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Titus – Making Things Right

Chapter 2 - (vs. 15)

We come to Titus 2, and we're just going to finish up the understanding of verses 11 through 15. So, hopefully, as we look at this it will be an encouragement to you as well as an inspiration to do the right thing. When you go through Scripture, what you see repeated over and over again is the difference between the law and grace. Especially, I think, when you look at the book of Romans when Paul deals with this particular issue. The perception is that if we just had a list of things to do, then obviously man would always do the right thing. As Romans begins to reveal, no, "there's none righteous, not even one." (Romans 3:10) The problem isn't that we don't know what is right; the problem is that we don't feel like doing right. So, oftentimes when we hear the list of the things that we need to do, i.e. Romans 7, or we could maybe even convey to everybody else what we know we need to do, it just convicts us more. In some ways, it makes us want to do wrong because somebody is pointing out to us that we can't do something, and we don't like people telling us that. The point is that we just don't have the heart to do the right thing. The power of the gospel is what transforms us. The reason why the gospel is so powerful is it takes away condemnation. It's like a kid being caught in school doing something wrong, and a teacher walking up to them and saying, "Did you do that?" and by virtue of the voice of the teacher, the kid goes, "Who? Me?" Then, immediately races in his head trying to figure out all the rationalization and maybe even moving away from the subject so that he doesn't have to deal with that particular issue. However, if the teacher came up to him and said, "Do you have a problem? Maybe I can help." It segways into something a little bit more amiable and the kid is thinking in terms of "maybe I can admit what I did." Grace gives us that freedom to admit because God says it's all been paid for. So, why don't you just come clean? You begin to realize you can. That's why Paul writes in Romans 1, "I'm not ashamed of this gospel because it is the power that changes lives; something the law couldn't do."

So, as we come to this interesting epistle written to Titus who was dealing with all kinds of issues; more specifically, issues that come out of that realm of chaos, confusion, and disarray. Why do people find themselves in the quagmire of all this mess? How do you get there? Well, I guess in a way all we have to do is go back to the book of Judges, every man did what was right in his own eyes. As man begins to explore his freedoms, I think one of the things we've seen specifically is that this island of Crete is probably closer to America than almost any place at that time would have ever been. They had great freedoms, not only to the men, but also to the women. So, many people were just doing whatever they felt like. As you read the beginning of Titus 1, you realize, ok, they're rebellious men, they're lazy gluttons and pleasure seekers. They have an epicurean mindset, "Let's eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die." What does that bring? Well, he

conveys that it just brings divisiveness and hurt and problems within the household. In fact, one of the statements is “they’re upsetting whole families.” When you take order out of any situation, then not only do you have chaos, but you have a lot of upset, anxiety, division, and strife. So, it’s imperative that we have a book such as this because in many respects that’s what this kind of freedom that we, in this country, so cling to has created through the years. It is one thing to seek freedom to do good, it’s quite another to seek freedom to do what I want to do whether it hurts anybody or not. So, that confusion that oftentimes comes, and you can see households where a wife says to her husband, “I can do whatever I want to do” and the husband will say to his wife, “I can do what I want to do” and the kids say to the parents, “I can do anything I want to do.” Then, you’ve got a mess. So, what needs to happen? Well, there has to be some sort of standard. The kid could say, “Well, I know what the right thing to do is;” the parent could say, “I know what the right thing to do is;” and you can debate about those things all day long, but there has to actually be a truth.

As we start off in this epistle, we start off with the truth of God. So, really, we’re a bondservant of God and we do what He has to say. He sets the standards. Which takes all of us out of the mix, really. Let’s just do what God says. Once you have that perfect standard, then you at least have a jump off point. You also have to have people that will align with that standard that are in the position of leadership; that position of leadership has to be in accordance with the hierarchy that God has ordained from the beginning. That is to say, the men need to be the leaders, and more of the elders than the young people. There has to be some sort of hierarchy. Nobody wants to be subordinate to anybody; we all resist that, but you begin to realize that this sense of order is going to bring about some kind of peace and freedom that we never could have gotten from pursuing our own desires. So, he begins to talk about the fact that these men have to be these kinds of people. More specifically, they have to have this character, and he gives the list of the character traits.

“... above reproach, the husband of one wife...”

In other words, they have to have a reputation that you have nothing bad to say about them. These are the kinds of people that you want in charge; not the people that have criminal records. You don’t want people with criminal records to be in charge. It wouldn’t be good.

So, you want to have that kind of standard and you want somebody who’s faithful. Why? Because you can depend on them. In some way he has to have some sort of track record. More specifically, Paul will write to Timothy, “He must be one who manages his own household well;” having his kids under control. So, there has to be some sort of track record too. All these things are what begin to put things into order, and we realize the necessity of that. By the time you go into Titus 2, he gets into the specifics and logistics of “Ok, we’ve maintained the order of older men teaching younger men and older women teaching younger women.” You have these guidelines so to speak. He even gives very practical things that they should be doing that really is a kind of order. In other words, if everybody’s doing the same job, that can be pretty chaotic too. If we do what we do, and it compliments, now it’s very harmonizing. So, he begins to establish those

things. Beyond all of this, it's not enough to really change people. That's where we are led, specifically to the end of chapter 2 because this is where he really hits hard that this is what you have to teach and get across, and you can't compromise on this truth.

In fact, verse 15 clarifies that the pastor has a responsibility to not only encourage people to do the right thing, but literally to shame them in some cases to do the right thing.

"These things speak and exhort..."

Which would be "*parakaleō*" meaning encouragement and coming alongside. Sometimes you can gently nudge somebody and say, "Let's do this together." Then, he uses another word, and that's "reprove." Now, to clarify, it's not only to convict somebody, "Hey, you did something wrong" and call them out on the carpet, but it actually goes into the realm of correcting and chastening. So, it gets pretty intense at that juncture.

"These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority..."

What authority is he talking about? Well, he's saying that you have the right to command. Why do you have a right to command? Because "Thus sayeth the Lord." It's not because the individual has the right to command in the sense that he has the knowledge, but these are the commandments of God. I think one of the problems that has arisen in these latter years is that you're not allowed to offend anybody; especially if you say there's an absolute. The one thing you really don't want to do is tell people they have to do something, but Scripture is telling the pastor, "You have to be dogmatic about this." This is an imperative; it's a noncompromising situation. Now, the question in all of this is what exactly are we talking about? This is what the gamechanger is in the text. So, I want you to back up into verse 11 because this is where it actually hits it hard.

Question: "You said Scripture is telling the pastor, it's not telling all of us?"

Not all of us. Here again, part of order, for instance, wouldn't be saying to the kids, "You need to be dogmatic with your parents and telling them that they need to straighten up." The kids wouldn't have the authority, and it would be out of order. One of the things that Titus is doing within the passage is he's establishing that sense of order. That's why Romans 13 says that all authority is ordained by God. Now, a person that's not walking by faith will say, "Yeah, all authority, but who's in charge?" but faith says, "God's in charge."

These pastoral epistles are to pastors, and it's telling them not only what to do but the authority that they have. The one thing that Paul was really concerned about with Timothy is that he was going to hold back a little bit. He says, "Don't let anybody look down on your position." People have a tendency to do this, especially people that may have had some high position; especially in the city of Ephesus with all this wealth and everything going, "Who's this young whippersnapper telling me what to do?" Paul says, "Don't let them look down on you. You come with the authority of Scripture because you've been ordained for this office." So, he literally gives him that authority to do that.

The interesting thing about this particular passage is that the one thing that has to come across very dogmatic is the grace of God. That's where I want you to back up into Titus 2:11 because this really sets the stage for dogma. A lot of confusion and rebellion comes from people just barking orders and telling people that they have to do things. There are going to be times when the leaders have to do that, but you want to be careful what you're barking out. In other words, if you're barking out a bunch of rules and regulations, you're going to cause more chaos and more rebellion. However, if you're dogmatic about the grace of God, and don't let people compromise on that, that's what begins to establish the sense of order and bring the healing to the body.

(Titus 2:11) "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men."

So, he's establishing the great favor of God in that He was willing to die for us. This has to be strong dogma. You can't compromise on this. It's all Him.

Now, look at verse 12, I just want to repeat this word, "*paideuō*," "Instructing us." Literally, you can define that as "beating." It is that sense of correction that is not just instruction, but it will bring somebody to their knees. Here again, it's not in the physical sense of beating somebody, but it's in the sense of the grace and the mercy of God through His salvation being so powerful that it brings somebody to their knees. In other words, when you and I preach this, it needs to be without any sense of compromise, and it's all God; none of us. When the gospel is presented right to somebody that is searching for truth, it will bring them to a sense of repentance. Romans 12 makes reference to the fact that when somebody does something wrong to you, and you return good for evil that you heap burning coals upon their head; which is a picture of that person going into repentance and putting ash, dust and even coals because they're convicted to such a degree. Well, that's the power of the gospel. So, you can't compromise this gospel and it has to be declared in such a powerful way that it actually brings men to repentance, and they feel like they've been beat up.

Now, if you look at this, it instructs us or corrects us; it scourges us "to deny ungodliness..." What is it that would cause somebody to let go of that sense of disrespect and disenchantment with God? What would cause them to embrace Him and walk in humble adoration? The grace of God.

"Instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires..."

In other words, I'm leaving all this stuff that at one time in my life I thought was so important.

"... and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age."

Now, watch what it says in verse 13 because it's all going to tie together. Of course, as you go more specifically into chapter 3, we're going to realize that grace is all a part of the mercy of God. He'll state in chapter 3 that you once were sinners too, but now we've received mercy. So, it's this power that begins to move, but he interjects the word "hope" in this passage.

(Titus 2:13) "looking for the blessed hope..."

That's a confident expectation of goodness. Why would we do that? Well, verse 13 reads, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."

What's the statement? Well, as Hebrews says, next time Christ comes, He comes without reference to sin. In other words, what are we looking forward to? We're looking forward to the One who died for us. So, if our sights are on the one who died for us, then do we have anything to fear? That's why John will say in 1 John, "perfect love casts out fear" because if in fact there is love, there is no fear of punishment. So, we don't have any fear of punishment, we have a Savior who is coming for us. If you don't have the expectation of doom and gloom, you're energized to do the right thing. He's really talking about what is going to motivate these people to stop pursuing their selfish desire. There's only going to be one thing that will do that. Here again, you can point out their faults, but the problem was there were other teachers coming in and everybody had their humanistic formula. "You need to do this." They were coming in saying, "We have a list of things you have to do" and they're making everybody jump through hoops, but it's just making people more resentful. So, it's bringing more division than help; more confusion than unity. What about telling people a very interesting tale? How about a fable? So, people give an interesting, anecdotal story, "I was doing this..." and people go, "Well, that's interesting. It's kind of cute and..." You know what, the problem is that it doesn't change anything. What if you had somebody like a psychologist, psychiatrist, or a philosopher, and he sat down with you and for a fee he would maybe help with psychoanalyzing or motivation? So, what about that? Well, Scripture reveals that all the teachers that are coming in are actually taking advantage of people.

If you go back to Titus 1:10, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers..."

So, "I have an idea." Yeah, but your idea doesn't change hearts. Here again, you can use behavior modification, you can zap people into going, "I'm not going to need that anymore," but the only problem is you're not going to change the heart. So, they might not do that thing anymore, but they'll do "this" thing. Everybody finds a way to substitute immediate gratification for something. I think it's really interesting. We've got the whole cigarette thing out of control and people are vaping. Ok, so, we're just substituting, that's all. People are finding that there are problems with that too. The point is that we have a tendency to not really find the solution. So, everything is in disarray because things aren't being taken care of. People are charging people money for this advice. How do we know that? Verse 11, "who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain."

They're making money off of the people. So, you not only have advice that's not working and people trusting in experts that yields nothing which brings more confusion, but people are going bankrupt because they're having to pay for all this stuff. So, how do things get changed? That's why he emphasizes that you need hope; you have to have a source that can actually change. You have somebody that really loves you. So, that's the gospel. That's why he says this

in Titus 2:13, “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus”.

He then describes it, and he actually takes two passages of Scripture from the Old Testament to convey this truth. I know that we read a book like Titus and our initial thought is “Why didn’t they look up the text in Colossians or Ephesians?” They didn’t have the New Testament at that point in time. So, what they’re pulling out is the Old Testament truths that have been talking about this all along but has now been revealed to us by virtue of the gospel itself. In other words, now the Old Testament makes sense because we see it through the eyes of Christ. Before, all we saw was law and regiment. Now, we begin to see that it was a tutor that was leading us to Christ. So, he writes this and quotes this out of the Old Testament, “He gave Himself for us.” So, what are you looking forward to? Christ’s return. Why? Because He gave Himself for us. So, if He spared not His own Son, how would He not then freely give us all things? If He died for you, what, He’s now going to kill you? He’s now going to take advantage of you? He has already given you all of His love. So, the only thing you have left to expect is the return of someone who gave Himself for you.

(Titus 2:14) “who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed...”

In other words, it’s that sacrifice that moves us to not want to do wrong anymore. When you fall in love with somebody and you realize just how much they love you, people will give up an awful lot for somebody that loves them that much. It’s that realization that begins to pull on your heart strings. Now, you begin to set things in order. It’s almost like you go, “What does He want me to do?” You ask, “What, you’re volunteering?” Yeah.

“Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous...”

See that word “zealous”? On fire to do the right thing, honorable thing. “*Kalos*” is the word that he uses for “good” within the passage. So, we’re talking about somebody that is wanting to pursue that which is honorable in character and virtue. It’s those kinds of things that he desires to do. What has motivated him? Once again, the love of Christ constrains me; moves me.

The passages that he pulls out are found in two places in the Old Testament. Let me show you the first one. It’s found in Exodus 19, and you’ll recognize it right away as we begin to hit the specific verse. In Exodus 19, Moses went up to God to talk to Him. That was quite a sight, wouldn’t it be? “Where are you going Moses?” “I’m going up the mountain, and I’m going to talk to God,” and there was thunder and lightning. I was watching the weather today, and it was like an epiphany. The weather person said, “Do you know that you have to have lightning in order to have thunder?” I didn’t know that.

(Exodus 19:3) “Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel...”

In other words, He’s telling Moses, “You’ve got to tell them.” Now, I can’t picture Moses coming down from the mountain saying, “You know guys, I don’t know if you really want to hear this. I

don't know if it's really that important." He's going, "I just talked to God, and you know what He said? 'Stop it!' He means this; He wants you to do the right thing." So, they're hearing that sense of urgency.

If you look at Exodus 19:25, "So Moses went down to the people and told them."

Why? God told him to. What, do you think that Moses isn't going to do what God told him to? There's no way. So, the question is what does He want Moses to tell the people? What is the message that God wants to send to His people?

This is the message that Paul quotes from, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself."

That's an interesting initial phrase which is fundamentally, "I rescued you. Tell the people, remind them, 'Who do you think rescued you? How do you think you got here? Why do you think you're ok? I did that. What, do you think I'm not going to be nice to you? That I'm not going to take care of you?'" People start grumbling there in the wilderness, "How are we going to drink?" "Stop. Didn't I rescue you?"

Then He declares this in verse 5, "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice..." Jesus will make the statement, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." The point is "Do you see Me as a Savior?" Yes. "Then do what I tell you because everything that I tell you is going to save you from something."

"Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant..."

In other words, "Be faithful to the promises that We established." Here again, if you're confused about the covenant, all you have to do is go to Exodus 20, and He goes, "Ok, here's the covenant, 'You shall have no other gods before Me.'" He goes on, and ultimately gives us the Ten Commandments. If you even look at the commandments dealing with one another, what is He asking them to do? Well, He's fundamentally asking them to be honorable. He's asking them to be kind. That would be like don't kill somebody. Then, He wants them to be faithful. You need to be faithful to your wife, your husband. So, all of these are characteristics, generous, truthful, content and satisfied. They're all a part of what we signed up for. If you can imagine a place in which people weren't faithful; if you can imagine a place where people weren't content; if you can imagine a place in which people weren't kind, then how horrible that would be. So, God is saying, "Come on. We made a commitment that we were going to be devoted to each other. We weren't going to go around to others. We were going to be exclusive." So, it's a very interesting picture of "I'm expecting you to keep this." Now, it is to be noted, "if you will indeed obey My voice;" in other words, "Understand that everything I have told you to do is for your good."

Then the second part is, "keep My covenant" which shows us that it doesn't really do any good to only obey Him one time; there has to be a sense of continual. "I was faithful today, but tomorrow, maybe not." God says, "No, no. You've got to keep this."

“... then you shall be My own possession...”

The way King James translated it as “My own treasure.” It really has that connotation about it in the sense that “You are highly valued to Me above all else.” It’s a great picture. Of course, Peter will talk about this, you are like precious stones and highly valued. It’s not like somebody is highly valued just because they are a Jew; it’s somebody that is highly valued because they wanted to obey and trust God. So, that could be anybody. I mean, that could be Ruth who is a Moabite, or it could be a woman in the wall of Jericho. If you do this then you’ll be very highly valued above all like a spouse would be to one another.

“...among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine;

(Exodus 19:6) and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

“Tell them that I want to have a relationship with them; tell them I want a commitment; tell them ‘I rescued you, don’t you trust Me?’ Call upon them to have this closeness with Me.” Of course, because the earth shook and the voice was so powerful, it scared them half to death, but the message is very clear that God is not there to torture them; God is there to redeem them, and He has good things in store for them. He wants Moses to let them know that. The phrase here is “you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine.”

When you go back to Titus 2:14, “a people for His own possession.” Now, where does he get “zealous for good deeds”? Well, “Do what I tell you to do.” So, when it says, “zealous for good deeds,” what is it saying? “I want you to be as intense about wanting My way as I am intense about wanting to save you.” He’s asking for a commitment. So, this kind of sets the stage.

Then, he pulls from Psalm 130:8. The quote goes, “He will redeem Israel from all its iniquities. Remember the way that he puts it in the Old Testament, “zealous for good deeds,” but more specifically, to purify for Himself a people for His own possession. There’s a sense of being cleansed. Why is God cleansing us? It’s that point that I want to talk about because as we look at this, it’s a setting. When a particular individual, whether it be Christ or one of the disciples, quotes from the Old Testament, yes, they’re quoting maybe a passage, but there is a context that is also coming along with it. It would be no different than maybe somebody writing a note to somebody and just adding little word, “You know how much I care for you.” Now, you can just take that phrase and go, “Ok, so that’s all they’re thinking.” No, that’s not all that they’re thinking. What they’re thinking and what they want you to think is all of the ways they displayed how they’ve always cared for you; so that the person comes up with the conclusion, “They’ve always cared for me.” That’s kind of what’s going on in this passage. So, it’s with that in mind that I want you to see not only this chapter in Psalm, but all of the chapters dealing with “A Song of Ascent.” Now, you probably remember us going through this, but I want to do more of a summary so that you can see the progression as we go up the steps.

So, if you back up to Psalm 120 which begins "A Song of Ascents." Here again, I won't go into much detail about explaining what that is, but it is an interesting picture of those that were going to the feast. Oftentimes, they would go through these psalms as they were heading towards the feast and the assenting or getting close to Jerusalem. You were always going up to Jerusalem; you were never going down to Jerusalem, no matter where you came from. The same thing is true with a priest. He would have basically these 15 steps that they would take, and every step they would begin to recite each of these Psalm. The picture is a progression of, I would put, motivation. What is it that motivates us to set our life in order; to do what God tells us to do? Well, in a very simplistic way, Exodus 19, "I saved you. Why wouldn't you do what I told you to do?" The Psalmist is now going to take us on a more detailed journey to that. Once again, without us reading through each of the chapters, fundamentally what you're looking at in Psalm 120 is what initially brings us to God. Here again, in Titus 3, Paul will begin to explain, "Remember you once were this way, but now you're not." It wasn't by works of righteousness which we have done, but it was according to His mercy that we were saved. So, what was it that caused the initial change in your life? The answer is very clear, I had troubles, I had problems, and I turned to God. It may be that you ran out of options. It may be that you couldn't see help anywhere else, but it was a recognition that you needed help. There's no other reason to go to a Savior. Jesus will make it really clear, "If you don't think you need a physician, then you're not going to come to Me; if you admit that you need help, then you'll come to Me."

In Matthew 11, how does Jesus beckon people? "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

(Psalm 120:1) "In my trouble I cried to the LORD..."

Trouble is tribulation; it's wearisome things in your life. It's one of the reasons why he begins to talk about these forces whether it's in Meshech or whatever. Here again, I'm not going to go into all of the details, but all these things begin to wear on us. Sometimes it's a catastrophic event and sometimes it's just something wearing on you, but it's the troubles that bring me to God. I look around to everybody else, and maybe I look for some sort of hope from somebody else, but his ending statement was "I am for peace, but when I speak, They are for war." (Psalm 120:7) Can we just get along?

Then, you come to this point. So, the initial step on the way to God is you come with a history of troubles. You're weary and heavy-laden, and then He gives you rest. So, that begins the process, but it forces you to decide to trust in God wholly, completely. Psalm 121 is about that. It says,

"I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come?"

Now, I've known people that take this particular passage, and they go, "Ok, so the mountains come from the Lord. My help comes from the mountains and the Lord is up in the mountains." No, that's not the picture. I look at the mountains, and the mountains are a picture of ominous power that surrounds me and literally threatens me. So, the question is who could help me?

Where does my help come from? The ultimate within the passage is “the LORD, Who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:2) which is bigger than the mountains. That’s the point in verse 2.

He then goes on and says in verse 6, “The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night.”

We’re even getting bigger. So, who is my help? Well verse 2, “My help comes from the LORD...”

Verse 5, “The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand.”

In other words, coming at a time in troubles, realizing that everyone else is for war and you’re looking for peace, when these ominous forces are surrounding you, you go, “I’ve got to make a choice. I’m going to choose God.” That’s Psalm 121.

Psalm 122 is what that creates in me. Really, 122 is really dealing with that creating of a longing to be close to not only God, but all those who have made the decision. In other words, what brings us together as a body? What encourages us is being together. The interesting picture in Psalm 122 is I could hardly wait to get into the house of God. You say, “Why?” Because it’s crowded with people that have made the same decision as I have. What’s the decision? To wholly trust in God. So that’s why he said,

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’”

If you look in verse 3, “Jerusalem, that is built As a city that is compact together.”

Can you feel it? We’re just squeezing each other in. I just can’t get close enough to people. So, what is he stating? He’s stating once again that there’s a power that begins to move in us and changes us. When you begin to gather with a bunch of people that feel as devoted as you do, it strengthens you. So, maybe at one time you wrestled with something, but you come together, and you feel the encouragement and the strength of those that are wholehearted for God, and you go, “Man, this is really a powerful force in my life. I need this. I’m so glad to get out of the world.”

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’”

What a wonderful picture.

Psalm 123, it makes me want to serve God. It makes me want to serve Him and actually wait for His grace because He’s the one that rescues; He’s the one that I can put my trust in. I’ll do whatever He says because I know everything that He tells me to do is good. So, it’s almost like a servant looking at the master’s hand saying, “Whatever you say, I will do.” Yeah, there are people that look like they’re better off for the time being, but you know what I’m going to do? I’m going to wait for Him. Isn’t that what it says? If you look in verse 4,

“Our soul is greatly filled With the scoffing of those who are at ease...”

There are people around me that seem to be at ease, but you know what, I’m going to wait. Whatever God says. It actually begins to put things in order. What is it that is making me wait?

I'm looking for His gracious hand. Verse 3, "Be gracious to us..." I've realized at this juncture that the grace of God is far more powerful than any immediate gratification of man, and I'm going to wait.

So, when you come to Psalm 124, you begin to recognize how much you need Him. Remember that song, "I need thee every hour most precious Lord"? How bad do you need Him?

(Psalm 124:1) "Had it not been the LORD who was on our side..."

Let me say that again.

(Psalm 124:2) "Had it not been the LORD who was on our side..."

(Psalm 124:3) "Then they would have swallowed us alive,
When their anger was kindled against us;

(Psalm 124:4) Then the waters would have engulfed us..."

(Psalm 125:5) Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul."

"How else could I escape their teeth going into me? How else could I escape their trap that they have for me?" (Psalm 124:6-7) No, no, no, no. I recognize just how very much I need Him. That will change you. Once you realize that you need Him that badly, He will take care of all these forces of evil.

Well, Psalm 125, it causes me to feel safe and secure. Why would I do everything that the Lord says and abide by the order that He gives me? I've never felt more secure. I have found that if I just do what God tells me to do, there's a peace that the world can't take away. Where does that come from? That's the favor of God on me. If God is for me, who could be against me? It's almost like a mountain that surrounds me. Would that be a good description? Well, that would be the description that he gives,

"As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the LORD surrounds His people..." (Psalm 125:2)

Who's reigning? It's not a wicked person. The wicked are not allowed to reign here. God is in charge. If God's in charge, I feel very secure and stable.

When you come to Psalm 126, and you begin to realize the great power of redemption from captivity. Do you remember when you were saved? The burdens of your heart rolled away and it was like you were set free. Well, the value of that is that it makes you far more grateful than you've ever been because you knew what it was like to be trapped; you knew what it was like to be held captive. You almost had to go through that to have that sense of gratitude, appreciation and joy. Why is it that believers are so joyful? God rescued us.

It reminds me of Luke 7. Do you remember the woman from the city? She begins to anoint Jesus' feet with her tears and began to wipe His feet with her hair. Simon the pharisee goes, "Ok, do You know who this woman is? You say You're a prophet." Jesus goes, "Yeah, you know something, I walked into this door, you didn't anoint Me; you didn't care for Me, but this woman hasn't stopped from the moment that I walked in. You know what, Simon? Somebody

who has been forgiven much will love much.” You begin to realize the power of redemption from captivity. Is that motivation or what? What motivates you to do the right thing? I once was there. That’s one of the reasons why he will go on to say in chapter 3, “You once were.” You don’t remember how things were? You’ve been set free from this. You of all people should be motivated through gratitude, appreciation and thanksgiving. There should be a joy about serving. When you lose your joy in serving, all you have to do is go back, “I’ve lost my motivation.” If you’re not joyful about serving the Lord; if you’re not joyful about obeying God; if you’re not desirous of obeying, you’ve lost motivation. You have to ask yourself, “What part don’t I believe?” So, what a great passage.

When you come to Psalm 127, here again, all part of the “Songs of Ascent”, you realize that this mindset and redemption that God gives actually gives us a sense of perspective and understanding as to what really matters in our life. How wonderful it is that God rescued us, right? It’s a wonderful thing. Before I was rescued; before I went into captivity; before I had all the problems of the prodigal son; before he went into all those troubles, he was thinking entitlement, “I deserve this. I should have all these things.” He wasn’t grateful, happy, or joyful. He was just greedy. It was through all of that when God began to reveal to him, “What is really important son?” and he begins to realize what’s really important is that somebody cares for you. “Nobody cares for me. When that money goes, it makes itself like wings of eagles and flies away.” When all of that is gone, what really matters? You realize it’s the relationship.

(Psalm 127:1) “Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it...”

What are you working so hard for? Some people never stop to ask themselves, “Why am I working so hard?” and they never stop to ask themselves, “Why am I working? What am I working for?” It puts it into the context of family here. The psalmist goes, “Did you know that children were a gift?” Somebody so engrossed in their career or their job they don’t have time for them, but you begin to realize what’s really important when that happens. So, that’s Psalm 127, you really get perspective and a sense of prioritizing.

Come to Psalm 128, and you realize that prosperity in every facet is yours when you do what is right. Is that motivation or what? When your heart is right, you fear God and you walk in His ways, He will not only make your enemies to be at peace with you, but He will also make your family to be at peace with you. He will make your family prosperous. We think in terms of “I’m not going to let that person tell me what to do.” Stop. Do God’s ways. It doesn’t matter who says it. Do it. As you begin to do it, you’ll please Him. I don’t care what everybody else thinks, you just please Him and do what he says. Humbly submit before your God; fear Him, walk in His ways, and you’ll eat of abundance fruit. Look what you’re going to get,

(Psalm 128:3) Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants...”

Why does he say, “like olive plants”? Because you can make olive oil, and what is so good about olive oil? It’s soothing. “You mean I’ll have kids that are soothing to me?” Yeah, and you need

that ointment when you get old because it helps you move. Ultimately in verse 5, "may you see the prosperity..." God's going to make you prosperous in all your ways. That's fundamentally the promise of Psalm 1.

Psalm 129, how wonderful it is that when you and I do what we do together we find the Lord's protection. You realize that Jesus says, "This new commandment I give you: that you love one another as I have loved you." If we do that, then there is a kind of protection that comes together. It's interesting because he talks in terms of us within this Psalm especially. He starts off at the very beginning,

"Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up, Let Israel now say,"

You were hurt by somebody. When we come together, and talking to somebody, "I've been hurt." So, we all begin to say, "We've been hurt."

(Psalm 129:2) "... Yet they have not prevailed..."

So, it ultimately ends in verse 8, "We bless you in the name of the Lord."

He states in verse 5, "May all who hate Zion Be put to shame..."

Zion is that which holds us together. It is that picture of together we unite around Christ, and the Lord is righteous. Have you ever had stuff that comes into your life, and it seems like no matter how hard you try, you just can't shake it? Whatever the problem is, it just seems to follow you everywhere. It's like it has cords that have hooked and tied onto you. I like the way it's put in verse 4,

"The LORD is righteous; He has cut in two the cords of the wicked."

So, motivation? To me that's motivation. Scripture says, "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together." Why would I do that? Together we're stronger. Where do you get that principle from? I don't know, Ecclesiastes.

Psalm 130 is the psalm in which he uses specifically dealing with God redeeming Israel. I think it's to be noted why it's so important that we had to go through all these things to get here; that is, up to this point, most of the irritants have been from the outside, but now the irritant is me. If you look in the passage, it starts off meaning "I'm in the depths of despair." The question you want to ask yourself is "How did I get here? What is it that puts me in depression?" Well, you could blame your surroundings, and you could blame other people, but that's not what depresses you; you depress you. It's your sins that overwhelm you. That's why he states in the passage, verse 3,

"If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?"

Watch verse 4. If I come to You, what is it that You're going to give me? Forgiveness. "There is forgiveness with You..." If you have ever done something against someone, you're going to realize that there are some people that are just not going to forgive you, but that's ok. There's forgiveness with Him. Scripture says to confess your sins to Him. He's faithful, He's just; He

never will not forgive you. Think about that. Why wouldn't I? You can just picture someone shaking their finger at you, "Admit it! Admit your sin!" Then you're thinking, "I'm not going to admit my sin." We have someone going, "Come on, there's forgiveness. If you confess your sins, I'm going to forgive you. There's therefore no condemnation. They've been paid for."

"...there is forgiveness with You..."

(Psalm 130:5) "I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope."

There's a confident expectation, "My soul waits for the Lord More than the watchmen..."

(Psalm 130:6)

What are you waiting for? Not doom and gloom, but good. He's going to bring good to my life. That's what I'm looking for.

(Psalm 130:7) "O Israel, hope in the LORD;
For with the LORD there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption."

Now, the quote is verse 8, "And He will redeem Israel From all his iniquities."

How will He do that? Well, they didn't know how He would do that, but Titus reveals to us how He did that. He died for them. Why would I not trust Him?

Psalm 131 says, don't be proud; don't be arrogant. Be like a kid that leans against his mom. Just trust Him, right? This is king David that goes, "my heart is not proud...
Nor do I involve myself in great matters..."

You're a king for crying out loud, you've got to involve yourself. "No, not me. I'll just ask God, 'What do you want me to do?'"

(Psalm 131:2) "Surely I have composed and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child rests against his mother,
My soul is like a weaned child within me."

(Psalm 131: 3) O Israel..."

Relax. There is peace and comfort with a broken and contrite heart if you just humble yourself. That's all you have to do. That's a gamechanger when you think about the reason why people won't submit to God's rules is because "I'm not going to let somebody tell me what to do." If you realize there's not only forgiveness with Him but redemption, and if you realize that it's like He takes you and holds you in His arms, and He's just saying, "Relax. I've got this." Why wouldn't you let Him control your life? You'd have to say, "You take the wheel," right? Just like the song goes.

So, in Psalm 132, one of the reasons why I like this particular Psalm is because it starts off with "Remember David." The context is "Remember David when he built the temple," but more specifically, do you know why David was so zealous to build the temple? It was because God had worked in His life to such a degree that He healed all of his afflictions, and his desire was

"I've got to do something for God." Now, we know that he ultimately did not build the temple. God says, "No, I have greater things for you. You're going to build the temple this way through your genealogy." Then David says, "This is far better than me building the temple." Solomon will do that task, but "I get to be in the lineage of the Messiah." So, he realized the value of building that wonderful temple. The point is that God rewards that zealous heart. To such a degree that it says, "For the LORD has chosen Zion." (Psalm 132:13)

If you look in verse 6, "Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah, We found it in the field of Jaar."

Ephrathah is dealing with Bethlehem. Remember Bethlehem is so small and insignificant? So, the point is that God says, "I'll be with you. I'll elevate you, and I'll make you great." We go, "Yeah, but I live in a little town, Durbin Crossing, whatever, but I live in this little insignificant place on the planet." God goes, "I know where you live. Let it be heard there that's where I'm going to reside."

The other term used Jaar, which takes from 1 Samuel 7. I don't know if you remember but the ark first rested in that particular area. It rested there for a number of years, literally forgotten, but David wanted to go get it. Here you have that sense of worship had stopped; they had gone to worship other gods, and David's heart goes, "We need to get that ark." God says, "I saw that."

Then, as you go in the Psalm, it says in verse 13,

"For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation."

You ask, "Where's Zion?" In that region where David was. Why did He choose this place? This is what the Psalm is about. God says, "Do you want to know why I chose this place? Because I chose David, and I saw his zeal. So, I said, 'This is where we're going to worship' because this is where I saw the zealous heart." That's a great picture when you think about it.

In Psalm 133, ultimately God is promising pleasant brotherhood and wonderful fellowship.

Then Psalm 134 is the last chapter, and it talks about blessings both in heaven and earth. God is the God of heaven and earth. It's like when Jesus is talking to the disciples, and they go, "What do we have if we follow You?" He says, "Many blessings here, and in heaven eternal."

Closing Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your love for us and that which motivates us to drop our way of doing things, and just submit completely to Yours. Lord, may we be dogmatic and forceful about proclaiming this truth; never apologetic. For the grace and mercy of God alone is what moves us, and what a wonderful hope we have. We give You thanks in Jesus' name. Amen.