothers tore off his tunic and threw him in the pit. Then the brothers sat down to eat a meal. As they were eating, a company of Ishmeelites passed by on their camels, bearing spices. Judah asked what they would gain by killing Joseph. He suggested they sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites. He said they shouldn't raise their hand against him because he was their brother. The brothers listened to his counsel and sold Joseph for twenty shekels of

silver. The Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt.

Reuben then returned to the pit and realized Joseph was not in it. He returned to his brothers and told them now that his brother wasn't there, and he didn't know what to do or where to go. So they took Joseph's tunic and dipped it in blood. Then they showed their father the tunic and asked if the coat was Joseph's. Jacob knew the coat was Joseph's.

Explanation

In this passage we see two men who should have shown great leadership, but didn't.

A. Jacob - Although we cannot be totally to blame for our children's actions, Jacob's sons acted horribly in this passage. What caused these brothers to show such terrible behavior? Not only did they dislike Joseph, but they wanted to join together and kill him! Jacob obviously had made some key errors as a Father.

1. He had not taught them the value of life- These men valued their own desires over the lives of others. They also had a basic misunderstanding of the importance of life.

2. He had not taught them sufficiently the importance of honesty. Jacob's name in Hebrew means "deceiver". Jacob had been known to deceive others in the past. (See Genesis 27). Now the deceiver of the past was being deceived by his own sons. We cannot train our kids to be morally upright in an area of our life (such as honesty), when we do not practice that moral ourselves.

3. Jacob did not know his sons' potential for wrong doing. When Jacob was presented Joseph's coat dipped in blood, he just ASSUMED Joseph had been killed by an animal. He did not stop to consider that the sons may have done something wrong. (Genesis 27:33). Had he been aware of their hatred for their brother? Had he stopped to consider the possibility that his sons could have acted wickedly? Often times, we can be blind to the possibility that our own children could act wrongly.

B. Reuben - Reuben was the oldest brother. He was supposed to be the leader when the Father was gone. Instead of Reuben boldly stopping his brothers, he tried to form a plan to sneak his brother back to safety. Reuben's word should have been enough to stop the crime, but he did not have enough influence with his brothers. Older brothers CAN and SHOULD have great influence with their younger brothers.

Illustration

A good example of the influence of an older brother can be found in John 1:35-42.

John was standing with two of his disciples. Looking at Jesus as he walked, John the Baptist said, 'Behold the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. They called Jesus 'Rabbi' and asked Him where He was staying. They went and saw where he was staying and remained with Him that day. One of the two that followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found Simon Peter and told him that they had found the Messiah. Andrew brought Simon to Jesus."

Application

Leaders of homes should take their roles seriously. If God made you the father, or the oldest sibling, remember that with that position comes great responsibility. Andrew, as the older brother, had obviously taken his role seriously because his younger brother, Simon Peter, followed him to Christ. The consequence of Andrew's actions is that Simon Peter became a follower of Christ and later became the leader of Christ's apostles.

Take your role seriously as older brother and watch as your family follows your leadership in your relationship with the Lord.

IV. Each Family Member, Act in a Godly Manner with Your Family – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 37:2-11

Joseph was seventeen years old. Joseph helped feed the flocks with his brothers. One day, Joseph brought a bad report about his brothers to his father, Jacob. Now Jacob loved Joseph more than all of his children because he was the son of his old age. Jacob made Joseph a coat that had many colors. When Joseph's brothers saw this coat, they hated him.

Joseph had a dream and told it to his brothers. Joseph said that in the dream he and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field. His sheaf rose up while the other sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. When he finished retelling his dream, Joseph's brothers asked if he was to be their leader. They then hated him even more.

Joseph then had another dream and told it to his brothers. He said that in this dream the sun, moon and the eleven stars bowed down to him. So he told it to his father and his brother. His father, Jacob, rebuked Joseph and asked if he and Joseph's mother would bow down to him, also. However, Jacob kept Joseph's dream in mind.

Explanation

Joseph most certainly did not act in a Godly manner at this stage in his life. While Joseph matured and later finished his life very well, in this first chapter he acted ungodly. How did Joseph act? How did his actions influence the actions of his brothers? Look again at the Bible narrative, and we can observe three things from Joseph's life that we shouldn't do.

A) Joseph talked negatively about his brothers - Genesis 37:2

As Christians, we should speak out against sin. We do not know what Joseph's brothers were doing; maybe it was very appropriate for Joseph to speak out against them. Maybe they were sinning. However, all too often, one family member constantly is the "snitch" on other family members. While one family

member should be building trust and friendship among his brothers, instead he was trying to tear them down.

B) Joseph was arrogant toward his brothers - Genesis 37:5-11

Whereas Joseph received profound dreams from the Lord, one has to wonder if he was arrogant about those revelations with his brothers. Joseph may or may not have understood the significance of those dreams, but his brothers sure seemed to understand them, and they were not very happy that Joseph told them the dreams! Arrogance never works within the family.

Illustration

Everyone knows one person who seems to be completely blessed. That person may be good looking, rich, funny and smart. No one enjoys being near someone who has been greatly blessed and is also arrogant. While we don't know all of Joseph's attributes, we do know he was probably good looking and intelligent, and we certainly know he was destined to be great. He made a major mistake in taking pride in this over his brothers.

Application

Have you acted arrogantly toward brothers and sisters who are less fortunate than you? Has this been a cause of family strife?

C) Joseph's lack of respect for his father – Genesis 37:9-11

Joseph probably dearly loved his father. In fact, like all of Joseph's mistakes in this chapter, this mistake probably occurred in part because of his age. However, it is amazing that Joseph not only acted arrogantly to his brothers, but he also wanted to show his father that he would be Jacob's leader one day as well. Jacob clearly understood what Joseph's dream was implying. Jacob even rebuked Joseph for describing this dream to him, even though Jacob reflected on the dream as well.

Application

Have you treated your mother and father with honor? Of all of the Ten Commandments, only one comes with a blessing tied to it. The Bible says, "Honor your father and your mother, that our days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:12) We do not have a choice; we must honor our parents. God will bless us if we honor them.

Decision

Have you noticed that in one simple chapter there are so many truths that can be applied to our family life? The Bible is full of Godly advice for people. This book is not only focused on what happens after you die, but it is also written to help you live your life better today and to experience life more fully right now.

Maybe you are here and your family life is not what you want it to be. Ask God to help your family right now. Ask Him to help you apply some of these principles you have learned.

Maybe you are in a home that seems to be completely broken. The relationships in your home seem not to function. Have you given your life to Christ yet? If not, then you are trying to live your life and run your home on your own power. Christ longs to come into your life, change the way you live, and give you eternal life. You will be amazed at the difference in your life with Christ. Ask Christ to come into your life. Ask Him to be your only God, Lord and Savior. Watch and see how He changes your family today.

If you want Christ to come into your life, pray this prayer with me today . . .

SERMON 44

Purpose of the sermon - To get a better understanding of how God placed Joseph in his position of power to help his family and to show how God blessed Joseph in the midst of his trials and tribulations.

Bible Text - Genesis 39, 40, 41

Sermon –

Introduction

In our continuing study of Joseph, we will look at what happened to Joseph after he was sold into slavery. We will see him rise to power and then fall very quickly. The young man will be at the beginning stages of being broken spiritually by the Lord. While he is being broken, he will be put into a position of power to save his family.

Bible Narrative - Genesis 39

Joseph was taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites. The Lord was with Joseph, and Joseph's master saw that the Lord blessed him. Joseph found favor with his master and was put in charge over Potiphar's entire house. Potiphar was blessed by the Lord through Joseph.

Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

Potiphar's wife began to desire Joseph and she asked him to sleep with her. Joseph refused and told her that Potiphar trusted him with everything, so he would not sleep with his wife. He said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" She asked him day after day to lie with her.

One day Joseph went into the house to do his work and was alone with her. She caught him by his garment and said, "Lie with me." He fled, leaving his garment in her hand. When she saw his garment in her hand, she called to the men of the house saying that "the Hebrew" had come to mock them. She said he had tried to lie with her; however, when she screamed, he left his garment and fled outside.

She kept the garment with her until Potiphar came home and then accused Joseph, "the Hebrew," of attacking her. Potiphar became very angry, and he put Joseph in the king's prison.

However, the Lord was with Joseph. He showed him mercy and gave him favor with the keeper of the prison. The keeper committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners in the prison. The keeper of the prison did not have to look into whatever Joseph did. Whatever Joseph did, prospered.

I. God Was With Joseph – First Spiritual Truth

Explanation

It would have been very easy for Joseph to give up. After all, Joseph had been betrayed by his family, sold into slavery, and sent to a foreign land. In the midst of his sadness, God blessed Joseph. How?

A) God made him handsome –

Joseph was handsome in form and appearance (Genesis 39:6). The Bible says that Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. Your beauty is a gift from the Lord. Whether you have pretty eyes, teeth or hair, your beauty came from the Lord.

B) God gave him favor with Potiphar and the keeper of the prison –

The Lord was with Joseph. Joseph's master saw that the Lord blessed him. Joseph found favor with his master and was put in charge over Potiphar's entire house. Potiphar was blessed by the Lord through Joseph.... However, the Lord was with Joseph. He showed him mercy and gave him favor with the keeper of the prison (Genesis 39: 2-5; 21).

Even though Joseph was a foreigner and was a slave, both Potiphar and the keeper of the prison saw great things in Joseph. They both desired to put him in positions of authority.

C) God blessed his work –

The Lord was with Joseph. Joseph's master saw that the Lord blessed him. Potiphar was blessed by the Lord through Joseph . . . Whatever Joseph did, prospered (Genesis 39: 2-5, 23).

Joseph had not only been given great authority, but he also produced great results. God gave him the results.

II. Joseph Still Made Errors – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Genesis: 39:11-15

One day Joseph went into the house to do his work and was alone with her. She caught him by his garment and said, "Lie with me." He fled, leaving his garment in her hand. When she saw his garment in her hand, she called to the men of the house saying that "the Hebrew" had come to mock them. She said he had tried to lie with her; however, when she screamed, he left his garment and fled outside.

Explanation

Joseph did the right thing by rejecting Potiphar's wife's sexual advances, but he was foolish to put himself in the same house with her alone. He got too close to sin to walk away unscathed.

You should always seek to AVOID situations that could put you in a compromising position with another man or woman. Possibly this was a situation that Joseph couldn't avoid. However, we can learn from this situation. In the ministry, I am never alone with another woman if possible. If I have to counsel another woman, I counsel her in the open so that others can see and be witnesses that I have not made any wrong advances toward her.

Joseph obviously was alone with another woman and close enough to her that she could yank off his garment (at least part of it). Joseph got into serious trouble not because he did something wrong sexually, but because he got close enough to the trouble that he was harmed. He ran away, which must have taken every bit of self control that he had, but even this was not enough to spare him embarrassment in front of the entire household staff, shame before his master and a place in jail.

Illustration

Sometime it seems fun to live life dangerously. When my wife was a little girl she liked to play with candles. She would put her finger as close to the fire as she could to see how close she could come to being burnt. She would even put her finger through the candle's flame very quickly to see if it would burn. When she didn't get burnt, she would slow her finger down to see how slow she could go without having any little pain. She told me later that this was a silly childhood game, but isn't this the same type of game Satan tries to seduce us into playing with sin? We put ourselves closer and closer to the temptation of sin and hope to not get "burnt" by sin.

God's message is to FLEE. Run before getting burnt by sin.

III. God Was With Joseph Even Though Events Seemingly Went From Bad To Worse – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Genesis 39:19-20

So Potiphar became very angry, and he put Joseph in the king's prison.

Explanation

Even though God was with him, to poor Joseph, life must have been very difficult. I cannot imagine how discouraging it must have been for Joseph to go from living in Canaan with his family to being sold into slavery. Then he was forced to move to Egypt. Finally, just when he felt that God was blessing him, suddenly he was forced into prison for a crime he did not commit.

Application

Do you ever feel like God is against you? Do you ever feel like you get through one crisis and God places you in another? You can trust in the Lord that He will not place you in any situation beyond what you can bear. I Corinthians 10:13 says, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that may be able to bear it.”

Let us observe how God allowed Joseph to overcome the trials he faced.

IV. An Opportunity Came – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 40

It came to pass that the baker and butler of the king of Egypt offended their lord. They were sent to prison and were under Joseph’s custody. Both men had a dream. Joseph asked them their problem and they talked about their dreams. Their problem was that no one could interpret them. Joseph said, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.”

The butler said his dream was of a vine. The vine had three branches that were budded and full of grapes. He took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup and placed the cup in his hand.

Joseph told him that the dream meant that in three days he would be restored to his position and he would put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand. However, Joseph asked the butler both to remember and mention him to Pharaoh because he was stolen from the land of the Hebrews and had done nothing to deserve being put in the dungeon.

The chief baker liked that interpretation and told Joseph his dream. In his dream there were three baskets on his head. In the highest basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on his head.

Joseph told the baker that the dream meant that in three days Pharaoh would hang him on a tree, and the birds would eat his flesh. On the third day, Pharaoh had a birthday and had a great feast. He restored the chief butler and hung the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted. Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Explanation

Joseph had been faithfully serving in the prison when these two men arrived. When he successfully interpreted the dream for the butler, Joseph had an opportunity to be recommended to the Pharaoh; however, the butler forgot about him.

Application

Once again, Joseph had a heartbreaking experience in his life. He was so close to freedom, but the person that he helped forgot about him. Do you ever feel that the people you help forget about you?

Even Jesus experienced this type of ingratitude, when he healed a group of ten lepers and only one came back to thank Him (Luke 17:11-19). Do not become discouraged if your good deeds seemingly go unnoticed. The Bible does not indicate that Joseph despaired. He had to have been very disappointed, but he continued in his work.

Joseph was still a faithful follower of the Lord while he served in the prison. In fact, we can tell that he still was faithful to the Lord when he said, “*Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me please.*” (Genesis 40:8) Joseph knew that his God was in control.

V. God Placed Joseph Exactly Where He Needed To Be – Fifth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 41

After two years, Pharaoh had a dream. He dreamed that seven fat, good looking cows came up out of the river. Then seven skinny cows came up out of the river and ate the fat cows. Pharaoh woke up. In another dream he saw seven plump heads of grain come up on one stalk and then seven thin heads spring up after them. The seven thin heads devoured the seven plump heads. He woke up again and called his magicians to interpret, but they could not.

Then the butler spoke and said that he remembered his error that day. He told his story about his dream and the young Hebrew’s interpretation of the dream. So Pharaoh summoned Joseph. Joseph shaved and changed his clothes and came to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said that he had a dream, and no one could interpret it. Joseph said that God could interpret it. Pharaoh then described the dreams of the cows and the seven heads of grain.

Joseph said that the dreams meant the same thing. God had shown Pharaoh what he was about to do. He said the seven good cows and heads of grain were seven good years, while the seven ugly cows and thin heads of grain were seven bad years. Seven years of great plenty were to come to Egypt, but then seven years of famine were coming that would completely deplete the land due to its severity. Joseph said the dream was repeated twice because the thing was established by God, and it would shortly come to pass.

Joseph then told Pharaoh to select a discerning and wise man and set him over Egypt. He was to appoint officers in the land to collect 1/5 of the produce of Egypt for seven plentiful years. The officers were to gather the food and store the grain under Pharaoh’s authority, keep it in the cities, and use it as a reserve during the famine so the land would not perish.

Pharaoh and his servants liked the advice. He asked would it be possible to find another man “in whom is the Spirit of God.” He then said since God had shown Joseph this, there was no one more wise and discerning than Joseph. He would be in charge of Pharaoh’s house, and all the people would be under him. Only the throne would be higher than Joseph. Pharaoh said, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”

Pharaoh took off his signet ring and put it on Joseph's hand. He put fine clothes on Joseph and put a gold chain around his neck. Joseph then rode in the second chariot, and everyone had to bow his knee before him. Pharaoh told Joseph that no man would be able to do anything without his consent. Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife. Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh. Joseph went from the presence of Pharaoh to all the land of Egypt. Joseph gathered up all the food and stored it in the cities in every city where the fields surrounded them. There was so much grain stored that the grains were like the sand of the sea, so that they stopped counting the amount of grain.

Joseph had two sons named Manasseh and Ephraim. Manasseh means, "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." Ephraim means, "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Then the seven years of plenty stopped, and the seven years of famine began. The famine was in all lands, but in Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, they cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh told them to go to Joseph and do what he says. The famine was over all the face of the earth. Joseph opened the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. The famine became severe in Egypt. All the countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain because of the severity of the famine in all the lands.

Explanation

God had not forgotten Joseph. He gave Pharaoh a great dream and Joseph the ability to interpret dreams. God used that dream to cause Pharaoh to find Joseph. God had appointed Joseph to be his instrument to save all the surrounding countries from a horrible famine. In the end, Joseph rose to such power that everyone in Egypt had to bow his knee to him.

There is so much to talk about in this story, but what can we specifically learn from this story?

A) Through many trials, God finally placed a Godly, solid man in a position of power in Egypt. He had prepared Joseph to be His instrument to take care of all of the countries in that area. We will see starting next week that God would use Joseph to save his family as well. It was those trials and tribulations that caused Joseph to mature into his position of leadership. He became a wise, discerning man that not only could interpret the dream that God sent to Pharaoh, but he could administer a plan that would save the peoples of all the surrounding nations. God used those trials to mold Joseph into the man he was. We should be aware that God uses trials in our life to mold us into Godliness (James 1:2; I Peter 1:6-8).

B) God proved trustworthy to Joseph as well. There is no record of Joseph cursing God for his situation. Most certainly, Joseph faced very dark days. However, in the end Joseph went from a lowly shepherd boy in Canaan to the second most powerful man in the Egyptian empire. Joseph found peace during his trials and temptation. Not only would those nations be saved, but Joseph would

find inward redemption for the suffering he had. We see this in Genesis 41:51-52 as the narrative reads, *Joseph had two sons named Manasseh and Ephraim. Manasseh means, "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." Ephraim means "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."* The names of his two sons showed that Joseph was able to:

- 1) Forget his past toils and problems,
- 2) Overcome the grief of being torn from his father's house,
- 3) Recognize that God caused him to be fruitful in his affliction.

You and I can overcome the pain and bitterness from the past as well.

A) Forget your past toils and problems.

Here is a good illustration concerning forgetting your past problems.

One day, two monks were walking through the countryside. They were on their way to another village to help bring in the crops. As they walked, they spied an old woman sitting at the edge of a river. She was upset because there was no bridge, and she could not get across on her own. The first monk kindly offered, "We will carry you across if you would like."

"Thank you," she said gratefully, accepting their help. So the two men joined hands, lifted her between them and carried her across the river. When they got to the other side, they set her down, and she went on her way.

After they had walked another mile or so, the second monk began to complain. "Look at my clothes," he said. "They are filthy from carrying that woman across the river. And my back still hurts from lifting her. I can feel it getting stiff." The first monk just smiled and nodded his head.

A few more miles up the road, the second monk griped again, "My back is hurting me so badly, and it is all because we had to carry that silly woman across the river! I cannot go any farther because of the pain."

The first monk looked down at his partner, now lying on the ground, moaning. "Have you wondered why I am not complaining?" he asked. "Your back hurts because you are still carrying the woman. But I set her down five miles ago."

That fictional story describes what many of us are like in dealing with our families. We play the role of the second monk who couldn't overcome his frustration. We hold the pain of the past over our loved ones' heads like a club, or we remind them every once in a while of the burden we still carry because of something they did years ago.

Sometimes we cannot seem to forget the pain of the past. In fact sometimes we do not WANT to forget the past and bitterness forms in our hearts. However, when we hold on to bitterness in this way we run the risk of not seeing how God can use even our painful past for greatness.

B) Overcome the grief of being separated from family.

For example, when God looks at our lives from his perspective, he sees our death as our time to come be with Him but also to be reunited with loved ones who have gone on before us in heaven. As a Christian we have the assurance that we will spend eternity with those who have accepted the Lord and NOTHING anyone can do can take away that gift of eternal life.

C) Recognize that God brings greatness from sadness

For example, I heard a man once say, “man can make something great out of something good, but ONLY God can make something GREAT out of something bad.” God can still do wonders from each of our lives even when things seem tragically wrong.

Application

Have you been going through sincere trials in your life? Do things seem dark and you feel that God has forgotten you? The key question for you is, do you trust in the Lord? Do you think that He has a plan for you even in the dark times? Sometimes it may seem difficult to trust Him. When you make Christ your LORD, you surrender totally your faith and trust in Him.

Many people want to have Jesus Christ as their Savior, but for Him to be their Lord is something altogether different. God was Lord of Joseph’s life. Joseph allowed Him to be his master no matter what the circumstances. Have you truly made Christ Lord of your life? If you have, but you are struggling through trials, ask Him to give you strength and slowly reveal to you His plans for your life amidst the struggles. He may not reveal his plans immediately, but ask for wisdom that you can recognize why God placed you in those various trials. Joseph was able to see God’s hand in all that happened.

Decision

If you haven’t given your life to the Lord, won’t you do that today? Let us show you how you can give your life to the Lord today. You will begin to see His mighty plans for you, and you will see how He is able to help you overcome whatever temptation or trial you might be facing today. If you want to give your life to Him, you can pray and ask Him to forgive you of your sins, save you, and make Him Lord of your life right now. If you want to give your life to Jesus, then let show you how . . .

SERMON 45

Purpose of the sermon - To continue the story of Joseph's life, examine the consequences of past sin, and copy from a Godly response from Joseph.

Bible Text - Genesis 42, 43

Sermon -

Bible Narrative - Genesis 42, 43

When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, he sent his sons to buy grain so they would not die. So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. Jacob did not send Joseph's brother, Benjamin, because he was afraid something might happen to him.

Joseph was governor over the land, and he sold grain to all the people. Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth. Joseph saw and recognized his brothers, but he acted like a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. He asked, "Where do you come from?" They replied that they came from Canaan to buy food.

Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn't recognize him. Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them. He said, "You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!" They told him that they were honest men, all one man's sons, and they had only come to buy food.

Joseph accused them again. They said that they were "sons of one man." They had two brothers. One was with their father and the other was "no more."

Joseph then told them that they would have to be tested to see if they were spies. They would have to bring their youngest brother to him. He told them to send one of them to get their brother, and the rest would be placed in prison. He then put them in prison for three days.

On the third day Joseph said to the brothers, "Do this and live, for I fear God." Then he said if they were honest men they should let one brother be confined in the prison, but the others should go and carry grain back home. They should bring their brother back to them to show they told the truth. If they did this, they would not be killed.

This they proceeded to do. They said to one another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."

Reuben told his brothers, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy?'" He said that Joseph's blood was required of them. They did not know that Joseph understood them for he spoke to them through an interpreter. Joseph turned away so that they would not see him weep. He returned and took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

Joseph then commanded that all of their money be returned to them and that the brothers be given provisions for their journey. As the brothers were returning home, they stopped at an encampment. One of them saw in his sack that their money had been restored. They became afraid and said, "What is this that God has done to us?"

They returned to Jacob and told him all that had happened. Jacob replied that they had saddened him because first Joseph and now Simeon were taken from him. Now they wanted to take Benjamin. Reuben told Jacob to kill his two sons if they didn't bring Benjamin back to him. However, Jacob would not let Benjamin go.

Now the famine was severe in the land. After they had eaten the grain that they bought, Jacob told them to go back and buy some more. The brothers told Jacob that they were warned not to return without their brother.

Jacob scolded them for telling the man in Egypt about their other brother. They replied that they were asked pointedly about themselves, their father and if they had other brothers. They had no way of knowing that he would tell them to bring their brother to him.

Judah then replied that he would be surety for his brother. If they didn't bring Benjamin back to Jacob, he could let Reuben bear the blame forever. Jacob told them to carry the best fruits of the land to the man in Egypt, take double the money plus the money that was found in their sacks. He said that God might give them mercy and release both Simeon and Benjamin to them.

They returned to Joseph with the money and Benjamin. Joseph commanded that they be brought to his house and an animal be slaughtered for a meal so they could eat with him at noon. However, the brothers were afraid and assumed that they were going to his house to be made as slaves. As they approached Joseph's house, they told his steward that they had only come to buy food the first time and had not meant to take the money. They even brought other money to buy food.

The steward said, "Peace be unto you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them. They were taken to Joseph's house, washed their feet, and made their present ready for Joseph at noon.

When Joseph came home, they gave him the present and bowed to him. He asked about their father, and they replied that he was in good health. Then they bowed again and prostrated themselves. Then Joseph saw Benjamin. He asked if Benjamin was their younger brother. He said, "God be gracious to you, my son." He became overwhelmed with emotion and went to his bed chamber to weep. He washed his face, restrained himself and said, "Serve the bread." He sat a place by himself, the brothers by themselves and the Egyptians by themselves because Egyptians could not eat food with Hebrews. The brothers were seated by the Egyptians before Joseph in their birth order. The brothers were astonished by this. They were served their food, and Benjamin received five times as much as the others. They drank and were merry with him.

I. Joseph's Façade of Anger – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 42:8-13

Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn't recognize him. Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them. He said, "You are spies! You have come to see

the nakedness of the land!” They told him that they were honest men, all one man’s sons, and they had only come to buy food.

Explanation

Was Joseph really angry? Did Joseph truly think that his brothers were spies? No. Joseph “remembered the dreams” about his brothers. He now saw clearly why all his past struggles had taken place. Joseph was aware that God had brought all of these things to pass. He had already overcome any bitterness or frustration about what had occurred. We saw that in the way he named his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. The Bible says, *Joseph had two sons named Manasseh and Ephraim. Manasseh means “For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.” Ephraim means “For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.” (Genesis 41:51-52)*

Joseph now began testing his brothers to see what kind of men they had become. Were they honest men? Were they concerned about their father? Did they have guilt for their past actions? Were they repentant?

II. The Brothers’ Dismay – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 42:8-13

Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn’t recognize him. Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them. He said, “You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!” They told him that they were honest men, all one man’s son, and they had only come to buy food.

Explanation

The brothers couldn’t recognize Joseph. Why could they not recognize him?

- A) Joseph spoke roughly to them (Genesis 42:7).
- B) He was in a position of total power and the brothers had to be in awe of him (Genesis 42:6).
- C) He didn’t speak Hebrew but instead spoke the Egyptian language to them (Genesis 42:23).
- D) His physical appearance had changed. Twenty years had passed. He was dressed like an Egyptian. He was probably shaven (Egyptians shaved and Canaanites didn’t shave their beards) - (Genesis 41:14).

E) He pretended to be involved in divination. Joseph was a God-fearing man. Although God allowed him to see dreams occasionally, he certainly wouldn't have been involved in something God prohibited later.

However, the brothers should have had hints as to who Joseph was:

- 1) He said he feared God (Genesis 42:18).
- 2) He was interested in their family. In Chapter 42, verse 16, Joseph showed great interest in their brother, and in the next chapter Joseph was interested in their father. Why would a leader of Egypt be concerned about a shepherd's family in Canaan?
- 3) He took time to meet with them individually. Joseph was in charge of the distribution of food for ALL of Egypt. He certainly had many large cities to administrate. It was God's providence that he was to be at the exact city at the exact time that his brothers would arrive. His brothers should have wondered why one of the great leaders of Egypt would be taking time with their family.

The entire situation was certainly frightening for the brothers. Whether they recognized Joseph or not was not the key issue. The key to this passage for Joseph was that his brothers had showed true remorse for their sins of the past. They had not shown repentance yet, but the brothers were remorseful for their actions. How do we know they were remorseful?

a) They REMEMBERED JOSEPH.

In verse 13 of Chapter 42, the brothers said, "But they replied, 'Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more.'" The fact that the brothers even mentioned their deceased brother (Joseph) showed that they dwelt on their past actions.

b) They struggled with GUILT and assumed they were being punished. In verse 21 the Bible says, "They said to one another, 'Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us.'" Why did the brothers say this? It had been twenty years since the incident with Joseph. The incident in Egypt seemed to have nothing to do with what they had done to Joseph twenty years ago. However, guilt has a way of staying with you. It is very difficult to ever get away from guilt. They assumed their past sin was causing their present problems.

Illustration

Two men were on trial for armed robbery. An eyewitness took the stand, and the prosecutor moved carefully: "So, you say you were at the scene when the robbery took place?"

"Yes."

"And you saw a vehicle leave at a high rate of speed?"

"Yes."

"And did you observe the occupants?"

"Yes, two men."

"And," the prosecutor boomed, "Are those two men present in court today?" At this point the two defendants sealed their fate. The two men in their guilt accidentally raised their hands in admission.

Application

Just as the two guilty robbers couldn't hide their guilt and accidentally raised their hands, the burden of guilt had stayed with the ten brothers all of those years. They were never able to shake the guilty feeling. Some people seem to be able to live guilt free, but most people in the world struggle sometimes with their sins of the past.

The two robbers in the illustration could not hide their guilt from their crime. The ten brothers confessed their guilt as they realized their sins had come back upon them.

Do you struggle with a sin of the past? One of the first steps to overcoming that sin is confession. (I John 1:9) The brothers HAD NOT confessed their sins yet. Therefore, they were still stuck with guilt and dismay over their past deeds.

III. The Father's Fear - Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 42:38

But Jacob said, "My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow."

Explanation

The story of Jacob is another important story in the book of Genesis. In this sermon series we will not even begin to discuss Jacob to the depth that we would like. However, it is important to notice two things about Joseph's father, Jacob, in this passage.

A) The sons' sin had hurt Jacob deeply. Jacob was still hurting for all of those years after Joseph's death. The brothers had never confessed their sin to him, and he still struggled with the pain of the loss of Joseph.

B) Jacob was still acting as a poor father. Two weeks ago we studied how Jacob played favorites with his boys. He liked Joseph the best because Joseph was born from Jacob's first wife, Rachel. Today in this passage, we need to discuss Jacob's INABILITY TO LEAD. While Jacob's sons were desperately trying to save the family from starvation, Jacob is making key mistakes:

1) He is still playing favorites. He doesn't send Benjamin because he is afraid he will lose him (Genesis 42:4).

2) He complains and thinks only of himself rather than the necessary good for his family (Genesis 43:6).

Jacob is wise enough to send gifts to the Egyptian leader (Joseph), and he does ask for God's blessings on his sons (Genesis 43:11-14). However, overall, Jacob is still not leading as a man of his stature should lead.

Application

Our sins always hurt others. The sons' jealousy and attempted murder on their brother Joseph still deeply grieved their father.

Parents, regardless of the pain that you might have experienced in the past, your children still depend on you for Godly leadership. Do not follow the example of Jacob in this passage. Look to lead even when you are hurting.

IV. Joseph's Grace – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 43:26-34

When Joseph came home, they gave him the present and bowed to him. He asked about their father, and they replied he was in good health. Then they bowed again and prostrated themselves. Then Joseph saw Benjamin. He asked if he was their younger brother. He said, "God be gracious to you, my son." He became overwhelmed with emotion and went to his bed chamber to weep. He washed his face, restrained himself and said, "Serve the bread." He sat a place by himself, the brothers by themselves and the Egyptians by themselves because Egyptians could not eat food with Hebrews. They were seated by the Egyptians before Joseph in their birth order. The brothers were astonished by this. They were served their food, and Benjamin received five times as much as the others. They drank and were merry with him.

Explanation

Joseph now had his younger brother with him, Joseph's only full-blooded brother, the son of both Jacob and Rachel. This younger brother, Benjamin, had not participated in sending Joseph away to slavery. This could have been a moment to seek revenge on his other brothers that had sought to cause Joseph harm.

However, Joseph showed GRACE at this moment. He was not completely ready to reveal himself to his brothers; instead, he showed loving compassion to his brothers as he continued to see if they had changed. How did Joseph show grace and compassion?

A) He served them food and drink.

Joseph met their PHYSICAL NEEDS. Joseph met their basic need of food and drink.

B) He was merry with them.

Joseph met their EMOTIONAL NEEDS. It is very difficult to be happy with someone you dislike. Certainly one can pretend to be happy with a person that you dislike for a period of time. However, Joseph was truly happy with his brothers. This was a reunion of JOY, not a meeting of REVENGE. The brothers had to be scared to death of this great leader before them. Joseph set them at ease.

C) He continued to test them.

Joseph did not reveal himself. He tested their SPIRITUAL NEEDS. He needed to know that the brothers had truly repented of what they had done. Up until now the brothers could have been acting out of fear of Joseph. For example, they may have brought Benjamin back because they needed food and they feared the power of Joseph. However, Joseph was already receiving indications that the brothers were acting from repentance and not only fear.

1) The brothers showed obvious guilt –

This they proceeded to do. They said to one another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us." (Genesis 42:20-21) Twenty years had passed and the brothers were still guilt-ridden for what they had done to Joseph. How many hours had they spent discussing the horrible sin they had committed to their brother? How many times had they watched their father's pain-ridden face as he remembered his lost son? It had to be obvious to Joseph that the brothers felt guilty. HOWEVER, GUILT IS NOT THE SAME AS REPENTANCE.

2) The brothers showed that they had overcome jealousy –

The brothers had HATED Joseph. They hated the favoritism that Jacob showed him for being Rachel's son. Now the second born son of Rachel

was among them. Benjamin had just been served FIVE TIMES the amount they had. They could have become embittered by that. They could have bickered among themselves in their own language. Instead, they showed no indication of hostility toward Benjamin. Their lack of jealousy toward Benjamin had to be a sign to Joseph that the brothers may have changed.

One does not do another person any favors by just forgiving them and not being concerned about his sin. Joseph wanted to MAKE SURE that the brothers had CHANGED. In the next lesson, we will see just how the brothers had truly changed.

Application

a. Is there someone in your life that you need to forgive? Did you know that it really doesn't matter to Christ whether they are repentant or not? He expects you to forgive them? Do you know why Christ expects this? Because he died on the cross to free you from bitterness and sin.

God prospered Joseph despite of his hardships. He got married, had two sons, a good job, lots of money—and all of this occurred in spite of what his brothers did. Next week we will continue to learn that Joseph had ALREADY FORGIVEN his brothers. If you can forgive God wants to heal your heart and life as well. He might even use you to bless that other person as he used Joseph as well. You might even be used by God to show them how they can find repentance and freedom from sin through Christ.

b. Have you hurt someone? Do you feel like you can never be forgiven? God did not punish the brothers for the rest of their lives because of their sins. The brothers suffered much because of their sin, but God did not make the Egyptian ruler come after them like they thought. Instead, we will learn in the next sermon how God brought healing to their lives.

God desires HEALING. He wants to heal those you have hurt. He also wants to heal YOUR heart. He brings healing through Jesus. Do you know one of the best things you could do for someone you have hurt? Ask for forgiveness for the pain you have caused and tell them about Jesus. You can never undo the past, but you can share the love of Christ with them so they can have a FUTURE of eternal life with Him.

Decision

Are you struggling right now? Maybe you are struggling with some of the things that Joseph and his brothers dealt with. Maybe you are struggling with family issues. Maybe you are struggling with issues of forgiveness and bitterness. There is ONE PERSON who can cure your personal family issues. That person is Christ.

Many people pray to idols that have no power to hear, speak or walk (Revelation 9:20). These people hope their spirits or gods will bring them a solution to their problems. However if you let Christ come into your life as your ONLY LORD AND SAVIOR, you will be amazed at the change He brings to your life. Your changed life will also affect those around you. Won't

you give your life to Christ today? Confess you are a sinner, confess that only Christ can save you, repent of your sins, and turn your life over to Him. Watch Him work in your life today. If you'd like to give your life to Him, then pray with me now . . .

SERMON 46

Purpose of the sermon - To finish the story of how a family can be reunited based on forgiveness and not revenge. Joseph wanted RECONCILIATION and RESTORATION and not REVENGE.

Bible Text - Genesis 44 and 45

Sermon -

Bible Narrative – Genesis 44 and 45

Joseph commanded his steward to fill up each man's sack with food, put each man's money in the mouth of each sack, and put Joseph's silver cup in Benjamin's sack along with his money. The next morning the brothers left the city. When they were not far off, Joseph sent his steward to catch up with the men. He told the steward to accuse the men of stealing Joseph's cup. He said to tell them it was the cup in which he drank and practiced divination.

The brothers asked the steward why he would accuse them of such a thing. After all, they had brought back the money they had found in their sacks, so why would they steal Joseph's gold or silver? They said to look for the cup and whoever had it would die, and the rest would be his lord's slaves. The steward replied that whoever had the cup will be his lord's (Joseph) slave and the rest would be blameless. Each man took down his sack, and they were searched from the oldest to the youngest. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack. The men tore their clothes and returned to the city.

Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house and fell down before him on the ground. Joseph asked them, "What deed is this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?" Judah told him that God had found out the sins of his servants, (the brothers), and they as well as Benjamin would be Joseph's slaves. Joseph told them that only the one who had stolen the cup would be his slave, and the rest could go back home to their father.

Judah came to Joseph and retold him the story from their first meeting to that day. He talked about his father's love for his son Benjamin. He was the only living son born from Jacob's wife. Judah said that if he returned without Benjamin, too, his father would die. He asked if he could be a slave in his brother's place. He had already promised to be surety for his brother. He could not go back to his father without the lad because he couldn't stand the evil that would come upon his father.

Joseph could not control himself any longer. He made everyone in the room leave. No one was in the room when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. He wept aloud, and the Egyptians and Pharaoh's house heard him. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" The brothers could not answer him because they were dismayed in his

presence. Joseph repeated, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."

He told them to go to his father and tell him that Joseph was the lord of all Egypt. They should come to him and not tarry. They will dwell in the land of Goshen to be near to Joseph. He would take care of them, their children and children's children. They should do this, or they would be overtaken by poverty for there were still five more years of famine. He said that their eyes, and the eyes of Benjamin, confirmed that this was true, and they should bring his father. Then he fell on Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on Joseph's neck. Joseph kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after this his brothers talked with him.

Pharaoh heard of this and was well pleased. Pharaoh told Joseph to tell his brothers to depart, take carts from Egypt and bring their families. They would eat from the best of the land. They were not to worry about their goods, for the best of Egypt was theirs.

The sons of Israel (another name for Jacob and his children) were given carts by Joseph. He gave them provisions for their journey as well as changes of clothes. Benjamin received three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of clothes. He sent ten male donkeys and ten female donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt as well as grain, bread and food for Jacob's journey. Joseph told them, "See that you do not become troubled along the way."

Then they returned to Canaan to their father Jacob. They told him Joseph was still alive and was the governor over Egypt. Jacob's heart stood still because he did not believe them. However when they told him all the words which Joseph had said, and he saw all of carts of goods, Jacob revived. He said, "It is enough. Joseph my son is alive. I will go and see him before I die."

I. Joseph's Test - First Spiritual Truth

Explanation

A wise older pastor was talking about the story of Joseph and his brothers. He discussed how wise Joseph had been in dealing with his brothers. Someone telephoned the pastor to tell him that he disagreed. He thought that Joseph should have visibly forgiven his brothers immediately. Instead, Joseph had tried to be vindictive and had caused his brothers to suffer for a time before finally forgiving them. After all, Joseph had thrown his brothers in prison, kept Simeon in prison even longer, talked roughly to his brothers, threatened their lives, and made them think they had stolen from him. Joseph sure seemed like he was trying to be mean!

Instead of looking at Joseph's actions as being mean or vengeful, think of Joseph as putting his brothers to the test. How did Joseph put his brothers to the test? Last week we learned that Joseph began the test by not allowing his brothers to know who he was. Joseph

spoke roughly to them, he dressed like an Egyptian, and he spoke another language through an interpreter to them.

This week he continued to hide his identity by making them think he dealt in divination (Genesis 44:5). Maybe he wanted them to think he had special powers by working in divination. Even though Joseph, like Daniel, was given the ability to interpret dreams, God gave those two men understanding of dreams for a specific purpose. They were not ritualistically performing divination. In fact, God expressly forbids this practice in the Old Testament Law (Deuteronomy 18:10). God only allowed Joseph and Daniel to interpret dreams for a special purpose at a special time but this is not divination. Christians are never to meddle with these kinds of practices.

Think about all the ways that Joseph tested the brothers.

A) He tested their feelings toward Benjamin (Genesis 42:14-24).

Had they hurt Benjamin like they had tried to hurt Joseph? Could they go back and bring Benjamin to Joseph unharmed and unscathed? Had they mistreated him in the past as they had done to Joseph?

B) He tested their honesty and compassion (Genesis 42:25).

Joseph filled their sacks with grain and with their money. They could have just left with the money, forgotten about Simeon, and gone back home. They probably greatly feared the Egyptians, but certainly unscrupulous men would have thought about just leaving their brother behind, taking the money and running.

C) He tested their growth in the area of jealousy (Genesis 43:34).

If he served Benjamin five times as much as his brothers, how would they react? Would they be jealous if they saw obvious favoritism?

D) He tested their repentance (Genesis 44:17).

Were they truly sorry for their past deeds? Would they give up everything to protect their brother Benjamin? Had they **LEARNED FROM THEIR MISTAKES?**

Let's not forget that in the midst of this test, Joseph still did nothing to really **HARM** his brothers. He tested them with much more grace and compassion than what they had given him. Look again at each of the above situations during the testing.

1) Joseph had been in prison for years; he put his brothers in prison only for three days (Genesis 42:17).

- 2) Even though Joseph was also testing them, when he filled their sacks with grain and money, he was feeding his family for FREE (Genesis 42:25).
- 3) He tested their jealousy toward Benjamin, but at the same time ate and was merry with them at his house (Genesis 43:34).
- 4) When he tested their repentance, did he require any of them to be his slaves? No! He threatened to do it, and he had the power to enslave them, but he never did.

Application

Joseph was able to put his brothers to the test with compassion and grace because HE HAD ALREADY FORGIVEN THEM. He loved them. Many times people want to seek revenge when their family, or others, have wronged them. Joseph sought RESTORATION and RECONCILIATION, not REVENGE. In every step, Joseph was testing and taking care of his family. Your job today is to FORGIVE FIRST. Joseph had forgiven his brothers before they even showed up. Forgive and then leave the changing hearts up to the Lord.

II. The Brother's Reaction – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative - Genesis 44:18-34

Judah came to Joseph and retold him the story from their first meeting to that day. He talked about his father's love for his son Benjamin. He was the only living son borne from Jacob's wife. Judah said that if he returned without Benjamin too, his father would die. He asked if he could be a slave in his brother's place. He had already promised to be surety for his brother. He could not go back to his father without the lad because he couldn't stand the evil that would come upon his father.

Explanation

Judah spoke beautifully at this moment. If we want to study a perfect, selfless response to calamity, this passage is a great example (Genesis 44:18-34). Joseph had threatened to release everyone else and make Benjamin his slave. Judah asked Joseph if he could take the place of Benjamin. Even though no man wants to be a slave, Judah asked to give his life for his little brother. Why did he do this? Judah, first of all, was more concerned with his brother than himself. Secondly, Judah was more concerned with his father than his own life. Judah gave a perfect example of selfless love. He had learned from his mistakes of the past. He would not fail Benjamin like he had failed Joseph (Genesis 37:26).

Joseph had to have heard his brother Judah be the first to offer to sell him as a slave twenty years earlier. Now he was offering to be his slave for the lives of his brother and father. Judah's heart had changed.

Illustration

One of Judah's descendants was to be Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was born of a virgin woman named Mary. Mary had never slept with her husband Joseph. However, God, through the Holy Spirit, had placed His divine seed in Mary's womb. God did NOT have sex with her. This was a miraculous event. This allowed Jesus to be born a man but still be God at the same time. He had no earthly father, but He maintained His perfect, sinless deity throughout his Earthly life.

Just as Judah offered himself up as a slave for Benjamin, Jesus offered himself up for you and for me. We are all slaves to sin. For all history all people have been slaves to sin. Jesus Christ gave up His life and sacrificed Himself on the cross to take away our sins. He offered to be the substitute for our sins on that cross.

The righteous God is perfect and sinless. He cannot have any sin in His presence (Isaiah 59:2). God the Father sent Jesus the Son to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins (I John 2:2). Only an act of love so great as DYING FOR YOU AND ME would be enough to take away our sins. Jesus came to Earth and took our place for our sins. Someone had to die for your and my sin. Either you and I had to die for our sins and be separated for all eternity from God, or Jesus Christ had to be our sacrifice for our sins on the cross. Jesus gave up Himself up for you and for me.

Application

Have you given your life to Christ today? Do you understand why it is so important to accept Christ as your Lord and Savior? He is the only One who can take the place for your sin. There is only one person who could take the place of your penalty of sin, for your judgment—Jesus Christ. To worship any other god is saying that Christ is not good enough and His sacrifice is not good enough for you. Christ is the only God that died for your sin. He wants you to worship Him and Him alone (John 14:6).

III. The Secret Is Revealed – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Genesis 45:1-10

Joseph could not control himself any longer. He made everyone in the room leave. No one was in the room when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. He wept aloud, and the Egyptians and Pharaoh's house heard him. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph, does my father still live?" The brothers could not answer him because they were dismayed in his presence. Joseph repeated, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."

He told them to go to his father and tell him that Joseph was the lord of all Egypt. They should come to him and not tarry. They will dwell in the land of Goshen to be near to Joseph. He would take care of them, their children and children's children.

Explanation

Can you imagine the brothers' shock at hearing what this great Egyptian ruler had to say? He was Joseph! Joseph could not hold back his emotions any longer. He had to tell them who he was. He could see that his brothers had changed. Most certainly, Judah's plea for Jacob and Benjamin had been overwhelming for Joseph.

Notice how Joseph finally revealed himself. Did he reveal himself in anger? No. He had a loving, forgiving, nurturing attitude. Joseph had reconciled himself to the past, and now he was ready to be Godly in the present. Joseph was able to show his brothers how God the Father worked in all that had been done. He told them that:

A) God had sent him before them (Genesis 45:5)

But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life

Joseph could see the hand of God in all that had been done.

B) Their lives had been saved (Genesis 45:5).

But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life

Part of God's plan was for the family to be saved. Although Jacob's family was NOT perfect, they were still followers of the true God. God honored them for their faithfulness to Him.

C) Their future had been saved (Genesis 45:7).

And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

God not only had protected the family in the present, He had protected their future. Their family would live on. They and their descendants would bless all peoples from all parts of the world. In fact, one of their descendants, Jesus Christ, would be the SAVIOR OF THE WORLD.

E) Their livelihood would be protected (Genesis 45:10).

They will dwell in the land of Goshen to be near to Joseph. He would take care of them, their children and children's children.

They would have food to eat and a place to dwell during the famine.

IV. The Fruits of Joseph's Obedience – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Explanation

Joseph had truly obeyed the Lord. He had fled from bitterness and pride and had been used to save his family. Joseph had EVERY RIGHT to seek revenge on his family. Instead he deemed it MORE HONORABLE to forgive than to seek revenge. Because of Joseph's obedience, Joseph's family was saved and all the nations in the area were saved. However, Joseph's obedience not only blessed others, he was blessed as well.

- A) Joseph got to be the second most powerful man in Egypt (Genesis 45:9).
- B) Joseph was given a wife and had sons.
- C) Joseph got to be reunited with his family. In Chapters 46 and 47 we can read how Joseph's family was brought to Egypt. He was able to care for them and to give them wonderful land to work with their cattle. In fact, his family even became the chief herdsman of Pharaoh's flock. Joseph was reunited with his father. After a long and difficult life (Genesis 47:9), Jacob was able to die in peace (Genesis 45:28; Genesis 49:33). What a wonderful gift Joseph got to give to his father but also to receive in return!

Joseph could have sought quick revenge on his brothers, but look at the FAR GREATER JOY he received when he acted in the manner that GOD WANTED rather than what MAN TELLS us to do. Joseph acted Godly, forgiving, and loving. Consequently, he received more than he ever imagined and got his family back in the process.

Application

Are you fighting with your family? Have they wronged you? Will you follow Joseph's example? Will you choose forgiveness over bitterness? Will you choose reconciliation over anger and wrath? You will be amazed at how God can bring even the greatest of enemies together. Remember, it takes one person to forgive and reconcile first. Will you be that person? Both people who are fighting have to be accountable for their sins (repentance), but certainly it will take one brother or sister to be the more honorable person FIRST and reconcile with the other.

Decision

Maybe you are here and have given your life to Christ. However, you are struggling with family problems. Ask God to forgive you of your bitterness right now. Go and make things right with your brother (Matthew 5:23-26). Be the leader and bring your family back together. You

might have to overcome some pride. However, if you act in God's way, you will find peace in your heart and maybe win your family back.

Maybe you are attending today and you haven't given your life to Christ yet. We have already studied how Christ came to be the ONLY substitute for your sins. He is the only One who can take away your sins and get you to know God. John 17:3 says, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." You can KNOW God today through Christ. He can take away your sins and give you eternal life today. Won't you ask Christ to be your Lord and Savior today? How do you do that?

- A) Confess to God that you are a sinner. Everyone is a sinner, but we first must recognize that each of us has sinned against Him.
- B) Believe that only Jesus Christ can save you. No other person, building, idol, or god can save you. Only Jesus Christ saves. Forsake all other gods and follow Him.
- C) Repent of your sins and ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life. "Lord" means "master, boss or king" in your life. Ask Jesus to be your only Lord and Savior today. Watch Him help you have a more full and abundant life today. Watch Him help you show more grace, love, joy, peace, patience, faithfulness, gentleness, kindness and self-control to others. Rest in the promise that if you give your life to Christ, you will spend eternity with Him in Heaven after you die.

If you want to give your life to Christ today, pray this prayer with me to the Lord right now and commit your life to Jesus as your ONLY Lord and Savior.

"Dear Jesus, I know I'm a sinner, but I know that You love me. I know that only You can save me. I ask You to forgive me of my sins. I want to repent of my sins and make You Lord of my life today. Save me, Lord Jesus. Thank You for my salvation. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

SERMON 47

Bible Text - Daniel 1

Purpose of the sermon - To show that people that seem to have everything can both suffer and stand up for the Lord.

Sermon -

Introduction

Have you ever known someone who seemed to have everything? Maybe he was very good looking, smart, wealthy and likable. I went to school with a young man named Jake. Jake was eighteen years old. He was very handsome, all of the girls loved Him, his father was a former professional football player, he was smart and he was actually very likable.

I remember looking at him and thinking, “This guy has everything going for him. He must not have a trouble in the world!” It was difficult not to be jealous of Jake. Probably everybody in the world knows people who seem to be more blessed from the Lord.

Today we begin to look at four men who were all greatly blessed by God. In fact, the Bible talks about their attractive physical appearance, ability to learn, and noble birth. These men were so blessed that they qualified to serve the King!

All too often we look at people with blessings such as these, and we are jealous. In fact, we just assume that they are not good people BECAUSE they are so blessed. Today we will see four very blessed men who were excellent servants of the Lord.

Bible Narrative - Daniel 1

During the reign of King Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon attacked Judah. God delivered King Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. Nebuchadnezzar took the precious articles from the temple to Babylon. The King then ordered one of his chief officials to bring in to him some young men from both the royal family and nobility. These were to be young men that were handsome, without physical defect, able to learn and qualified to serve the King. They were to learn about the language and literature of Babylon. They were to eat food from the King's table. Their training was for three years, and then they would serve the king.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were four of the young men taken. When they were taken, they were given new names: Daniel, received Beltshazzar; Hananiah, Shadrach; Mishael, Meshach; and Azariah, Abednego.

Daniel decided not to eat and drink of the royal food and wine and asked the chief official for permission to abstain. This man liked Daniel. However, he was afraid he would get in trouble if the young men didn't eat the food and drink the wine. He feared they would look worse than the other captives in training. Daniel then told the official to test them for ten days. He

asked for nothing but vegetables and water to drink. Then he was to compare the four boys with the other trainees. The official agreed.

After ten days the four boys looked healthier and better nourished than any of the men who ate the royal food. The guard took away the royal food and gave them vegetables instead. God then gave them great knowledge of all types of learning, and to Daniel He gave the ability to understand visions and dreams. At the end of the training they were presented before Nebuchadnezzar. There were none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They entered the service of the King. In whatever the king asked them, these four were ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in the Kingdom.

Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

I. Even the Blessed Can Suffer – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 1:1-7

During the reign of King Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon attacked Judah. God delivered King Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. Nebuchadnezzar took the precious articles from the temple to Babylon. The King then ordered one of his chief officials to bring in to him some young men from the royal family and nobility. These were to be young men that were handsome, without physical defect, able to learn and qualified to serve the King. They were to learn about the language and literature of Babylon. They were to eat food from the King's table. Their training was for three years, and then they would serve the king.

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Explanation

A conquering empire named Babylon took over Judah. The King was taken away, as well as his family and the nobles of the country. Generally when a nation attacks another nation, the poor suffer. Most assuredly the poor suffered when Babylon conquered Judah as well, but here we see an instance of four Godly young noble men that suffered. These four men might even have been part of the royal family. How did they suffer?

A) They were taken from their homes.

Probably Daniel and his friends were fourteen or fifteen years old when they were taken captive. Although they weren't small children, they were still too young to have been ripped from their homes. Remember, they were only boys. They loved their mothers, fathers and homeland just as any normal boy would.

B) They were forced to study the conquering culture.

Studying is a privilege and an honor. However, these boys were forced to study BABYLONIAN culture and not their culture. In today's world many people want to study English or French and study cultures from around the world. However, what happened to Daniel was different. Nebuchadnezzar wanted them to study his culture so that Daniel could become his servant. He wasn't concerned about making Daniel more aware of the world; he just wanted Daniel to be better prepared to be submissive to him.

C) Their identity was taken away.

Everyone's name has a meaning. Do you know what your name means?

Daniel means, "God is my judge;" Hananiah means, "God is gracious;" Mishael means, "Who is what God is?" and Azariah means, "God has helped." All four boys were given names that honored God. Their new names were dedicated to other gods. Daniel was called Beltshazzar, which meant, "Bel, protect his life!" (a Babylonian god). Hananiah's name became Shadrach, which meant, "Command of Aku" (the moon god). Mishael's new name, Meshack, meant "Who is what Aku is?" Azariah, was now "Abednego, which meant "Servant of Nebo" (the second greatest god in the Babylonian religion).

These boys' identities were taken away. Their names were changed to give honor to pagan gods.

Application

Daniel, Mishael, Azariah and Hananiah were blessed boys who had everything in their world radically changed.

Have you suffered? Have you ever had some other nation, village or group attack you? Maybe no other group has attacked you, but have you suffered in other ways? Understand that you are not alone. Even the wealthy followers of the Lord have suffered throughout the years.

II. Even in Suffering, God Takes Care of the Details – Second Spiritual Truth

Explanation

God was in control of everything during these difficult times. It looks as if during these dark days Israel (Judah was part of the divided Kingdom of Israel), the King, and these four boys were doomed. Yet, God took care of all of the details. What are some examples that show that God was in control throughout those difficult times?

A) God gave Judah over to Nebuchadnezzar.

God delivered King Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand (Daniel 1:2).

Nebuchadnezzar may have thought that he had taken over Judah by his great military power. However, the Bible says that God DELIVERED Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. In fact, God was in complete control of what had happened.

Many nations and people feel that because they are strong they can do incredible things. People would do well to remember that it is God who allows nations to be strong, and it is God who allows nations to fall as well. It is He who is in control (Romans 13).

B) God placed the four boys together.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were four of the young men taken (Daniel 1:6).

It is very hard to serve God alone. Jesus worked with 12 disciples at one time. Paul, if possible, constantly had someone with him to train. It would have been very difficult for these four young boys to thrive for the Lord if they were by themselves. However, God allowed them to have each other. In the same way God gives us brothers and sisters in Christ. Remember that they are gifts from the Lord.

C) God gave them favor with the chief official.

Daniel decided not to drink the royal food and wine and asked the chief official for permission to abstain. This man liked Daniel (Daniel 1:8-9).

There is a saying, "It is not what you know but WHO you know." In life, it is so much easier to get ahead when you know someone with influence. Most jobs are given because of who you know, not what you know. For example, there are many, many young men who can stack boxes or push a plow. There are also many, many men that need jobs. However, it is much easier to get a job doing those things if the boss already knows and trusts you or your family.

God guided that chief official to like Daniel and his friends. This relationship helped the young boys.

D) God gave them great abilities.

God then gave them great knowledge of all types of learning, and to Daniel He gave the ability to understand visions and dreams. At the end of the training they were presented before Nebuchadnezzar. There were none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They entered the service of the King. In whatever the king asked them, these four were ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in the Kingdom (Daniel 1:17-20).

God was gracious to give these boys much ability. They learned their tasks to so well that the king allowed them to work for them. Although it is important to

work hard in ones studies, the boys did not forget that their success in training came from the Lord. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)

III. Even in Suffering, the Boys Took a Stand For the Lord – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 1:8

Daniel decided not to drink the royal food and wine and asked the chief official for permission to abstain.

Explanation

Daniel decided that he could not drink the food and wine that was offered to Him. Instead, he wanted to be served vegetables and water. Why? We are not sure of all of the reasons why Daniel wanted to do this but several may be:

A) Religious reasons –

The Jewish people did not want to eat food that was “unclean.” In other words, they did not want to eat things such as pork and horseflesh. They did not want to eat food that did not have the blood drained from it (Leviticus 17:13-14).

Let us remember that God told Peter in Acts 10 that all foods were now “clean” and could be eaten. We can learn in that chapter that eating certain types of food will not get you closer to God. From that moment on Christians knew that they could eat all types of food. However, at the time, God had not spoken these things to Daniel and his friends. For their consciences’ sake, they chose not to eat this food.

B) Idols –

Many of these foods were probably offered to idols. Daniel did not want to eat food that had been offered to idols. He may have been trying to follow his conscience.

In the New Testament, Paul assured believers not to feel guilty if they ate food from the marketplace that had been offered to idols (I Corinthians 10:25-28).

C) Health –

Although God told us that all foods are now “clean,”(Acts 10) a diet of wine and rich foods day-after-day is not good for our bodies. Daniel was not rejecting all food and wine. In Daniel 10:1-3, the Bible implies that he drank wine and ate meat again in his life. However, Daniel was also showing the importance

of taking care of your body at this time by putting vegetables and water in his body.

Was it difficult for these boys to take their stand for the Lord? Most definitely it was difficult. Why?

- A) To refuse the King's food would have been considered an insult to the King.
- B) The boys were eating the best food of the land. It would have been difficult to give up that food for water and vegetables.
- C) There were certainly other boys in the training besides those four. These boys probably put pressure on Daniel and his friends for taking this stand.
- D) They put their leader's job in jeopardy by taking this stand (Daniel 1:9-10).
- E) They were living far away from home. It would have been easy not to stand up for the Lord considering their parents and families were so far away.
- F) They put their career advancement in jeopardy by not going along with what the program said to do in terms of food.
- G) They could have been embittered against the Lord for being taken into captivity. They could have decided to not serve Him because they felt he may not have been "taking care" of them like they would have wanted.

IV. God Blessed the Four Men For Standing For Him – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 1:15-21

After ten days the four boys looked healthier and better nourished than any of the men who ate the royal food. The guard then took away the royal food and gave them vegetables instead. God then gave them great knowledge of all types of learning, and to Daniel He gave the ability to understand visions and dreams. At the end of the training they were presented before Nebuchadnezzar. There were none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They entered the service of the King. In whatever the king asked them, these four were ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in the Kingdom.

Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Explanation- Daniel and his friends took a courageous stand for the Lord. He blessed them greatly for this stand. Although God did not do EXACTLY what the four young boys may have wanted Him to do the Lord still blessed them. What did God do?

God did NOT-

1. Send them back home
2. Free Judah

God DID-

1. Give them great knowledge
2. Give them better physical health
3. Allow them to enter the service of the king

God blessed them with great knowledge. He actually made them ten times better than the king's other advisors. He allowed them to be put in a powerful position in a new kingdom. Because of this position, we will see them be used mightily throughout this book. He may not have given them exactly what teenage boys may have wanted, but He gave them what He needed them to have. A great position in a new kingdom so that they could be great testimonies for Him in their new world.

Application

Are you having a difficult time right now? Are you forced to make a difficult decision for the Lord? It IS difficult to take a stand for the Lord sometimes. However, remember the example of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Whether you are rich, poor, powerful or unknown, God honors those who stand for Him.

Pray to God for strength to stand for Him today.

Decision

If you are seeking to know more about the Lord today, and you FEAR taking a stand for Him, that is understandable. It is hard to follow the one true Creator God. It is hard to reject all the other gods that are worshipped around you. It is difficult to go against the religions or traditions that you may have been taught. However, if you feel as if your heart is burning with interest about God, that is His Spirit working in your life. He is trying to point you to the TRUTH and the TRUTH IS JESUS. If you give your life to Jesus today, He will come into your heart and save you today. He will give you joy in your heart and eternal salvation for your soul. Won't you give your life to Jesus today? Won't you follow the TRUE GOD? If you would like to do this, pray with me right now. Confess your sins, turn to the ONE ONLY GOD, tell Him that there are no other gods but Him, and give your life to Him. You will be amazed at the joy you will experience for standing up for Him.

If you would like to give your life to the Lord Jesus, pray this prayer with me now. . .

SERMON 48

Bible Text - Daniel 2

Purpose of the sermon - To teach how to act in a problem situation.

NOTE TO PASTOR – DANIEL, CHAPTER TWO, IS SO RICH WITH SPIRITUAL TRUTHS THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO PREACH THIS IN ONE SIMPLE SERMON. PREACH SERMONS 48-49 IN TWO CONSECUTIVE SERMONS. YOU WILL NEED TO RETELL THE STORY IN CONTEXT BOTH TIMES IN ORDER FOR THIS PASSAGE TO BE CLEAR.

Sermon -

Introduction

We have all faced crises in our lives. These are moments when we do not know how to resolve terrible situations. Although there are many stories in the Bible that can teach us how to act in a crisis situation, Daniel 2 gives excellent advice on how to act.

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2

During Nebuchadnezzar's second year of his reign, he had dreams that troubled him, and he could not sleep. Nebuchadnezzar called all of his magicians, astrologers and sorcerers to tell him his dreams.

The sorcerers praised the king and asked him to tell them the dreams so they could interpret them.

The king refused to tell them the dream. He said if they could tell him the dream they would be rewarded, but if they didn't they would be cut to pieces and their houses would be made into an ash heap.

The servants told Nebuchadnezzar to tell them the dream, and they would give an interpretation. The king told them that they were stalling for time. He accused them of trying to speak lying and corrupt words to him. Therefore, he wanted them to tell him the dream, and then he would know they could interpret it.

The sorcerers said that no king on Earth has ever asked such a thing of his astrologers or magicians. They said there was no one who could tell this to the king but the gods "whose dwelling is not with the flesh."

The king became very angry and gave the command to kill all the wise men of Babylon. The decree went out, and the wise men began to be killed. Even Daniel and his companions were sought after to be killed. Daniel then went to the captain of the king's guard and asked him why the decree was so urgent.

Daniel went to the king and asked him to give him time. Daniel went to the house with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and they sought the Lord in order that they wouldn't be killed. That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Daniel blessed God.

Daniel went back to Arioch and told the captain not to kill the wise men because Daniel had the interpretation. Daniel was taken before the King and David told him the dream. He told the king that the wise men, astrologers, magicians and soothsayers could not reveal this mystery to him. However, there is a God in Heaven who reveals secrets. Daniel said this secret was revealed to him to tell the king, not because Daniel was wiser than anyone living, but it would be revealed for their sakes as well as for the king's sake, so he could know the thoughts of his heart.

The vision was of a great image. The statue had a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron and its feet partly of iron and clay. A stone was cut out, but not by human hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay. The feet broke into pieces. Then all the rest of the body was crushed together and became like chaff. The wind carried them away, and the stone became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

Then Daniel interpreted the dream. He told the king that Nebuchadnezzar was a great king and the head of gold represented him. He said that another kingdom would arise that was inferior to the king's, and then a third kingdom of bronze would rule over all the earth. The fourth kingdom would be as strong as iron. That kingdom would break in pieces and crush all the others. Just like its toes were partly iron and partly clay, that kingdom would be divided. It would also be partly strong and partly fragile. However, in the days of those kings, God would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed. It shall break into pieces and consume these other kingdoms and stand forever. In as much as the stone was cut out of a mountain and it broke all of the pieces of iron, bronze, clay, silver and gold, the great God would show what will come to pass after these things.

Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face before Daniel, and the king commanded that offerings be brought to him. Nebuchadnezzar said that surely Daniel's God was the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and revealer of secrets since Daniel could reveal the secret. The king promoted Daniel, gave him many great gifts, made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and administrator over all of the wise men of Babylon. Daniel asked that the king set Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon, but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

As we can see, Daniel had a big, big problem in this passage. In fact, his problem was a matter of life or death. If he did not solve the king's dilemma of the interpretation of the dream then he and all of the advisors would be killed.

Life often sends problems to us. Sometimes they are matters of life and death, sometimes the problems are small by comparison. Whatever type of problem we might face, Daniel 2 can teach us some basic principles on how to act when a problem occurs. Let us look at how Daniel reacted and apply what he did to our own life.

I. A Crisis Occurs – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:1-3

During Nebuchadnezzar's second year of his reign, he had dreams that troubled him and he could not sleep. He called all of his magicians, astrologers and sorcerers to tell the king his dreams. The sorcerers praised the king and asked him to tell them the dreams so they could interpret them.

Explanation

This was a true crisis. Nebuchadnezzar had a definite need. His dreams had greatly troubled him, and he needed his advisors to do their job. Initially this looked like a typical situation for the advisors. They had a system for interpreting dreams; if they knew what the dream was, the advisors probably could have researched in their books and given him an answer. It did not matter if the answer was accurate, but they could give him a seemingly satisfactory answer.

Illustration

In our world today, there are many people that claim to be soothsayers. In other words, they read the palms of someone's hand or they look to astrology to tell the future. They claim to be able to speak to dead people. Millions of people around the world follow what they have to say. It is very interesting what the Old and New Testament has to say about these sorts of people.

A) There were terrible consequences for prophesying incorrectly (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

B) If the prophet spoke something that did not come to pass, then people were not be afraid of him; they felt that the message did not come from the Lord (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

C) People that dabbled in the occult were viewed negatively (Leviticus 19:31; 2 Chronicles 33:6).

D) Jesus warned us to avoid false prophets (Matthew 7:15). These were people who preached a false gospel and may have even performed false signs and wonders. Those false signs had to have demonic influence.

Are these same consequences applied to people that mess with divination today? Most certainly not! The fourth point is most applicable to us today. While we are to watch out for false prophets (false prophets can also mean people who preach heresy, not just people who claim to foretell the future), we shouldn't KILL them. We should judge them by the fruit.

We have two things now that the early followers of God did not have in the Old Testament. We have the HOLY SPIRIT and THE COMPLETED SCRIPTURE—THE BIBLE. Even with those two things, does God work through dreams even today? It seems as if He does. There are many stories about Muslims coming to Christ through dreams. These dreams typically occur where there is little Christian witness and few available Bibles.

Daniel was given a special gift by God to show that in Babylon, where dream interpretation was highly respected, God was Lord of lords. Only Daniel could interpret the dreams the king had because only God was powerful enough to give the interpretation. The other gods, which the Bible calls demons (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37; I Corinthians 10:20), have no authority over the one Creator God. In fact, even though they are attempting to deceive billions of people on Earth, demons know that there is only one Creator God (James 2:19).

II. A Leader Acts Inappropriately – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:5

The king refused to tell them the dream. He said if they could tell him the dream they would be rewarded, but if they didn't they would be cut to pieces and their houses would be made into an ash heap.

Explanation

All too often those with absolute power act inappropriately. There is a saying, “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Nebuchadnezzar threatened to kill all of his soothsayers over this dream. In fairness to Nebuchadnezzar, he may have just been trying to determine if his advisors were trying to deceive him. However, his desire to kill all of those men shows a great overreaction on his part.

Application

Do not be frustrated when your boss overreacts to a problem. Leaders have been doing that for centuries! God sees when leaders act inappropriately and is with you to protect you.

III. There Were Man-Centered Attempts to Solve the Problem Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:7-9

The servants then told Nebuchadnezzar to tell them the dream, and they would give an interpretation. The king told them they were stalling for time. He accused them of trying to speak

lying and corrupt words to him. Therefore, he wanted them to tell him the dream and then he would know they could interpret it. (Daniel 2:7-9)

Explanation

As always, the interpreters had their own approach to solving this problem. They wanted Nebuchadnezzar to tell them the dream. Then they could research their books and tell him their solution. Whether their solution was correct or not was not important; they just needed an answer. Instead of seeking the one true Creator God, they sought their own wisdom and experience.

Application

The world is always looking for man-made solutions. While God did give us a mind to think and study with, He wants us to look toward Him for our solutions.

IV. Daniel's Wise Reaction – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:15

Daniel then went to the captain of the king's guard and asked him why the decree was so urgent.

Explanation

Imagine David's feelings right now. He was still a young man, seventeen or eighteen years old at the time. He was being threatened with his life. However, he calmly questioned why the decree of the king was so urgent. His reply was wise and his consequent discussion with the king calmed the situation. David put his trust in the Lord's solution, and that enabled him to react wisely rather than panic.

Application

Have you been asked to do something at work or at home that seems unreasonable and could possibly be bad for you? Take time, trust in the Lord, and let Him handle the situation.

V. Daniel Takes the Problem to the Lord – Fifth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:16-19

Daniel went to the king and asked him to give him time. Daniel went to the house with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and they sought the Lord in order that they wouldn't be killed. That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Daniel blessed God.

Explanation

Daniel did exactly what he should have done. He went to his friends and sought the Lord (prayed) for help. The Bible says that when two or three are gathered in His name, God is in their midst (Matthew 18:20). Daniel and his three friends sought the Lord, and He answered.

Application

When you face a crisis—PRAY! In fact, find believers that you can pray with. You will be amazed at the wisdom God gives you as you pray together.

VI. Daniel Tells the Solution without Shame – Sixth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:36 (See vv. 31-45)

Then Daniel interpreted the dream.

Explanation

God gave Daniel the answer to his request. He showed Daniel the dream and what it meant. Daniel then took the answer to the king.

Application

When you have sought God, maybe even have consulted the church, and feel that you know what He would have you to do, then approach the problem without shame. There is no indication that Daniel was afraid to tell the king what God had revealed to Him. He approached the king with the truth.

VII. Daniel Gives Glory to the Lord and Not Himself – Seventh Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:28-30

However, there is a God in Heaven who reveals secrets. Daniel said this secret was revealed to him to tell the king, not because Daniel was wiser than anyone living, but it would be revealed for their sakes as well as for the king's sake, so he could know the thoughts of his heart.

Explanation

Daniel could have approached the king and told him that he had interpreted that dream himself. However, he gave God all the credit. Why? Because God deserved all of the credit. God had interpreted the dream, and Daniel was humble enough to know that truth.

Application

Remember that when something extraordinary happens to you, God is the one who has blessed you. Give Him the credit and watch how He blesses you.

VIII. God Receives the Glory – Eighth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:46-47

Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face before Daniel, and the king commanded that offerings be brought to him. Nebuchadnezzar said that surely Daniel's God was the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and revealer of secrets since Daniel could reveal the secret.

Explanation

Because Daniel did not give any glory to himself; Nebuchadnezzar was able to see who God really is. He is the God of gods and the Lord of kings. This was an amazing proclamation for Nebuchadnezzar. After all, Nebuchadnezzar was possibly the most powerful man on Earth at the time. He worshipped many, many gods. However, this is Nebuchadnezzar's beginning step to realize that **YOU CANNOT WORSHIP MANY GODS AT THE SAME TIME, AND JUST ADD THE CREATOR GOD TO YOUR LIST OF GODS. INSTEAD, YOU MUST WORSHIP ONLY THE ONE TRUE GOD.**

Application

Are you a worshipper of many spirits, idols or gods? The Bible says that we can only worship the one true creator God. (Exodus 20:3-4). You cannot worship other gods AND God as well. You must worship only God in order to be His true follower.

IX. Daniel Accepted the New Challenges – Ninth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:48

The king promoted Daniel, gave him many great gifts, made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and administrator over all of the wise men of Babylon.

Explanation

Often, we are afraid to take on new challenges even after something good happens to us. Daniel was not afraid to take on the administrative roles that the king offered him.

Application

Do not let under confidence stop you from taking the steps in life God might have for you. Rest in Him and allow Him to work through you as you take on more responsibility at home or at work.

X. Daniel Remembered Others – Tenth Spiritual Truth

A) The lost -

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:24

Daniel went back to Arioch and told the captain not to kill the wise men because he had the interpretation.

Explanation

It is always easy to overlook the lost of the world. They often are not nice to us, they hold different priorities to life, and they reject our God. However, Daniel remembered the soothsayers that were still alive. He was concerned for their safety.

Application

Do you prioritize the lost in your life? Do you think of others in the midst of a crisis situation? Most of us only think of ourselves when we are in a crisis situation. God allows us to overcome that selfishness and see the needs of a lost world around us.

B) The saved –

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:4

Daniel asked that the king set Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon, but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

Explanation

Daniel remembered the friends with whom he prayed. They prayed as a team. They served the Lord together. In Daniel's moment of glory, he was concerned about his friends' future.

Application

Do not forget your church and your friends who are with you in your decisions. Support your church members when possible. Remember to be concerned for their well being as well as your own.

Decision

Are you facing a crisis situation in your life? Maybe not all of these ideas can be applied to your situation, but you can certainly apply some of them. Seek the Lord, respond wisely, answer with confidence, remember those around you, accept new challenges, and give glory to God when you have a problem. These are all solid pieces of advice when you have to deal with stressful situations in your work, home or school.

Did you know that the Bible is full of advice for your life today? The Bible says that the Word of the Lord is living and active (Hebrews 4:12). In other words, it is as applicable today as it was hundreds of years ago. It can be applied to your own life. It is "living" because God speaks through His Word. The same Creator God who speaks through His Word wants you to know Him.

Do you know how to know Him? You can know God through Jesus Christ (John 3:16). God sent Him to be a sacrifice for you even today. A Holy God needed a sacrifice for your sin. Either you were to die in your sins, or God the Son could die for you. He died for me and you on that cross. Three days later He rose from the grave and He is alive today and wants to live in your heart. Won't you let Him come into your life?

If you'd like to be a follower of Jesus Christ and only Jesus Christ, no other gods, repeat this prayer after me.

"Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I want you to be the Lord of my life. Forgive me of my sins. I know that only you can save me, so I turn my sins, my soul, and my life over to you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

SERMON 49

Purpose of the sermon - To teach about the return of Christ.

Bible Text - Daniel 2

Sermon –

Introduction

Christ is returning. Only God the Father knows when He will return (Matthew 24:36), but someday Christ will return. Much of the book of Daniel deals with the future events surrounding Christ's return. We could spend weeks and weeks discussing what may happen when Christ returns, but we will not do that. In our six-part series on Daniel, we will only spend one day discussing Christ's return. The book of Daniel, however, is rich with many chapters concerning the end times. Let us look at God's revelation to Daniel concerning the end times in Chapter 2 and see how this can be applied to our lives today.

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2

During Nebuchadnezzar's second year of his reign, he had dreams that troubled him, and he could not sleep. Nebuchadnezzar called all of his magicians, astrologers and sorcerers to tell him his dreams.

The sorcerers praised the king and asked him to tell them the dreams so they could interpret them.

The king refused to tell them the dream. He said if they could tell him the dream they would be rewarded, but if they didn't they would be cut to pieces and their houses would be made into an ash heap.

The servants told Nebuchadnezzar to tell them the dream, and they would give an interpretation. The king told them that they were stalling for time. He accused them of trying to speak lying and corrupt words to him. Therefore, he wanted them to tell him the dream, and then he would know they could interpret it.

The sorcerers said that no king on Earth has ever asked such a thing of his astrologers or magicians. They said there was no one who could tell this to the king but the gods "whose dwelling is not with the flesh."

The king became very angry and gave the command to kill all the wise men of Babylon. The decree went out, and the wise men began to be killed. Even Daniel and his companions were sought after to be killed. Daniel then went to the captain of the king's guard and asked him why the decree was so urgent.

Daniel went to the king and asked him to give him time. Daniel went to the house with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and they sought the Lord in order that they wouldn't be killed. That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Daniel blessed God.

Daniel went back to Arioch and told the captain not to kill the wise men because Daniel had the interpretation. Daniel was taken before the King and David told him the dream. He told the king that the wise men, astrologers, magicians and soothsayers could not reveal this mystery to him. However, there is a God in Heaven who reveals secrets. Daniel said this secret was revealed to him to tell the king, not because Daniel was wiser than anyone living, but it would be revealed for their sakes as well as for the king's sake, so he could know the thoughts of his heart.

The vision was of a great image. The statue had a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron and its feet partly of iron and clay. A stone was cut out, but not by human hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay. The feet broke into pieces. Then all the rest of the body was crushed together and became like chaff. The wind carried them away, and the stone became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

Then Daniel interpreted the dream. He told the king that Nebuchadnezzar was a great king and the head of gold represented him. He said that another kingdom would arise that was inferior to the king's, and then a third kingdom of bronze would rule over all the earth. The fourth kingdom would be as strong as iron. That kingdom would break in pieces and crush all the others. Just like its toes were partly iron and partly clay, that kingdom would be divided. It would also be partly strong and partly fragile. However, in the days of those kings, God would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed. It shall break into pieces and consume these other kingdoms and stand forever. In as much as the stone was cut out of a mountain and it broke all of the pieces of iron, bronze, clay, silver and gold, the great God would show what will come to pass after these things.

Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face before Daniel, and the king commanded that offerings be brought to him. Nebuchadnezzar said that surely Daniel's God was the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and revealer of secrets since Daniel could reveal the secret. The king promoted Daniel, gave him many great gifts, made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and administrator over all of the wise men of Babylon. Daniel asked that the king set Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon, but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

I. There Were Great Kingdoms in the Past – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 2:31-35

The vision was of a great image. The statue had a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron and its feet partly of iron and clay. A stone was cut out, but not by human hands, and struck the image on its feet of iron and clay. The feet broke into pieces. Then all the rest of the body was crushed together and became like chaff. The wind carried them away and the stone became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

Explanation

Throughout the world there were many great kingdoms. India has had great civilizations for close to 5,000 years. China has had dynasties for close to 4,200 years. Daniel had a vision of four great empires of the past in this vision.

A) Nebuchadnezzar was the King of the Babylonian dynasty (605-539 B.C.) This empire was centralized where Iraq is located today. This empire was represented by the gold head.

B) The Medo-Persian Empire was in the Middle East as well and arose from modern day Iran. It rose to power after the Babylonian empire. The vision described this empire as the section of the statue with the chest and arms of silver.

C) The Greek Empire (331-146 B.C.) was centered in Greece, and the vision said that it ruled over the whole earth. This empire did cover much of the world as it spread from Greece all the way to India. This empire was identified as the belly and thighs of bronze.

D) The Roman Empire lasted for five hundred years before it was divided and covered much of Europe, North Africa and Asia. This was symbolized as the fourth kingdom. This was symbolized by the legs of iron. Once the empire was divided, it was represented by the feet and toes of partly iron and partly clay.

God gave each of these empires immense power and wealth. For example, Nebuchadnezzar had so much money that he could make a gold plated statue 30 meters tall. He also built the Hanging Towers of Babylon (a man-made mini-mountain) just to please one of his wives who missed living in her mountainous homeland. We can still see other examples of immense wealth even today from Roman Empire if we travel through Rome and see some of the great structures such as the Coliseum.

God revealed to Daniel the existence of these future empires hundreds of years before they existed.

II. There Are Great Kingdoms Now – Second Spiritual Truth

Explanation

The world is filled with powerful nations right now. India and China are fast becoming two of the strongest nations in the world. With 1.3 billion people in China and 1.1 billion in India, the sheer number of people makes them world powers. The kingdom of Saudi Arabia

possesses immense wealth because it possesses almost one-fourth of the world's proven oil reserves. The United States is by far the strongest nation on Earth economically and militarily. It spends as much on its military as the rest of the world's armies combined.

Application

Even though there are powerful kingdoms today in our world, those powerful leaders would do well to remember that God gave them their power (Romans 13). Christians would do well to remember that the kingdoms that they live in are not their own. We are not of this world. We are in the world, but we are not of the world (John 17:16). The true Kingdom is coming. Jesus is returning to set up his final rule here on Earth.

III. The Great Kingdom That Is Coming, God's Kingdom – Third Spiritual Truth

Explanation

God is setting up a perfect Kingdom in this world.

A) Its present state –

God's Kingdom on Earth has already begun. He does not rule as a political or military ruler, but through His spirit He does rule in the hearts and minds of men. When Christ lived, died, was buried and rose again, He began the Kingdom of God here on Earth. All of those who accept Him as Lord and Savior are part of that kingdom today.

What is God's Kingdom like?

1. It started small but will grow (Mark 4:30-32).
2. We must be prepared and follow God's plan for our lives (making Christ our Lord) in order to be part of it (Matthew 25:1-13).
3. We must use our gifts and talents for the Lord's rule in this world (Matthew 25:14-28).
4. To be part of this Kingdom is highly valued and is worth everything we have (Matthew 13:44).

B) Its future state -

Christ is returning again. One day He will return. Shortly thereafter, He will set up a Millennial Kingdom and reign on Earth for A thousand years (Matthew 25:1-46).

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from Heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in Heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other.”
(Matthew 24:29-31)

Christians should remember several things:

1. Christ’s return will be a surprise (Matthew 24:36-44).
2. Believers will be taken and unbelievers will not (Matthew 25:31-34).
3. Everyone on the planet will know of His return. *“And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn.”* (Matthew 24:30)
4. His return will be glorious. *“And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.”* (Matthew 24:30)

C) Its eternal state –

After a time of great tribulation for the world (Revelation 6, 8, 9, 16), Christ will set up His millennial kingdom on Earth. At the end of 1,000 years, God will judge the entire world. He will then create a new Heaven and New Earth for all those who have followed Him. The followers of Christ will finally be present with the Lord, and we will be at eternal rest (Revelation 21:22-22:5).

Application

What does this mean for you?

- A) If you are a believer listening to this message of Christ’s return, this should give you the desire to go out and witness to your friends. Christ is coming back. After He returns and judges the world, there will be no second chances (Revelation 20:11-15). In fact, even today, once someone dies there are NO SECOND CHANCES (Hebrews 9:27). You should be diligent to witness to your friends so that they will be prepared to ask for salvation in Jesus.
- B) If you have not come to Christ yet, this message should give you HOPE. Christ has delayed coming back until the full number of people who are going to give their lives to Him will come to Him. He is patiently waiting for YOU to come to salvation.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) Whether you give your life to Him and have salvation is your choice. He is waiting for you.

- C) If you have not come to Christ yet, this message should give you FEAR as well. Do not wait until it is too late to give your life to Christ. After he returns and the ultimate judgment occurs, those who do not have Christ as Lord will be tossed into the lake of fire or hell (Revelation 20:14-15). Hell is the location where people without Christ will spend eternity. This is the place where people face God’s judgment for rejecting His will while they are living. We already saw that God is patient with us, however, judgment must eventually come.

- What do we know about hell? From The Bible we can see that Hell is
- a. Not only the location for lost people after God’s final judgment, but where lost people go even today upon their death (Luke 16:22-23)
 - b. A place where the lost are sentient of their presence. In other words, people do not die and just go to sleep. They are aware of their presence there. (Luke 16: 24)
 - c. It is eternal punishment. Isaiah 66: 24; Mark 9:34-38; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 14:11 and 20:10.
 - d. It is a place of everlasting fire. (Matthew 25:41)
 - e. Body and soul will suffer. (Matthew 10:28)
 - f. It is impossible to leave once one is in hell. (Luke 16:26)
 - g. Those suffering in hell know it is important to warn the living about their plight. However, it is too late for them to evangelize the living. (Luke 16:27-30)

If even those in hell want to evangelize a world without Christ, shouldn’t we desire to share Christ even more so?

PASTOR A POWERFUL SERMON TO PREACH ON HELL CAN BE FOUND IN LUKE 16 AS JESUS DISCUSSED THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

Decision

Considering that Christ is returning, won’t you give your life to Him today? He is returning to set up his Kingdom here on Earth. He has already begun His Kingdom in the hearts and minds of hundreds of millions of people around the world. He is waiting for millions more to give their lives to Him. He is waiting for you as well. Are you ready to be part of His Kingdom now? If you are, pray this prayer with me today:

“Dear Jesus, I know that I’m a sinner. I know that You are God the Son and that You are returning. I want to give my life to you as the only true Savior and Lord of my life. No other god, spirit or idol can save me. I want to repent of my sins. Thank you for saving me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.”

SERMON 50

Purpose of the sermon – To show your people the proper response to the Lord concerning trials.

Bible Text - Daniel 3

Sermon -

Bible Narrative – Daniel 3

Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue that was thirty meters high and three feet wide. He set it up outside the city of Babylon. The king sent word to all of the leaders of his empire to come to the dedication of the temple. So all of his leaders stood before the image.

Then a herald cried out that all of the leaders from all peoples, nations and languages had to bow down and worship the image when the music started to play. Whoever did not fall down and worship would immediately be thrown into the furnace. So when the music played, all of the people from all of the nations bowed down and worshipped the golden image.

Then certain priests or advisors to the King came and accused the three Jewish men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego of not bowing down to the image. They told Nebuchadnezzar that he had appointed these men over the affairs of the province of Babylon and that they had not paid due regard to him. They did not serve his gods nor worship the golden image.

Nebuchadnezzar became enraged and called for Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. He asked them if they had chosen not to serve his gods or worship his image. He then gave them one more chance to bow down and worship during the music. If they didn't obey, they would be thrown into the furnace. He asked them, "Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

The three men replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and his countenance changed toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. He commanded the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than normal and for mighty men from his army to cast them into the furnace. The three men were bound in their coats, turbans, trousers, and other garments and were cast into the furnace. The king's command was so urgent that the fire killed the men of the army that took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abe-Nego. The three men were tied and fell into the furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and asked if they hadn't thrown just three men into the fire. The others told them they had. Then Nebuchadnezzar said that there were four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they were not hurt. He said the fourth man looked like the Son of God.

Nebuchadnezzar went to the furnace and told Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, “Servants of the Most High God,” to come out. So the three men came out of the fire and all of the leaders saw that they had not been burned, their hair wasn’t singed, and not one piece of clothing was effected. The smell of fire was not even on them.

Nebuchadnezzar praised God for sending his “Angel” to deliver them. Nebuchadnezzar said that Shadrach, Meshach and Abe-Nego had frustrated the king but only because they didn’t want to worship any other gods. He said that any person in his kingdom who speaks against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would be cut into pieces and their houses burned down. He said, “There is no other God who can deliver like this.”

The king then promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

I. Nebuchadnezzar Didn’t Learn from His Experience with God – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 3:1-6

Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue that was thirty meters high and three feet wide. He set it up outside the city of Babylon. The king sent word to all of the leaders of his empire to come to the dedication of the temple. So all of his leaders stood before the image.

Then a herald cried out that all of the leaders from all peoples, nations and languages had to bow down and worship the image when the music started to play. Whoever did not fall down and worship would immediately be thrown into the furnace. So when the music played, all of the people from all of the nations bowed down and worshipped the golden image.

Explanation

God had already used Daniel to show King Nebuchadnezzar that the Most High God, the Creator God, was the only true God. Daniel’s God proved His power by showing and interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Daniel 2). However, instead of learning to worship the only true God, Nebuchadnezzar created another god—possibly an image of himself! Some people think that instead of learning from the image in the first dream (the statue with the golden head), he simply copied it and made a new image of himself. It could have been an image something completely different. Either way, the true Creator God does not allow images to be made (Exodus 20:4-6).

Application

Many people can hear the truth or have an experience from God, but then learn nothing from the experience. For example, people pray and ask the Lord to heal them. If he does heal them, they forget about Him until they have ANOTHER problem. Why do people act like this? They forget about God because most people want to be the god of their own lives. They don’t

want to worship the true God; they want to be their own god—master of their own lives. However, the Bible teaches that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4-6; John 17:3). He is so powerful that He is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, all three separate yet unified and one.

Nebuchadnezzar may have believed in God the Father, but he wasn't ready to submit to God the Father. Do you know people like that? Do you know people who have been touched by the Lord through His word or through a miracle, but still want to be the god of their own life? Do you know people that may believe in the one true Creator God, yet they still worship other gods and spirits as well?

II. The Danger to the Believers Was Real – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 3:6

Whoever did not fall down and worship would immediately be thrown into the furnace.

Explanation

This furnace was probably very close to the statue. It was probably the same furnace that was used to smelt the metal for the production of the statue. For the leaders who were commanded to worship the statue, the threat of being thrown into this furnace would have been a horrifying thought.

Illustration

To be burned to death is one of the most horrible ways to die. Believers throughout the world have had to face possible death for their faith. Many believers in Europe hundreds of years ago faced being burned to death for their faith. In the end, thousands died for their faith. At that time people who were burned at the stake usually died by unfortunately breathing in the smoke. However, in this instance these three men were facing being thrown into a furnace. Most assuredly they had to fear not only the smoke but the fire! The fire would have certainly killed them.

Application

We all face trials in our faith. Unfortunately, in many areas of the world, believers have to face death for their faith. Take comfort in the fact that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego faced a similar situation. Ask God to help you perform as admirably as these three young men did if you have to face a trial or even death for your faith.

III. The Believers Chose to Follow God Regardless of What Happened –Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative –Daniel 3:16-18

The three men replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

Explanation

Every reader in the world needs to know these verses because these three men gave the perfect response to their trial. Believers would do well to remember what these men said when they face trials, sickness or death. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego’s response showed three things.

A) They trusted God.

They told the King that they had complete trust in God. They were totally sure that God had the power to deliver them from the situation.

B) They accepted whatever results God gave them.

Even though they knew that God had the power to save them, they were also aware that God might CHOOSE not to save them. Either way, they were content with whatever God chose to do.

Believers need to understand that God will not always answer our prayers in the way we want Him to. There are three ways that God chooses to answer our prayers - “yes,” “no,” or “in a different way”.

For example, if we pray for Him to heal someone who is sick, He can choose to answer our prayers exactly as we ask. He can also choose to say “no” and not heal them. He also can choose to answer the prayer for healing in a different way than we imagine. For example, He can choose to answer our prayer for healing later than we imagined or He can choose to partially heal. He can choose to answer by allowing us to find medicine for the person.

In whatever situation, it is our responsibility to accept God’s results like these three Godly men. They were prepared to accept whatever result God gave them. Remember, God ALWAYS HAS THE POWER TO ANSWER PRAYERS, but He might choose to answer them differently from what we want or imagine. We must love Him no matter what the response.

Let us remember two more points concerning God’s response to our prayers and to crisis situations very briefly.

A) God will guide His children (those who have followed Christ) in a way that is best for them. He loves you and the Bible says He works all things out for GOOD for you. (Romans 8:28)

B) As you pray, remember, that if we pray in faith and in His will, we will receive. (Matthew 21:22) The key to this idea is that we are praying in His will and not in our will.

Application

Ask God to help you pray to seek only His will. Ask Him to help you accept His answer regardless of how He responds. Ask Him to help you remember that everything that occurs happens for His children's benefit.

IV. The Lost World Saw the Lord – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 3:26-27

Nebuchadnezzar went to the furnace and told Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, "Servants of the Most High God," to come out. So the three men came out of the fire, and all of the leaders saw that they had not been burned, their hair wasn't singed and not one piece of clothing was effected. The smell of fire was not even on them.

Explanation

What did the lost world see because of these three young men's obedience?

A) The Lord was present.

Who saved the young men? God did. Many people believe that this was the Lord Jesus Christ who appeared to save the young men. The Bible tells us that no man can see the Father's face and live (Exodus 33:20). The language that is used in the Bible seems to imply that this was God who saved them. So if God the Father was present, how could the boys have lived in his Holy presence? Many Bible teachers believe that this was God the Son who sat with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The beautiful thing is that not only did the three young men get to see their Savior, but also the leaders of the Babylon got to see Him work a miracle as well.

B) The men were saved.

Truly an incredible miracle occurred. God the Son had protected the young men to the extent that the onlookers couldn't even smell fire on Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Their faith proved to be very powerful.

C) A lost man came closer to the Lord.

Every time you witness you will not see immediate results. There are times that you will see a lot of fruit. Sometimes you will not see as much fruit. Sometimes when you witness you are simply causing that person to move one step closer to giving His life to Christ. That is an important step! It is important to have FAITH that God will move in His time in the hearts of people when you witness to them. If you evangelize without faith, you are not pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6).

Remember, Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man in the world at the time. He had already seen God work through both Daniel and these three young men when Daniel interpreted his dream (Daniel 2). In fact, Nebuchadnezzar had already claimed that God was the “God of gods, the Lord of kings, and revealer of secrets.” (Daniel 2:47) However, Nebuchadnezzar still just placed God as a powerful god among many powerful gods. He had not admitted that God was the only True God.

Even though Nebuchadnezzar had moved one step closer to understanding in this chapter (he called God, “The Most High God” and admitted that no other god “delivers” like God), he still had one more step to take. Nebuchadnezzar now had to surrender his life and repent of his sins to the one true God.

In Daniel, Chapter 4, we will see what happened when God broke this proud man and helped him repent of his sins in order to surrender to Him.

Decision

Have you been forced into a difficult situation for God? Are you afraid to stand up for Him? Ask God to give you the strength to stand up for Him. Ask Him to help you respond like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. Be prepared to have complete faith that God can answer your prayers, but also be prepared to accept whatever answer He gives.

Do you want to have faith like these three young men? Wouldn't you like to believe in something as strongly as they do? God can give you that faith. If you give your life to Christ today, He will give you faith and strength that you never imagined you could have. Give your life to Christ today. Admit that God the Father is the one true God of the universe. Surrender your life to Jesus today.

Ask Him to be your ONLY LORD AND SAVIOR. No other god, no other moral life can save you, only Jesus Christ. If you want to give your life to Him, pray with me right now.

Dear Jesus . . .

SERMON 51

Purpose of the sermon – To show your people an example of how an older man was broken before the Lord and how his children refused to follow his example.

Bible Text - Daniel 4-5

NOTE TO THE PASTOR - THIS EITHER CAN BE A VERY LONG STUDY OR A TWO-PART SERMON.

Sermon –

Introduction

Today we will study one of the most unique chapters in all of Scripture. Chapter 4 was written by King Nebuchadnezzar. The Holy Spirit guided Him, but this is the only chapter that was written entirely by a pagan king. No one knows if Nebuchadnezzar gave his life to the Lord, but this passage implies that he did. Let us look at what brought Nebuchadnezzar to repentance, but also look at what happened to his son as well.

Bible Narrative – Daniel 4

Nebuchadnezzar wrote that he thought it would be good to declare the wonders that the Most High God did for Him. He said that God’s kingdom is everlasting, and His reign is for all generations.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that greatly upset him. He called in all of the magicians, astrologers, and soothsayers, but they could not interpret the dream. At last Daniel came, and Nebuchadnezzar told him the dream. He said that he knew that the Spirit of the Holy God was in Daniel and that he wanted Daniel to explain the dream.

He saw a great tree that was seen to the ends of the earth, but also he saw someone coming from Heaven crying that the tree must be cut down. The tree would be cut down, but the roots and stump would stay in the Earth. It would be wet with dew, and “he” would be wet with dew and would graze on the grass of the earth. His heart would change from that of a man and would be given the heart of a beast. Seven times would pass over him. This was decreed by the holy ones so that the “living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men.”

Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel to interpret the dream, but Daniel was too astonished to do so. He did interpret it, however. He told Nebuchadnezzar the tree was the king. He had grown strong and powerful, but he would be cut down. He would not lose his kingdom, but all that happened to the tree would happen to him. Daniel begged him to “break off your sins by being righteous and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor.”

One year later Nebuchadnezzar was walking around his royal palace when he reflected on how his own power and majesty had built Babylon. When he said this, a voice came from Heaven and told him that he had lost the kingdom. He would not dwell with men but would dwell with the beasts of the Earth. This was to happen so that he would know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses.

That very hour he was driven from men, ate grass like an oxen, and his body was wet with dew until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and nails like birds' claws.

At the end of that time, Nebuchadnezzar said that he "lifted my eyes to heaven," and his understanding returned. He blessed the Most High God and praised and honored Him. Everything returned to him—including his reason and his kingdom. His counselors and nobles were restored to him as well as his majesty.

Nebuchadnezzar said, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven, all of whose works are truth and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down."

We can learn several things from the life of Nebuchadnezzar.

I. The Arrogance of Nebuchadnezzar – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 4:29-30

One year later Nebuchadnezzar was walking around his royal palace when he reflected on how his own power and majesty had built Babylon.

Explanation

- Nebuchadnezzar had become a very arrogant man. Instead of giving praise to God for:
- A) Showing him great miracles such as his dream in Chapter 1 and the "Angel" (possibly God the Son) in the furnace,
 - B) Giving him the kingdom in which he ran,
 - C) Warning him of upcoming judgment in this dream,

Nebuchadnezzar took pride once again for all that "he" had done.

Application

Be careful not to take credit from God if He has given you a great family or job. All good gifts come from above (James 1:17).

II. The Humbling of Nebuchadnezzar – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 4:31-33

When he said this, a voice came from Heaven and told him that he had lost the kingdom. He would not dwell with men but would dwell with the beasts of the Earth. This was to happen so that he would know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he chooses.

That very hour he was driven from men, ate grass like an oxen, and his body was wet with dew until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and nails like birds' claws.

Explanation

Nebuchadnezzar had been warned. However, at this moment, judgment came upon Nebuchadnezzar. God was patient with him as He gave him many chances (2 Peter 3:9). However, God finally did punish Nebuchadnezzar. Why did God do this? Because Nebuchadnezzar had become so prideful that he needed to be humbled in order to see God. God did not humble him to be mean, but to show Nebuchadnezzar that the Most High rules and gives men EVERYTHING they have (Daniel 4:31).

Nebuchadnezzar began to act like an animal instead of a man. He left the company of men, let his hair and fingernails grow, and he ate grass like an oxen. He was completely stripped of any dignity or majesty.

Application

Will God cause everyone who needs to repent to be degraded to the point that they lose their mental capacity and think he is an animal? No. However, every person who comes to Christ must come to a point that he is broken over his sin. He must realize that God gives him everything, that God deserves everything, and that his sin has kept him from serving Christ. When a person does that, he is ready to repent of his sins and give his life to Christ. Repentance is simply TURNING from one's sin. A person repents when he is on one path in life going in one direction, and he turns in the opposite direction and surrenders his life for the Lord.

III. Nebuchadnezzar's Decision for the Lord – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 4:34

At the end of that time he "lifted my eyes to heaven," and his understanding returned.

Explanation

Nebuchadnezzar finally looked up to God instead of inward to himself. At this point God restored him to normal. Was Nebuchadnezzar saved for all eternity at that moment? No one can totally know for sure. However, it certainly seems that now instead of acknowledging his former god (Daniel 4:8), he acknowledged the one true God -Jehovah (Daniel 4:37). Nebuchadnezzar said, *“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven, all of whose works are truth and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.”*

Application

Nebuchadnezzar wanted it all. He wanted wealth, power, and glory for himself. He wanted to take credit and be in control of his own life. He wanted to pick and choose gods at his own benefit.

Jesus does not allow that. In John 14:6 He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” In other words, there are no other gods higher than Him—including whatever god, spirit or idol anyone on Earth may worship.

We want to be in control of our lives, but God wants us to know that He is in control. Moreover, if we allow Him to take control of our lives, He will give us more than we ever imagined. We will be able to rest in Him forever (Matthew 11:28).

PASTOR - YOU MAY WANT TO STOP HERE AND GIVE AN INVITATION. IF GOD CAN SAVE NEBUCHADNEZZAR, HE CAN SAVE ANYONE!

It appears that God saved Nebuchadnezzar. However, let us observe what happened to his son (possibly his grandson) named Belshazzar in Daniel, Chapter 5.

Bible Narrative - Daniel 5

Belshazzar had a great party for a thousand of his lords. He then commanded for the gold and silver vessels that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem to be brought so that he, his wives, his concubines and his lords could drink from them. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

Then a hand appeared at the same hour and wrote something on the wall. This scared the king very much. He promised that whoever could read the writing would be clothed in purple, given a gold chain around his neck, and be the third most powerful person in the kingdom. The king’s wise men could not read the words. The queen came to the banquet hall and told him about a man “in whom is the Spirit of God.” She told him to call Daniel.

Daniel was brought in to interpret the dream. The king said his wise men couldn't interpret the dream, but he would reward Daniel if he was successful. Daniel told the king he could keep his gifts and give the reward to another; however, he would interpret the writing.

Daniel then told the story of how Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had ruled the kingdom with great power. However, God took his glory from him because of his pride. He did not receive his kingdom back until he knew that the Most High God rules.

However, Belshazzar had not humbled his heart even though he knew about all that had occurred with Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar had lifted himself up against the Lord of Heaven. They had drunk from the vessels of His house and praised gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know. The God who "holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways," they had not glorified. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him and wrote - MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPSHARIN. These words meant that God had numbered the days of his kingdom and finished it. Belshazzar had been weighed in the balances and was "found wanting"; his kingdom had been divided and the Medes and Persians would take it.

Belshazzar gave the command and clothed Daniel with purple and a chain of gold. Daniel was made the third ruler of the kingdom. That very night Belshazzar was killed. Darius the Mede received the kingdom; he was sixty-two years old.

IV. The Arrogance of the Son/Grandson – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Explanation

We see from that story that there was a great contrast between Nebuchadnezzar and his son. Although Nebuchadnezzar had been humbled, Belshazzar had not. He had rejected God now that he was in power. Why had he refused to humble himself and serve the Lord?

A) Wealth and power –

Possibly the wealth and power had gone to Belshazzar's head. "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:24)

Although God loves the rich and poor alike, many times it is very difficult for someone who seems to have everything the world has to offer to serve the Lord.

B) Lack of respect for God's things –

They drank from the vessels of His house (Daniel 5:3).

Belshazzar took vessels that had been consecrated to the Lord from the temple in Jerusalem. He showed no respect for God's things.

C) Worship of other idols -

They drank from the vessels of His house and praised gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know (Daniel 5:3-4).

Daniel explained that God was angry that Belshazzar would worship other idols. God is very clear about idols (Exodus 20:4). We are not to make AN IMAGE OF ANYTHING in order to worship it. Daniel told Belshazzar that they were worshipping something that they could not even see, hear or know. In other words, the idols had no power or life.

Application

Around the world there are literally billions of people who worship idols that have no power. The idols are simply stone, wood or metal. Do you struggle with the worship of idols? Do you know that God says that idols have no power? The only true power is from God Himself.

D) Unwillingness to learn from the events of his father's life –

However, Beshazzar had not humbled his heart although he knew all of this (Daniel 5:22).

Belshazzar had not humbled himself even though he knew about all that happened to his father (or grandfather) Nebuchadnezzar.

Application

Many times we assume that if parents follow the Lord, then the children will follow the Lord. It is not that way. Each person must make his own decision to follow Him. Do not ASSUME you are okay just because your parents serve him. You must make your own decision to follow the Lord. You must call on the Lord yourself to truly be saved (Romans 10: 9-10, 13).

E) Possible consequences of father's sin –

Although the Bible does not discuss this, Nebuchadnezzar acted very poorly for many years. There are consequences when we do not follow the Lord. Many times our children observe our shortcomings and copy that behavior. Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance was shared by his son. This might have affected him years later.

V. Belshazzar's Experience with the Lord - Fifth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 5:23-28

The God who “holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways,” you have not glorified. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from him and wrote - MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPSHARIN. These words meant that God had numbered the days of his kingdom and finished it. Belshazzar had been weighed in the balances and was “found wanting,” his kingdom had been divided, and the Medes and Persians would take it.

Explanation

God performed a miracle. He caused a hand to write Belshazzar's judgment on the wall. This was not a judgment for repentance because God knew it was too late for Belshazzar. He would lose his kingdom and his life.

VI. Belshazzar's Sad Ending to His Life – Sixth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 5:30-31

That very night Belshazzar was killed. Darius the Mede received the kingdom; he was sixty two years old.

Explanation

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Belshazzar never repented of his sin. He lived life like he wanted, and his time finally ran out.

Decision

Have you humbled yourself before the Lord? Have you asked Jesus Christ to come into your life and save you? Have you repented of your sins? There is a consequence to your sins—death. Everyone will die. However, in Romans 6:23 death can also mean eternal death or separation from God. Don't be like Belshazzar and wait too long. Don't try to maintain control of your life. Give control of your life to Jesus and let Him guide you.

If you want to repent of your sins and give your life to Jesus, you can do so right now. You can tell him that you know that you are a sinner, but you know that He is the **ONLY LORD AND SAVIOR IN THE UNIVERSE**. Tell Him you want to give your life to Him today. If you want to do that, let's pray

Dear heavenly Father ...

SERMON 52

Purpose of the sermon - To show how a faithful man can have a positive effect generation after generation for Christ

Bible Text – Daniel, Chapter 6

Sermon –

Introduction

Today we close out the final chapter of our study of the life of Daniel. Daniel was truly one of the greatest followers of the Lord who ever lived. In today's study we see that a new kingdom has been established. Instead of the Babylonian empire, we now have the Medo Persian Empire. Daniel is an old man now; he's probably over eighty years old. This older man has a new king named Darius that he must serve. Let us observe how Daniel reacts to another trial in his challenge-filled life.

Bible Narrative – Daniel 6

Darius appointed 120 administrators over the entire kingdom. Three governors, Daniel and two other men, became the leaders of these 120 administrators. Their job was to protect Darius from loss. Then Daniel, because of his excellent spirit, did such a good job over the other governors that Darius considered making him in charge of the entire realm.

So the other governors and administrators got together and tried to bring some charge against Daniel, but they could not find any accusations because Daniel was faithful. They decided the only way to bring charges against Daniel was to use his God's laws against him.

So all of the leaders went before the King and said, "King Darius, live forever!" They told him that they had consulted together and decided to make a law that any man who prayed to any other god or man for thirty days would be thrown into the lions' den. They asked Darius to sign this into law. They knew that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed. King Darius signed the decree.

Now when Daniel knew it had been signed, he went home. In his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day as was his custom. He prayed and gave thanks before his God.

The leaders got together and found Daniel praying. They went before the king and asked again if he had signed a law that no man should pray to any other god or man for thirty days or they would be cast into a den of lions. The king confirmed that he had signed the law. They told him that Daniel, a Jew, did not show due regard for the king or for the law because he prayed three times a day.

The king was very sad when he heard this and tried throughout the day to deliver Daniel from this problem. However, the men reminded the king that the law had been signed and could

not be changed. So the king gave the command for Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." Then a stone was laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his ring.

The king went back to his palace, fasted, and would accept no entertainment. He could not sleep. The next morning he got up very early and went to the lions' den. When he arrived, he cried out, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

Daniel replied that God had sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths. The lions had not hurt him because he was innocent before the Lord and because he had done no wrong to Darius. The king was very glad for Daniel and commanded that he be taken up from the den. Daniel was not injured because he believed in his God.

The king gave the command to bring the men who had accused Daniel and cast them, their children and their wives into the lions' den. The lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces before they even hit the bottom of the den.

King Darius then wrote to all of the peoples, nations and languages of his lands that they must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. He proclaimed that God is the living God and His kingdom will not be destroyed. His dominion will endure to the end. He said that God delivers and rescues. He works signs and wonders in Heaven and on earth. He delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

So Daniel prospered in Darius and Cyrus the Persians' reign.

I. A Foolish Decision – First Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 6:6-9

So all of the leaders went before the King and said, "King Darius, live forever!" They said that they had consulted together and decided to make a law that any man who prayed to any other god or man for thirty days would be thrown into the lions' den. They asked Darius to sign this into law. They wanted this because they knew that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed. King Darius signed the decree.

Explanation

In this chapter we see that King Darius was an intelligent leader. He divided up the leadership of his kingdom in an organized manner (Daniel 6:1-2). He recognized great leadership because he became impressed with Daniel (Daniel 6:3). Obviously, Darius was a good leader. Yet this great leader was trapped into an unwise decision. He allowed some of his new administrators to talk him into a foolish law. Why did he fall into this trap?

A) Darius allowed his PRIDE to control his decisions.

It would take extreme pride to cause a man to sign into law that people could only pray to him. Man throughout history has wanted to make himself like

God. For example, Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden because they wanted to be like God (Genesis 3:5). Darius didn't want to be like God; he wanted to be a god. There are many religions today that teach that you can become a god. However, there is only one CREATOR GOD.

B) Darius allowed his UNBELIEF to take over the situation.

Darius had probably already heard about God through Daniel (Daniel 6:16). Yet he still wanted to set himself up as a god.

Application

You and I need to put God first in our decisions. Darius allowed his pride and unbelief to affect his logic, and this caused him serious problems later.

II. A Courageous Response – Second Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 6:10-11

Now when Daniel knew it had been signed, he went home. In his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day as was his custom. He prayed and gave thanks before his God.

Explanation

Daniel knew the law had been signed, but he went home and prayed as he always had. We can learn several things from this verse.

A) Daniel had the habit of prayer –

...he knelt down on his knees three times that day as was his custom.

B) Daniel prayed for the whole world to see –

In his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem...

C) Daniel gave thanks even in a difficult circumstance –

He prayed and gave thanks before his God.

Application

Sometimes our actions speak louder than our words. Daniel did not debate the law that Darius had signed. He simply went back to his house and prayed. His personal prayers to the

Lord spoke loudly for the world to see. Maybe you are facing a trial right now. Going about your daily business for the Lord will speak loudly to a lost world.

III. An Incredible Miracle – Third Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 6:14-23

The king was very sad when he heard this and tried throughout the day to deliver Daniel from this problem. However, the men reminded the king that the law had been signed and could not be changed. So the king gave the command for Daniel to go ahead and be thrown into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." Then a stone was laid on the mouth of the den and the king sealed it with his ring.

The king went back to his palace, fasted, and would accept no entertainment. He could not sleep. The next morning he got up very early and went to the lions' den. When he arrived, he cried out, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

Daniel replied that God had sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths. The lions had not hurt him because he was innocent before the Lord and because he had done no wrong to Darius. The king was very glad for Daniel and commanded that he be taken up from the den. Daniel was not injured because he believed in his God.

Explanation

Daniel had to face the consequences of his prayers. Even though he obeyed the law of God, he had disobeyed the law of man. Even though the king was very unhappy, he was forced to throw Daniel into the lions' den. However, once in the den, Daniel was perfectly safe. God had sent an angel to protect him. It is interesting that Daniel was safer in that den of lions WITH the Lord than he would have been outside of the den without Him.

Application

The safest place for all of us to be is in the will of God. It was God's will for Daniel to continue praying to Him. The law that had been written was unjust, and Darius knew it. Daniel was innocent before both God and Darius. If you choose to be in God's will, you will have safety in Him. Will He always protect you from harm? No, some Christians throughout history have been forced to die for their faith. However, you will be AMAZED how God protects you on a daily basis when you are in His will. I have thought many times how often God has protected me both from the world and from my foolish actions.

IV. A Moved Man – Fourth Spiritual Truth

Bible Narrative – Daniel 6:25-27

King Darius then wrote to all of the peoples, nations and languages of his lands that they must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. He proclaimed that God is the living God, and His kingdom will not be destroyed. His dominion will endure to the end. He said that God delivers and rescues. He works signs and wonders in Heaven and on earth. He delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

Explanation

Darius was GREATLY moved by what he had seen. This was one of the most amazing and famous miracles of the entire Bible. The lions that refused to eat Daniel devoured the corrupt leaders and their families immediately (Daniel 6:24).

Darius set out and wrote a decree to all of the people across his vast empire. He declared what he had seen about the living God—the God of Daniel. God’s mighty action, combined with Daniel’s faithful witness, had an impact once again on one of the most powerful men in the world.

Daniel had every reason NOT to be a faithful witness for the Lord. Let’s think about some of those reasons.

A) Daniel had been taken from his homeland when he was a young boy. Most assuredly, he lost family and friends in that process. Regardless of how many people he lost, he certainly missed his homeland. He still prayed toward his homeland even toward the end of his life (Daniel 6:10). Daniel could have begrudged God for taking him away from home.

B) Daniel was very powerful. He was one of the most powerful men of three empires. Once men become powerful they often become convinced of their own abilities. They also tend not to want to offend others, so they avoid talking about their faith. Daniel never forgot to give glory to the Lord. He knew that the Lord gave him all that he had. He had obviously shared about his Lord to others around him (Daniel 6:20).

C) Daniel was very old at this time. He was over eighty years old. Yet, at eighty years of age, once again he was facing possible death for following the Lord. It would have been easy for him to think that he was too old to confront these problems. However, Daniel did not waiver. He trusted the Lord.

Application

If there is one thing we can learn from this Bible passage, it is that a faithful follower of Christ can have an impact far greater than he can imagine. This young captive boy was now an

old man. He had been a faithful witness for at least 65 years. In that time, Daniel had stood up for the Lord with Nebuchadnezzar, Balshazzar, and now Darius. He most probably had seen the most powerful man in the world, Nebuchadnezzar, come to Christ. Possibly, Darius came to the Lord as well. We do not know for sure if they came to the Lord, but we will find out someday.

If we are like Daniel and are followers of the Lord, we will see all of those who have given their lives to the Lord, from every country and every century, with us in Heaven after we die. Daniel was a faithful witness; it would be amazing to know how many people he helped influence for the Lord by his faithful witness through both the good times and the difficult times. (We can see an example of some of those faithful witnesses for the Lord in Hebrews 11).

Decision

Maybe you are here today, and, like Daniel, you have given your life to the Lord. Are you a faithful witness as well? Do you stand up for the Lord during times of trial? Pray that God will help you to be a faithful witness for Him. Wouldn't it be a joy at the end of your life to be able to look back at all of the people who you helped influence to give their lives to the Lord as well?

Maybe you have not given your life to the Lord yet. Aren't you ready to come to know the Creator God and His Son Jesus Christ? We have studied some incredible stories about God's power, deliverance, love and mercy through these sermons. He wants you to experience these things as well. If you want to experience knowing the Lord, then you need to do three things:

A) Confess that you are a sinner and you need the Lord. You cannot save yourself. No other god, person, church or temple can save you—only Jesus Christ.

B) Tell Jesus that you believe that ONLY HE CAN SAVE YOU AND BE LORD OF YOUR LIFE.

C) Repent (turn) from your sins and give your life, soul, mind, heart, passions, desires – EVERYTHING - over to Him. Turn from any other gods, spirits or idols you worship and ask Him to be your Lord. If you do this and obey what the Bible commands, He will save, bless, protect and love you in ways you never thought possible.

If you want to give your life to Jesus today, you can pray right now and ask Him to save you. Pray something like this: "Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner, but I know that you love me. I want to repent of my sins and give my life to you. Save me today, Lord Jesus. Thank you for my salvation. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

