


A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM



A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's roots are massive and spread out, some resting on the ground and others draped over the stone walls of an old building. The stone is weathered and mossy. The background shows more greenery and trees, suggesting a jungle or forest setting. The overall scene is one of nature reclaiming human-made structures.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLICAL *EVANGELISM* FOUND IN JOHN 4, “THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.”

TAKE

- TAKE THE INITIATIVE! JN. 4:6-9

OFFER

- OFFER GOD’S MERCY! JN. 4:10-14

IDENTIFY

- IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL NEEDS! JN. 4:9-10

CONFRONT

- CONFRONT SIN JN! 4:16-18

REJECT

- REJECT FALSE WORSHIP! JN. 4:19-24

REVEAL

- REVEAL CHRIST! JN. 4:25-26

CHAOS, CORRUPTION, AND THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

1. UPENDING GOD'S LAW
2. THE *HEART* OF THE PROBLEM IS THE *HEART*!
3. COMPREHENSIVE *CORRUPTION*
4. THE *HIGH COST* OF *REJECTING* GOD
5. *REJECTING* GOD'S *RESTRAINTS*
 - A. THE *CONSCIENCE*
 - B. THE *FAMILY*
 - C. THE *GOVERNMENT*

THE *CHURCH*

There is one more restraint God has placed in society—THE *CHURCH* FUNCTIONS AS ITS *SPIRITUAL* AUTHORITY. God has called His people to be a righteous and sanctifying influence in this world. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said,

“YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH; BUT IF THE SALT HAS BECOME TASTELESS, HOW CAN IT BE MADE SALTY AGAIN? IT IS NO LONGER GOOD FOR ANYTHING, EXCEPT TO BE THROWN OUT AND TRAMPLED UNDER FOOT BY MEN. YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A CITY SET ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN; NOR DOES ANYONE LIGHT A LAMP AND PUT IT UNDER A BASKET, BUT ON THE LAMPSTAND, AND IT GIVES LIGHT TO ALL WHO ARE IN THE HOUSE. LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.”

(MATT. 5:13–16)

- We understand the **effects** of **sin**—how it has corrupted God’s creation and set it on a destructive trajectory. We understand the world is dark and decaying. But the Lord has established His church as the last line of restraint against sin’s influence. **WE ARE THE SALT THAT SLOWS THE DECAY AND THE LIGHT THAT DIMINISHES THE DARKNESS.**
- Through our Christlike influence—through our **LOVE, MERCY, HUMILITY, KINDNESS, COMPASSION**, and **HOLINESS**—we’re called to restrain the corruption and chaos of sin. In that regard, the church is the most precious commodity in the world.
- However, just as **CHRIST WARNED**, the effects of salt and light can be diminished. **SALT** can become impure and lose its taste. **LIGHT** can be covered up and hidden. **THE TRAGEDY TODAY IS THAT SO MANY CHURCHES HAVE FAILED TO BE A PRESERVING, ILLUMINATING INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD.**

False teachers abound—charlatans promoting religious Ponzi schemes and selling phony miracles. ***Unholy*** and ***immoral leaders*** tarnish the church's testimony. ***Worldly entertainments*** dominate, while ***hard truths*** are dulled or dismissed altogether. Whole ***denominations*** deny the authority, sufficiency, and inerrancy of Scripture. Others deny the deity of Christ. ***TOO MANY CHURCHES DON'T CONFRONT SIN, DON'T CALL FOR HOLY LIVING, AND DON'T UPHOLD THE GOSPEL AS THE ONLY HOPE FOR SALVATION. WHAT KIND OF RESTRAINT CAN A CHURCH LIKE THAT PROVIDE?***

We need to recognize the correlation between the state of the world and the state of the church. A weak, worldly, false church has no ability to restrain the chaos and corruption of this world. A church like that actually contributes to the problem.

GOD'S PEOPLE NEED TO BE DIFFERENT. WE NEED TO BE SALT AND LIGHT, AND LIVE HOLY LIVES THAT GLORIFY THE LORD AND ADORN HIS GOSPEL.

LOVE AND *FULFILLING* THE LAW

- *WHAT DOES A **HOLY, GOD-HONORING** LIFE LOOK LIKE?*
- To answer that question, we need to consider one particular altercation between *JESUS* and the *PHARISEES*.
- *MATTHEW* records one of the religious leaders attempting to trap the Lord with a trick question. ***“TEACHER, WHICH IS THE GREAT COMMANDMENT IN THE LAW?”*** (MATT. 22:36). It seems their plan was to pin Him down on one of the hundreds of *ceremonial laws* and *rituals* they had heaped on the people of Israel, only to contest whatever He said. ***THEY BELIEVED THEY POSSESSED THE SUPERIOR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD’S LAW. THEY WERE WRONG.***

JESUS replied with a quote from the **MOSAIC LAW**. **“‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ THIS IS THE GREAT AND FOREMOST COMMANDMENT” (MATT. 22:37–38).**

He was quoting from **(DEUT. 6:4–9)** (specifically **verse 5**), a key passage of the law that links love for God with obedience, and which also figured prominently in the customs and ceremonies the Pharisees had instituted. Once again, He was contrasting the emptiness of their pious rituals with the comprehensive, full-orbed love God commands from His people.

But **CHRIST** doesn't stop there. He says, **“THE SECOND IS LIKE IT, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF’” (MATT. 22:39).** Again, He's pointing back to the **Mosaic law**—this time, to **LEVITICUS 19** and God's commands regarding the way His people were supposed to behave toward one another, and to strangers.

- ***“NOW WHEN YOU REAP THE HARVEST OF YOUR LAND, YOU SHALL NOT REAP TO THE VERY CORNERS OF YOUR FIELD, NOR SHALL YOU GATHER THE GLEANINGS OF YOUR HARVEST. NOR SHALL YOU GLEAN YOUR VINEYARD, NOR SHALL YOU GATHER THE FALLEN FRUIT OF YOUR VINEYARD; YOU SHALL LEAVE THEM FOR THE NEEDY AND FOR THE STRANGER. I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, NOR DEAL FALSELY, NOR LIE TO ONE ANOTHER. YOU SHALL NOT SWEAR FALSELY BY MY NAME, SO AS TO PROFANE THE NAME OF YOUR GOD; I AM THE LORD. YOU SHALL NOT OPPRESS YOUR NEIGHBOR, NOR ROB HIM. THE WAGES OF A HIRED MAN ARE NOT TO REMAIN WITH YOU ALL NIGHT UNTIL MORNING. YOU SHALL NOT CURSE A DEAF MAN, NOR PLACE A STUMBLING BLOCK BEFORE THE BLIND, BUT YOU SHALL REVERE YOUR GOD; I AM THE LORD.***

- ***YOU SHALL DO NO INJUSTICE IN JUDGMENT; YOU SHALL NOT BE PARTIAL TO THE POOR NOR DEFER TO THE GREAT, BUT YOU ARE TO JUDGE YOUR NEIGHBOR FAIRLY. YOU SHALL NOT GO ABOUT AS A SLANDERER AMONG YOUR PEOPLE, AND YOU ARE NOT TO ACT AGAINST THE LIFE OF YOUR NEIGHBOR; I AM THE LORD. YOU SHALL NOT HATE YOUR FELLOW COUNTRYMAN IN YOUR HEART; YOU MAY SURELY REPROVE YOUR NEIGHBOR BUT SHALL NOT INCUR SIN BECAUSE OF HIM. YOU SHALL NOT TAKE VENGEANCE, NOR BEAR ANY GRUDGE AGAINST THE SONS OF YOUR PEOPLE, BUT YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF; I AM THE LORD. . . .***

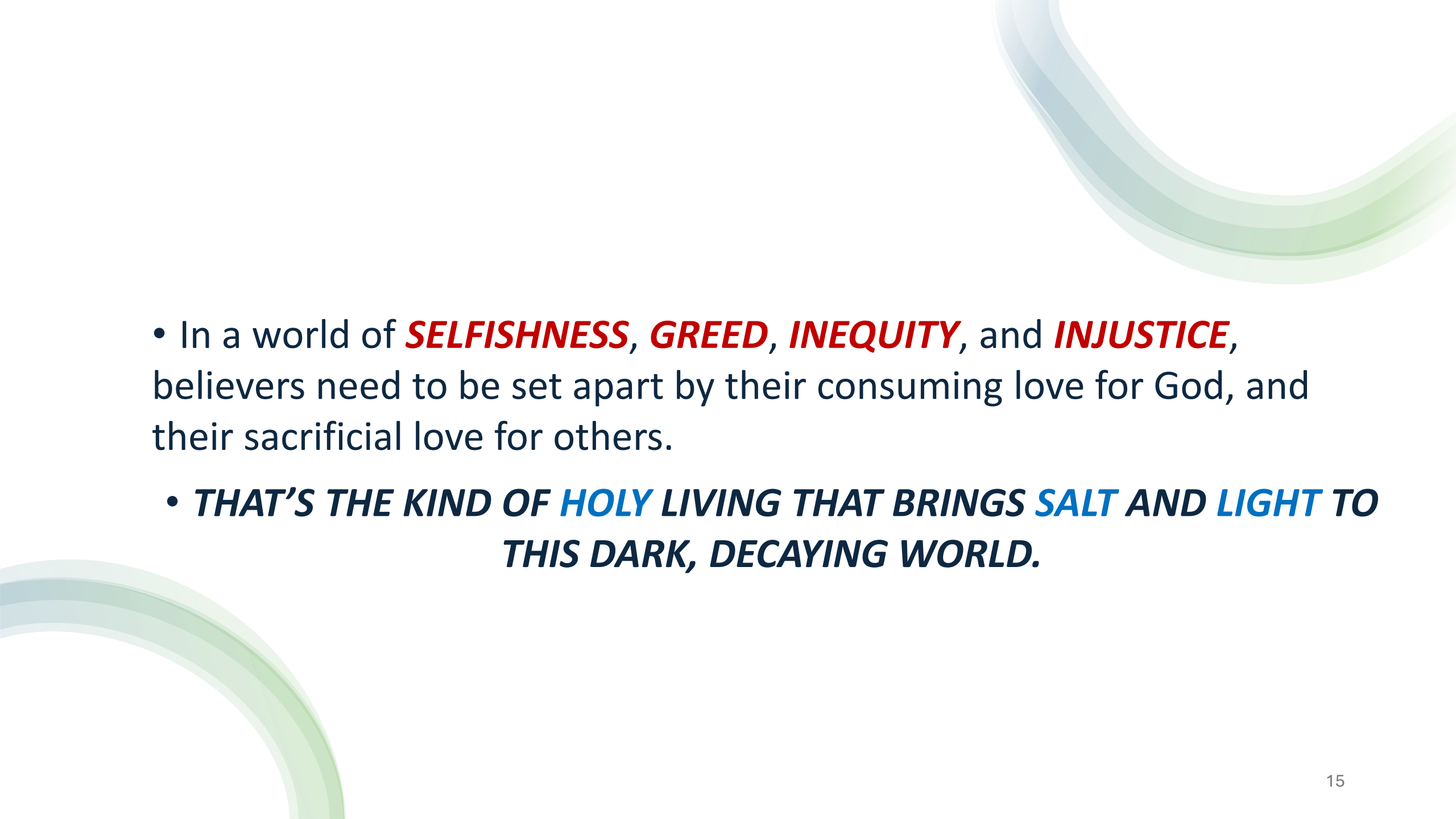
WHEN A STRANGER RESIDES WITH YOU IN YOUR LAND, YOU SHALL NOT DO HIM WRONG. THE STRANGER WHO RESIDES WITH YOU SHALL BE TO YOU AS THE NATIVE AMONG YOU, AND YOU SHALL LOVE HIM AS YOURSELF, FOR YOU WERE ALIENS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT; I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. YOU SHALL DO NO WRONG IN JUDGMENT, IN MEASUREMENT OF WEIGHT, OR CAPACITY. YOU SHALL HAVE JUST BALANCES, JUST WEIGHTS, A JUST EPHAH, AND A JUST HIN; I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD, WHO BROUGHT YOU OUT FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT. YOU SHALL THUS OBSERVE ALL MY STATUTES AND ALL MY ORDINANCES AND DO THEM; I AM THE LORD.” (LEVITICUS 19:9–18, 33–37)

- God wove those specific provisions into His law ***TO PROTECT HIS PEOPLE FROM THEMSELVES***—to keep them from defrauding each other or leaving each other destitute. If you think about it, that’s really the purpose for laws—to protect us from one another.
- The truth is, if we could truly love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and if we could faithfully, graciously, and sacrificially love our neighbor as ourselves, we wouldn’t need laws—we’d be living holy lives.
- Like Christ concluded in **(MATT. 22:40), “ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS DEPEND THE WHOLE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.”** All of God’s commands, both the ***SPIRITUAL*** and ***MORAL*** duties He has given to us, are fulfilled in our comprehensive love for Him and our faithful love for our neighbors.

PAUL picks up this same idea in **ROMANS**.

“OWE NOTHING TO ANYONE EXCEPT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER; FOR HE WHO LOVES HIS NEIGHBOR HAS FULFILLED THE LAW. FOR THIS, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” AND IF THERE IS ANY OTHER COMMANDMENT, IT IS SUMMED UP IN THIS SAYING, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” LOVE DOES NO WRONG TO A NEIGHBOR; THEREFORE, LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW.” (ROM. 13:8–10)


Reading that, it's easy to see how that kind of love is missing in the ***human heart*** today. How our society runs in the opposite direction, with people demanding their own rights and privileges without a thought for one another, much less any consideration of God!!





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- In a world of ***SELFISHNESS, GREED, INEQUITY***, and ***INJUSTICE***, believers need to be set apart by their consuming love for God, and their sacrificial love for others.
 - ***THAT'S THE KIND OF HOLY LIVING THAT BRINGS SALT AND LIGHT TO THIS DARK, DECAYING WORLD.***

LIFE UNDER THE *SUN*

- Some have offered specific *strategies* to show compassion and make a difference while the culture collapses around us.
- For example, many in the church have suggested that God's people need to take an active role in changing the laws of the land and putting new people into positions of power. I won't deny that it is a tremendous blessing to have a voice in our political process, and that God's people are responsible to support biblical standards of morality in society.
- But at the same time, ***WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS NO WAY TO LEGISLATE TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND NO HUMAN LEADER CAN HOLD BACK THE TIDE OF MAN'S CORRUPTION.***

- **THE BIBLE IS CLEAR ABOUT THE STATE OF THE *UNREPENTANT* SOUL.**
- ***“THE HEART IS MORE DECEITFUL THAN ALL ELSE AND IS DESPERATELY SICK; WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT?” (JER. 17:9).***
- **PAUL** reminds his readers of how they lived prior to Christ: ***“FOR WE ALSO ONCE WERE FOOLISH OURSELVES, DISOBEDIENT, DECEIVED, ENSLAVED TO VARIOUS LUSTS AND PLEASURES, SPENDING OUR LIFE IN MALICE AND ENVY, HATEFUL, HATING ONE ANOTHER” (TITUS 3:3).***
- Elsewhere he says, ***“THE MIND SET ON THE FLESH IS HOSTILE TOWARD GOD; FOR IT DOES NOT SUBJECT ITSELF TO THE LAW OF GOD, FOR IT IS NOT EVEN ABLE TO DO SO” (ROM. 8:7).***

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- We can change the laws or add new ones, but **SINNERS FUNDAMENTALLY CANNOT KEEP THE LAW**—changing policies can't change the heart of man.
 - The same is true when it comes to our **LEADERS** and **ELECTED OFFICIALS**. We can swap different sinners into positions of power, but we shouldn't expect drastically different results. **GOD'S PEOPLE CAN'T PUT THEIR HOPE IN HUMAN LEADERS**—as we've already seen,



“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE” (ROM. 3:10–12).

- Other believers have suggested partnering with a ***SOCIAL-JUSTICE MOVEMENT*** like ***Black Lives Matter***. And while everyone should agree that black lives *do matter* because they are made in the image of God, the movement itself is much more than a simple slogan.
- ***IN THEIR OWN DOCUMENTS***, they eagerly affirm ***HOMOSEXUALITY*** and ***TRANSGENDERISM***. They argue for the ***DISSOLUTION OF THE FAMILY***. They're ***MARXIST, ATHEISTIC***, and ***ANTI-AUTHORITY***.
- Put simply, there's no partnership between a radical movement like that and the people of God that doesn't defy the clear commandment of **(2 COR. 6:14)**,
“DO NOT BE BOUND TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS; FOR WHAT PARTNERSHIP HAVE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LAWLESSNESS, OR WHAT FELLOWSHIP HAS LIGHT WITH DARKNESS?”

- **PAUL** goes on to illustrate the *futility* and *foolishness* of believers forging unions with the very corruption from which God has saved them. Quoting from **ISAIAH**, he says, **“COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,’ SAYS THE LORD”** (V. 17).
- Still others will argue that, even if a specific partnership like that isn’t an option, believers still ought to join the protests. That Christians need to speak out against injustice.
- But remember what **PAUL** explained in **ROMANS 13**—that we are to be **SUBJECT TO THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES**, because **GOD HIMSELF ESTABLISHED THEM**.
- **PETER** gives us similar instructions. **“SUBMIT YOURSELVES FOR THE LORD’S SAKE TO EVERY HUMAN INSTITUTION, WHETHER TO A KING AS THE ONE IN AUTHORITY, OR TO GOVERNORS AS SENT BY HIM FOR THE PUNISHMENT OF EVILDOERS AND THE PRAISE OF THOSE WHO DO RIGHT”** (1 PET. 2:13–14).

- **WHY? “FOR SUCH IS THE WILL OF GOD THAT BY DOING RIGHT YOU MAY SILENCE THE IGNORANCE OF FOOLISH MEN” (V. 15).**
- How we respond to **AUTHORITY**—whether **JUST** or **UNJUST**—has repercussions for our **TESTIMONY**. Our **submission** can actually silence those who oppose the gospel and are looking for reasons to criticize believers.
- He continues on the theme of **SUBMISSION** in **verse 20**, **“FOR WHAT CREDIT IS THERE IF, WHEN YOU SIN AND ARE HARSHLY TREATED, YOU ENDURE IT WITH PATIENCE? BUT IF WHEN YOU DO WHAT IS RIGHT AND SUFFER FOR IT YOU PATIENTLY ENDURE IT, THIS FINDS FAVOR WITH GOD.”**
- **PETER** wants us to **SUBMIT** and **SUFFER** for the sake of **RIGHTEOUSNESS**—rather than suffering the consequences of **OUR SIN**.

- But notice that he treats **SUFFERING**—one way or the other—as **INEVITABLE**. In fact, he says, **“FOR YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED FOR THIS PURPOSE, SINCE CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED FOR YOU, LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE FOR YOU TO FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS”** (v. 21).
- Just as **CHRIST SUBMITTED** to **UNJUST SUFFERING** and **ABUSE**, we should likewise expect to suffer. Peter even says, **“DO NOT BE SURPRISED AT THE FIERY ORDEAL AMONG YOU, WHICH COMES UPON YOU FOR YOUR TESTING, AS THOUGH SOME STRANGE THING WERE HAPPENING TO YOU; BUT TO THE DEGREE THAT YOU SHARE THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, KEEP ON REJOICING”** (1 PET. 4:12–13).
- **SUFFERING IS THE GREATEST TOOL IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER. IT’S HOW THE QUALITY OF OUR FAITH IS TESTED AND PROVEN.**

- It's how we learn to **RELY ON GOD'S STRENGTH** instead of our own.
- It's how the Lord displays **HIS SUFFICIENCY** and **PROVISION** to the watching world.
- **GOD HAS GREAT PURPOSES IN OUR SUFFERING**. And as Peter reminds us, it's temporary. **"AFTER YOU HAVE SUFFERED FOR A LITTLE WHILE, THE GOD OF ALL GRACE, WHO CALLED YOU TO HIS ETERNAL GLORY IN CHRIST, WILL HIMSELF PERFECT, CONFIRM, STRENGTHEN AND ESTABLISH YOU"** (1 PET. 5:10).
 - **GOD IS NOT UNAWARE OF OR UNMOVED BY OUR SUFFERING**—on the contrary, **HE'S WORKING THROUGH IT TO SANCTIFY US AND GROW US IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS SON.**

- Having said that, **SCRIPTURE IS NOT BLIND TO THE INJUSTICES OF THIS WORLD**. The book of **ECCLESIASTES** gives us a wise and helpful perspective on the nature of this world and the place of God's people in it.
- Regarding the prevalence of injustice, **SOLOMON** writes, **"IF YOU SEE OPPRESSION OF THE POOR AND DENIAL OF JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE PROVINCE, DO NOT BE SHOCKED AT THE SIGHT; FOR ONE OFFICIAL WATCHES OVER ANOTHER OFFICIAL, AND THERE ARE HIGHER OFFICIALS OVER THEM"** (ECCL. 5:8).
- **IT'S PRESUMED THAT HUMAN BEINGS CAN'T BE TRUSTED**. The whole reason for *structured hierarchies* is to make people **accountable** and *mitigate the inequity* and *oppression* that will inevitably occur.

- We understand that life in this world **WILL NOT BE FAIR**. ***“I AGAIN SAW UNDER THE SUN THAT THE RACE IS NOT TO THE SWIFT AND THE BATTLE IS NOT TO THE WARRIORS, AND NEITHER IS BREAD TO THE WISE NOR WEALTH TO THE DISCERNING NOR FAVOR TO MEN OF ABILITY; FOR TIME AND CHANCE OVERTAKE THEM ALL”*** (Eccl. 9:11).
- We can’t guarantee ***equitable*** outcomes for everyone. But we know there is no advantage for those who do evil.

“ALTHOUGH A SINNER DOES EVIL A HUNDRED TIMES AND MAY LENGTHEN HIS LIFE, STILL I KNOW THAT IT WILL BE WELL FOR THOSE WHO FEAR GOD, WHO FEAR HIM OPENLY. BUT IT WILL NOT BE WELL FOR THE EVIL MAN AND HE WILL NOT LENGTHEN HIS DAYS LIKE A SHADOW, BECAUSE HE DOES NOT FEAR GOD”
(8:12–13).

- The **WICKED** may benefit in the short term, but they cannot avoid **DEATH** and **JUDGMENT**. ***“FURTHERMORE, I HAVE SEEN UNDER THE SUN THAT IN THE PLACE OF JUSTICE THERE IS WICKEDNESS AND IN THE PLACE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS THERE IS WICKEDNESS. I SAID TO MYSELF, ‘GOD WILL JUDGE BOTH THE RIGHTEOUS MAN AND THE WICKED MAN,’ FOR A TIME FOR EVERY MATTER AND FOR EVERY DEED IS THERE” (3:16–17).***
- **GOD’S PEOPLE** ***DON’T TURN A BLIND EYE TO INJUSTICE OR THE CHAOS OF UNCHECKED SIN.***
- But neither do we take its punishment into our own hands. ***“NEVER PAY BACK EVIL FOR EVIL TO ANYONE. RESPECT WHAT IS RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN. IF POSSIBLE, SO FAR AS IT DEPENDS ON YOU, BE AT PEACE WITH ALL MEN. NEVER TAKE YOUR OWN REVENGE, BELOVED, BUT LEAVE ROOM FOR THE WRATH OF GOD, FOR IT IS WRITTEN, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,’ SAYS THE LORD” (ROM. 12:17–19).***

- **GOD IS THE JUDGE**—WE SHOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO DO HIS WORK FOR HIM.
- We need to console ourselves with the fact that we won't always know what God is accomplishing through suffering and trials. We have no choice but to trust in His sovereign timing.
- As **SOLOMON** reminds us, ***“HE HAS MADE EVERYTHING APPROPRIATE IN ITS TIME. HE HAS ALSO SET ETERNITY IN THEIR HEART, YET SO THAT MAN WILL NOT FIND OUT THE WORK WHICH GOD HAS DONE FROM THE BEGINNING EVEN TO THE END”*** (ECCL. 3:11).
- SO HOW, THEN, DO WE LIVE AMIDST THE **CHAOS** AND **CORRUPTION** OF SIN?

- **SOLOMON** continues, ***“I KNOW THAT THERE IS NOTHING BETTER FOR THEM THAN TO REJOICE AND TO DO GOOD IN ONE’S LIFETIME; MOREOVER, THAT EVERY MAN WHO EATS AND DRINKS SEES GOOD IN ALL HIS LABOR—IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD”*** (vv. 12–13).
- **WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THIS LIFE FOR THE GIFT IT IS.** Again, ***“I HAVE SEEN THAT NOTHING IS BETTER THAN THAT MAN SHOULD BE HAPPY IN HIS ACTIVITIES, FOR THAT IS HIS LOT. FOR WHO WILL BRING HIM TO SEE WHAT WILL OCCUR AFTER HIM?”*** (v. 22).
- We don’t know what’s ahead for this world—how much worse it might get ***before*** the **LORD RETURNS**. But in the short time we have, we don’t need to be part of the disruption and rebellion. Our lives ***“ARE JUST A VAPOR THAT APPEARS FOR A LITTLE WHILE AND THEN VANISHES AWAY”*** (JAM. 4:14). **WE SHOULD BE HAPPY AND ENJOY THE GIFT WE’VE BEEN GIVEN.**

