

96-11-03b

We're back now from our break, and we're looking at God's purpose in choosing. We have seen that the consequences for believers who are saved by God's grace and their eternal destiny is secure, of ignoring or being apathetic, rejecting or rebelling against the plan and purpose of God is severe. We've seen this in Leviticus, we've seen it in Deuteronomy here this morning, we've seen it in Jeremiah chapter 2 and Lamentations chapter 3. You can see it for believers in this age in Hebrews chapter 10 verse 26 and following.

Now keep in mind Hebrews is written to believers. If you look at the context starting in Hebrews 10 and 19, therefore brethren, he's talking to believers. We don't call unbelievers brethren, they're not brethren.

Believers are brethren. Therefore brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, new and living way and so forth. Verse 23, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

This is an exhortation. It's possible for us not to hold fast. It's possible for us to drift away.

Let us consider one another, stir one another up to love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching. For, now who are we talking to here? We're still talking to believers. For, if we, brethren, sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no longer any sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

Now we don't like to think about this. We have itching ears. We like to hear about reward and blessing and prosperity and so forth.

God says there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who rejected Moses' law died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Now, let me just refresh your memory.

Who lives under the law of Moses? The world or the people of God? The Assyrians and the Egyptians and the Chinese or those who came out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb? It is believers who live under the law of Moses. By definition, they're believers. Anyone who rejected that law, they start out under it and they reject it and disregard it.

They died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment do you suppose will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified? You don't have unbelievers sanctified by the blood of the covenant. This is believers.

How much worse punishment do you suppose will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified as a common thing and insulted the spirit of grace? We know him who says vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord. And again, the Lord will judge who? The Lord will judge his people.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And so he says, recall the former days in which after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings. Why does he bring this up? He's encouraging believers.

He says, remember what it was like right after your salvation. He's talking to the Hebrews here. These are Jewish Christians who after they were first enlightened, they endured suffering.

They endured persecution. They endured the bad wrath that they were getting from their fellow Jews when they started following Christ. He says, remember the former days after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings.

You were made a spectacle with reproaches and tribulations. And partly you became companions of others who were treated the same way. You had compassion on me or on us and chains and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

Therefore, the whole point of this discussion is in verse 35, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. You have need of endurance so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. The fulfillment of the promise of God for reward and blessing both now and in the eternal future depends on what we decide.

Are we going to stick with the faith that saved us? Are we going to endure? Or are we going to fall away? Look at what he quotes here from the Old Testament here. This is a quote from, I can't see where this is from. It's an Old Testament quote.

I believe it's from Habakkuk 2. He says, Yet a little while and he who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith, but anyone who draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Now, how can you draw back unless you got there? You're there and then you draw back.

You start well and you take your hand off the plow, however you want to look at this. The righteous shall live by faith. If anyone draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

We are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the delivering of the soul. This is not talking about salvation. This is talking about blessing and reward for believers.

You might just take note of that word perdition there because that's the next thing we're going to look at here in Romans chapter 9. There are dozens of other passages to which we could go.

Some of them we have seen in the past that talk about the responsibility that we have as human beings to respond to God. And the Bible doesn't make this big, huge distinction between responding to God at salvation, at deliverance from the lake of fire, and life.

In God's mind, it's all one thing. If you respond to God, you should keep on responding. If God has been able to have mercy on you at the beginning, he should be able to keep on having mercy.

And you don't draw back. You don't pull away and do something different. The whole idea of responding to God is to continue to respond so that God can continue to bless and continue to have mercy.

And it is strange and bizarre for us to respond at a certain point and then having been enlightened to fall away and go do something different. It just doesn't follow. It's strange.

And God demonstrates that with Israel in the Old Testament, and he talks about it with the church in the New. So now what we want to look at here is what are we talking about when we say that God has endured with great patience vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. We say, my goodness, that sure sounds like unbelievers to me going to the lake of fire.

The word here in Romans 9.22 says, What if God, wanting to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? The word for destruction here is *apoleia*, A-P-O-L-E-I-A. It is a noun that comes from the verb *apolumi*, which means to obliterate, to ruin, to destroy, to render of totally no effect, to neutralize. It was used of battles in which an army totally conquered and subdued.

It is used occasionally of inflicting death on someone. *Apoleia* here is the word that is translated destruction. Now, if we're talking about the lake of fire here, then we should see this word being consistently used for that elsewhere in Scripture, right? So, let's take a look at some of the other passages where *apoleia* is found.

Turn with me back to Mark 14, verse 3. This is the episode where the lady has an alabaster container full of perfume and she breaks it open and anoints the Lord Jesus with it. Mark chapter 14, verse 3. This is shortly before the Lord's death. He's in Bethany.

Jesus is at the house of Simon the leper. As he sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on his head.

There were some who were indignant among themselves and said, why was this fragrant oil wasted? That perfume might have been sold for more than 300 denarii and given to the poor. You remember from the story when Jesus talked about the servants that came and worked all day and they were paid a denarius at the end of the day? A denarius was a day's wage. So 300 denarii, you figure what's an average wage in the United States? Maybe \$25,000 or \$30,000 a

year.

Well, that's about what this perfume is apparently worth. It's nearly a full year's wages for someone. But in verse 4 it says there were some who were indignant.

They see this lady break this perfume and pour it on Jesus' head and they say, why was this fragrant oil wasted? The word wasted there is *apoleia*. Why was it wasted? It's ruined. It's gone to no effect in their mind.

It could have been used for something useful. This was a useless act. It was useless to pour it on the Lord's head.

It should have been put to some good use instead of just wasted by being poured on the Lord's head. *Apoleia*. Let's go forward and look in 1 Timothy chapter 6. Same author as the book of Romans.

1 Timothy chapter 6. Paul is talking about someone who teaches otherwise in verse 3. 1 Timothy 6.3. Who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. Boy, you turn on Christian TV and radio today and that's what you get. You get all of these things.

Godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

Now, who's he talking about here? Believers or unbelievers? He's talking about believers. Godliness with contentment is great gain. We're not saying if you're godly and content you'll be saved.

We're saying if you're godly and content you'll be blessed. You'll have great gain. You're going to receive a blessing from god.

We should be content with the food and clothing that we have. Those who desire to be rich, these are believers who get consumed with the desire for things. They fall into temptation and a snare into many foolish and harmful desires which drown men in destruction and perdition.

The word there for perdition is *apolia*. Believers can be drowned in *apolia*. You as a believer, if you pursue material things at the expense of God and His word and so forth.

And that's why he says in verse 10, The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many

sorrows. Same idea. So, the point we're starting to develop here is that this apolia is not a synonym for destruction in the lake of fire.

It is a synonym for ruin and loss and waste. Does that make sense? Let's take a look at another passage. Turn with me to Acts chapter 8 verse 18.

Acts chapter 8 verse 18. We have the apostles doing acts in the power of the Holy Spirit here. And this fellow Simon sees it going on.

In Acts 8 verse 18, Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands, the Holy Spirit was given. And so Simon said, boy, what a great racket this is. I could make some money at this.

If I could lay hands on people and they'd be miraculously healed and so forth, this would be a big money maker. So he offered them money saying, Give me this power also that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit. Peter said to him, Your money perish with you because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money.

You have neither part nor portion in this manner, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Well, up there in verse 20 where it says, Your money perish with you. Guess what? It's Apollia.

Now this Simon believes in God, but he's taking a completely wrong tack in terms of what the power of the Holy Spirit is for and what the purpose of life as a believer is. Notice what Peter says. You have neither part nor portion.

Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this, your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.

He is a believer that's got completely the wrong idea. He is interested in monetary gain. He believes in God and believes in the Holy Spirit, but he wants to use it for his own ends.

Now look at verse 24. Simon answered and said, Pray to the Lord for me that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me. He's a believer.

He knows who God is, and he realizes that he has erred. But notice, Peter says, Your money perish with you. Your money go to ruin with you.

You're on the road to ruin, and you and your money. Okay? Not a synonym for the lake of fire. We're kind of skipping around here, but turn to 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 15.

2 Peter chapter 3. Keep in mind here in 2 Peter 3, he says, Beloved, I'm writing you this second epistle. I want to stir up your pure minds by way of reminder, so that you'll be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the Holy Prophets, the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior. Knowing this, scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own

desires, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

Look down at verse 14, 2 Peter 3. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by him in peace, without spot and blameless. And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord, his patience, his letting human history go forward, is deliverance. Just as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do the rest of the Scriptures.

There are believers who take the words of Paul and twist them around and say things with him that Paul never said, just like they do with the rest of the Scriptures. And they do that, they are untaught and unstable, and they twist Paul's words to their own destruction. The word destruction there is *apolia*, to their own ruin.

The fruit and the result of their life is going to be ruination, it's going to be loss, it's going to be waste. These are believers. It isn't twisting the Scriptures that results in the ruin of unbelievers, it's rejection of Christ, that's what sends us to the lake of fire.

This isn't talking about going to the lake of fire for rejection of Christ. This is talking about, as a believer, twisting Scripture around and making it say something it doesn't say. We see that today.

Bring your tithes into the storehouse, and the windows of heaven will open, and you'll be blessed, and you'll have washing machines, and cars, and dryers, and so forth. People twisting the Scripture to their own ruin. I am sure that these folks on TV are believers, but they are on completely the wrong road, and they're consumed with their own desires, and it's the road to ruin.

What's our point here? This *apolia* ruin is not damnation in the lake of fire. This is a life that results in complete loss, like we saw Friday night in Hebrews chapter 6. If you're a field that God cultivates and rains on, and all you bring up is thorns and brambles, you are fit only for burning and near to a curse. That's the result of your life.

You don't lose your salvation, but the fruit of your life ends in ruin. Like Jesus taught in John 15, if you're a branch and you bear no fruit, you're going to be snapped off and wither up. The result of your life is going to be ruin.

Like Paul told the Corinthians, if your building on the foundation is wood, hay, and stubble, it's all going to be burned, and you will suffer loss, but you'll have your salvation yet so as by fire. It's a consistent picture all the way through Scripture. Remember, you don't necessarily have to turn there.

I'll read it to you. Matthew chapter 7, verse 11 and following. Remember when Jesus said, What father among you, if your children ask you for bread, will you give him a rock or a snake or a

scorpion? If a child comes to you and says, I need food, even as a human being, you're going to give them bread.

Well, in Matthew 7, verse 11, Jesus said, If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to those that ask him? Therefore, anything whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. This is the law and the prophets. Enter in at the straight gate.

Now, the reason I give you that context about the giving of good things and so forth is that Jesus is teaching believers here. He's not presenting the gospel of salvation. He's saying this is how you should live.

Go to your Father and ask. Claim his promises and he will give you bread, not a rock or a stone or a scorpion. If you go to him and ask, he'll give you good things.

And right in the middle of this context in Matthew 7, he says, Strive to enter in at the narrow gate. Now, if the narrow gate is salvation, we've got to strive for our salvation because that's what Jesus said. He says, Strive to enter in at the narrow gate.

It's going to take some effort. It's going to take some perseverance and some endurance on our part to get through that narrow gate. So, do you think that that narrow gate is talking about salvation from the lake of fire? It's not.

This is right in the middle of a section of teaching to believers. And Jesus says to these believers, Strive to enter in at the narrow gate. Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to Apolia, that leads to destruction, that leads to ruin.

And many there be which go in that gate. Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to life and few there be that find it. The very next verse after that, Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.

You shall know them by their fruit. This entire section is addressed to believers. And He tells believers, You've got to strive to enter in at the narrow gate.

There's a broad way and a wide gate that leads to Apolia. And a lot of believers are on that road and are going to end up in ruin. Why do you think the world is so large and Israel is so small? Because in the millennial kingdom, it's not going to need to be very big to contain those who entered in at the narrow gate.

There aren't very many of us that are going to enter that narrow gate. And we will all comfortably fit. Those believers who enter in at the narrow gate, who receive the reward of dwelling in the historical boundaries of Palestine, in the city of Jerusalem, in the presence of Jesus Christ, are going to be few in number and will comfortably fit in those historical geographical limits.

Think about how many Old Testament saints there are that will be resurrected in the millennium. Where are most of them going to live? Outside the land. Because broad is the way and wide is the gate that leads to destruction.

And that's where most of us as believers are. This is the way Apollia is used. Hebrews 10.35. We were just over there in Hebrews 10.

Do not cast away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. Hebrews 10.25. Who is he talking to here? Do not cast away your confidence. Hebrews 10.35. You have need of endurance so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

Is everybody going to receive the promise? No, it's those who endure. Yet a little while and he who is coming will come and will not tarry. The just shall live by faith.

If anyone draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. We are not of those who draw back to perdition, to Apollia. Hebrews 10.25. Those who believe, who are faithful to the delivering of the soul.

I'll give you two final references here. Philippians 3.17. Brethren, guess who that is? Be followers together of me and mark those who walk the way that we walk. Mark those who walk by way of a good example.

Philippians 3.18 says, Many walk of whom I have told you before and I tell you even now, weeping, they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is Apollia. Whose end is destruction. Whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Those are believers who are totally caught up in life in this age and their end is Apollia. You can see that same thing in 2 Peter 2.1. We've seen that. False prophets among the people who bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them.

Who is it that the Lord bought? Believers or unbelievers? They deny the Lord that bought them. Jesus told believers, If you deny me before men, I'll deny you before my father. If you confess me before men, I'll confess you before my father.

It's not a synonym for salvation. It's reward and blessing in the eternal future. 2 Peter 2.1. These false prophets, they deny the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift Apollia.

Swift ruin. Swift loss and waste and destruction. Believers, we as believers can bring upon ourselves swift destruction when we deny the Lord that bought us.

When we go off on some weird tangent, we get consumed by the things of this world. Now, we say all of that to say, as we return to Romans chapter 9, God, wanting to show wrath and to make His power known, has endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath prepared for Apollia. God is enduring the bulk of us who as believers are on the wide road going through the broad

gate that leads to Apollia.

And we as believers are vessels of common use. We are fit only for being common washpots. And God endures the bulk of believers who are disobedient in the same way that He endured the bulk of Israelites who were disobedient and unfaithful for the remnant, for the sake of the remnant, for the sake of the fathers, for the sake of those who partook of the covenant.

God endured the bulk of the Israelites. God preserved Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai with the golden calf for the sake of one man, Moses. God said, look, Moses, I'm going to destroy these people and make a new nation out of you.

Moses interceded. And because of Moses' intercession, God did not destroy the entire nation. He endured with great patience these people of God who were fitted for Apollia, for ruin, so that He could make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.

Not for salvation, for glory. Even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. And we go back to 828.

Those who love God, who are called according to His purpose. He foreknows us. He pre-designates us.

He calls us. He justifies us. He glorifies us.

This is talking about the opportunity that we have as believers to reflect the glory of God. This entire chapter is talking about the difference between in that wide spectrum of believers. Most of us, and you look around us today, where are most believers? Are we pursuing righteousness by faith, or are we pursuing it by works? Are we pursuing an understanding of Scripture, or are we pursuing experience? Pursuing material things.

Pursuing justification in the eyes of people. Pursuing whatever it is we pursue. Narrow is the way, and straight is the gate that leads to life, and few there be that find it.

There's only going to be a few believers that have access to the heavenly city, that have access to Jerusalem, have access to Jesus Christ, His immediate personal presence. Many of us have eternal life, but few of us are the called and the chosen. Many are called, few are chosen.

Why is that? It's our choice. And it demonstrates God's purpose in choosing. God's purpose in choosing is to make a single point.

We are accountable for our attitudes. We are accountable for our choice. If we choose rightly, God will bless and reward.

If we choose wrongly, God will discipline. God will judge. God will destroy.

God will ruin those who disregard and dishonor Him. Peter says these people who, these false prophets who bring in, they bring disrepute on the gospel. They bring disrepute to the name of God in the same way that the Old Testament Israelites did.

We have a calling, and we're responsible for the outcome based on our choice. This life is not, the purpose of it is not just to get by. It's not to pay the bills at the end of the month.

It's not to get along reasonably well with people and have some measure of stimulation and some measure of pleasure. We're here for a purpose. We're here to fulfill the calling of God, and it makes a big difference.

Paul says, Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him, those who honor Him, who respond to His calling. We have no idea what's on the line. If we got even a glimpse of what God has prepared for us, if we're faithful and if we endure and if we pursue His calling, everybody would get with the program.

We'd say, My goodness, look at the reward at the end of this path. So what if I suffer a little? So what if I'm in disrepute a little bit? Look at the payoff at the end. But because we disregard God's way, we don't see it and we don't realize it, and we fool ourselves.

Christianity today says what everyone wants to hear. Oh, it's all a great table of manna at the end of the rainbow when Jesus returns. We're all going to be honored.

We're all going to rule. We're all going to be blessed. It's all going to be grand.

We're all going to be up on the top rung of the ladder in God's eternal future. That's not what Scripture teaches. Consistently, Scripture says, God will honor those who honor Him.

And it is not enough to simply be saved. God has a purpose for us, and we're accountable for the choices we make in that regard. It's going to make a huge difference.

And Satan has successfully obscured this and has lulled us as believers into a false sense of security. And people are busy trying to pray off Satan and pray to bind Satan and to keep Satan from messing up the circumstances of their life. And they think that they've succeeded when they carry off a prayer meeting or they carry off some other mundane circumstance of life when, in fact, Satan has totally won the victory by obscuring the issue and by defeating us, by distracting us and giving us false objectives and a false idea of what constitutes success as believers.

He has succeeded for the bulk of believers because the bulk of us don't understand our calling and don't understand what's on the line and we miss fulfilling God's purpose. We are here for no other reason than to demonstrate God's purpose in choosing. And it's up to us to take advantage of that opportunity and respond so that God can bless us.

And in receiving that blessing, we glorify Him. Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank You for the terrific opportunity that You have put before us.

We thank You for the clarity of the truth that You've put in Your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us of these things. We pray that we will be constantly aware of the importance not of what we do, but of what we think, the priorities and our desire to honor You in our hearts.

We pray that as a result of these things, we will fulfill Your calling and Your purpose for us. We pray that as a result, our Savior Jesus Christ will be glorified. We ask it in His name.

Amen.