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Genesis

Chapter 4 - God's Grace Misconstrued Right Counsel - Wrong Response (vs. 6-8)

Genesis 4:6-8: Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? “If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

We come to the Book of Genesis, and you can't help but read the word “beginning” throughout the pages. It's the beginning of everything. Certainly, at the very beginning of the book, we begin to see the beginning of God's grace to man. As Psalm 19 so aptly puts it, the heavens declare the

glory of God and the firmament shows forth His handiwork. You go to Psalm 104, and he begins to explain all the wonderful things that God has created, not only in creation, but the sustaining of creation. He talks about the rain coming down and how it just feeds the grass, and how the animals are fed, and they all wait to be fed by Him. It's a great Psalm that reminds us of God's gracious act in creation. Nevertheless, what is difficult to see within the passage is that man rejects God's graciousness. Though God is gracious, man is rebellious, and it is in that rebellion that troubles and sorrows and all these things begin to happen.

God had placed within the garden a choice for man. You would think that man would choose to trust God, to trust His graciousness. No, no, he chooses to rebel against God, and it is that rebellion that we begin to see. It is bizarre that man would actually desire things like calamity or hardship or toil or suffering and pain and sorrow, because that's what he chose. He wanted to have the knowledge of those things. Another way of putting having the knowledge of those things would be experiencing those things. He wanted to experience those things. Experiencing hardship

and pain and sorrow and toil and all the things that we oftentimes perceive as bad is not bad in and of itself, but it's what brings you to that. In other words, why would you want to suffer? Man would say, "I want to suffer for rebelliousness. I want to suffer for self-desires and selfish ambition." So, he pursues those things, and what Scripture would call sin. That is to say, going the wrong way; desiring the wrong things; going against God. So, as he goes against God, and he goes and offends God, would be another way of putting sin, he finds himself having the byproducts of that sin. The byproducts that Adam and Eve began to realize were things like shame, fear, regret, betrayal. Not only betrayal, but separation and isolation, even from each other and from God. We're going to see the same thing as we come into this passage, as Cain has an opportunity to do the right thing. Nevertheless, he'll choose to do the wrong thing, and in choosing to do the wrong thing, he will experience a very strange phenomenon that really up to this point had never been felt before. Things like jealousy, envy, inferiority, rejection; all these things he's going to begin to feel like he's never felt before. The rebelling against God's graciousness and the sorrow that it brings.

Nevertheless, man just doesn't seem to learn. I mean, you would think that with the garden experience, man would go, "Ok. I get it. Let's follow God and do what He says." Because even in God's discipline with man, as He begins to take the very things that man embraced, which was hardship, toil, suffering, pain, God says, "We're going to use this to do good." So, God turns to the woman, and He goes, "We're going to bring life from hardship and toil pain and suffering" and to the man, He says, "We're going to bring productivity. You're going to be able to help people." So, God directs them and corrects them in a way that would actually bring good. It was actually the grace of God in so doing. Nevertheless, man doesn't look at things the same way and as we look at this particular passage and Cain really rebelling against God, not desiring to recognize His graciousness for the things that God has given. He finds himself not being seen by God in a good way.

So, the way that it's kind of put within the passages is that God had regard for Abel's sacrifice and did not have regard for Cain's. The specific wording would be, "He looked upon Abel's, He would not look upon Cain's." We don't see an aggressive punishment within the text. We see God saying,

“Look, you're not giving Me good. You're giving Me rotten. So, I'm not going to look upon it.” You would think that alone would bring Cain to a point of maybe even being sorrowful that perhaps he had hurt somebody. That's going to be the furthest thing from his mind. And we're going to see the reaction that he gives us. The passage is going to be teaching us about responding to correction, and it's going to be telling us that how you respond to correction will literally define the course of your life. We oftentimes think of correction as being something we can take or leave, and Scripture says just the opposite of that.

As we see the beginnings of so many things in the Book of Genesis, I thought about verses 6 through 8 and there is a beginning here, a beginning of something that I never thought I would see, but it actually is the beginning of stupid. According to the passage of Proverbs, it reads this way,

(Proverbs 12:1) “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, But he who hates reproof is stupid.”

It is actually the beginning of stupid within the passage, and we see Cain not responding appropriately to the very

correction of God, not in the sense that God was punishing him, but He was correcting him. He was saying, "Son, I can't look at that. Go get something better." And nevertheless, Cain will just get angry. In fact, the way that it reads is he becomes very angry because God had no regard. Now, what you have within the passage is a perfect description of a narcissistic personality, and we're going to talk about the description of that as we go on. Actually, we're going to parallel him to another passage and individual that has the same kind of personality. The question is, where does this sense of entitlement come from? It's very clear at the very beginning of this chapter that there's been a sense of favoritism; a sense of seeing a child as one that should be elevated and given a position. One of the great responsibilities that parents have is to actually teach their children to be humble. Children basically come out thinking that they are the center of attention. You can see this at the very beginning of stages, but one of your main responsibilities as a parent is to elevate humility.

Scripture will tell us in James 1:21, if you'll receive the word of God in humility, you'll receive a word implanted which is able to save your souls. Certainly, it is that receptivity and

willingness to be corrected that will bring good in your life. To not listen to correction, to not listen to reproof would literally bring you to failure.

So, as we come to this passage, we're going to see the rebellious nature of Cain, one that perceives himself to be quite a bit more than he really is. Nevertheless, as we come to the passage, there is a great warning within the text.

(Genesis 4:6) “Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? ...”

I do think it's to be noted that God is not in any way, going after Cain for being angry. The anger is kind of an emotional response. Now, his motivation for being angry is inappropriate, and clearly that's the thing, but Scripture never says the anger in and of itself is sin. As you go on in the passage, you'll see God actually saying sin is crouching at the door. So, we already know he's angry. So, it's actually saying that the sin's not here yet. What we have is a reaction to things that are going on. Clearly, an inappropriate reaction, there's no doubt about that, but God is saying how you handle this will make a big difference in whether or not you go the path of sin or not.

There are things that happen to us, and we perceive it to be unfair or not right in the way that it's handled. Our initial response by our perspective, sums it up quickly, and we oftentimes react instead of responding, and by virtue of that, we find ourselves in an emotional frenzy, thinking the wrong way. The question is, will we listen to correction? Will we listen to the direction of God and do what is right in the midst of our emotions and not allow our emotions to take us over and to direct our paths, but to let the word of God and to let truth begin to direct our paths? Well, that's the question, isn't it? So, an interesting question is posed. It kind of sounds like the same question that's posed to Jonah. You remember in the Book of Jonah, as Jonah is very angry that God is gracious and God turns to Jonah, and He goes, "Do you have good reason to be angry?" We all get angry, but the question is, do you have a good reason for it? What would be a good reason for it? Well, you could be angry about people that are sinning, people that are doing things that are wicked and hurtful to other people. That's fundamentally Psalm 4, as the Psalmist comes before the Lord and begins to describe all these people that are doing all these horrible things. He goes, "I'm really upset" and

God goes, "I understand. You should be. But you need to offer the sacrifice of trust." In other words, "Believe Me, I'll take care of them, and you need to go to sleep." So, the passage ends with, "Go to sleep." Well, that's quoted in Ephesians 4,

(Ephesians 4:26) "BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger."

And as Psalm 4 would say, "And go to sleep. Trust God."

Many times, it is a sacrifice to actually trust God, because in the midst of your anger and your feelings of emotion, it's hard to let that go, but letting it go means that you actually believe God would do right. Will not the God of all the earth do right? Is He not sovereign? Would He not handle these things? As Romans 12 so clearly puts it, leave room for the wrath of God. Let it go. Let God handle this. It's a wonderful, wonderful reminder within the passage.

As God questions Cain,

(Genesis 4:6) "Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

There are two things that are happening within the passage. One is he's very angry. We know that he's very

angry because verse 5 says that. So, we know he's very angry and we know that his countenance has fallen, which means that there's this kind of a depressed state. It's a picture of his face going down to the earth. God is saying, "Why are you not only angry, but depressed about this?" He's describing the way that he's feeling, and the emotions are being described within the passage. The solution is given to him in the great council of the Lord.

(Genesis 4:7) "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? ..."

If you do the right thing. Actually, in Jeremiah, this particular word is used "to see things right." "If you'll see things in the right way, will not your countenance be lifted up?" Is there a benefit to correction?

The way that it's put in Proverbs 12:15, a wise man will listen to counsel.

Proverbs 13:1, A wise son accepts his father's discipline.

Which of course, the opposite of why would be?

The way the psalmist puts it in Psalm 119:71 is,

“It is good for me that I was afflicted,
That I may learn Your statutes.”

The realization that affliction oftentimes in our life is the very thing that brings us to a sober thinking. We would normally go our own way in our own pursuit and in that pursuit bring a lot of hurt to a lot of people without really any thought of how it does hurt to them, which brings us really to the point of the personality of Cain within the text. The only person that Cain can think about is Cain. He's not thinking about how it affects God. He's not thinking about how it affects Abel. He's not thinking about how it affected his parents. That's the last thing on his mind. It's just, “How does this affect Cain?”

So, “If you do well...”

If you do the right thing, if you think right, if you will see this thing right,

“...will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching...”

Once again, sin is the offense towards God, that which offends Him, but more specifically, it is something that brings destruction in the world. Here again, when you go

against anything that God wants, it is that which is hurtful. Everything that God wants for you is good. Every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of lights. There is no variance or shadow of shifting of His goodness. So, if in fact you reject, what are you bringing in? All the hurt and all the pain and all the suffering and all the hardship for all the wrong reasons.

Interesting description that is given in Romans 1. If you'll look there with me. Romans 1 begins to describe just how horrific this sinning is, and I know that people think it's fundamentally innocuous, "I'm sinning of my own. Nobody knows about it, you know, in the bedroom." You know, your selfishness affects everybody around you. Romans 1 reminds us that God's upset at us, angry, because we've not recognized His goodness.

(Romans 1:18) "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

(Romans 1:19) because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

(Romans 1:20) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

(Romans 1:21) For even though they knew God...”

They knew His goodness through creation would be another way of putting it; not only knew His goodness through creation, but even in their heart, even in the sense of there's an internal intrinsic understanding that God is good.

“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks...”

There's no gratitude for anything that they had, and because of that, God gives them over because they would not honor Him. They would not give Him thanks. They would not recognize His goodness. Then they go into this tailspin of thinking wrong, and they began to think that they're the center of attention; they're the ones that are smart. It's always surprising to me how man thinks that he's actually smarter than God. I don't know where he gets that from.

(Romans 1:22) “Professing to be wise, they became fools,
(Romans 1:23) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible
God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of
birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

We're just going downhill; we're not going up.

(Romans 1:25) “For they exchanged the truth of God for a
lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the
Creator...”

(Romans 1:26) “For this reason God gave them over to
degrading passions...”

See, the degrading passions are sin. That's you wanting what you want. You go, “I think things are going to go pretty well if I get what I want.” I don't think so. I think everything will go degrading. Your degrading passions will begin to exchange what God has ordained to be natural and good for that which is unnatural and twisted.

(Romans 1:27) “and in the same way also the men
abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned
in their desire toward one another, men with men
committing indecent acts and receiving in their own
persons the due penalty of their error.”

People wonder, “Why is the world such a hateful place?” It's not. That's not the way He created it, but it's man and his rebellion towards God; that He would allow any of us to live. I know that many of us want God just to come in and stop everything, but if He did, He would stop you too. Which would mean it would be the end of life as we know it. So, you want God to stop everything, or do you want Him to let it play out and Him to bring people to Himself through the person of Christ?

(Romans 1:28) “And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.”

Now, this is a very interesting point because what we have with Cain is this depraved mind. He's not thinking right. I mean, is anybody thinking right that disobeys God? You're not thinking right. Could you imagine people actually shaking their fists at God. I mean, we're less than the size of an ant, clearly, in His eyes. I mean, the whole universe and this little earth is so tiny, so minute, and then the little

minute beings on this little minute planet are shaking their fist to God. I just don't get the wisdom of that.

“... God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

(Romans 1:29) being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife...”

Which we'll witness with Cain.

“... deceit, malice; they are gossips,

(Romans 1:30) slanderers, haters of God...”

What's happening here? Well, man goes his own way.

“... arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

(Romans 1:31) without understanding...”

I think it's interesting that “disobedient to parents” is listed at that point because fundamentally what he's saying is, this is where it began. “I don't think I have to listen authority.” Well, God said you did. “Well, I don't think I have to listen to God.” That's a problem. Because of this, they are “without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful...”

Everything that's happening within the passages is that it's literally degrading man in so many ways. Not only himself, but the people that he makes contact with, all under the name of “I want to do what I want to do when I want to do it. I know better than God.”

As you go back to the text,

(Genesis 4:7) “If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching...”

That’s a very interesting way of putting it. The word literally means “on all fours.” It gives the picture really of a force that is lion like; to devour. The reason why we say that is it says,

“If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire...”

The word “desire” there is actually the word that describes a beast who wants to devour. So, it has that insatiable desire to devour you. So, there's something there that wants to devour you. See, the problem with sin is that it devours you. It not only devours everything and everyone

around you, but it wants you. As the Psalmist will say, if in fact you won't put your trust in God and you put your trust in yourself, you're like the beast that perishes. Peter will make the same kind of reference in 2 Peter, and he'll describe man as one that lives by his instincts rather than by character or by doing what is right. So, Peter will begin to describe a sense of you're like a beast that lives with its instincts. So, whatever you want, whenever you want, that's what you're going to get and that's how you live. He goes, "Look how horrific this is. The beast has become you. It's devoured you."

"... but you must master it."

Now, I know that most of us will say, "Well, that's easier said than done." And I think it's also interesting within the passage that it doesn't actually tell us how to do that, but we're going to look at a passage that does.

But if you go on, we begin to see the fruition of this,

(Genesis 4:8) "Cain told Abel his brother..."

Well, the question is, what is he telling Abel? Well, the Scripture is not telling us what he told him, but the word

itself is given us a picture of what he's doing, because the word "told" in this text is making reference to a kind of boasting or bragging. So, in some way, Cain is trying to elevate himself in the eyes of Abel, and he's trying to demean Abel. Obviously, he's not taking the advice of the counsel of God within the passage. So, Cain told Abel, made himself prominent before him in this discussion.

"... And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up..."

Now, God said, there is a way for you to be elevated, but man likes to elevate himself and the way that man elevates himself is he rises up against somebody; he puts somebody else down. God says, "If you humble yourself, I'll exalt you." But it didn't work for Cain.

"... Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him."

You can put the word "murdered" within the text. It is the personality of somebody that thinks that he should have something when he didn't earn it. He didn't earn the praise of God. He didn't earn the recognition of God. Yet, why? "I'm Cain. I'm the gotten one. I'm the one that should be having the praise."

If you look with me in the Book of Daniel, there's another guy that fits pretty close to this guy by the name of Cain, and his name is Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar is a man that because of all that he had, perceived himself to be great. Not unlike the time of Cain and Abel in which they were living in a world in which there was still so much that was given to them. Nothing they had that they had ever earned, really, and in spite of this, Cain perceived himself to be great just because he was. So, in Daniel 4, this Nebuchadnezzar, great king of Babylon, who seemed to be not only king of Babylon, but at this juncture probably king of the known world, one of the greatest kings that ever lived. He began to build for himself what are called the "hanging gardens," and in many respects, was trying to reinvent the garden of Eden. As we know that Babylon was kind of the area with the Euphrates, of the garden of Eden. He was trying to reinvent this land in which he would bring about the great beauty that would give him great fame, which is even recognizable to this day. The passage goes on, and as we had read the beginning of Daniel realized that Nebuchadnezzar had built a statue of a vision that he had dreamed. Of course, the head of the statue was that

which would be of Nebuchadnezzar and Nebuchadnezzar wanted everybody to bow to that statue. Remember that? He seemed to be extremely irritated because everybody wouldn't bow down to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar. So, we're already seeing a little bit of this arrogance coming out, but in Daniel 4, God gives him a dream, and in this vision, it talks about this great and glorious tree He caused to grow. Now, what we know about trees is that they grow not because you and I are sitting there going, "Grow" but because God makes them grow. So, it's something that God does, and it's a magnificent work. This particular tree became strong and large and glorious and began to benefit so many people. This is part of the vision, but the angelic beings in heaven go, "Cut this thing down" because of the arrogance of this tree, as we begin to see. So, the tree is cut down and there's only a stump left, and the vision goes that this stump is kind of a picture of one basically losing his mind and going back to the very basics. So, Nebuchadnezzar is not real sure what this dream is about. So, he calls Daniel in, and Daniel says that he'd be glad to help, and he relates the dream to Daniel and Daniel said to him, "King, I wish this wasn't about you at all, but it's about

you, and I hate to tell you, but this is not good news.” The king says, “Well, tell me. Don't be afraid to tell me. Tell me anyway.” So, he begins to describe it.

(Daniel 4:23) “In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, “Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,”

(Daniel 4:24) this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:

(Daniel 4:25) that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.

(Daniel 4:26) ‘And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be

assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.

(Daniel 4:27) 'Therefore, O king, may my advice...'

Daniel gives him advice. Sometimes correction comes from sources that we wouldn't think, and sometimes that correction comes from very humble places, but if it's right, it's right; if it's true, it's true. You and I should receive any correction with humility. Receive the word of God implanted, which is able to save our souls. People may even do it in the wrong way. I mean, Shimei did it the wrong way against David, and yet he realized that maybe God was directing him through this source.

If it's true, it's true. Therefore, he gives this advice, this counsel,

“Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins...”

I would say, sometimes, that literally means that you have to tear yourself away because you become so attached to your sin and your sins have become attached to you. They have devoured you in so many respects.

“... break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.””

In other words, change your heart now. Now, we know the advice that he gives him is advice of actually thinking of others instead of himself. Nebuchadnezzar is focused on “how wonderful I am.” Does he take the advice? Well, God gives him a year. I've oftentimes thought about this. I would think you want to strike while the iron is hot while it's still in his mind. God goes, “No, I'm going to give him a year.”

(Daniel 4:28) “All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.

(Daniel 4:29) “Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.

(Daniel 4:30) “The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’”

Wait a minute. You're just a tree. You didn't have anything to do with growing it. This seems to infer that during this

time of twelve months he was spending more time building and working on his house instead of, what was he supposed to do? Showing mercy to the poor, acts of righteousness and kindness.

“While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, (Daniel 4:32) and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’

(Daniel 4:33) “Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.”

Very descriptive, isn’t it? Was God humbling him? You bet. What was the problem of Nebuchadnezzar? Well, I would

say fundamentally, if you were to define it psychologically, he was a megalomaniac. Which basically means that this is a person that is obsessed with their own power, and he's not only obsessed with his own power, but he has delusions of grandeur. He perceives himself to be great and has a clear sense of entitlement, but like Cain he as well, is a narcissist. Let me describe to you what a narcissist is and maybe some of you can identify with this. I hope not. A narcissist feels entitled to special favors from others while showing no responsibility in return. A narcissist will lack empathy and often does not recognize when they hurt others. A narcissist has a grandiose sense of self-importance. They are extremely self-centered. They're preoccupied with fantasies of beauty, wealth and success. They're also focused on how special they feel their problems are. "Oh, you think you have a problem? My problem is a lot worse than your problem." They are exhibitionists and they require constant attention. In response to criticism, they may respond with marked rage or feelings of extreme inferiority, humiliation or emptiness. You know what that's saying? They can't take correction. You correct them, and they'll either get really mad at you

or their countenance will fall, and they just can't take it. You know what the problem is? You think too much of yourself. It is in this thinking too much of yourself that you become depressed. Psychologists say that most human depression is a result of irresponsible behavior, and one of the greatest irresponsible acts that you and I commit is unforgiveness. Did you know that? We can blame our bad parents, we can blame bad genes, and we can blame unfair treatment, but the problem is with us. Though Cain, I'm sure, had a lot of reasons for what he did, the problem is he's just thinking of himself, and it was that self-centeredness that wouldn't allow him to receive the correction. Now, the correction of the passage is very clear what he needs to do, he needs to break away from his selfishness and start being unselfish. That's why you have the text, "Why don't you go help poor people? Why don't you think of somebody other than yourself?" Because sitting around, thinking about yourself, you're not only going to be miserable, but you're going to start getting angry because people aren't treating you the way that you deserve to be treated, right? I mean, "You're special." It is

in that perception that causes people to reject the correction that God gives.

What's interesting to me is this is the fundamental advice in Romans 12 that Paul is saying by the mercies of God, you need to present your bodies a living sacrifice, and then he begins to describe how we're to minister within the church to different ones, "Be devoted to one another." That kind of means that you're not thinking of yourself, you're actually ministering to other people. You're serving without really any thought of getting back. Your whole focus is building up the body rather than building up yourself. The perception is, "If I'll build up myself, then I'm going to be lifted up." And yes, you'll be lifted up, but you'll be lifted up in such a degrading way that you'll be more depressed.

The interesting thing about the Old Testament is that it gives you the path to take, but it doesn't give you the power. The realization of the New Testament is that the power is the Spirit of Christ. Listen, it's not in me not to be selfish. The heart of man is desperately sick. It's twisted. I can't receive anything good. So, as Paul will begin to talk about throughout the Book of Romans, very interesting, he will say in Chapter 5, "While we were yet sinners, Christ

died for us. It is this that begins to set us free.” And you go into that wonderful Chapter 6, and you begin to read, “We've been crucified with Christ,” right? We're going to bury this old self, but it's the Spirit of Christ that raises up and it is literally resurrected in a newness of life. Then, as he ends that chapter, he says, “Now, you've become obedient from the heart.” Remember that passage? Chapter 7, “Who will set me free from this? I mean, I really want to do the right thing, but I just can't seem to get there.” And Chapter 8 goes, “But the Spirit of God sets us free, and as you begin to walk according to Spirit, no condemnation anymore to you, and God has set you free to live his life.” The New Testament is telling us that you need the Spirit of Christ in order to not have a rebellious nature. You show me somebody with a rebellious nature, I'll show you somebody that the Spirit of Christ is not on the throne. When the Spirit of Christ is on the throne, you don't think of yourself.

What a wonderful text when you begin to realize there in Hebrews, that Christ, for the joy set before Him would endure the cross, thinking nothing of the shame for the sake of saving and bringing many sons to glory. His thought

would not be on the suffering or in the pain of Himself. And Paul will write passages like, “hold others in higher esteem than yourself.” Who would even think that way? It would have to be the mind of Christ in us. One of the reasons why we keep bringing you back to that gospel is it's the only way you're going to get out of this, because though you may start doing the right thing, though in a given moment, you might try to be nice to people and think kind thoughts and try to be merciful, it's not in you to sustain that. You can't do that, but when you have the Spirit of God, you can. I mean, how miraculous it is that God literally changes our whole perspective and causes us to see things different. We're seeing at the very beginning, God reconciling man to Himself, saying, “Look, this is all you need to do.” I can just see everybody going, “That's all we need to do. I don't feel like doing it.” So, that's all the Old Testament, isn't it? I mean, you even look at people as great as David and you begin to see the struggles, but as you come into the New Testament, you now see Paul, and he goes, “I'm willing to die for you.” You go, “What sustains this guy?” It would have to be the Spirit of God. We're calling upon you to receive the Spirit of Christ. We know what we need to do.

We know what draws that selfishness out, what literally causes us to rip that selfishness out of our lives. It is the heart of Christ. We couldn't do it any other way. In Christ, we're willing to crucify that old flesh. That's not a natural inclination in my life, but it is a supernatural one. The simplicity of you just coming before Christ and saying, "I surrender all to You. I want You to take charge of my life" is inviting the power of God to give new life. You want to change the world? Change your heart. Come to Christ. You'll begin to see the power of God in you.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we have to admit that we don't like correction. We don't like people telling us what to do. We don't like being told that we're wrong. We don't like the sense of rejection. We don't like things being withheld in our lives. Our thought is that we're very deserving of everything, even though we didn't work for it. When something bad happens, we feel like we deserve good; when we have bad health, we deserve good health;

when we have a lack of food, we deserve food, but all these things are truly gifts from You. We have forgotten to give thanks, but more than that, we have perceived ourselves to be worthy of all. In so doing, we are not very good at correction. We become hostile when somebody points out a fault, but according to Your word, that's a gift that You're giving us. Why is it we have such a hard time? And You open our eyes and say, "You have the wrong heart."

So, with your heads bowed and your eyes closed, call unto Him. Receive Him. Receive the heart of Christ. Take on a new nature, a nature that will see things differently; will even rejoice in trials, knowing that if it draws one closer to God, it's most certainly worth it.