

02-05-05a Ecclesiastes

The thought often crosses my mind at the beginning of Bible class that, for some reason, that the Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and the joints and the marrow. It is a judge or critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. All Scripture is inspired by God.

The Old King James said, given by inspiration from God, but it literally says God breathed and is profitable. One of the main themes of Ecclesiastes is profit, *eterno*. But the inspired Word of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may become complete, mature, perfect, thoroughly equipped, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Be diligent to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. We're about to study the Word of Truth together this morning, and it is important for us to have prepared hearts and clear minds. We take the opportunity at the beginning of our study to set aside any distractions or stray thoughts that might intrude themselves into our concentration so that we can fully receive and benefit.

We would have no insight, no apprehension, no comprehension of God's Word. And even if we did, we could not make any profitable use of it. It is only by the grace of God manifest in His Spirit, which the Lord Jesus Himself commissioned to minister to us, that we have any strength at all to live this life.

It was a thought that really stuck with me from our Friday night study about how Jesus came up and several times in His ministry gave verbal commands to dead people, and they obeyed them. The girl in the upper room, the young man laying on the stretcher as they were carrying him out to be buried, Lazarus in his tomb. Jesus spoke, and those who had no power and indeed no life were enabled by divine power to fulfill Christ's command.

And it pictures for us the complete dependence that we have on the power of God to execute our calling and fulfill our obligation as believers. And it's a great comfort to me because I know from experience that my strength is insufficient, which is really an understatement. It is just totally inadequate.

And it was so frustrating for me in my early life as a young adult to try to live in a way that was pleasing to God and find myself erring and falling short again and again, knowing what the form of godliness was but having no power to fulfill it. And it has been a wonderful, meaningful truth in my soul to know that it's not my strength and it's not my power. We live in the strength that God gives us, and we are about to partake of that manna that nourishes and strengthens our souls.

And it's so important for us to give every attention to it so that we can remember and apply it in the days ahead. So let's take a moment to prepare our hearts before the Lord in prayer. Father,

we recognize the privilege that we enjoy as your children, as body and bride of Christ, to enter into your throne room, to come before you in humility, recognizing that everything we have comes from you, everything that we can accomplish in our lives must be accomplished through what you provide.

We do not have anything that has not been given to us, and we are thankful for the work of Jesus Christ, for the love that was expressed toward us by you and by him in the salvation work that was accomplished at the cross. And we pray that as we study together this morning, we will be able to avail ourselves of the great opportunity and potential that is ours through Christ, and that as your word is implanted in our hearts, we can be transformed, our minds can be renewed, and we can be enabled and empowered to reflect your glory now and in the age to come. We pray for those who have the rule over us in our country.

We ask that you guide and direct in such a way that your purpose in providing the environment of growth and the cultivation of faith and obedience in believers will be enhanced, and that we will continue to enjoy the great blessings of freedom and prosperity that we now have, and that even as we enjoy those blessings, we will remember that you've given them to us for a purpose, and that we are free to pursue our upward calling in Christ Jesus. We ask that you will bless our fellowship. May the ministry of the spiritual gift that you've imparted to each one of us be manifest.

And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. For a scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Matthew chapter 7. Matthew chapter 7. Anytime I look at scripture from the Gospels, the first thought that occurs to me is to remember that even though it is on the right side of my Bible, and it is in the section of my Bible labeled New Testament, these are actually Old Testament times.

Jesus lived in the age of Israel, and he ministered to Old Testament saints, and the teaching that he gave them has to be scrutinized in that context. Otherwise, we can make mistakes in interpretation and application if we don't remember that just as the law of Moses and the Pentateuch, just as the prophets and the writings, the wisdom literature of the Old Testament have to be observed in their context, and we do our interpretational triangle there of observation, interpretation, and application, we have to be especially diligent to remember the first audience and the people to whom Jesus spoke. In Matthew chapter 7, this is the culminating section of the Sermon on the Mount, which is addressed to believers, and that has sometimes been forgotten.

People think that parts of it are evangelistic or are warnings to unbelievers, but it is all addressed to Old Testament saints. It is an exhortation to live the life of faith, just as we are exhorted to do in this age. Matthew chapter 7 begins this way, Judge not that you be not judged, for with what judgment you judge, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own

eye? Or how can you say to your brother, let me remove the speck from your eye, and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite, first remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces. Ask, and it will be given to you.

Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

Or what man is there among you, who if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him? Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets. Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate, and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it fell, and great was its fall.

So it was when Jesus had ended these sayings that the people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." Well, of course, there are many sermons. Each verse, almost every phrase in this section is freighted with truth. But in particular, at the beginning of this section where he says, Judge not that you be not judged, this is sort of a corollary to the idea of forgiveness that we have studied recently, where our forgiveness from God is dependent on whether or not we forgive others.

And the flip side of forgiveness is judging. If we don't forgive, we are inflicting a penalty on someone. We're bearing a grudge.

We're saying, you malfunctioned and I will not forget. And this is not just what we say to others. You know, this man here in Dallas who was angry with his wife and was on the phone with her and shot his two daughters while he was talking to his wife on the phone.

And then he was recently convicted and they sentenced him to death. The wife stood up in court and said, I hope you burn in hell and so on and so forth. I can't think of anything that would be more difficult to forgive than your spouse murdering your children.

But it doesn't matter what the offense is. And I'm not saying she should have stood up and wept and said, I forgive you. But it is an example of the indignation and the sense of injustice that we tend to feel.

And the level of indignation that we feel is directly proportional to the amount of pride that is in our soul. Because if we think that an offense has been committed, it has a direct relationship to how important we think we are. And the fact that we have been discommoded, we have been offended, we have somehow suffered a wrong is what drives the idea of offense and indignation.

Jesus told us in Luke chapter 17, it is impossible but that offenses should come. And there is woe pronounced on those through whom those offenses come. Jesus said, God has already taken care of that.

They would be better off to have a millstone around their neck and be thrown into the sea than to offend one of these little ones. But you don't see the little ones standing on the shore, shaking their fists saying, you see there? That's what you get. That's not good enough for you.

They ought to tie three millstones around your neck. And they ought to go down and after you've sunk to the bottom of the sea, they ought to shoot you, they ought to stomp on you, they ought to light you on fire with magnesium flare. Jesus doesn't say anything about the little ones standing there, yelling in victory on the shore.

It's just not a part of that thought, is it? Jesus says, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. That's what the word of God says. And Jesus in that parable says, offenses are going to come, so get over it.

Don't be surprised if you're offended. It's just like Jesus said, the poor are with you always. So get used to it, get past it.

But do not sacrifice your happiness, do not sacrifice your fruitfulness, do not sacrifice your eternal inheritance because you get preoccupied with what somebody did to you. Who are we? We are nothing but representatives of the Master. And if they hated the Master, they're going to hate the

servants.

If people are out of fellowship with God, if they have no relationship with God, what do you expect? Did you think that you are somehow golden and better than the Lord Jesus and they can spit on Him and stick a crown of thorns on Him and lash Him and crucify Him and spit in His face and pull His beard, but you're not subject to any sort of offense or abuse? I mean, it's arrogance. It is the pride in our hearts. Any time we get a sense of righteous indignation and how dare they do that to me? And that attitude is what prevents forgiveness.

Look at Stephen. Have you suffered the way Stephen suffered? Have you been stoned to death for no good reason? Then what's your beef? Judge not, because if you judge, you will be judged. And every bit of bitterness, every bit of rancor, every bit of negative thought that you direct towards someone else is going to come back to you.

The Bible says it. With what judgment you judge, you will be judged. And notice that is future.

You are subtracting from your inheritance. This, you know, people, the Enron thing, you see people who are building up their retirement and then something bad happens and their future savings evaporate or they get taken to the cleaner. Somebody comes and they have these little old ladies who are well off.

They've got several hundred thousand dollars in the bank that they're living on and some smooth-talking scam artist comes in and wheedles them into investing or into giving a loan or something. There was a rash of this happening around Dallas a few years ago. And they had these ladies on TV and they're saying, oh, he just seems so nice and yet I looked and my stuff was all gone and I can't get it back.

Or people who do identity theft or get your credit card number and run up a big bill and ruin your credit and you can't get it back. Well, how much worse to do it to ourselves? What if we just went nuts and frittered away our life savings, frittered away our 401K or whatever it is? Well, that's exactly what we do when we fail to forgive, when we judge instead. And you remember the definition of judging.

It is not discerning that someone is in error. We are commanded to do that. How can you identify a wolf in sheep's clothing if you don't do some close looking? You know, if you just glance at the clothing, you're going to think he's a sheep and he's not.

And we are commanded to discern. Judging, it goes past discernment. You not only recognize that someone is in error, but you decide that you're the judge, you're the jury, you are going to pronounce sentence and you're going to carry out sentence.

You're going to penalize them in some way. You're going to damage their reputation by talking about them. You're going to cause them to pay some penalty by what you do or what you fail to

do.

And the attitude of, well, this is what you get for malfunctioning in this way, that's judging. Jesus says, judge not. Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and do not consider the plank in your own? We have a responsibility to turn the laser beam of our wonderful perspicacity on ourselves.

If we have such great discernment to be able to see the flaws and faults and failures of others, what happens to that? Why does it suddenly go foggy and blind when we turn it on ourselves? We can't be of any help or encouragement or benefit in speaking the truth in love to others because there is a place for removing the speck in the brother's eye, isn't there? Jesus says, get the plank out of your eye and then, verse 5, you will see clearly to remove the speck. If you live with anybody who wears contacts and sometimes their contacts get lost in their eye, soft contacts, hard contacts, I don't know that they do that, but soft contacts can roll up and get lost in the eye and it's helpful. You need somebody to go in there and help retrieve that, get it out of your eye.

You can get a speck, you can be mowing or be potting plants or something and a speck of something gets in your eye and you can't see to get it out. It's great to have someone there, but it's not much good if the person who's trying to help you is blind from having all kinds of grit and stuff in their eyes and can't see clearly. We can be useful to one another with specks, but you have to have all of your specks out first.

So, he goes on in verse 6 to say, do not give what is holy to the dogs, do not cast your pearls before swine. And when he says they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces, the significant verb in that verse to me is turn. How do you know when to speak the truth? These pearls of wisdom, the pearls of the Word of God, that's really what it's talking about.

Do not give what is holy to the dogs. What do we have that we can give to someone that's holy? It's the truth of God's Word and we are commanded to speak the truth in love. How do we know when to speak and when not to? Well, the key is in this verse because it says do not cast your pearls before swine.

It doesn't say hand them to the swine. It doesn't say feed them to the swine as though they're in your hand and you're trying to present them. It says cast them.

And why do you have to cast them? Because the swine are headed the other direction. The swine are headed away from you and you're throwing the pearls out in front of them. How do we know that? Because it says they're going to trample them under the feet and then they are going to turn.

They have to turn around to tear you to pieces. They weren't facing you. And we need to have the discernment to recognize that someone is not really interested.

Even people that ask questions a lot of times are just... they get a perverse delight out of controversies and discussions and endless debates about words. Paul talks about that with Timothy. And he says don't waste your time getting into endless debates, teasing apart phrases and words and going on endlessly over insignificant details.

People who will not get to the heart of a matter when you're talking with them. And I can't tell you how many times I've had this where initially someone is asking questions and they come to me and they say, well, what about this and what about that? But after a few minutes of conversation, it's clear to me that they're not really seeking. They don't have that genuine desire to be filled with the truth of God's Word.

They just want to test. They want to see what your answer is. But it's like a game.

It's like a pastime. And when you bring the central issues to light, they want to go off here and, well, what about the heathen? Or what about the age of accountability? What about this? What about that? And the truth of the saving work of Jesus Christ and rescue from our lost and hopeless condition and a future with God in eternity isn't really of interest. They want to play games with issues.

Well, if you continue and you keep on trying to push the truth out there, they've already turned around. They're going another direction. And you're taking the pearls of God's Word and trying to throw them, trying to get them to turn around.

Hey, I've got pearls. Can't you see? Let me throw them out in front of you here. If you see the pearls, maybe you'll turn around to see where they came from.

And he says, no, they're going to trample them underfoot and then they are going to turn around and come back and tear you to pieces. So if people are headed the other direction, don't try to... They encourage people to do this in churches. They say, oh, you know, get these over-the-fence conversations with your neighbor.

Have a barbecue and invite them over. We're showing a movie at church. Invite them in and we're going to show the cross and the switchblade or something and bring them in or, you know, invite them to some luncheon and we have a lady who's going to talk about how to make a better casserole and then she's going to put an evangelistic thing at the end.

And these people are going the other direction. They're swine. They're looking for swine food.

They want things that people are interested in. But you're going to stick some pearls out there at the end and try to bring them around. Jesus says, don't do that.

He says, concentrate on your own. We have our hands full. This whole emphasis on mentoring and discipleship and bring them in and I'm going to coach you and I'm going to be your... There's

a couple on the radio and they are coaches.

And I was listening to, and forgive me for mentioning her name. She's a wonderful lady, but I think she's just as wet as rain, is Jill Briscoe. Stewart and Jill Briscoe, Stewart Briscoe, came out of the seminary and spoke to us.

And they've got this traveling ministry all around the world where they give seminars and they tell people how to improve their marriage and how to improve their relations with their in-laws. I heard Jill Briscoe on the radio talking about Ruth and Naomi, the whole thing with Boaz. And there is such wonderful truth about Christ in that story and there's such great things to be learned from Ruth and Boaz.

And she just completely, completely missed it. It was all about the mother-in-law. Naomi is the mother-in-law and Ruth is better than seven sons.

It was very depressing. But the thing is, here are ministries and people encouraging other people to go out and do likewise to look at other people and say, you know, I don't think your relationship with your mother-in-law is really very good. Let me come in and help you.

Let me crank up a ministry and give you a resource. And if you'll, for a suggested donation of \$15, you can get my tape series. I had to laugh.

This is completely off the subject. But I had to laugh because somebody has a T-shirt that says something about something. And they said, you know, for a suggested donation of \$15, you can get this T-shirt.

And they were careful to say every time, you know, for a suggested donation of \$15, this includes shipping and handling. I thought, now, wait a minute. It's a donation, but it includes shipping and handling.

I mean, they're just saying that to get around the law. Anyway, it made me laugh. Your suggested donation of \$15 includes shipping and handling.

Anyway, the point that Jesus is making to his generation, and again, remembering who he's talking to in the Old Testament age, was there a ministry of God the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament? Were they commanded to faith and obedience just as we are? Yes. Some of the dynamics were different. Some of the levels of ministry and the level of presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart and in the life of a believer was different.

But you cannot understand the Word of God and you cannot obey the Word of God apart from the power of God's Spirit. If there was ever an Old Testament saint who was faithful or obedient apart from the ministry of God's Spirit, guess what? He did that in human strength. And the plan of God and the purpose of God is not fulfilled in human strength.

It's fulfilled in divine strength and only in divine power. So where does the divine power come from in the Old Testament? The same place it comes from in the New Testament age. Spirit of God and the Word of God, and both of them have to be present.

The Word without the Spirit is knowledge that puffs up. The Spirit without the Word is impossible because He's mute. He has nothing to say.

He doesn't speak from Himself. He can only take the things of Christ, as Jesus told the disciples in the Upper Room. He does not speak from Himself.

If you don't have the Word of God, the Spirit can't speak. They have to both be there, and it was just as true in the Old Testament. So when Jesus tells His audience, Ask, and it will be given to you.

Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. God grants the request of those who desire, who want to know.

And I cannot tell you the countless scores of times that I have brought this promise up to God, specifically with regard to the study of His Word. We want to know what His Word says. And this is a demand that we can make before the throne of God.

This is the mulberry tree prayer. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you can move mountains. You can move deeply rooted trees into the sea.

But what is faith? What does it mean to have faith as a grain of mustard seed? It's not just the ability to trust. People can trust in anything. People can trust in foolish things.

I've seen people who trust in their tattoo to lure the people of the opposite sex in their direction. Oh, I've got this nifty little tattoo around my ankle, and that's going to make me attractive. I've got a butterfly tattooed on my thigh, and that's going to make me... People trust in all kinds of things.

But people trust in their education. People trust in their looks. People trust in their skills.

People trust in their wealth. People trust in their relationships and their good old boy network. A lot of people who join the Masons have no earthly idea what the Masonic lore is all about.

It's a good old boy network. People who graduate from the Citadel and Texas A&M and things like that, a lot of the allure of that is that their father or their brother or their uncle graduated, and they've seen the good old boy network. That's why those girls, that was the argument they made on network television.

Oh, I want to go to the Citadel, because look at the advantage. All the network of graduates, and little did they know that they ticked all the graduates off, and they're not going to get that good old boy network benefit. But people trust in all kinds of things.

But faith trusts in God's Word. Faith says, I believe what God's Word says is true. And when you pray and when you desire in accordance with God's will, that prayer will be granted, no matter how impossible it may seem.

And to ask for understanding, to seek for a greater comprehension of God and His Word and His plan, is there any possible way that that is not in the will of God? It absolutely is, and you can pray it with total confidence. And you can wait confidently and expectantly for God to answer your questions, to give you insight into things that are difficult. It may not come right away.

It may come over a period of months or years. But if you ask, it will be given. What are we asking for? Well, there was a guy named Reverend Ike that we used to hear on the radio up in Tulsa.

And he had these little catchphrases, you can't lose with the stuff I use. And he would talk about, you know, if you want a new, he would give stories about how people needed a new refrigerator, a new washing machine. They would pray the prayer of faith, and the next morning the lady woke up and opened up her back door, and there was a new washing machine sitting on her back porch.

You can't lose with the stuff I use. Pray the prayer of faith, and ask and it shall be given. Well, it's highly doubtful that the plan of God hinges on whether or not someone gets a new washing machine.

But for us to understand and be able to live in the light of God's Word, is absolutely essential in God's plan. And praying that prayer sincerely will always be answered. Everyone who asks, receives.

He who seeks, finds. And to him who knocks, it will be opened. I can't tell you how many times I prayed that prayer.

What man is there among you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? If we are looking for the bread, the manna of God's Word, consistently and over a period of time, that's the pattern of our life, we're not going to end up, you know, we always say, well, there's so many other understandings, how do we know if we're right or not? I trust that God answers the effectual, fervent prayer of someone who is looking for his righteousness through faith. And he says in verse 13 and 14, enter by the narrow gate. And this wide is the gate, broad is the way that leads to destruction.

People say, well, see, that's talking about salvation. This is an imperative that Jesus is giving the same audience that he just said, don't judge, ask and it will be given to you. Seek first the kingdom of his God and his righteousness.

Don't worry about your life. Beware of false prophets is in verse 15. So, verse 13 and 14, enter by the narrow gate.

This is an imperative, it's a command given to believers. There are many, many believers who are going through the wide gate and the broad way that leads to destruction. He doesn't say you have entered by the narrow gate.

He says you need to enter. Narrow is the way and straight is the gate that leads to life. And there are few who find it.

Why? Because there are few who genuinely ask and seek and knock for the things of God. We're too busy trying to accomplish our own agenda. But this is the contrast.

Jesus began this section talking about do not judge. You get your eyes on other people, you're going to forget your own mission. If you're rowing a boat, you have to get a fix on some unmovable object so that you can row a straight course.

If you get to looking around, if the coxswain in an eight-oared shell, when you're rowing crew, if he starts looking around at the other boats trying to figure out, well, are they coming up on us? Are they going to pass us? What's their stroke rate? Let me look at my watch and time their stroke rate and see if they're at 38 or 40 or 42 or maybe they're up to a racing sprint pace of 44 or 46 strokes per minute. If he's looking around and not paying attention, he's going to be steering a zigzag course and his boat's going to lose the race. They've shown films of Olympic runners who are running a race and at the last minute the runner turns around to look and see how close his nearest pursuer is and it slows him down.

You can see as soon as he turns his head, his pace slows down. You can't run at your optimum speed with your head pointed sideways. But that's exactly what happens to us when we get our eyes on other people and we start analyzing and scrutinizing and spending a lot of time figuring out everything they're doing wrong.

And we look at other people and say, you're going the wrong direction, let me toss these pearls in front of you and get you to turn around and come to the great truth that I have in my hand here. Jesus says, forget all of that. Don't cast your pearls before swine.

Don't judge other people. You concentrate on your relationship with the Father. He is the Father who will give you bread if you ask Him for it.

We need the bread so that we can enter by the narrow gate. There are so many of us who don't do this. Most of us, the Bible says, that the many are headed down the broad way, going through the wide gate.

We are going to be in a minority. We are not going to find very many at our right hand and at our left. We're not going to find very many ahead of us or behind us going down this narrow road.

So don't be surprised if your circle of fellowship is small. There are few who find it. Now it doesn't

mean just because your circle of fellowship is small that you're on the right track either.

But if you are on the right track, you can bet that you're not going to be in a stadium full of cheering, hand-waving people. Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruit.

He began saying, judge not. But he says, you've got to look at the fruit. What kind of fruit? This is the fruit of the Spirit.

You cannot have someone leading and teaching a right way whose life does not reflect the fruit of the Spirit. And that's why you have the qualifications for elders over in Timothy and in Titus. The church is required to scrutinize the life of those who are in positions of leadership.

And if they do not measure up, if their life does not evidence the fruit of the Spirit in self-control, in sobriety, in managing well their own household, in being a one-woman man, in not being given to anger, in not being a failure in the areas of application, in the basic function of a believer before God, is not qualified. And not everybody gets the opportunity that some of us have to work within Christian organizations or spend a lot of time with the board of a church or the leadership of a Christian ministry organization. But it is a scary thing to see a large group or a large church or a significantly numbered bunch of believers who are trying to go forward and do something, and yet there is strife, there is bitterness, there is backbiting, there is gossip.

I had a conversation with some people and it came out that they were having a real problem and there was a deep rift and great bitterness between them and another party. And then later, in another completely different public context, these two parties were saying nice things to each other and making a presentation and kind words were being exchanged. And it was so opposite in one context when you are kind of behind closed doors saying, oh, you don't know the problem we are going to have and lawyers may have to get involved in this and the other and these things may be destroyed out of spite.

And then in another context, there are smiles and handshaking and oh, what a great ministry you have had and what an influence you have been and what a blessing you are. And this facade, well, that is an example of fruit lacking. And whatever endeavors and whatever leadership people are seeking to exercise, if they are fraught with that sort of difficulty, this would be like trying to go to a seminary and having a seminary professor trying to teach you New Testament or something and yet he has got all kinds of personal problems.

They don't have seminary professors. They try not to have pastors who have all kinds of deep personal problems. Look at the Catholic Church.

How can the Catholic leadership be doing well and they are uncovering all of this policy, not just the failure of a few priests, but a policy of cover-up, a policy of tolerance of pedophiles in the Catholic Church. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. It has been well known that this kind of

thing has gone on.

This is not the first revelation of it, but people throw up their hands and say, oh, how shocking. It has been well known in the Catholic Church for decades. I knew about situations like this when I was a teenager, like five years ago.

It has been well known. It has been in the press. It has been written about.

But people just turn a blind eye and say, oh, but you know the Church. Well, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

The one who does the will of my Father. Notice entering the kingdom is not predicated on salvation faith. How many times have we seen in the Word of God that entering the kingdom is not synonymous with eternal salvation in the sense of no lake of fire.

Entering the kingdom is predicated on doing the will of my Father in heaven. Entering the kingdom is predicated on obedience that springs from faith. You ask, you seek, you knock, you walk the narrow road, you do the will of the Father, and you enter the kingdom.

Disobedience results in not entering the kingdom. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name. We cast out demons in your name.

We have done many wonders in your name. I will declare to them, I never knew you. Jesus has fellowship.

Jesus has intimacy. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. And the one who hears his voice and opens the door so that he can come in and have a fellowship meal, that is a minority of believers.

And many believers will not qualify. With this on the line, do we really have the luxury of looking around at others? We don't. Well, we have the responsibility to build our own house.

They had this 1883 show on this past week where people went back to Montana and tried to live in 1883. And there were three different households. And it got so tiresome, I about quit watching the program.

I was interested in learning about 1883, but there was so much bitterness. And one group was saying, oh, these people in this other house, they cheated. They went down and they traded with a modern family because they ran out of food.

So they traded baked goods, they got meat. They said, oh, their husband was getting too skinny and losing all kinds of weight. And they were worried that he was going to die on the prairie.

And so they had to get him some meat. He wasn't getting enough protein from his beans and cornbread. So they made up some baked goods and went and traded for elk burger and some other stuff.

Well, this other family was just incensed. And they couldn't get over it. The doctor came in and looked at the guy and said, you know what? You came into this thing overweight.

You're really getting down to a good weight. Now there's nothing wrong with you. And these people just picked that up.

And they spent the whole rest of the show doing nothing but casting stones and saying, oh, well, we did it the right way and they cheated. And it just kind of poisoned the whole thing. But they were busy looking down the way at the other cabin and the other people instead of concentrating.

And when the experts came in at the end, they said, guess what? You wouldn't have survived the winter either. You spent all your time sitting there gritching and moaning about these other people. You didn't lay in enough firewood.

You don't have enough food to last the winter. You would have died just like them. Well, we have to build our own house.

We've got to look for the solid foundation and build on that. If we get busy looking over at somebody else, we're going to wind up building our house on the sand. And when the pressure comes, when the judgment comes, the house is going to collapse.

Well, this all, even though we've had an extended Scripture reading this morning, when we come back from the break and we look at the rest of Ecclesiastes 10, we're going to see the direct correlation between what we've just looked at and the last half of that chapter. So that's where we'll resume when we come back.