

## 99-02-12b Colossians

We're ready now to resume once again in Colossians chapter 3. We have been looking at the passages dealing with the appearing of Christ, which of course are going to be New Testament passages. Paul mentions this. You have to ask, well, you don't have to.

I think it's good to ask ourselves the question, why do these, we just take it for granted. We say, well, this is Scripture and Scripture says what it says. But you can observe a lot by watching.

You can see that if you look carefully, you think, why is this particular idea introduced in this passage? If you look at it from, if I was going to sit down and try to answer the question or address the subject, I would have just said, you need to live this holy life. Here is the fruit of the Spirit, here are the things to avoid and so forth. But when you read Paul or John or some of the other authors that God used to create the inspired Scriptures, these other things will be in there.

And you think, well, now what motivated the inclusion of this idea? Why is this even in there? Why does Paul even mention the appearing of Christ? Well, there's always a really good reason why it's there. The appearing of Christ is a quick way of referring to that which is the content of our hope. What are the three great Christian virtues? Faith, hope and love.

We've studied them in the past. We know that faith is the means of living the life, fulfilling the calling that God has called us to. We've talked about faith in our first lesson tonight, what faith is.

This was one of the most dissatisfying things when I was young and going to Sunday school and sitting in church and so forth. People were so vague about faith or have faith. Well, what is faith? It all seemed to me like it was kind of a squinching up and getting through whatever was going on.

Well, just have faith and just kind of a vague notion that, well, God's going to do something and it will all turn out right in the end. It was a very indefinite thing. Faith is one of the most definite things there is because when you're operating in faith, you have a propositional truth.

There is a statement of fact, one or more, in the word of God that you look at and you say, this is a true thing. God says that he will supply my needs. He says take no thought for what you will eat or what you will drink.

If God can take care of the rest of the universe, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like God takes care of the plants of the field. His eye is on the sparrow and I am worth more than a whole basket full of sparrows in God's eyes. God knows my needs.

God has promised to provide, especially if I am seeking to please him. If my daily life's goal is to live in a way that is pleasing to God, if I'm trying to find that worthy walk and be well-pleasing in his sight, if that's my reason for getting through the day, who more so is God going to look at and

care for and provide for and bless and support? Because God is looking on the earth trying to find those who are seeking him. And when he finds someone that has actually awakened to the great potential that God has given us in Jesus Christ, there is nobody he's going to be more anxious to support and nurture and try to bring to maturity.

God, if you will, is just tickled to death that there's somebody that cares enough about him and his plan to actually do something about it, to make us worthy object of their faith. God is not going to let the righteous go begging bread. He's going to supply our needs.

Who else? Is he going to just let the rain fall on the just and the unjust and get busy somewhere with the angels off in some corner of heaven and leave us to languish? There are so few of us that ever wake up and pursue the plan of God that those of us who do, God is going to be paying very close attention. There are contingents of angels that are dedicated to nothing but watching over us and making sure that our needs are met. And if our need is not met, there's an exceedingly good reason for it.

It's a teaching point. It's an opportunity to learn. It's a place to exercise and to wrap our brain for the doctrines and principles and promises to make the object of our faith.

It's an exercise. You know how they do when you're in boot camp or in other forms of basic military training and you have a weapon. For a young, new officer, it'll be a .45. For a recruit, a private or a PSC, it's going to be an M16 or it used to be an M14 or an M1.

What would they do? They teach you how to feel-strip the weapon. Take it apart, put it together, take it apart, put it together, take it apart, put it together. You learn these things by rote.

Then what do they do? They say, well, now it's pitch dark. You've got to take your weapon apart and put it back together in the dark. And so they're blindfolded.

You have to feel-strip the weapon, take it all the way into its component parts, put it all the way back together without your eyesight. Well, you think, well, that's not fair. I've got my God-given eyesight and now you're taking it away.

And some people think when God does this in our lives, he'll take something away and see if we can function without it. It's training. It's to test our knowledge.

Have we really learned the lesson? Can we get by without this person or without this thing that we think is essential? And we discover that it's really not essential because we have the Lord. This is the kind of thing that God is going to do. So I'm not saying, nor does the Bible say, that every single logistical need is always going to be supplied.

Sometimes you may run short of money or you may run short of time or of affection or some other thing that we think is a part of the essential necessities of life. But when we do, it's a very critical part of God's plan for us, to teach us, to give us the chance to learn and grow. And we

ought to get excited when we see something like that happen.

It really gets the adrenaline going for me when I see something that's very obviously a test from God. If I check myself to see if I'm in the faith, if I've been allocating time and attention and I'm doing the things that I know I'm supposed to do, and suddenly there's a shortfall or there's a lack or there's an obvious stressful situation, it's exciting. Not to say that all of these are enjoyable, but there's a part of me that's excited because it's like, this is obviously from God.

God has taken this away. It's just like blindfolding me for the field strip, the weapon test, because I know this is his personal fatherly attention to me. He's saying he's got an active personal plan for me, and here it is.

And there's a part of us that no matter what the test is, even if it's bereavement or if it's something that's sorrowful or stressful, there's a part of us that ought to get a little bit excited because here God is tailoring an individual test just for us. He knows exactly what our knowledge level is. He knows exactly how much we can handle.

And he's giving us a pretty good test. This is a real challenge, and it's doable. It's makeable.

It's a bar that we can clear if we just focus and concentrate and make sure that we're using the tools and using the resources that God has given us. So this is now what Paul is turning his attention to here. This is what he's reminding us of in Colossians, that the resources are there in Christ.

He's painted a picture of where Christ is. Christ has already field-tested this whole lifestyle. He came down here and lived it.

And he's sitting at the right hand of the Father. And he is our intercessor. He is our advocate.

He is the one that has personally sent God, the Holy Spirit, to be our ally, our helper, to remind us of the appropriate truths at the appropriate time, to bring to our mind the truth that we need at the time that we need it. We have all this great equipping and gracious provision from God to live this life. The problem is we get distracted and forget that it's there.

We miss this great opportunity, and sometimes we misdefine the Christian life, and we think that it's ministry, we think that it's evangelism, we think that it's impact or outreach or some other thing. And by misdefining it, we stop looking at the truths of Scripture and seeing that they are true and then making them the object of our faith. Instead, we have a false set of facts.

We think that the goal of the Christian life is ministry and outreach. We operate on that reality, which is a twisted truth. Is there supposed to be ministry? Is there supposed to be outreach? Of course.

Of course. But we cut to the chase without doing the intermediate steps. And instead of becoming

what we're supposed to become, in the process of which we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work, we jump right to the good works and we're not thoroughly equipped.

And there are some good works that we don't have the faintest idea of how to do them. And when God acts, He has to act in spite of us. And so we'll go in there and bumble around.

God will accomplish His will in spite of us. And then we think, I'm doing exactly the right thing because look at the results. Here's somebody that came to Christ.

Here's somebody that has changed their life, so I must be doing everything right. And so we continue in error. And it almost requires God to stop blessing His word and to stop doing things in spite of us so that we can wake up and realize that we're not doing it right.

So Paul is bringing these things to our attention in Colossians chapter 3. And we've been looking at the appearing of Christ because we have faith, hope, and love. Faith is the means. Hope is the motivation.

And the appearing of Christ is the symbol. That is the embodiment of our hope. Everything hinges on the appearing of Christ.

And the appearing of Christ is mentioned so many times and we have so many different statements made about it. As we pointed out last time, at the appearing of Christ, we will see with our own two eyes that our labor is not in vain. It may seem like it's in vain in this life.

There are people who have labored in a mission field, in foreign territory, and didn't see but two or three converts as the fruit of a lifetime's work. But there may be lots of other fruit that they weren't aware of because the measure is not how many converts came. The measure of a church is not how many people are in the congregation, although you wouldn't know that to look around today.

We will see that our genuine labor in the Lord is not in vain. The quiet times of faith, the peace and joy and forbearance that have been born in our soul in little things that God has produced as a fruit, we may not even have thought about or focused on, but all of these things are going to come to light at the appearing of Christ. So that's what 1 Corinthians 15, 58 talks about.

In fact, the bulk of that chapter leads up to the point that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. He's going to change our body. We don't have to worry about the things that so many of us in culture and society today worry about as far as the body.

Dan was talking about some of the cosmetic dentistry that's being put forward now where people spend exorbitant amounts of money and go through all kinds of different procedures and things to look different, to get little veneers put on their teeth. I mentioned before about things people do to their skin and their hair and their lips and so forth to look different. Paul says these things only

profit a little.

The best things you can do with your body as far as exercise and so forth, that's just a little profit, but with godliness there is great gain, and it's eternal gain. You can take it with you. All these people are going to leave their false lips and stretched wrinkles in the grave.

The appearance of Christ is judgment time. This is where we left off in 2 Timothy 4, verse 1 and verse 8. I didn't tie that directly back to the appearing. I'd like to do that just quickly in 2 Timothy 4, verse 1 and verse 8. He says, I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and dead at his appearing.

Remember the charge we read in 1 Timothy? Here's another charge from Paul, the same idea. I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word. He's back to that idea.

Be a faithful minister. If you do these things, if you preach and teach these things, you will be a faithful minister. Preach the word.

Be ready. Be prepared. In season and out of season.

Convince, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching. Good teaching takes long-suffering, by the way. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables.

This is fulfilled. I'm sure it's been fulfilled in every generation, but it's never been more true than in this generation today. The type of teaching we get from the pulpit today is largely teaching that deals with our problems, where we can get measurable fixes for measurable problems.

We want to see our circumstances change. We want to have a circle of friends. We want to go into a squeaky-clean, germ-free bubble and have relations with other people.

We want to have friends. We want to have kids that our kids can play with that are not dangerous hoodlums and so forth. So people will go to a church where they get these things, and there's nice, fine-sounding, harmless stuff coming from the pulpit.

It doesn't step on your toes. It doesn't rebuke. It doesn't exhort.

It doesn't convict. It doesn't correct. If you don't feel yourself, when you are under the teaching of the word of God, if you don't find yourself seeing a lack, if you don't find yourself being rebuked and corrected and exhorted to do things that are not currently happening, you need to stop listening to whoever you're listening to, if it's me or whoever, and find somebody where you're getting teaching that rebukes and corrects and instructs.

If you never find your toes being stepped on, if you never see the word of God shining its light on your soul and showing you flaws and errors, you need to get a different dose of the word of God, because that's what the word of God does. None of us have reached anything approaching sinless perfection, and the light of the word of God is designed to show us where we're falling short. It's alive and powerful.

It's supposed to cut us open like a sword, right down to the dividing center of the soul and the spirit and the joints and the marrow. It is profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that we can become mature. You can't become mature if you don't get rebuked and corrected.

You ought to come away from Bible class once in a while feeling just bad. I do. I feel bad when I prepare the lesson sometimes.

I think, boy, how am I going to stand up there and teach these things when I myself am a big example of an offender in this area? But the word of God does its own... It carries its own power. It doesn't have to have the authority of a sinless person behind it. Thank goodness, or we'd never get taught.

And it teaches me just as it should be teaching you. All of us need to look at it, and we ought to be getting rebuked and corrected by it. And we shouldn't get bored.

We shouldn't get frustrated. We shouldn't get disinterested. This is what is predicted for the last times.

People have itching ears. They want to hear something stimulating. They want a great curtain drawn back to see something they've never seen before and ooh and ah and be stimulated.

And this has led to some guys just knocking themselves out, trying to constantly reveal some long-forgotten, long-lost truth or show some interesting connection. Those things are great, and they're a part of the study of the word of God inevitably, but that's not what we live for. What we live for is the substance.

On special occasions, you get a great dessert. You get a fancy meal or something on anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, things like that. You trot out all the trimmings and get really wonderful food.

But that's not what makes you who you are physically. It's your day-to-day. It's your little oatmeal breakfast and your bologna sandwich lunch and whatever you have for dinner.

I'm not saying that's what I have. My wife makes wonderful, excellent food all the time. But it's our daily, it's our routine meals that make us who we are.

And it's the routine meals from the word of God that feed our soul and make us who we are. It's

not always a blinding flash of revelation or just a deeply captivating, interesting. Sometimes it's just going through and getting the standard reminder of who we are and why we're here.

And sometimes we get a little disinterested and our ears start itching. We think, oh boy, I really wish I could be wowed. I remember three years ago I was listening to a lesson and it just rolled my socks down, knocked me right out of my chair.

Well, there are plenty of things in the word of God that will do that, but we also need to be checking and be sure that we're sensitive and that we're exposing ourselves to the teaching of the word of God that corrects, instructs, rebukes, that shows us who we are, where we are, where we need to be. That's the substance of it. The Talmud will not endure sound doctrine.

Why would somebody not endure sound doctrine? Because they're looking for something else. If you're looking for something besides sound doctrine, you're looking for something besides Christ. And you will find it.

You'll find it in a false Christianity. You'll find it in any of these deceptive philosophies. So, Paul prefaces this whole discussion about these end times when people turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside the fables.

He says, I charge you by the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want something to motivate you to keep after this, just think about the appearing of Christ. What do you want to have in your soul when you stand before the Lord? You better have the substance of the word of God.

That's the point. So, this is another part of the appearing. The motivation for mortifying the needs of the flesh, for putting to death the things that belong to the earth, the motivation for that is the appearing of Christ.

Look at Titus, just a few pages forward from 2 Timothy. Titus 2, verses 11-15. Paul says, The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness, denying worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.

There's a lot you could say about those three descriptions. Soberly, righteously, godly in the present age. Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed.

This is like what Paul says at the beginning of Galatians, where he says that Christ died to deliver us out of this present evil age. I think it's Galatians, I'd have to look. Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people.

Isn't that interesting? The reason Jesus gave himself for us doesn't say anything about the lake of fire, does it? It says he gave himself for us so that we could be purified, so that we could be delivered, redeemed from lawless deeds, be purified, a special people, zealous for good works.

And these are the good works that take place in the heart. They have an echo and an effect.

They have a result in our outward deeds, but they begin in the heart. Speak these things. Exhort and rebuke with all authority.

Let no one despise you. We sometimes think, well, it's getting a little tedious. We're having a lot of review, a lot of generalizations instead of going through the meat of word by word, verse by verse.

These are things that we all need reminding about. And once again, every time you see these charges, you find Paul saying, it's the appearing of Christ that counts. Think about the judgment.

Think about the reckoning. Think about the great bright light of the glory of Christ that's going to shine on these things. You will be glad that you went through the tedious lessons.

You will be glad that you set yourself down and meditated and put the effort in to draw back up out of the well of your soul the things that you've learned and didn't just go blowing on through life in a shallow way spiritually and here's the appearing of Christ and you're not ready. You don't know Him. You're not excited about His appearance.

You're a little bit ashamed. When God came down on Mount Sinai, Moses climbed up the mountain because he wanted to see God. The rest of the people cowered in the shadow of the mountain because they didn't know God.

There's a big difference. You can imagine. We see things all the time.

We see planes flying over. We go down to the airport to pick up a loved one and we see these planes flying through the air, landing. We get excited.

We think, oh boy, here comes this visiting relative and it's exciting to us. You take a native from deepest, darkest Philippines someplace, some guy that's never been out of the jungle, bring him to an airport and when he sees a plane flying over, he's going to be cowering in terror because he doesn't know what it is. He doesn't know where it came from.

He doesn't know that it might be bringing the rest of his relatives from the jungle over there. He's fearful of it because he doesn't understand it. He has no knowledge of it.

Most believers are going to be fearful at the return of Christ. Believers are going to be fearful when they get resurrected and they see Christ returning in glory because they don't know what's happening. They don't have a clue as to what the issues are.

They're going to be cowering. They're going to be ashamed in the presence of Christ because they are, as it were, naked. They don't have the robe of righteousness.

This is why Paul ties these things together. This is why Paul mentions the appearing of Christ. That's why there is a crown of righteousness that is promised to all those who love his appearing.

You find that in some of these passages as well. In 1 Peter 1, verse 7, at the appearing of Christ, our faith is going to be vindicated. If we trust it in Christ, it might not be vindicated in this life.

We might trust Christ and it doesn't look like circumstances worked out well. Maybe we lose our job because we stand up for a principal. And we never recover from that.

We never get that bit of a job again. We never make that kind of salary again. It leaves some kind of a lasting stain on us somehow in this life.

But at the appearing of Christ, our faith is vindicated. There is grace and glory brought to us at the appearing of Christ. This is 1 Peter 1 also, 13-15.

We can rejoice in our sufferings when we think about the appearing of Christ. 1 Peter 4-13. Those who shepherd the flock of God need to keep in mind the appearing of Christ.

This will keep us humble, Peter says in 1 Peter 5, 4 and 6. If you want to avoid the sin of pride, if you want to avoid lording it over the flock, avoid the pitfalls that both Paul and Peter pointed out for pastors and shepherds, just think about the appearing of Christ. Think about the reckoning. Remember the parable that Jesus told about the servant who says, well, my master delays his coming and so he starts beating his fellow servants? Why does he do that? He's not worried about the master coming back.

If you keep in mind the return of the master, keep a lot of things straight in the mind. 1 Peter 5, 4 and 6. We can have confidence at the Lord's appearing. We can avoid shame at His appearing if we remember it during this life.

This is 1 John 2-28. 1 John 3, 2 and 3. I wish we had time to look at each of these. The appearing of Christ is the substance of our hope.

It's the substance of our motivation, Romans 8, 14-26. Now, as we move forward, we set our minds on things above, not on things of the earth. In chapter 3 of Colossians, when Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

That ought to be a powerful source of motivation. It's not the result today. It's the evaluation when the Lord returns.

You may see no visible consequence for your failures today, but there will be loss at the judgment seat when the Lord returns. You may see no visible payoff for your faith today. You may have joy and peace in your soul today, and you think, well, I don't think that's any earth-shaking thing.

You will see at the appearing of the Lord that that bears an eternal weight of glory. Just your joy, just your peace, just your patience, the fact that you held your tongue, the fact that you didn't let yourself get angry, you didn't let the sun go down on your wrath, you put up with a wrong that was done to you. You didn't go out there and try to defend yourself.

You didn't go out and try to get revenge. You didn't cut someone down in the eyes of others because you were upset with them for something they did or failed to do. You just kept your peace.

Somebody told you a piece of gossip, and it stopped with you. It didn't go any further. It was a juicy tidbit.

In the past, you would have loved to go call two or three friends or whoever you confide in and talk with, but it just died. It got to you and stopped dead. That's a great fruit of the Spirit that you don't wound another by passing on things that should not have ever been told to you in the first place.

Somebody tells you something, and you go to your grave. You never reveal it. That's a wonderful thing.

And at the appearing of Christ, it will be revealed. Put these earthly things to death. They are profitless.

They are fruitless. And he gives the list there in verse 5. We've looked at that. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

And you can put a period at the end of that phrase. Because of these things, this pornia, this akatharsia, this uncleanness. We talked about pornia.

We could do a long study on that. We won't. But it is disloyalty.

It is breaking faith in almost any area of life. Its most obvious manifestation is breaking the marriage vow. It is sometimes used synonymously with that, but it is by no means limited to that.

And Jesus used it in its broader sense when he said that divorce has as a legitimate ground pornia. If someone breaks faith in a fundamental way, it doesn't matter whether or not they have consummated a physical relationship with someone else, there are other ways of breaking faith. If you physically abuse someone, and this is a pattern of life, if as a pattern of life someone breaks that vow to be true and faithful and to love until death do you part, that can be grounds for divorce.

And this is something every believer has to decide for themselves if they find themselves in that position. Because of these things, this uncleanness, this pornia, people pursuing their desires rather than the will of God, these last three, evil desires, covetousness, passion, these things are

all people focusing on something other than God, looking at something other than the calling to define their life and to define their priorities. Because of this, the wrath of God is coming, period.

And why does it say in the New King James it's coming upon the sons of disobedience? I'll turn over to Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians chapter 5. As I've mentioned before, Colossians and Ephesians, which is in fact the letter to the Laodiceans, were written at the same time, the same thoughts were running through Paul's mind, and he addresses the same subject in almost the same order in both letters. So we can look profitably at the parallel. Look at chapter 5 of Ephesians.

This is where the sons of disobedience phrase comes from. It's not in most of the earliest and best manuscripts of Colossians chapter 3, but the reason it shows up in other manuscripts of Colossians 3 is because the scribe had in their mind what Paul said over in Ephesians, which is the sister book. It's the parallel passage.

And he does say sons of disobedience over in Ephesians 5, and it has crept in to Colossians 3. It's not really in Colossians 3. It doesn't hurt anything for it to be there. It's a true statement. The wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience.

Paul just didn't happen to use that phrase in Colossians 3. Well, here's our question. What does it mean to be a son of disobedience? This is a fascinating phrase, because you thought when I looked at the machine I was going to stop, didn't you? Leave you hanging until next week. But no, we have time.

What does it mean to be a son of disobedience? The word for disobedience is *apathos*. It comes from a verb *apetheo*, or *apathos* would be the noun. This is A-P-E-I-T-H-E-O, *apetheo*.

And, of course, the A on the front of that, that's the negative. So you have the positive side of this, which is *patho*, P-E-I-T-H-O. Interesting thing about this is, obedience is not really the best translation of the word group here that surrounds *patho* and its negative, *apetho* or *apethos*.

*Patho* originally had the idea of being convinced, of being carried along by something. Its initial idea is the idea of something rushing along. It's a long story on how this came to mean being convinced or persuaded of something.

But remember earlier when we were talking about the two steps when you're dealing with the truth of the word of God, the first step is to understand and accept it as a truth, to be convinced of it as a truth. You have to be convinced of it before you can make it the object of your faith. You can't trust something that you're not convinced is even true.

You just can't. You're not going to have conviction and confidence about something that you're not really convinced is even true. This is why I seldom, if ever, I don't think I've ever changed my diet based on science.

I'm not convinced that their reports are accurate. I have no idea who these researchers at the University of Minnesota are. I don't know how they did their experiments.

And if their results conflict with what I know from the word of God, I'm not convinced. I'm not convinced that they know what they're doing. I'm not convinced that they've taken all the factors into account.

There can be other reasons why their test turned up the way that it is. They don't have credibility in my mind. I don't know who they are.

It could be a bunch of 19-year-olds with test tubes out there. I have no idea what they're doing. And I'm certainly not going to change my life based on what a group of white lab coats decided in some far-off state.

So I'm not convinced. I can't act on that. I can't make that the object of my faith.

Now, there are people who are superstitious. They say, well, I don't know. So to be on the safe side, well, now you're acting in superstition.

That's not faith either. Well, patho gets at this first stage. The obedience proper comes at the end of this process.

Patho doesn't talk about the end of the process. If I'm convinced of something, that's step one. If I make it the object of my faith, that's step two.

And the result of that conviction and faith is going to be obedience. I will obey God because I trust him because I'm convinced of the truth. So obedience is a bad translation for this because obedience is the result of faith, which is the result of believing the truth.

Patho, and it's negative, is at the beginning of the process. You hear the truth. Are you convinced of it or not? You can't even get to step two and three if you, A, don't hear the truth, or if you hear it and don't believe it, or if you leave it as kind of a question in your mind.

You say, well, I don't know if that's true or not. Well, you're never going to get to faith and therefore never to obedience. That's where patho is.

Patho says, I am convinced. A patho, the negative in front of it, says I'm not convinced. Well, we've got hupakuro for obedience.

Akuro, to hear. Hupa means under, to hear under. This is the word used of a military commander who gives an order to his troops and they carry it out.

That's obedience. Patho has the idea of being convinced of the truth. So now when we look at our passages where patho shows up, let's look at a few of these and then we'll know what's going

to happen, why the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience.

Look at Romans chapter 2, verse 8. This is one of the first places in the New Testament where this word shows up. I could give you examples from the Septuagint, but we don't need to. You remember chapter 2 of Romans? If you went through the Roman study, you remember that chapter 1, Paul has his introduction, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, in chapter 1. Then he goes on, he talks about all these people who ought to know who God is from creation and so forth, but instead, when they know Him as God, they don't glorify Him.

Instead, they move in a different direction. They disregard the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the evidence of their senses and nature and they go choose other things. And Paul sets this up in a way saying, yeah, Paul, you're right.

And then in chapter 2 he says, and you, old man, you're pointing your finger at these ungodly people out here who do not have faith in God. You're doing the same thing. You're a believer and you ought to know better and you're not.

Chapter 2 says, look, you believer, you're busy pointing your finger at other people. And this is the basis of a lot of ministry. Today, people have gone and evangelized and tried to have an impact.

They're pointing their finger saying, oh, you've got problems. I'm going to come help you solve your problems. When they haven't gotten the beam out of their own eye.

That's what chapter 2 of Romans is all about. Who are you to judge another when you yourself are doing the very same thing? So Paul goes on and he says, in chapter 2, he says, you're busy judging these other people. And in verse 4, he says, you're despising the riches of his goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God is trying to lead you to a change of mind.

You as a believer need to have a change of mind about the way you're living your life. Repentance is for believers. In accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, your unrepentant heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

This is the day of the Lord's appearing. He will render to each one according to his deeds. This is the believer's judgment.

This is the judgment seat of Christ that he's talking about. You can't treasure up wrath if you're an unbeliever. There's only one brand of wrath for an unbeliever.

It's an ultimate wrath. It has a fixed quantity. It is the wrath of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

You go to the lake of fire as an unbeliever because you rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. You

rejected any notion of relationship with God. There is a fixed, immeasurably great wrath that comes upon you.

It's the wrath of the lake of fire. There are no hot spots, no cool spots. It's a lake of fire.

You know the one thing about a lake? The lake is the same all over, isn't it? When you look at it, it's got the same water in it anywhere you go. It's all one big bowl of water there. Well, the lake of fire is one big punishment for people who've rejected relationship with God through Christ.

It's fixed. You can't store up wrath. God's not going to say, well, you're so sinful I'm going to make the fire seven times hotter.

I'm going to put you in a hot spot in hell. Some people have tried to teach that. It's not so.

Here, people are treasuring up for themselves wrath. If you're a believer, you can store up discipline because you're being judged by a different standard. You have opportunities that you miss.

You have failures, and each failure is going to get its own little judgment. We're not talking about salvation in Romans chapter 2. He will render to each one according to his deeds eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality. We've been through this before.

This is not the basis for salvation, is it? You don't have to patiently continue in well-doing. You don't have to seek for glory and honor and immortality to be given deliverance from the lake of fire. This eternal life is the inheritance.

This is the reward. This is the bright reflection of God's glory in the eternal future. And you forfeit that if you fail the grace of God as a believer.

If you seek it, if you are aware of your calling, and if you are asking and seeking and knocking to pursue it, by patient continuance in well-doing, God is going to grant eternal life. This is eternal in quality, in fullness, in the rich reward of being one that pleases God, being a well-done, well-good, and faithful servant type. Eternal life God will give to those who by patient continuance, this is a pattern of life, not a little flash in the pan at a retreat or a one-shot rededication at the emotional peak of some revival.

Patient continuance in doing good, seeking for glory, honor, and immortality to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth. The word for obey there is *apetho*. And it means you've not been convinced of the truth.

The truth didn't convince you. It didn't compel you. You didn't find it compelling.

We just had a whole bunch of evidence presented to a hundred senators up there on Capitol Hill,

and the majority of them did not find it compelling. They may have thought, well, it's true, but it doesn't carry sufficient weight for us to make a change in the state of the government here. So it wasn't compelling.

It wasn't convincing. It didn't result in an action to be taken. And you can make analogies either to faith, or to some of them were not convinced that it was even true.

We don't think that these crimes were even committed. We don't think that the law was broken at all. That would be an example of apetho.

I'm not convinced that these charges have any merit whatsoever. There are other people who said, well, the charges are true. I'm convinced of it, but I'm not compelled to act on it.

I don't think that I ought to vote for removal from office. That would be being convinced, but not acting on the knowledge. Then there were people who said, I think it's true, and I think the president ought to be removed, and let's go ahead and remove.

Well, you have those three different categories. Apetho means not convinced. Why are these people condemned? They are self-seeking.

You're either seeking God or you're seeking self. That's the only two options. Anyone who is not seeking God is by definition seeking self.

If you're self-seeking, you're not convinced of the truth. God has said in His Word, the Holy Spirit convinces each of us as a believer that we are children of God, that we have a responsibility as children of God to live out our calling. If we are not convinced, if that isn't compelling to us, then we're going to be self-seeking.

It isn't a matter of not obeying the truth, like, well, I didn't keep the Ten Commandments or I didn't pray without ceasing or I didn't rejoice evermore. It's not talking about that. It's saying the truth didn't compel you.

It didn't constrain you. Paul says the love of Christ constrains us. The love of Christ compels us to do what we do.

There are believers who don't find the truth of the Word of God compelling. They're not denying that it's the Word of God. They just don't feel that it applies to them.

It doesn't produce any sort of motivation in their soul. This is the basis for condemnation at the judgment seat of Christ. Those who are not convinced by the truth, who are not compelled by the truth, they obey unrighteousness.

Unrighteous things compel them. Other things, things that satisfy self, all these things that Paul talked about, selfish desire, passion, lust, and so forth. Approbation, the little click and circle of a

church that gets into a works thing and has a little squeaky clean kind of fellowship.

People find that compelling instead of genuine relationship with God. What are they going to get? There is going to be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also the Greek. People, almost all of Christendom takes this passage as talking about unbelievers.

How could this possibly apply to a believer? Let me tell you from the Greek what this is saying. I don't remember how much detail we went into when we were trying to get through all 16 chapters of Romans, but let me point out four or five words here in the Greek so that this will live and breathe and be a source of motivation to us. Let me find this.

Romans 2. Verse 8. Romans 2.8 when it says for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, you have apetho there, there is going to be orge, that's wrath. This is where we get the word orgy. Orgy is when someone is carried away by some particular passion.

They're just senseless. Well, in Greek, this was the word for anger, and it was anger that would brook no obstacle of compassion or reasoning or a plea for clemency or anything else. Wrath, this is undiluted anger.

This is what's coming to a believer that does not find the truth of the word of God compelling enough to be an asker and a seeker and one who knocks on the door. So, orgy is the first thing that's coming. It also says thumos, T-H-U-M-O-S.

This is what is translated as fury in the RSV. In the New King James, it is translated as wrath. Indignation is pretty mild for orgy, to be indignant.

That's like, oh, you've spilled food on my dress. That's indignant. Orgy is much stronger than that.

It is the worst anger. As I mentioned last week, the girls have been reading this book and we taught them what it meant when a story will say that someone was livid. Well, orgy, a good translation in English would be livid.

Someone is livid when they're this angry. Thumos is wrath. Thumos was a Greek word that meant a rushing.

There are many Greek words that have a U in them like psyche and pneuma. A lot of these U words have the idea of an invisible force of some sort. Thumos originally in Old Greek meant a rushing, like a torrential river flowing.

It came to mean this flowing wrath. It had the idea of a smoking or a burning, a rush of wind. When you have a huge bonfire you can feel the rushing wind next to it.

It's just sucking so much air into it. It came to be used for sacrifice, for immolation or the total

burning of a sacrifice. Thumos.

This is how the wrath of God is pictured for those who are not compelled by God's truth. It's a serious thing for a believer to come under orgy and thumos. Indignation and wrath as the New King James puts it.

Then it says in verse 9 there will be tribulation and distress. That's what the RSV describes it as. Or tribulation and anguish in verse 9. Anguish.

I always think of anguish as someone who is just kind of paining and just anguished. You almost feel sorry for somebody who is in anguish. That's not what the Greek says here.

In verse 9 the Greek word for tribulation is phallipsis. This phallipsis T-H-L-I-P-S-I-S It's even a hard word to say. In a way it's onomopoetic because when you try to say phallipsis you're pronouncing a difficult word.

This is going to be great distress. It's going to be a trial, a tribulation. It's going to be a very trying thing.

Who wants to have the Lord appear and be going through phallipsis to be the object of God's wrath and indignation? Think about the Israelites at the bottom of Mount Sinai dancing around the golden calf and that moment when they looked up and saw Moses dash the tablets to the ground. That's what this is going to be like for us at the judgment seat. People find a lot of other things compelling.

The emotional rush they get from a song or a crusade or a story that's told, a witness type of thing. People find lots of things compelling other than the truth of the word of God. People don't want to take the time.

They don't want to take the meditation. They don't want to let it sink in and expose the rocks and cracks in our souls. And because of that, there's going to be this great burning indignation.

There's going to be the fire of judgment. The axe is laid at the root of the trees type of thing taking place. That's phallipsis.

And then this most interesting word. The reason I'm running along here is I've been angling to get at this word because the thing that is translated anguish here in verse 9 of Romans 2, this is the word stenochoria. S-T-N-O-C-H-O-R-I-A.

The steno part there, this comes over in English. You've heard the word stenographer. What is a stenographer? Well, grafo means to write, so they're writing something.

What does steno mean? We have stenopads and all that kind of thing. Steno means narrow. A stenographer is someone who can write a lot in a narrow space.

They can take shorthand. They can write down dictation. They can keep up to somebody who's speaking rapidly.

They're a stenographer. They write in a narrow space. They write a lot in a little space.

So steno means narrow. Choria, C-H-O-R-I-A, is an area. It's a landscape.

It's a place. So stenochoria literally means narrow place, narrow territory, a tiny spot that you're in. In English, we have similar phrases, like you're between a rock and a hard place.

Dire straits would be a decent rendering into natural English here. There will be tribulation and dire straits. What is a strait? S-T-R-A-I-T.

It's a narrow place, a narrow passage that you sail your ship through, the Straits of Gibraltar or the... There are others. I can't think of them. Dire straits.

That's literally what this is saying. You're going to be in a narrow place. You're going to be between a rock and a hard place when you stand before God in this category.

What a terrible thing. Anger and wrath, tribulation, and with your tail in a crack, my dad would say, like a cat with its tail in a crack. That's a narrow place.

You just can't imagine the shame and the uncomfortable nature of the appearing of Christ if we've ignored our calling. That's what Paul is talking about. That's what he's invoking when he says Christ is appearing.

That's what he talks about when he says the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience. These are sons. You say, oh, well, their father is disobedient and they're unbelievers.

Apatho is sometimes used of unbelievers. I can show you passages where the truth of the gospel, the truth about God and his plan, is not compelling and people never come to salvation. But it is also used a greater number of times in Scripture for believers who find the truth of their calling, the truth of their place in God's plan, not compelling, not interesting enough or convincing enough to become the object of faith or to become the wellspring of actual obedience, of hupakoe type obedience.

Well, that's what's on the line here. We've talked about the positive side. We've talked about what we can become in Christ, the place where God has put us, the power of God and what it can do in our souls, the fruit that can be born as the landscape of our soul is transformed by the power of God's Word.

But this is a big deal. God has put a lot of store in his plan and he considers it pretty important, very important. He is going to reward and bless those who recognize that importance and pursue it.

For those who by patient continuance and well-doing seek for glory and honor in immortality, God is going to grant that eternal life fullness. But for those who are self-seeking and are not convinced by the truth, who are apetho, that disobedience that Paul talks about in the phrase, sons of disobedience, there is going to be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, that narrow place, literally narrow territory. When God grants acreage in the kingdom, Jesus said, I've gone to prepare a place for you.

I'm going to come again and receive you to myself so that you can be where I am. Well, how big is that place going to be? If you've totally disregarded God and the things of God, it's going to be a narrow place because of the wrath of God. There were people in Israel who never received an inheritance in the land because they had no faith.

They never even crossed the Jordan. They dropped in the wilderness. That's what's on the line.

So at the same time that we find the appearing of Christ motivating in a positive sense, we want to look forward to it. We want to be joyful at his appearing. There are going to be many of us as believers who are going to be ashamed at his appearing, who are going to be experiencing rebuke, the rebuke that we did not heed in this life from the word of God we're going to experience face to face with God at the judgment seat.

And there will be an accounting for this pattern of life, this failure to wake up and realize that the reality is in the spiritual realm, not in the earthly realm. There's a lot riding on your decisions, on my decisions to make the word of God the object of our faith, to know it, to be convinced by it, to live in the light of it, and let the chips fall where they may. The consequences in this life are minuscule compared to the consequences at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Paul is reaching for something profound to charge Timothy, to charge Titus with the importance of their job as communicators of the truth of the word of God, he charges them by the presence of God and the presence of Jesus Christ at his appearing. He can't reach for anything higher or more compelling than that. We need to find that equally compelling.

When we lay out our day, our schedule, do we think about allocating some time to stop? You may or may not open your Bible. You may or may not review your notes from Bible class. You may just sit quietly for 10 or 15 minutes and just recall.

It's a wonderful memory exercise. Can I remember anything of the hundreds of hours I've spent in Bible study? Do we think it's important? Do we want to be prepared for the return, for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ? If we find that truth compelling, if we are patho by that truth, we'll make that time. Just like someone who is so motivated to change their appearance that they will change their diet, or is so motivated to be in shape that they'll make time to run or to lift or to do aerobics or whatever it is.

If you're compelled enough, you will make the time. If you realize that spending time with your

children or your family is important, you'll make the time. You'll move things around and make that time for things that you consider important.

All of us do that. You think about the thing that you find most enjoyable or most important in your life and you think about how you've been able to make the time. If we're compelled by the knowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ is returning, we'll make the time, not only for Bible class, but for meditation day and night.

That's our charge. That's our calling. Paul reminds Timothy of it.

We're reminded of it over and over again. So think about that narrow place when the Lord returns. Do you want to be standing in that narrow place or do you want to be reflecting His glory and receiving that wonderful eternal life in its fullness? We have the choice.

There's nothing hindering us. The grace of God and the resources of God are more than sufficient to counter anything in our lives to make that possible for us. The only thing holding it up is whether or not we are convinced, whether or not we exercise faith, and whether or not as a result of conviction and faith we put the truth of God into action as a reality in our life.

It's all up to us. We have the opportunity. We have the knowledge.

And especially since we've gone over it now in this lesson, you are going to find, here's my gift of prophecy, I predict that tomorrow, and the next day, and the next, you're going to find yourself thinking about this lesson as you face your circumstances, whatever they may be. You will find that you have to make a choice as to what reality you're going to base your priorities and your decisions on. Is it the spiritual reality or the temporal reality? Is it the heavenly things or the earthly things? I promise you from the Word of God you will find that opportunity coming right up.

It's going to be in your face. The Holy Spirit is going to bring these words back to your mind. And you ought to get a little excited because God is paying personal attention to you.

He knows what you've heard. He knows what you know. And here's your written exam, so to speak.

Here's your practical exercise. So it ought to be exciting. It ought to be something you look forward to.

The toughest thing is making that step and saying, I really am going to get a handle on my anger, or I really am going to get a handle on the way I treat this person in my periphery. I really am going to be different in my soul because the Word of God is real. That's our challenge.

That's what's going to be coming up for each of us in the next few days. The Word of God will be alive and powerful for us. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the truth of your Word. We thank you for the special place that you have assigned us in your plan, our standing in your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all of the opportunities and the resources that that brings to us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will be able to raise his voice above the din of our circumstances and the other realities that are constantly being pressed upon us, the other viewpoints and the other types of priorities, the other kinds of measures that are constantly being pushed at us and that we find ourselves immersed in.

We pray that we will heed the compelling nature of the truth of your Word and your plan in our souls and that as a result we will bear that fruit that is eternal, the fruit that is described so clearly in your Word, the fruit that reflects the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

Amen.