

The Need for Sinless Leadership vs. The False Hopes of the World
Session #06
Keeping Faithful to Our Lord in a Growing Hostile Culture
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Central Theme of Scripture: Romans 12:1-2 (KJV), “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

Well this morning is our final presentation, session 6, and in session 7 there will be a question-and-answer session. I hope we have some nice robust questions for the 7th session. But today were going to deal with the Conquest, the failure of the Conquest, and the need for leadership and we’re going to set that over against the false hopes of our present world system. Shall we bow for a moment of prayer before we come to God’s Word ...

Opening Prayer

“Father, we come to You again on the merits of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You again for the preservation of Your revelation down through the corridors of time against many of those who would destroy it, burn it, obstruct it. We thank You that in Your sovereign power You have preserved this 66-book library that we hold in our laps today. We ask that Your Holy Spirit Who illuminated, that revealed that text, would illuminate it to our hearts that we may be effective believers in our present culture. For we ask this in Christ’s name, Amen.”

Well the theme [for this series] has been Romans 12 and Colossians 2. These passages are about being not conformed to the world but being transformed. We have tried to show how these things work in the world; in the real world.

An artist friend of mine drew this little cartoon [slide 63], but I think it depicts the attitude toward the authority of Scripture. The thing to remember about the Bible is, why the Bible is different from every other book, is because it’s God speaking through that book to the heart of man. The problem is that because it is a personal encounter; when people encounter the Word of God, they’re encountering the Word of God, and that means there’s a heart response.

So what my artist friend tried to show in this picture is that there’s an automatic rejection if we’re not born again, and if we’re not seeking Him; it bothers fallen men and women to hear God speaking. The reason is very simple; it’s the same reason that Adam and Eve fled the presence of God and the response shows you the reality of the Word of God.

People wouldn't respond if this were a tale of Santa Claus, or if this was some fantasyland; they would quickly dismiss it. But the fact that they have to devote a religious strength to suppress it and reject it tells you right away that it is God's Word.

What we want to do today is we want again to review what we have done for just a moment here and we go through the slides and we think about the fact that in our culture, if nature is all there is, so we eliminate Creation [slide 64]. We actually don't eliminate the reality of Creation, but we eliminate the news of Creation—the history of Creation. We suppress that, but we have to have a tool so that if I am in my unbelief, I have to have a thoughtful way of suppressing the story of Creation. I don't like the story of Creation, because the story of Creation awakens within my heart an ultimate responsibility to my Creator and I can't stand that as a sinner.

So, therefore I've got to do something, and the something that I do is I create these false narratives. I replace God's attribute of eternity here—that God is eternity, He's never changed. He has always existed, He always will exist—I don't like that.

So I replace it with deep time—the idea that the earth and the universe are billions and billions of years old. Because if I can just conceive of the universe as billions and billions of years old, I get rid of the idea of its starting point. Deep time is a very clever device of suppressing the idea of an instantaneous Creation.

Then we come down to the fact that if God is not there, I live in an impersonal universe. There is no person in charge, and that, as we said, produces a sense of cosmic loneliness, which has interesting implications because the natural impulse for us, as creatures of God, is to examine His handiwork. But in exploring outer space and exploring the universe, there comes to be something else than just curiosity about the nature of the universe.

A religious element injects itself into these programs. The religious element is the desire to find other living beings in the universe because for us to conceive of ourselves as the lone people on a pale blue dot in the middle of the semi-infinite universe is scary in a sense, because it means we, as people, are odd things; we're just peculiar things, and so we're cosmically lonely, and that has a powerful influence I believe, on a lot of our science.

We have an all-powerful nature; if nature is capable of evolving itself, we have effectively done away with God's omnipotence. See, each one of these ploys, each one of these attempts to suppress the Word of God, creates spiritual damage to the soul. Now as a sinner, I like the damage at first because it gets rid of me having to be conscious of an eternal God; it gets rid of the idea of me having to be conscious of a God who is always totally with me everywhere I go. It gets rid of the idea that God is all-powerful and He can overwhelm my best things; my best works.

Then the idea is, as we talked about, man and his relationship to nature—where his relationship to nature is determined by the laws of God. We don't like the idea that God is masterminding our environment, but yet we need order. So the next thing we wind up doing is we keep laying regulation upon regulation upon regulation on the divine institution of civil government—so we have a hyper regulatory state. The desire for regulations is a desire to establish control. Why is there this intense desire to establish control? God is in control. Why must we insist on a human

agency of almost total sovereignty? It's because we're filling a spiritual vacuum. There is a religious impulse in these desires.

Finally, if nature is all there is and I've erased Creation, I have a loveless nature. The problem with that is we all want to be loved—we all have the experience of receiving love and giving love. The problem we have as finite creatures is this: there's no other creature—man, wife, child, father, mother—who is capable of meeting our need for love the way God created us, and so God is the source of love. We go to Him for *His* love that we can then pass on to others in reciprocity.

But you see, if God doesn't exist, it makes us totally dependent for our soul's need for strong love, and we will inevitably, living this way, overload other people with expectations that they cannot meet, and this leads to frustration, and so forth. No one is capable of loving us as God designed us to be loved, because He is the one to do the loving.

So we have this tension that develops and what we tried to do here is think in terms of Paul in Romans 12:1. He's warning us not to be conformed to this world but be transformed. That is a process of spiritual growth and sanctification. As we've said it repeatedly, the problem here is this: most of us have, in our early formative years from kindergarten to 12th grade, or if we've gone to college, all the way up the four years; graduate [school], even beyond that; we have systematically been exposed all during our childhood to every major idea treated as though God does not exist, or if He does, that He's irrelevant to the subject material.

This creates a problem because when we become a Christian, we start reading the Bible. We read the story here, we read a story there, but the problem is those stories are disconnected from everything else we've learned. Why? Because we've learned them in a secular environment—an environment by the way, that was designed to do precisely that—to kick God out of the system. An academically neutral situation is fictional, it doesn't exist.

We now have a situation where we have to reconstruct, and that's Paul's word, we have to have our minds transformed, and the Holy Spirit has to help us do that. It will take years after you have become a Christian. It will take years of habitual study. You can't have transformed minds by listening to a 40-minute sermon once a week. That doesn't work, that doesn't cut it.

What you have is, if you think of the number of hours that you have personally spent in a classroom all of your 13 most formative years—work it out on a piece of paper—how many hours you have sat in a classroom. Now compare that sum total of hours with the hours that you have been exposed to the Word of God. You see it doesn't connect, and there's no way around this. We have to go back to the Word of God consistently and reconstruct in our minds' eye, our worldview.

We've gone through this and we've been going through that slide and it's the same sort of thing: God's attributes are suppressed by being molded according to this world [slide 65]. One of the dangers that we mentioned, and this has political and social implications, is that if we deny the Fall, see because we're looking at different objects: the Fall, Mount Sinai, and others where God's righteousness is revealed.

The problem we have is that humans are not considered fallen. Our culture does not take sin seriously. It thinks that behavioral problems can be dealt with by law, but law doesn't change

hearts, so we've still got a problem. Now the problem is that if you entertain the notion, and you neglect the sin nature, and you neglect depravity, what you wind up with are intensely naïve social problems—social policies.

Policies have been constructed all through the Western world, and obviously for ages in the Asian world, as though we are improvable beings. In fact I pointed out earlier that Horace Mann, one of the founders of American education, believed, and he said it, these are his words, not mine, Horace Mann said, "Man is perfectible, and I am going to create a school system that will do it." The moment you hear that sentence you know we've got a problem. Human nature is not perfectible. The only perfected human nature is going to be as the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and we are resurrected—that's how human nature is changed. It's not changed by some government policy, it can't be. Even though the people advocating this, I'm not saying they're bad people, they're just naïve people that don't consider the intensity of the Fall; the damage done by sin.

So we have that, and we started last night on the idea of God's plan for society starting with the call of Abraham. The call of Abraham and the exodus and Mount Sinai gave the human race an opportunity to bring in the kingdom of God. We'll get further into that this morning. But again, because I don't like to hear the Word of God if I am a sinner in rebellion, I want to suppress this. I don't want my redemption to be caused by God. If there's any redemption to be done, I want to do it—that's the spirit of the world.

The idea of redemption, of fixing society, of solving social problems—we move that away from God and His program and we shift it over here, and the greatest place to locate it is the institution of civil government [slide 67]. So what happens is the Babel image, the old idea of Babel. We showed you the European Parliament building is designed after the Tower of Babel deliberately. The architects had a multimillion dollar project. They knew what they were doing. They're not naïve people.

They deliberately picked the 1553 painting to depict Babel. And when they built the European Parliament building, they built it after the painting. What they're basically saying in the European Parliament style, the architecture is saying, "We will finish what Babel couldn't do." See, that's the call of redemption.

That's not what God designed civil government to do. Civil government was designed to restrain sinful behavior. Its symbol throughout the Scriptures is the sword, which is a lethal weapon of death, and capital punishment was given to man as a partial judgment, as a tool to restrain sin.

We pointed out in the Mosaic Law code, capital punishment was there for murder and some other sins, but you could not execute a sentence, or adjudicate the decision of guilty for capital punishment, unless you had two eyewitnesses, which meant that in actual practice in the Old Testament, capital punishment probably was very infrequent. Because if a guy wanted to kill somebody, he usually did it at night when there were no witnesses.

The laws of evidence that accompanied capital punishment were stricter than in our society. In our society, people can be convicted of capital punishment on circumstantial evidence. That was not acceptable under the Mosaic Law code.

While God had strict rules of evidence to execute capital punishment, in principle, in *principle*, the civil authority structure was all the way to the right to execute criminals, and that is because we're depraved people. The idea of having to have a sword is an indictment of the human race. If we weren't fallen, we wouldn't need a sword, right?

So see this whole picture is changed in our society. And then it changes this policy; it changes that policy; it changes all our energies over here; it moves something over here; and you can quickly see the whole thing unravels. We are experiencing the results of that because we have neglected the framework of God. We have not listened to God speaking in history.

Today we're going to look at the Conquest—that's the next event, so let's turn to Joshua 1. Now let me explain something about the Conquest. If you have a vigorous unbeliever in your family or you are talking to someone who is an experienced skeptic, one of the things they're going to try out and you're going to have to respond to it is, "Well the Bible's got genocide in it." Yes, it does. The Bible does have genocide in it. Now the question is, what do we do about it?

The Conquest was a local genocide—a destruction of an entire culture: men, women, and children. And you say, "well why did God execute this genocide? I mean isn't that like Isis? Isn't that like Hitler and the genocide against the Jews, and against the crippled people?"

Well, the Bible's genocide was oriented against the occupants of a defined zone, a defined land area. It wasn't generally used with anybody outside of the land. The reason why that genocide was limited geographically was because of the people that were the object of genocide. When God spoke to Abraham, and we read that the previous session, He said, "Abraham, your descendants will live as slaves under another nation until the iniquity of the Amorites is full."

Let's listen to that. The Amorites were the Canaanites of that culture. Listen to what God is saying: There will come four generations; and by that time, that culture, those communities, will become so far depraved by bad choice, after bad choice, after bad choice, that they are beyond redemption.

That's a horrifying thing to think about, but it's going to come again, and this time it's going to be global genocide because God will make sure that when Jesus Christ returns to set up His Millennial Kingdom, every unbeliever will be killed. They will die in geophysical catastrophes or they will be killed by disease, by angelic means. We have to face that—there is genocide and that is not gracious. That is the end of grace and why is that?

Because God is righteous. God is just. These are not just words for Sunday School. This means that God is actually righteous, and actually just, and grace does not always continue. Grace is temporary. It's as an opportunity to repent and to come to God, but it does not go on forever. So when we look at genocide in Joshua here at the Conquest period, what we're looking at is a small-scale, geographically-limited genocide as a foreview of what's coming. Now if you think of that, it's not strange. People have a hard time with this Conquest period because God is asking the Hebrews to kill other people.

But let's go back. Weren't there two other examples of God's, in one sense, genocides? Weren't there two before that? Wasn't the Exodus one? Weren't Egyptian firstborn all killed because they didn't put blood on the door? Was that a result? Weren't good Egyptians killed? Yeah, because

they wouldn't put blood on the door. Were bad Egyptians killed? Yeah, because they weren't putting blood on the door. But interestingly, the firstborn of every Egyptian family not only was taken down, but so were the firstborn animals taken down.

Now isn't that interesting? Man and nature *together* are judged. Why is that? Because man is the lord of creation. As goes man, so goes creation. It's exactly reversed in the environmental movement that says: nature comes first and then man comes second. The Bible says man comes first and nature comes second. The Bible is interested in cleaning sin out of man. The environmentalists are interested in cleaning man out of nature. There are profound changes going on in opposition and you just need to think more deeply about these passages of Scripture.

Then, of course, there was a mass global genocide wasn't there, in the Flood? Lots of people were killed in the Flood. But you see in the case of the Flood and in the case of the Exodus, the agency of the genocide wasn't human. In the Exodus, the agency of the genocide was angels—the Angel of the Lord. The agency of genocide with the Flood was the universe—through geophysical flood waters.

What offends people most particularly here, with this genocide, the third genocide, is that the agents of genocide are people, are other people. “What right do these people have to kill all these other people?” But God says to do it, so argue with Him. Besides, the interesting thing about this passage is that the book of Joshua narrates a victory, but it ends in a disaster finally, which we're going to look at, and you know why? Because the Hebrews didn't want to kill other people. They were reluctant to do that.

Put yourself in their position: suppose we're the Hebrews now. How would you feel if you were called to go outside here and have lethal armor, lethal weaponry, and you go kill everybody in North Stonington. Is that a pleasant thing to do? No, and these people are no different. They were told, as God says here, they were told to kill and I'll be with you.

Let's look at Joshua 1. As we come to Joshua now, he's the second generation, he's the successor of Moses, and God begins a new work with Joshua—a new event. He says in Joshua 1:1–6, “After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua, the son of Nun, saying, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving them. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given you, as I said to Moses, from the wilderness and this Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the great city.”

You look at that sentence and think on a world map how large a land area that is. Notice what it says: “All the way to the river, Euphrates.” You know where the Euphrates River is? It's in Iraq. The Arabs are worried about a 14-mile strip of land called Israel, when the Bible is talking about how Israel should occupy all of Syria and western Iraq. How's that for the modern diplomat?

This is the large size of the land that they were given, all the way to the Mediterranean. “No man,” notice what He [God] says; “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not leave you nor forsake you; be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide for an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.”

Notice that last sentence. What does He say? According to what? According to the swearing of the fathers. See that's that contract. God is faithful to His contract. Always remember the religion of the Bible is the only religion in world history that traces a contract made between God and a nation, several contracts.

Therefore the contract gives human beings the right to check whether God is faithfully following through with the terms of the contract. That is where we learn objectively that God is faithful. If He didn't make contracts, there'd be no way of measuring whether He was faithful or not. But the fact that God locks Himself down, and remember, in Islam and Islamic theology, Allah—they would never think of Allah obligating himself, constricting his behavior to a contract with mere man—that is inconceivable to the Muslim mind.

But in the Bible, God does restrict Himself to behavior according to a contract. And as we said, if you capture that idea when you read the Bible's word "covenant;" if you'll replace it in your mind's eye with the word "contract".

You know from your mortgage contracts, from your borrowing contracts, your business contracts with clients, you know that every contract has to be interpreted literally. There should be no question about the hermeneutic. It is solved if we understand that there are contracts here. So there's the contract. God is faithful.

Let's go to the last chapter of Joshua. Again, we're going fast through these because you are well-taught. You know about these events. So I'm just touching the highlights. In Joshua 24, Joshua is close to death. These are his last words to the nation. He rehearses from verses 1 to 13 what God has done for them. See all that rehearsal? See these guys keep going back and they rehearse, and they rehearse, and they rehearse.

What did Jesus do in communion? Remember? Did He use the word "remember"? Every time you folks have communion, listen to the words and you'll hear, "Remember this; remember this." That's a theme of Scripture; *zakar*, remember. And why should we remember? Because they're historic acts that actually happened in real history. We can remember those.

When we're down—we feel defeated and we feel weak, we feel impotent—that we can remember God is powerful. God is faithful. He fulfills His Word, and so we're commanded to remember.

That's so important in our age. Our age is the post-romantic era where everybody's central means of discerning truth is "how I feel today." How you feel today is different from how you felt last week. If your identity is going to be determined by how you feel, you are a very unstable person. You do not have integrity and strength; you can't. It's not a personal accusation, It's just we can't get that strength we need if we're going to go on the basis of our feelings. We have to go on the basis of what God has spoken.

This is why after this Joshua rehearses it down to verse 13. Now in verse 14 he gives a charge. "Now, therefore." The "therefore" is there for a reason. "Therefore," because of God's faithfulness, "fear the Lord," that is trust Him; respect Him; "serve Him in sincerity and in truth: put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river in Egypt."

Over and over again, and it's hard for us to understand this, they kept reverting to the paganism of their peers—the nations around them. They went through this over and over. You wonder, “What's the matter with these people? Why don't they get it?” But century after century they would lapse.

But they're not different from us because in our culture, we are culturally right now lapsing back into traditional paganism. The ideas that are circulating in our culture are no different than those that circulated in the closing days of the Roman Empire. So it's not like these people were queer and we're okay. We are vulnerable of doing exactly the same thing and you cannot do anything but watch television, read a newspaper, read a magazine; you can see the lifestyle shifts that are now occurring are the same kind of things that are classical pagan behavior. It's the same old story.

So he's warning them, “Don't do this.” Why is that? Because the heart's center determines the nature of your society. If you are oriented to the Lord, the society will eventually prosper. If you are in rebellion against Him, the society will ultimately decay. It's just the rule of history.

So, “And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day.” Notice, it's a choice. And no civil government, no government policy can compel heart changes. There is a volition in man, there is a choice in man. And so Joshua says [paraphrased], “If it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you serve; whether the gods which your fathers served on one side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord.”

Now there's a leader who lays it down and says, “Yeah, you got a choice; I'm not going to arm twist; there's no arm-twisting here. You are free to choose, but you're *not* free to choose the consequences of your choice.”

We go on then to the end of Joshua and he dies, so what happens? Here's what could have happened—here's what could have happened when Joshua left the nation in pretty good shape. Let me list for you some of the potentials that could have come about, and I list these for you because this period of history, from the Conquest to the Collapse, is a time in world history that was an experiment.

View it this way: it's a laboratory experiment of what could happen if men and women cooperated with God. If men and women had cooperated with God, the Kingdom of God could have come in that era. That society that we all want—a society of peace, a society of prosperity, a society in which we would feel joyful to worship the Lord—that society *could* have come about *if, if* these people had done what the Lord said.

Here's one: they were the only nation in history that had a contract with God, stipulating exact requirements and exact policies. Second: they were freed from a tyrannical civil government without fighting the government. They were amazing. First there's a revolution against a superpower and they didn't have one sword. They didn't fight the Egyptians; the Lord took care of them. So they were freed from tyranny by grace.

They had an unsavory culture that could have been eliminated so there wouldn't have been constant cultural battles. They could've experienced redemption, in other words, if their heart

had oriented to God. What Joshua's challenging them is whether the Kingdom of God comes in our day, he's effectively saying, if you let God reign and He helps us establish this kingdom, and they could have conquered the world by the way, economically as I said before through interest rates and other things, if that had happened; it could have happened had they obeyed the Lord.

That was a choice. That was a heart choice, and government policies can't change hearts. The end result of this was that they had this wonderful opportunity as no other nation in human history had. That's why this time from the 1400s BC down to the 1100s BC was a time in history when, if we were all living then, we should have all been watching like this, to see, is the Kingdom of God possible in human history, coming through mortal fallen beings?

Well, if you'll hold your place there, we'll go to Judges 2 to the end of this. But turn to Judges, and I want to show you a verse my wife found the other day in her reading. If you'll put your hand in Judges 2 and turn over to Isaiah 33, halfway through the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah. Isaiah 33 and there's a verse here that shows you how the Lord worked with Israel, and the startling thing about this particular verse, Isaiah 33:22, is what God says about Himself. He's saying this through Isaiah, and He says in verse 22, "For the LORD is our judge,; the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our King."

Those of you who had social studies, what do each of those three clauses show? What functions of government? Government's three functions, right? What's the first one? The judicial—God is our judge. The second one—the legislative function. And finally, the executive function. You see that was God's role. He was giving them guidance in all three functions. It was a total, all-encompassing reign of God. Now you can't ask for more than that. We're going around, "Oh, what's God's will? What's God's will?" [He says] "I told you what My will is," and He went through all the Mosaic Law.

Well, let's go to Judges 2 and see what happened. In Judges 2:7, here's the transition from Joshua's day: "So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua who had seen all the great works of the LORD which he had done for Israel. When that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD or the work; did not know the LORD or the work which He had done for Israel."

Now let's stop right there a moment. Why didn't the generation know the works of the Lord? What happened? What happened to the family transmission of culture? The kids grew up and didn't know what their parents had seen? Doesn't that sort of suggest at least the parents may have neglected their training and the kids just rebelled against the parents? "Ahh, we're not going to listen to mother and dad." Mothers and fathers always become stupid from age 17 through 28 and then, for some reason after we're 28 or more, our parents somehow get more IQ and are smarter. But there's a period where most kids grow up, and we all go through it, where we think we know more than our dad and our mom, and then finally we get humbled by the lessons of life and then we come on back with our tail between our legs and ask for some advice.

The point is that something happened; there was a breakdown in the family structure, because remember, the Bible goes back to the family as the institution of the transmission of culture. Families produce; positive or negative. Then the next sentence—what's going on? "Then the

children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, served the Baals and forsook the LORD God of their fathers.”

As a result of this, see this is the religious commitment—always underneath public policies are religious beliefs. Don’t be fooled, just because someone appears not to believe in God, they have a God-substitute somewhere. There always is a religious, spiritual undercurrent. So they lost their freedom. They lost their political freedom; they lost their economic freedom.

Another characteristic of that day was the men retreated from leadership so women had to take over. The interesting story in Judges 5 is Deborah the prophetess had to lead the armies of Israel because no man would do it. Then Sisera was finally knocked off by a lady who took one of her tent pegs and a hammer and put it through his skull. She was the heroine. By the way, Israeli girls are named for her. So it was an interesting case where you have a breakdown and men refused to exercise their responsibility.

You have men who *do* exercise their responsibility—Gideon being one of them. Gideon goes and cleans out the Baal statues in his township. It’s one night that he does this. Then in the morning everybody in the town gathers together; they all get in front of Gideon’s dad’s house and they want to kill him for destroying all the property last night. Well, the property destroyed was Baalism. So here’s a case where one man stands out and he has to stand against a mob of pagans.

One of the things I always try to assure young people of, and I’ve observed this in the college campus time and time again, all it takes in a class is for one Christian student to graciously, and I don’t mean belligerently, but to graciously stand firm, question what’s going on, and then all of a sudden you will have five or six Christians that have been sitting around quietly, fuming, and then they’ll come alongside the person.

It’s fascinating to watch because some of the young people I’ve trained are the ones that do this. And they say, “Gee, all of a sudden they come to me in the cafeteria and they say, ‘Boy, that was good.’ ” Well, you know how about helping me in the class?!

When I was at MIT, we used to get together and we’d have a dossier on every professor that we had, and the Christian each class year would write notes on this guy—here’s what he’s going to do; here are the questions he’s going to attack you with; boom, boom, boom, boom. So before you take the course, you just look at the folder. I mean, that’s not hard; it doesn’t require graduate training. You just keep notes, pass it on to your fellow Christians. So they’re neat things to do, you’re not alone. You just have to have courage and confidence enough in the Word of God to stand up, and people will come to your aid.

Well, what happened at the end of Judges 21? Let’s go all the way to the end in our fast survey here, and in Judges 21:25 here’s the summary: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” That’s a great ending to what could’ve been a wonderful nation with maximum freedom.

So now they were looking for a human leader. Who was the leader before? Joshua was, but who was the king? Like in Isaiah, who was the one that was telling them how to deal with all three

functions of government: the executive, judicial, and legislative? It was the Lord. But they didn't think of God as a leader. So now we want human leader.

Let's turn that to passage we covered the other night, 1 Samuel 8, and we'll just refer to that again. That's a crucial passage in the Bible. Remember in 1 Samuel 8:1: It came to pass when Samuel was old, he made his sons judges. That didn't work out. Verse 3: sons didn't walk in his ways. Verse four: all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, "Look, you're old, your sons don't walk in your ways, now make us a king."

Now here's the peer pressure: "Make us a king to judge us and then they add, 'like all the other nations.'" If we had time you could contrast that statement with Deuteronomy 17: Gods says, "Yeah, you're going to want a king but he's not going to be like all the others."

Last night we showed you that pillar in Egypt; what were the pagan kings like? The pagan kings considered themselves divine beings. We don't need that right now.

So here we have in the midst of this, verse 6. Samuel does what a godly leader should do in this situation. This is about leadership now as we're coming down to this passage. "The thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' Samuel prayed to the Lord." See what makes Samuel a great person in the middle of this? Everybody is coming to him, they got a plan, he's outnumbered. There's a massive social peer pressure on him to make a bad decision on top of previous bad decisions, so we compound our foolishness.

So what does he do? He stops, and I mentioned this before. This is slide 68. I mentioned this before. We have the term ASAP, as soon as possible. But there's another way of looking at that, **Always Stop And Pray**. That's one of the aspects of a godly leader. Before we get pushed along, pushed along by a lot of social pressure, let's just stop a minute here and pray.

So Samuel prays, the Lord says, "They haven't rejected you, they've rejected Me." I think we can learn something about leadership here. This was a crucial point. The whole political structure of Israel changed here and it did not change for the good. But God is going to use this nevertheless and I'll show you how.

In their book, *The Battle Plan for Prayer*, the Kendrick Brothers—by the way, this is an excellent practical book on prayer. It has some theological issues that we would differ with and we can nitpick it, but the point is that book was told to me by one of our board members who has been in the ministry many, many years said that's the finest, most practical book I've read in 42 years in ministry. It was written by two men who walk the talk and who built a whole ministry of Christian filmmaking from nothing. They started with no assets. They didn't have any idea how to operate cinematography, cameras, and so on. They had no contact with actors and actresses. They had never written a screenplay, and yet they pulled off four to five movies that have been very successful, *War Room* being the last one.

So how did they do this? They didn't know what they were doing. They just gathered together and prayed. Here's what they say about this kind of thing that Samuel did: "Praying isn't always easy. It can feel very counterintuitive to pause when we have so much to do, trying to focus our thoughts in the middle of a million distractions, say no to our selfishness and our self-sufficiency, humble ourselves before an Almighty God whom we cannot control, cannot

presently see or hear with our physical senses. It seems easier just to go out and attempt to fix things ourselves than to stop and pray about them. So we tend to put it off and save it as an emergency parachute during the crisis that usually comes.” And isn’t this so true? We all have that experience.

Well Samuel doesn’t, he stops and prays. Long story short, verse 11, God tells what it’s going to be like, you guys are going to make a bad decision. This is another interesting thing about prayer: there are some answers to prayer you don’t want. God is going to answer this prayer and there’s going to be suffering. So it’s not always good to get a “Yes” answer to a stupid prayer because God sometimes gives us the answer to a stupid prayer to teach us the stupidity of what we asked Him for. “You want this? Okay, I’ll give it to you, see how it works.”

This is one of those passages. An answered prayer that doesn’t work out. Verse 11, “This is going to be behavior of the king. He will reign over you, he will take your sons and daughters, appoint them for his chariots.” You’ve been through this passage several times, it’s one big bureaucracy, “and you’re gonna lose your freedom, you’re gonna lose your property, taxes are going to go up, and you’re gonna lose all the freedom that you once had.” That’s the result of a king. Why is that the result of a king? It’s the result of a king because, and this is a lesson for this period of history. It’s a lesson that is going to be repeated time and time again.

It is still being repeated because people just don’t get it. You cannot concentrate political power in a small group of people who are corruptible—and we are all corruptible because we’re mortals—we’re fallen beings. Christians themselves are corruptible, let’s not fool ourselves. You cannot concentrate power of elite decision-making in a few people.

That’s why churches have deacons in multiple offices. You can’t have it concentrated because you are asking for disaster. You’re putting too much of a load on leadership when you don’t have it distributed. No person, man or woman, is simply emotionally, intellectually, or ethically capable of taking that much power. They can’t do it, and so it’s a lesson that says this—this is the great lesson of this whole period of history of conquest and failure.

To get where we want to go in history with a king of worldwide peace and prosperity, that in our hearts we all want that, that we are never going to get there as long as we have corruptible leadership. It doesn’t matter who’s involved. You can have people that have the best of intentions, but it doesn’t work out.

This is why we are pre-millennial in our eschatology. What do we mean by pre-millennial? It means that Jesus has to come, pre, previous to the Millennium. You can’t get there with the church conquering the world as post-millennialism believes. It has to be: the Lord Jesus has to come back. He comes back in resurrection along with the body of Christ, that in our resurrection bodies we are the royal family of the administration of the future Millennial Kingdom.

Who knows? We don’t know whether Steve’s going to be in management of welfare or what. The point is that there will be a resurrected group that runs the world. The Millennial Kingdom ends in another disaster because the people in the Millennium are mortals, and they’re corruptible. After 1,000 years of perfect environment Satan is allowed to test and trial, and the whole thing falls apart again.

So we go to the eternal state where there is no one who is in mortality; everyone is resurrected unto godliness in the eternal state or resurrected into the Lake of Fire. But the point is that while we have the depraved heart in human history you cannot concentrate power.

Our forefathers understood that. That's why the Constitution is written the way it is with checks and balances. I know the objection of the Constitution, "It's too ponderous; it's just not efficient, there are too many arguments; it goes too slow." That's true, but the trade-off is, do what the French did in 1789. How did the French Revolution work out, huh? Liberty, equality, and fraternity, and they wound up with a dictator called, Napoleon Bonaparte. That was a great experiment, wasn't it?

See that shows you: the French Revolution is a demonstration of exactly what this Book [the Bible] is about, except here you had a better opportunity than the French did, and we did. Here you have God Himself actively advising through prophets who were telling exactly how to deal with every problem area. You have policies that they didn't even have to write. God gave them the policies. So they had all these assets going to them and they fail. That's why these are not just Bible stories. This was an actual historical experiment in time that can be observed and we can learn from it.

This ought to be the lesson. This ought to be the political lesson. You shouldn't be even studying political science and social studies without studying this period in history to see why there was the greatest opportunity to bring in the kingdom—everything was going for them, if they only had their hearts changed, and their hearts weren't changed, and until their hearts are changed they're not going to get there.

Let's go to the last part today and that is the false hopes of the world, and by the way, before we leave this history, I want to go to another passage my wife found, an excellent one, 2 Samuel 23. We're in 1 Samuel, but turn over to 2 Samuel toward the end of the book to 2 Samuel 23:3. In this passage, David is speaking, he's writing, and he's writing about leadership, and there are two verses here that just really stand out because David had to think a lot about this.

David is the leader in the Old Testament, and I neglected to mention this a few minutes ago when I said this is a historical period to learn lessons from. Let me also add to that that the next stage in Israel's history, and we don't have time in this conference to go for the next few events, but what's going to happen now, after they get the kings, after they get the monarchy, they're going to observe the occupants who are kings, and they're going to, after a while, they're going to crave what the ideal king should look like: God.

It's Romans 8:28, that these people screwed up but God is going to turn it into something good. The monarchy, the institution of the monarchy, from here and the rest of the Old Testament, is a demonstration that compels thoughtful believers to say, "This guy failed. This guy failed. This guy was good in this area. This guy was good in this area." And out of reflecting on the sequence of those kings, people are going to say, "I think I realize what an ideal leader would be like."

You know who that is shaping the way for? The Lord Jesus. And see the failure? This sets up the New Testament. So here you have Jesus Christ coming into history—God incarnate Himself—the God who was King in the Old Testament takes on human form. He visits the planet. He

walks around. And what happens to Him? He gets crucified. Is that an indictment of the human race or not?

So even though they had all this training of what the ideal leader should be, the ideal leader shows up and they try to kill Him. That is why the human race is not going to progress on its own toward any resolution, because there's a heart problem here and it still has not been addressed. That's why when you witness to an unbeliever about Jesus Christ, you are the one who is making the change in society. People can ridicule you and say, "Oh, that's just religion." Every time you share the gospel with someone and that person becomes a Christian, that is an advance that is impossible, impossible, without God's Spirit. It can't happen any other way. Every time someone believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, the body of Christ is expanded, and someday, and you may be the person, someday somebody is going to lead somebody to Christ and it's going to be, "bingo"—that's the Rapture, because the body at that point will be complete. So that might be a surprise one day in your evangelism and witnessing.

Well, let's turn to verses 3 and 4 [2 Samuel 23:3, 4]. Here's David's hope. Here's what David thinks would be a great leader. David knows the problem. David was picked out as a model for the Messiah and he failed. So he must've pondered this—this is written later in his life. "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning, when the sun rises, a morning without clouds"—I think we woke up yesterday morning without clouds—"like the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

See the metaphor of the clear weather. The freshness of the morning? That's the feeling that an ideal leader should convey to people. As David says, if we have an ideal leader, that's how you should feel—just like you feel on a day—fresh morning, breeze is blowing, a cloudless sky, everything is going great, there's a sense of uplift and optimism. What David is saying is, that's the picture. That's the portrait of the ideal leader. It's a forward look at our Savior. It's setting people up to think, "What does an ideal leader look like?"

I'll never forget, one of the college students I worked with years ago was in a class, and it was in a class on history. She was a lady, a girl student there, and the class was going on, the professor asked for discussion of what an ideal leader should be. So the kids would throw out one thing, and they would throw out another thing, the professor would write it on the board, and he was to have integrity and be honest and so forth. This Christian girl decided she'd drop a bomb in the class so she raises her hand and she says, "You know, I'm looking at that list, Prof, on the board, it reminds me of Jesus Christ." She said all of a sudden the temperature fell in the classroom about 10°, as you can imagine. But see, she spoke up. She did it graciously, and it was a witness to the other kids, "Gee, I wish I could have thought of that." But she just dared to do it. She had the courage to do that. Now I thought, "That was slick."

We come to the conclusion here ... the false hopes of the world. I've shown you this [slide 69]. We started the session with this. This is the statement of Bertrand Russell, and I go back to this statement again and again because I have to keep reminding myself, because I know what it is to be a believer, I know what it is to fellowship with God and I think sometimes, I have to be reminded of what my life would be like if I were a thoughtful unbeliever. So that's why I revert to Russell's statement.

I won't read the whole thing to you, but look at the end—the last sentence—after he goes through the bleak view of nature. He winds up saying, “Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.” He's absolutely right. If you are a thoughtful person and you have really thought about your unbelief, particularly as it existed at this point at the turn of the 20th century, this is all you could do. This is all you've got, because you have no hope beyond the grave. You have no meaning or purpose in your life. And the human race itself is destined for extinction in that view.

That's why I showed you the other slide [70] here at the University of Massachusetts only a couple months ago. Here's the conclusion of a youth worker working with young college students. Here's his point: “Our culture has replaced self-discovery with self-construction.” See, man is going to do it himself. We can't do it ourselves, we're asking too much. Everybody is expected to create and manage his or her own identity.

Kids in second and third grade are being told this now. “Personal achievement thus becomes the main means of justifying one's existence,” and he concludes, “Most students...are desperate to find a purpose beyond their own meager hopes and wishes.” They know intuitively, because they're made in God's image, that, “I can't fill that God-shaped vacuum with my own gimmicks; it doesn't work.” Well that's the problem—the hope to perpetuate existence. In the world of unbelief is destined for disappointment, and we've gone through the attributes of God, we've seen every single one of them is suppressed by these views. Even God's plan of redemption is being counterfeited to go, to be loaded on top of, the function of the government.

Well, we come back then to where we started. There will be some Q&A in the next hour. I hope you've got some good questions. We've got two or three already, but one of the questions is probably going to be about terrorism. Here are three ideas:

1. Modern hopes in the world today, whether they're ISIS, whether they're someone else, all the hopes, say, the hope to do something, to fix something. You think about ISIS. ISIS is just old-fashioned legalism. What are they trying to do? Impose law on a society. Does law change hearts? No, therefore, they will fail, period, end of the discussion. Legalism doesn't change hearts. It only destroys freedom.
2. Globalism—the hope of globalism. That is Babel all over again. That's why I showed you the picture of the European Parliament. The idea the Europeans had when they were getting all the Parliament together for all of the European community, they hoped that they would be able to do what Babel didn't get done.

And you see what great condition the European community is in. What did the voters in Britain decide to do this year? See? We're tired and sick of this. You know why they're tired and sick of this? Because the environmental regulations of the European Community forced them to shut down every coal-fired power plant in England. This past winter they had 30,000 to 40,000 people in England *die* because they froze to death. They are poor people who couldn't afford *both* fuel *and* food. They decided not to starve to death. They decided they would eat. So they froze to death. Those are the ethical results of this silly environmentalism. They come to us and say, “You're not concerned with the environment,” and my answer to them is, “You're not concerned with the human race,” and there's an example of it.

3. Libertarianism is arising, and I sympathize with libertarianism and limited government, but folks, the Judges period was libertarian. How did it end? How did that work out? Every man did what was right in his own eyes, that's how it worked out: chaos.

Let's go back where we started, and let's go back to Colossians 2. We've already been in Romans 12:1–2 a number of times, but again, let's go back to just Colossians and how we started this series.

This is a great passage on our Lord Jesus Christ. The warning that Paul gives the people in Colossi in Colossians 2 verses 8, 9, 10: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit.” These were ordinary people. He's not talking to college people here folks. This epistle was written to ordinary people—men and women that were in the church in Colossi. He's warning that those ordinary people, not just people on the college campus, these aren't young people going to Athens for university training. “Beware lest anyone through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of man, according to the basic principles,” the *stoicheia*, in the Greek, “of the world, and not according to Christ.”

The contrast in the sentence couldn't be greater. He's contrasting the principles of the world, meaning the ideas of fire, water, air—those basic elements from which all things spring, according to *their* philosophy, and not according to Christ.

See, this is a high view of Christ, but in this passage Paul isn't just talking about the ministry of Jesus. He's talking about the fact that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate, and as God Incarnate, He is the supreme revelation.

People often have an objection when we make the claim that the Bible is inerrant. They say, “Well I don't understand how God could reveal himself inerrantly through fallible human beings.” Well, why don't you ask this question, how do you understand how God could reveal Himself, becoming a person and walking around? Isn't that an equally difficult problem, the hypostatic union of our Lord Jesus Christ?

You see, Jesus is the ultimate revelation. It's not just God putting an idea in Luke's mind, or in Isaiah's mind, or speaking from Mount Sinai. In Jesus Christ, we have God Himself walking around, and that is so comforting because you know by watching Jesus' behavior we understand more about how God thinks. One of the most poignant sections in the Gospels, in the shortest sentence in the entire New Testament, takes place outside the tomb of Lazarus. Here Jesus, he had bed and breakfast at Mary and Martha's house—it's around the mountain from the temple—once you go there you can see why Jesus would visit Mary and Martha.

Lazarus their brother dies. You then have that poignant scene where the gals come out to Jesus and say, “If You had been here, my brother wouldn't have died,” and the very next statement is, “Jesus wept.”

I'll never forget Francis Schaeffer's comment about that, he says, “At that point, the God of the universe could weep and cry because of evil and suffering without being mad at Himself for allowing it.” Think about that. Jesus could weep because of the result of sin in history, and the pain that it causes people, without being mad at Himself for allowing that to take place. Amazing statement.

But it also shows that God is touched with the feeling of our suffering. Show me how you get that if you don't believe in God and you believe in all-powerful material universe. Is that going to give you comfort in a time of sorrow, or does a personal Creator, who is so knowledgeable of each one of us personally that He knows and can be affected by us? That's why there's that passage in Hebrews that says we have a high priest who can be affected by our situation [Hebrews 4:15].

Name another religion where God comes to earth and gets dirt under His fingernails, and understands what hunger is, understands how it is to be tired, to be exhausted, who understands the death of loved ones. Show me one other religion whose God does that! Allah didn't do that, nor did Buddha.

So we have a wonderful God and in Colossians, He says, "Beware lest anyone cheat you and so on; don't be deceived;" and then it says, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. You are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power"—a mouthful in that sentence—fullness of God, bodily, and you are complete in Him.

If you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life, you are in Him, and Paul says you are complete in Him. You may not know all the details, but grow in Him by reading His Word. You are complete in Him. He is the head of all principality and power. No matter what the human authorities are, no matter what unseen angelic beings exist, all the way up to Satan himself, what does this say? He is the head of all principality and power. He's available at the throne of mercy, at the throne of grace, 24/7.

Closing Prayer

"Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You that You have not left us alone in your Creation, even though we have sinned, even though we are depraved beings, even though it cost the death of Your son, You love us, and we thank You that You are a God of love. You showed Your love by executing a vicarious sacrifice. You did not compromise Your righteousness and justice because it was Your righteousness and justice that required a vicarious atonement that we might have propitiation, or might satisfy your righteousness for our sin.

We thank You that we can confess our sins, and You are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness. So we pray today for those of us who are under particular stresses and strains and pressure. We pray that Your Holy Spirit would illuminate hearts to encourage—to show the bankruptcy of the alternatives to the Word—there's nothing out there to compare to salvation in Christ. May this lesson penetrate our hearts and encourage us, for we ask it in our Savior's name, Amen."