

Lessons from Gideon

Roger Kendall—January 14, 2012

Let's turn to the book of Judges, chapters six and seven, which contains the account of Gideon going against the army of the Midianites. It's an interesting account, which we're going to go back and we're going to ask what lessons we can learn from this account in the book of Judges where we find an individual going to God asking for help because of oppression; because of an enemy. What can we draw from this in our lives today?

Let's get the background to the situation, Judges 6:1: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." Of course, this is the pattern that we find in the book of Judges when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, settled in the land, but then after a while—after the Judges, Joshua and others—they went back into harlotry, idolatry and worshipping other gods. What God would do is bring in a nation against them to bring punishment, but also bring the people back to realize that they were sinning against God.

Verse 6—here we see the Midianites are being used by God to afflict the children of Israel: "And Israel was made very poor because of the Midianites. And the children of Israel cried to the LORD.... [That's the point! God brought pressure and they cried unto the LORD asking for deliverance, for help.] ...And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried to the LORD because of the Midianites" (vs 6-7).

Verse 11: "And the angel of the LORD came and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. And his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, 'The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.' —And Gideon said to Him, 'O, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, "Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?" But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.'" (vs 11-13). Well, even Gideon did not understand what was happening in terms of why affliction was now being upon the children of Israel.

Verse 14: "And the LORD looked upon him and said, 'Go in your might, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?' And he said to him, 'O, my LORD, with what shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.' And the LORD said to him, 'Surely, I will

be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.'" (vs 14-16). So, we see the situation here and Gideon goes on to ask for a sign from God. He wanted to be sure that God was with him. He asked for a sign and you can read that in the rest of the chapter.

Let's read how Gideon, through God's help, accomplished the purpose of ridding the Israelites of the Midianites. Judges 7:1: "And Jerubbaal (he is Gideon) and all the people that were with him, rose up early and pitched beside the well of Harod, so that the army of the Midianites was on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley." You can picture this: The army of the Israelites were on one side, the Midianites were on the other.

Verse 2: "And the LORD said to Gideon, 'The people with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel boast themselves against Me, saying, "My own hand has saved me.'" We see the situation here that God told Gideon 'You've got too many people, you're going to have to send some of these people home.' That's what he did.

Verse 3: "'Now, therefore, speak in the ears of the people, saying, "Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and go away early from Mount Gilead.'" And twenty-two thousand of the people returned. And there remained ten thousand." So, we get the idea: originally he had 32,000, so everyone who was afraid of going into battle, go home. Now he's down to 10,000. That's still a pretty good group of people to go to war.

Verse 4: "And the LORD said to Gideon, 'The people are still too many. Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. It shall be that of whom I say to you, "This shall go with you," the same shall go with you. And of whomever I say to you, "This shall not go with you," the same shall not go.'" God is going to make another division and separate out some others. Notice how He does this, very interesting!

Verse 5: "And he brought down the people to the water.... [In other words, they were out in the field and they came out into the water to be refreshed.] ...And the LORD said to Gideon, 'Everyone who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set him apart; also everyone who bows down upon his knees to drink.'" He's separating the very way that the army would actually go to a stream and drink water. Typically, let's get the picture, if you're going into a stream of water, you'll just get down on your knees and put your face in the water and you'll drink in the water—that's as

a dog laps the water—the one group.

The other group did it differently. They did not get down on their knees. They basically picked up the water in their hands and they were looking up and around while drinking water out of the hands. I just want you to understand the picture here. God used this in a very interesting way.

Verse 7: “And the LORD said to Gideon, ‘I will save you by the three hundred men who lapped... [from their hand] ...and will deliver the Midianites into your hand. And let all the other people go, each man to his place.’ And the people took provisions in their hand, and their ram’s horns. And he sent away all the rest of Israel, each man to his tent, and kept *only* those three hundred men. And the army of Midian was below him in the valley” (vs 7-8).

It starts with 32,000, down to 300. Gideon is saying to himself, ‘God, I don’t think this is going to work out very well, but we’ll go forward.’ Interesting! Be not fearful! What did Gideon do?

Verse 16: “And he divided the three hundred men into three companies. And he put a ram’s horn in every man’s hand with empty pitchers and torches inside the pitchers.” I have really looked at this Scripture many times and I don’t know how one man can hold a trumpet in one hand, a pitcher of water covering the torch in the other, and be able to manipulate all of this. That’s what it says: he’s got a trumpet, he’s got a torch and he’s got the pitcher that is hiding the torch—a cover over the torch. That’s what we’re seeing here.

Verse 17: “And he said to them, ‘Look at me, and do likewise. And, behold, when I come to the edge of the camp, it shall be *that*, as I do, so you shall do. When I blow with a ram’s horn, I and all who are with me, then you blow the ram’s horns also all around the camp...’” (vs 17-18). He’s got these three companies around the camp of the Midianites and he’s going to blow the trumpet, and he’s going to show the torch. It’s at night so you can imagine what the picture of this really looks like.

Verse 19: “So Gideon and the hundred men with him came to the edge of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch. And they had but newly set the watch. And they blew the ram’s horns and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the ram’s horns and broke the pitchers and held the torches in their left hands and the ram’s horns in their right hands to blow. And they cried, ‘A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!’” (vs 19-20).

Here’s what happened. Again, picture this story. Can you imagine the ram’s horn blowing and you’re asleep in the camp and these blasting horns are going all around you. The lights, the torches, it

must mean that there’s a hundred thousand of the army coming and they—the Midianites—panic. It’s exactly what happened.

Verse 21: “And they stood, each man in his place, all around the camp. And all the army ran, and cried out, and fled. And the three hundred blew the ram’s horns. And the LORD set every man’s sword against his fellow...” (vs 21-22). They just literally slaughtered each other, because of the fear that overcame them.

God did eliminate the Midianites by His hand, and the army fled and Israel was spared. The story here is very interesting in that there are a couple of lessons that we can learn from this account.

I. God will fight your battles for you!

It’s not by our might or our strength that we are going to win the battles that we fight that are either against the demonic or satanic forces, or against those things in the world. ***It’s by God’s power that we get victory!*** If we seek His help—if we cry out to God for help—God is going to answer those prayers and He will give us the strength and victory over the enemy. 1-Cor. 15:57 says that it is Christ that gives us victory! Christ gives us victory over the enemy and, indeed, we need to recognize that it requires not a sign from God—Gideon went to God and asked for a sign.

For us it takes faith! It takes, faith, trust and confidence in God. Not that God has to show us a sign that He’s there. We know He’s there. We know God and we don’t need to go out and ask for a sign. It requires faith!

Romans 8:31: “...**If God is for us, who can be against us?**” If we are on God’s side, no enemy is ever going to prevail against us. We can have faith and trust, and we don’t need to fear the enemy.

1-John 4:4: “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them because greater is He Who is in you than the one who *is* in the world.”

Brethren, this is the first point. We can have confidence and faith because Christ is in us through the Holy Spirit, and we will have victory over the enemy. We can be thankful for that, so this a very vital lesson that we can learn.

II. Be on guard! Be vigilant! Be Alert!

This is what I’m going to expound on more here in the sermon today; it’s going to focus on the way that God separated the 300 from the main army of the Israelites. Again, we went over that and we recognize that God *selected the few* who lapped from their hand rather than drinking directly out of the water as a dog would drink. Why is that? What differentiates the two postures in drinking water?

If you're in enemy territory and you're facing a large force and one of the things that you have to do is be on guard, be vigilant and to be alert and to be aware of the surroundings, what is going on around you. So, the 300 were watchful. They were being alert! They were vigilant! Therefore, they were above and beyond the average soldier there, because they were showing leadership qualities. They were basically concerned not just about themselves, but their fellow soldiers.

If you're in enemy territory you don't want to all be down into the water and then suddenly find yourself being bushwhacked. In other words, you've got to be aware of what's going on. So, we could say that Gideon's 300 were the elite. They were the special ones within that army who went above and beyond in terms of being watchful.

Brethren, that should describe us! We are the *elite of God!* We are the firstfruits. Therefore, brethren, we're going to be looking at the importance of being *watchful!* of being *vigilant!* of being *aware* of

- what's going on around us in the world
- what's going on within the Church
- what's going on within God's plan and prophecy

—and to realize that we have a responsibility to keep our eyes on the Kingdom of God and to be doing those things accordingly, so that we can be doing our part.

We're to be watchful and alert, not only to the physical things around us, but our own spiritual condition. So, this watchful and being vigilant really covers a very wide spectrum of what our responsibilities are. We're going to be looking at some of these aspects of what we need to be watchful for.

Why do we need to be watchful? Let me give you just a simple account that if you're in enemy territory and if you have a mission to accomplish, or if you're going to be driving a vehicle of some sort and you have to go from point 'A' to point 'B' and you're not vigilant and careful, you could find yourself into deep trouble and difficulties: to be attacked or bushwhacked or to be taken unaware.

Brethren, that's the point! We have to be watchful. We have enemies. We're living in a world that is in the end-time. We live in a dangerous society. We have to be aware of what's going on to truly be able to protect ourselves, protect our families, that we're not distracted by the world and unprepared.

The Olivet Prophecy where Christ points out

very clearly that we need to be watchful. Matthew 24:37: "Now, as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be at the coming of the Son of man. For as in the days that were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark; and they were not aware until the Flood came and took *them* all away; so shall it also be at the coming of the Son of man" (vs 37-39).

Those around Noah as he was doing the ark, they weren't aware of what was going on and what was coming. They were taken completely off guard, even though for the 100 years Noah was a 'preacher of righteousness.' Noah was giving warning, but no one was paying attention. In fact, they mocked him, and they thought it was foolishness to build an ark in the middle of a plain many, many miles from any water. So, "...they were not aware until the Flood came and took *them* all away; so shall it also be at the coming of the Son of man."

Verse 42: "Watch, therefore, because you do not know in what hour your Lord is coming." Here we can look at this particular aspect of *watching*: we need to be aware of prophecy, the coming of Christ and realize and understand that we need to be spiritually prepared, emotionally; physically prepared for the days ahead. If we're not really on top of things in our lives,

- we can get lazy
- we can be distracted
- we can find ourselves not being vigilant

2-Timothy 4:5: "But as for you, **be vigilant in all things...**" We're going to look at areas that we need to be vigilant in. This word 'vigilant' means to *keep awake, to watch, to be sober!* The word 'sober' it doesn't necessarily mean to be free of intoxicating liquors. It means to *spiritually-minded!* In other words, you're focusing on that which is of God and truly *spiritually minded*. To be sober and aware of your surroundings. That's what we're talking about here.

My admonishment today is that we need to be

- *Alert!*
- *Awake!*
- *Aware!*
- *Watching!*

and be like the 300 of Gideon's army; the elite; the ones who are prepared and aware of the fact that when you're in enemy territory you don't want to let your head down, you want to be alert! **We are in the enemy's territory!**

What we need to be watchful for—this list is not all inclusive, there are other things that I can

add—but these are things that I came up with that are important:

- 1) **We need to on watch against the growing evil and wickedness in our society today!**

In our world today we need to be aware of what's really going on out there. It's easy for us to be kind of sequestered in our own little surroundings and really not keeping up with what's going on in the world. I can't blame you. Who wants to go out there, but things are getting worse!

Paul said in 2-Tim. 3:1 that in the end-time dangerous times are coming. Brethren, as God's people we need to recognize that the days are evil in which we are living. We know why things are the way they are; this is Satan's world. Satan is the 'god of this world,' he has deceived the world and he is doing his part to control and bring *his* kingdom into fruition. That is the way of darkness, of wickedness and of evil. Clarifying that, John points out:

1-John 5:19: "We know that we are of God, and ***that the whole world*** lies in *the power* of the wicked one." The whole world! Fred brought out in a recent message that all segments of our society are steeped in the ways of Satan. In religion—the groups out there that are satanic in their thinking. Many profess Christ, but they are being controlled by Satan.

He controls everything: economics, the business area, Wall Street, the governments, education—that's a subject! The modern education today is Satan's tool front, right and center. We need to be aware of that, because of its impact on our children. We need to protect our children from this evil society as much as possible. ***We need to be aware of what's going on!***

Ephesians 5:14: "Therefore He [Christ] says, '*You* who are sleeping—wake up, and arise from the dead! And Christ shall shine upon you.'" Sleeping is clearly a position in which you're not too much aware of what's going on around you. In other words, you're not being very watchful when you're asleep. Christ is not talking about physical sleep here; He's talking about not paying attention, not being alert and aware of what's going on.

Verse 15: "So then, take heed that you walk circumspectly..."—that you walk around with your eyes open and you are noticing and being watchful. Paul says that we need to be *watchful* of what's going on around us in the world, because we have enemies and we have forces that are working against us.

He says, "...not as fools, but as those who are wise..." A fool is a person who says there is no God, and the wise is the one who is watchful; one

who knows the plan and purpose of God, and one who is called of God and, in the end, will know what's going on. It says in the book of Daniel it says that in end-time the 'wise will understand.' We need to alert and awake in understanding prophecy, understanding the things that must happen.

If somebody told you that Christ was going to come tomorrow and say, 'I've looked into the Scriptures.' That happened recently. This individual said that Christ was coming in the near future. The point is that we *know* prophecy, we know that certain things will have to occur before Christ will come. There are a lot of things that yet have to happen. So, just as Christ used the analogy of the fig tree: as a fig tree puts forth its leaves then you know the signs of the times. We need to be watchful of the signs of the times. We need to understand prophetic events that must occur.

We need to couple world news with prophecy. On the Internet you find good things and bad things. You have to filter a lot of things out. But there are a lot of things on the Internet that really show a decay of what's going on in the world. Sure you can say that there's always been evil, there's always been war, Satan has always been out there, but we are in a time now that is just absolutely bazaar! We are absolutely in the depth of evil and wickedness.

I pulled up a few things from the web; I'm just going to read the headlines:

- ✓ **All the Vaccines are Contaminated, Every Last one of the Them**

The vaccines that have been given to you are loaded with toxins, with everything from heavy metals to pollutants that actually cause the very disease that they're supposed to be helping you with. The medical profession is full of deceit and we know that they're not out there to save people's lives. They're out there to milk your wallet.

- ✓ **Deceived by the Dielectric Process**

The process by where negotiators/facilitators try to change a group of people from one way of thinking to another. Anytime you come into a dielectric process, you have the antithesis and you basically try to synthesize a compromise between two sides, and in the process you water down the truth and you become closer to a satanic society. It happens in the churches and, in some cases, can happen even in the Church of God if we're not careful. So, that's important.

One that really caught my eye was a message that came across from a mother who lives in Australia, showing the degree of wickedness and evil that's coming into society. She was trying to bring up her daughter correctly, but what she found

was:

✓ Teen Girls Prefer the Devil to Jesus

We can understand that the churches of the world may not be the *true church*, but still they want to walk in the way of God, as best they can. The gist of the story is that her daughter told her that *her peers were basically telling her* that:

- Jesus is boring, *Satan is more exciting*
- Jesus tells us what we have to do, *Satan tells us we can do anything*
- Jesus is too tame, *we like somebody who is a little bit rough like Satan*; we like it rough and tough

This is the way it is, brethren! This is our society, it's happening in America! The young people coming up don't want anything to do with Jesus Christ; they don't want anything to do with any of the Truth of the Bible. They're steeped in Satan's world, and *it is evil!*

This article was just mind-exploding! With being able to compare the Scriptures with Satan's world, they're going to pick Satan's world because it's 'more fun, more exciting.' *Diabolically evil!* That's what going on in the world today and we need to be aware of that.

In technology, Fred gave a recent series on *Transhumanism*. If you haven't done any research on that, you need to understand what's going on in transhumanism, which involves robotics, nanotechnology, singularity—which means the coupling of the human mind with a computer. In other words you're now taking the human mind and making it 'better'; you're making it 'more superior.'

With gene technology you're biologically affecting the genes. What you're doing is you're changing the human being, morphing it into a hybrid, into something that's not human anymore, but that is mixture of machine and human life.

Brethren, if we can understand what the transhumans want to do, in a very few years they're going to say that if you're of the elite, the elite in society are going to be the transhumans and say, 'We're going to have powers and abilities that are 10,000 times better than the common person who just has this human brain.' What are they looking for? *Not just to have longevity, but to have immortality!*

Satan has found a way to trick people into thinking that they can sin against God and never have to worry about the consequences. Because if we can achieve immortality without God! Is that not evil? *Yes, it is!* That's the point! We need to be aware of what's going on in the world.

Verse 17: "For this reason, do not be foolish,

but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit" (vs 17-18). Here is the answer that we need. We need to be filled with God's Holy Spirit, be filled with hope; be filled with understanding that true immortality—true transformation—is going to come, but it's going to come *God's way!* That is going to be through the resurrection to eternal life. We need to be aware of that.

1-John 2:15: "**Do not love the world, nor the things that are in the world....**" I've just gone over a few things that are happening in the world, brethren, and it's not a pretty picture. Yet, the people of the world are going to be cheering this on; they're going to embrace it; they're going to love it; they're going to think it's the greatest thing ever! That's the horrific thing that's going to come.

God's people—the people who believe in the Bible and the true Scriptures—are going to be in a minority. They're not only going to be scoffed at and laughed at, they're going to be persecuted. This is what's coming, brethren, and we need to be aware!

"...If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because everything that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pretentious pride of physical life—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world and its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God abides forever" (vs 15-17).

Brethren, again, we must live in the world because we are physical, but we are *not to be part of the world*. To not be part of the world we have to understand that the wickedness and the evil aspects of what's happening, because we can get swept up in some of the things that are going on and be deceived by thinking that it's okay. We need to understand that God will provide our needs! God will watch over us! ***But we have to be doing our part!***

Matthew 6:33: "**But as for you, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness...**" Our defense against all of the evil that is in the world is to *seek Godly righteousness and the Kingdom of God!* That is our shield and that is the focus that we need to take. That's a person who is being alert, who is being awake and who is focused on the Kingdom! If we do that and *hold fast to God's Truth and walk in the way of God's way, then we will not be deceived by the evil that's coming over the world.*

2) Being watchful of false teachers and of those who would try to deceive you from the Truth

Matthew 24:4: "Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Be on guard... [to be watchful, alert] ...so

that no one deceives you. For many shall come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ"; and they shall deceive many" (vs 4-5).

This idea of coming to deception is not just in religious matters about who is Christ, but this whole thing about being on guard against deception is just as I said we can be deceived in so many different aspects. Who would have thought that the vaccines that the medical profession is giving us are loaded with toxins and its purpose is to create disease? Who would have thought that? That's horrific, and yet, that's what it says. *Deception!*

2-Peter 2:1—talking about false teachers, false prophets who would come and deceive us about the Truth of the Bible and about Christ and the coming of His kingdom: "But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, who will stealthily introduce destructive heresies, personally denying the Lord who bought them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many people will follow... [Oh yes! Any nut who gets up and says, 'I've got a better way' there's always going to be a crowd who will just jump in there and say 'yea, yea, let's follow this guy.' Deception, brethren!] ...as authoritative their destructive ways; and because of them, the way of the Truth will be blasphemed. Also, through insatiable greed they will with enticing messages exploit you for gain; for whom the judgment of old is in full force, and their destruction is ever watching" (vs 1-3).

The key here is, brethren, we need to be watchful of deception at all levels, including false prophets and false teachers who would lead us astray, because, again, they will bring in their doctrinal concepts, especially when it comes to the Passover, the Holy Days, even to the Sabbath. There are false teachers who will come in and will try and deceive you into breaking the Truth as we know it.

The key is to stand firmly on the Truth of God and know the Scriptures—understand the Word of God. Don't associate with those who would be teaching you error. That's kind of common sense, but don't associate with people who would want to lead you astray into error. Paul says to flee, or avoid those who would lead you into deception (1-Tim. 6:5). That's the Word of God!

3) Watch against the wiles and scheme of Satan the devil

I would be amiss if I didn't cover and focus on our arch-enemy, about who we need to be watchful and aware of: Satan the devil!

Paul talks about that we, as God's people, need to be forgiving one another. We need to forgive offenses and faults that other people have toward us.

And we, in turn, need to love our brother. 2-Corinthians 2:11: "So that we may not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes." He was talking prior to this verse that we need to forgive, because one of Satan's schemes is that he wants to drive wedges between God's people through offenses, grudges and difficulties. That's one of his schemes to divide the people of God. Satan right now knows that he has the world in his hands, but who is he really after? Who is he really trying to capture? *You and me!* He's trying to capture us! The world is already in captivity. We are not! We are free! We are free through Christ! So, he's after us and we need to be aware of his devices!

When you think of Satan's devices, I think of four schemes or devices that he uses. They all begin with the letter 'D' so you can remember them:

1. Deception!

Satan is the master of deception. He brings some truth, but he brings a lie with what he brings. He's deception in all aspects.

2. Discouragement!

Satan wants to discourage us! He wants to make us feel that we're at the bottom of the pile! He wants to make us feel that God doesn't love us that we are basically not fit for anything! *NO!* God loves you! God is there for you! We know that He fights our battles for us.

Satan wants to discourage us! Isn't this world discouraging? *It's a mess!* We get up every day and we've got to go there into the world and have to do our jobs, but it's discouraging to try to deal with people who are just steeped in it. But we keep on keeping on.

3. Division!

Satan wants to divide the people of God into small little pockets so he can pick us off one at a time. He wasn't to divide us any way that he can. We need to be aware of that. We need to be united in Christ. We need to be as one body *spiritually*!

4. Distraction!

He wants to distract us. He says, 'Look at this over here. Be busy with this physical activity. Be busy with sports. Be busy with watching television. Be busy with all of your hobbies or work you have to do. He wants you to be busy with the things that are not *spiritual*, that just keeps you distracted from the path of the Kingdom of God.'

These are some of the devices that he uses. He wants to divide and conquer. He wants to deceive, discourage, divide and distract us. We need to be aware of those tactics, and if we're aware of those tactics, we're not going to let him get away

with it. Satan knows our weak points. He knows just what he can do.

I'll give you a short story: Yesterday I was going to the carwash and I was in line and moving over. I went to the one that looked like he was just getting ready to leave. I moved into the line. That guy spent the next ten minutes scrubbing his truck at least four times over. I had to sit there. I said, 'This is a test! This is a test! This is a test!' Patience is one of my weaknesses. Again, it was an opportunity. I could have gotten all upset and angry.

Anyway, we need to realize that Satan knows our weak points and he tries to put you in situations. So, what you do is just sit there and think about good things, meditate and use that time appropriately.

Forgiveness:

Forgiveness is a big one! Within the Churches of God I feel that there are a lot of offenses going on and there are hurt feelings. I feel that there are offenses that are not being properly taken care of. And the result is grudges, hurt feelings, and this is something that we need to be aware of. We need to forgive those who offend us and to love our brethren.

Luke 17:1: "Then He said to the disciples, 'It is impossible that no offenses will come, but woe to the one by whom they come! It is better for him that a millstone be put around his neck and he be cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to offend'" (vs 1-2). We should avoid offending people is what He's saying. Don't go around doing that. We offend just when we open our mouths sometimes and the next words that come out are offensive to somebody.

The key is, v 3: "Watch yourselves... [Here it is, we've got to be alert! We've got to be aware!] ...and if your brother commits a sin against you... [offends you] ...rebuke him... [go to him (Matt. 18:15) and you rebuke him in a kind way to reconcile yourself to your brother. That's what God wants us to do.] ...and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him" (vs 3-4).

Forgiveness among brethren is so important that we need to be aware that Satan will try to use occasions like this of hurt feelings and offense to cause us to be divided.

A Stronghold:

Another situation that Satan uses is that he wants to try find a place, stronghold. A stronghold in Scripture is sin that has not been repented of. It could be a result of things we carry around in our

mind or whatnot. If there's something in you that you need to get rid of, whether it's envy, pride or any kind of elements of bitterness or hatred, these are *strongholds*. These are places you can give to place to Satan the devil to occupy a part within your mind—if you are walking around with unrepented sin.

We need to be watchful of that. We need to be examining ourselves and ask God to reveal to us even those presumptuous sins that we might think are not there. We need to ask God to reveal those deeper elements within us so we don't give place to Satan the devil. This is what Paul was talking about here:

Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore, let each one put away lies *and* speak the truth with his neighbor... [do not lie among ourselves, brethren] ...because we are members of one another.... [we are the body of Christ, don't lie to each other] ...*When you become angry, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger*" (vs 25-26). Yes, we become upset, we become angry at things, but we need to dispense that and get rid of anger. If anger is left in place it leads to bitterness, it leads to a whole attitude even of hatred that grows. *And the gives place for Satan to operate in your mind!*

What does Paul say? Verse 27: "Neither give place to the devil." Place is a *stronghold*; it an opportunity to occupy. That's what we need to be alert on. Don't give a place for Satan to come in and wreck your life. He is the *lord of the airwaves*. He transmits messages through the air. Guess what? We receive those messages, but we ought to be able to decipher who they're from. If they're not from God then we must delete! delete! delete! and get rid of those messages as they come in and not listen to them.

Verse 28: "Let the one who stole, steal no more; rather, let him labor with *his* hands, working *at* what is good, so that he may impart *something* to the one who has need." Is a repentant thief, if he stops stealing, still a thief? What this is saying that he is still a thief until he does something else—*replaces stealing with giving!*

In other words, basically a person who between heists is still a thief. What does Paul say? *Go from being one who steals from one who gives! Providing for the needs of others!* That's what he's saying here.

Verse 29: "Do not let any corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but that which is good and needful for edification that it may give grace to those who hear." In other words, you've got to go from being the negative to being the positive. That's the way you cutoff Satan at the knees, you go from the negative to the positive.

Verse 30: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by which you have been sealed for *the day of redemption.*" When we sin, brethren, we grieve the Spirit. When we pray to God and embrace His Word then the Holy Spirit being the power of God rejoices.

Verse 31: "Let all bitterness, and indignation... [these are possible places or roots which Satan can use] ...and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking be removed from you, together with all malice... [get rid of it; dump it and replace it with God's goodness, mercy and love and go forth] ...and be kind *and* tenderhearted toward one another, **forgiving one another**... [that's the key point that we're focusing on here: we need to love one another, forgive one another our offenses] ...even as God has also in Christ forgiven you" (vs 31-32).

Here it is: We need to be watchful of Satan's devices, the way that he strives to trip us up and get us focused on other things. We need to be aware of his devices. We need to fix our eyes on the Kingdom of God, the Word of God. We need to be out there doing and serving the brethren and one another in love and that way Satan will then flee from us and he will have no hold on you. That's what we need to work on and recognize. Don't give him an excuse to bring his way of life upon you at all.

4) Watch over our Spiritual State

Specifically our *spiritual garments* that we are wearing. We talk about the righteousness of God, which is equated to the *white raiment* that we, as saints, are to wear.

- How are your garments that you are wearing?
- Are they spotted?
- Do they have some things that need to be cleaned up?

Indeed, brethren, we all do, we all have things in our lives that need to be cleaned up. We need to recognize that. We're not perfect, yet. And God knows we're not perfect, yet, because we're flesh. But we need to be watchful and aware of our spiritual relationship with God and our spiritual state, especially whether we are growing in sanctification.

Sanctification means *to become Holy, purified and be separate from evil!* All of those you can work in the word of sanctification. We can understand what sanctification is all about, and although the word 'sanctification' is not used here, this is what is being spoken about:

2-Corinthians 6:16: "And what agreement is there between a temple of God and idols? **For you are a temple of the living God**, exactly as God said: 'I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be

their God, and they shall be My people.'" **Thank God for this!** God is with us! God is growing in us! Yet, what does Paul say?

Verse 17: "Therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate'... [that's one of the elements of sanctification; be separate from the world, not be part of the evil that we talked about earlier] ...says the Lord, 'and touch not *the unclean*, and I will receive you; and I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,' says the Lord Almighty" (vs 17-18).

2-Corinthians 7: "Now then, beloved, since we have these promises, we should purge ourselves from **every defilement of the flesh**... [That's what fouls up and spoils our garments; working with God the Father and Jesus Christ we have to work toward cleansing ourselves and become perfected in the spirit.] ...and *the spirit*, perfecting Holiness in *the fear of God.*" Here, brethren, we have been chosen, we are now in covenant with God and we need to cooperate with God and let Him, with His Spirit, clean us up and to truly overcome sin, overcome the ways of this world and to grow spiritually, to grow in the very character and mind of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

How do we reflect that? *By producing the good fruit of the Holy Spirit!* (Gal. 5:19-21). This is what we need to be doing. To focus on this very point:

Romans 8:29: "Because those whom He did foreknow, He also predestinated *to be* conformed to the image of His own Son, that He might be *the firstborn among many brethren.*" There is a transformation truly taking place. We've talked about transhumanism, but the transformation that is taking place now within us is that we are being transformed now into the very nature and the very character of Jesus Christ.

Verse 30: "Now, whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified..." Our justification is through Jesus Christ *in us*. God looks upon us as being His son/daughter and He does not impute the sins upon us upon repentance. So, brethren, that's what we need to be doing, repenting of our sins and overcoming them.

"...and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (v 30). How did He glorify us? *He gave us of His Spirit!* His Holy Spirit is in us! He glorified us, but yet, a greater glory is come when the resurrection takes place.

- Are we holding fast to the high standards of Jesus Christ?
- Are we holding fast to the Truth of the Bible?
or

- Do we let ourselves fall back into sinful habits?

Well, we're all guilty of that! Yet, in some ways, it seems like some people in the Church of God are just totally into the depths of certain things and they need to wake up and realize that they have a responsibility to, with Jesus Christ in them, overcome.

Pornography is a horrible thing that it's in the world; it's a horrible evil! I fear that many, even within the Churches of God, have been addicted to this horrific sin. Yet, it's something that is a horrible sin to break.

Ephesians 5:1: "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children." Oh boy! That is something that we need to put on our refrigerator and look at it every morning. We need to imitate God! We need to do what God is doing! We need to practice those things that are truly pleasing to Him.

Verse 2: "And walk in love, even as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us *as an offering* and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, do not permit it even to be named among you, as is fitting for saints; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking or jesting, which are not becoming; but instead, thanksgiving. For this you know, that no fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous *person*, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. Do not let anyone deceive you with vain words..." (vs 2-6).

- Are we watching our spiritual condition?
- Are we really truly cleaning ourselves up from all of the ways of the past?

And presenting ourselves before God the Father and Jesus Christ as clean vessel

- Are we watching and keeping our vessels clean?

Revelation 16:15: "Behold, I come as a thief.... [this is Christ speaking] ...Blessed *is* the one who is watching and is keeping his garments, so that he may not walk naked and they *may not* see his shame." Brethren, we've got to be watchful:

- that our garments being kept clean
- that we're walking in righteousness
- that we're doing God's will
- that we are allowing Jesus Christ to clean us up

Christ loves His Church and He is sanctifying it! Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your own wives, in the same way that Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it... [the greatest gift that we could all ever hope for, that Christ gave His life for us] ...so **that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it with the washing of water by**

the Word; that He might present it to Himself *as* the glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it might be Holy and without blame" (vs 25-27).

- Are we allowing Christ to clean us up by the washing of the water by the Word?
- Are we studying the Word?
- Are we applying it and doing those things that truly are of God's will and His purpose?

Brethren, we sin daily because of our thoughts, because of things that are still hanging on to us. Over time, hopefully—over 40 years in the Church and I'm still saying the same thing: Why do I still do the stupid things that I do? But we have hope, a great deal of hope, that God will bring us through if we keep focused on the Kingdom!

At the marriage of the bride on the Sea of Glass, it says that the 'bride has made herself ready' (Rev. 19) and that she is wearing the white garments of righteousness. In other words, she has been purified. That's the process that God will complete in us if we cooperate with that. We can't do it on our own power. God will fight our battles for us and will bring us into that relationship. Indeed, we need to be recognizing that we need to:

- *walk* by faith
- *stand* in hope
- *live* in love
- *rejoice* in Truth

These are things that we need to think about, that we need to be doing those things that are pleasing to God. Especially loving the brethren and one another.

1-Thessalonians 5:4: "But you, brethren, are not in darkness that the day *of the Lord* should overtake you as a thief.... [That's just what we read in Rev. 17 that we not be taken unawares. We have to be alert! We have to be awake!] ...*For* you are all children of *the light* and children of *the day*; we are not of *the night*, nor of *the darkness*" (vs 4-5). We're not of the evil domain of this world. We're walking in the Light, in the Truth of God's Word.

Verse 6: "So then, we should not sleep, as others *do*; but we **should watch**, and we should be sober.... [spiritually-minded; focus on those things that are right, good and perfect before God] ...*For* those who are sleeping sleep in *the night*, and those who are drunken get drunk in *the night*. But we who are of *the day* should be sober, having **put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation**" (vs 6-8).

Brethren, as it says in Eph. 6, we are to put on the armor of God, and here are some parts of the armor of God. We need to put on armor of God, because the armor of God gives us the very tools and

implements by which we are

- able to walk in righteousness
- able to overcome the enemy
- to be alert

A good soldier always goes out into battle fully equipped, because he knows he's going to have to fight the battle. So, brethren, we need to be fully equipped to fight the battles that we need to fight.

Verse 9: "Because God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, so that whether we *remain alive until He comes* or we *fall asleep before that day*, together we may live *forever* with Him. Therefore, encourage one another..." (vs 9-11).

Verses 11-24 is almost like a *spiritual checklist* of what we need to be doing, actively pursuing in our lives so that we can be building the kind of character and the mind of Christ and to be walking, fully clothed, with spiritually clean garments.

Verse 12: "Now we beseech you, brethren, to acknowledge those who are laboring among you, and are overseeing you, and are instructing you in *the Lord*, and to greatly respect them in love for the sake of their work. **Be at peace among yourselves.** Now we **encourage you, brethren,** to admonish those who are irresponsible, console the fainthearted, **support the weak, be patient** toward everyone. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone; but always be **pursuing what is good**, both toward one another and toward all *men*. **Rejoice always! Pray unceasingly!**" (vs 12-17).

These are tools, brethren, the very things that we need to be watching and be aware of and being sure that we are fully equipped in doing these very things!

Verse 18: "**Give thanks in everything**, for this *is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophecies. Prove all things. Hold fast to that which is good. Abstain from every form of wickedness*" (vs 18-22). Abstain from evil!

Why? Verse 23: "Now may the God of peace Himself **sanctify you wholly...**" We just went through what this means:

- to be cleansed
- to be purified
- to be not a part of this world
- to be walking Holiness

That's what God is doing to "...sanctify you wholly..." and it can also be 'sanctify you to be Holy.' ...and may your entire spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our

Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful *is He* Who calls you, Who will also perform *it*" (vs 23-24).

Brethren, God promises and says is that what 'He has started He will finish.' He is building us to be in the image of His Son as long as we continue to do our part: praying and studying, striving for the only perfection that can through His Spirit that we shall be in the first resurrection, part of the Kingdom of God.

We want to be able to hear what it says in Matthew 25:21 [transcriber's correction]: "...'Well done, good and faithful servant! *Because* you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'"

Scriptural References:

- 1) Judges 6:1, 6-7, 11-16
- 2) Judges 7:1-5, 7-8, 16-22
- 3) Romans 8:31
- 4) 1 John 4:4
- 5) Matthew 24:37-39, 42
- 6) 2 Timothy 4:5
- 7) 1 John 5:19
- 8) Ephesians 5:14-15, 17-18
- 9) 1 John 2:15-17
- 10) Matthew 5:33
- 11) Matthew 24:4-5
- 12) 2 Peter 2:1-3
- 13) 2 Corinthians 2:11
- 14) Luke 17:1-4
- 15) Ephesians 4:25-32
- 16) 2 Corinthians 6:16-18
- 17) 2 Corinthians 7:1
- 18) Romans 8:29-30
- 19) Ephesians 5:1-6
- 20) Revelation 16:15
- 21) Ephesians 5:25-27
- 22) 1 Thessalonians 5:4-9, 12-24
- 23) Matthew 25:21

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1 Corinthians 15:57
- 2 Timothy 3:1
- 1 Timothy 6:5
- Matthew 18:15
- Galatians 5:19-21
- Revelation 19; 17
- Ephesians 6

Also referenced: Sermon Series: *Transhumanism*

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