***The Times and the Fullness of the Gentiles
RO148-02***

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The topic today is "The God of Kindness and Severity," segment number two. We are looking at a Romans 11:22-24.

**God's Love**

Before Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, their relationship to God was based entirely on His love for them. From the love of God came two perfect people living in a perfect environment. All of the material, social, and spiritual needs of Adam and Eve were satisfied from God's love toward them. God does not love sin. And as long as Adam and Eve were sinless, God's love was able to flow freely and generously to them. God's love can only be directed toward perfection which is compatible to His Holiness. In their sinless state of perfection, Adam and Eve were in the best of all worlds, engulfed by God's love, and in a state of maximum happiness.

**God's Justice and Grace**

They did not face, at that point in time, the justice of God, because justice deals with demands of satisfaction for sin. They did not deal with the grace of God, at that point in time, because grace and mercy toward those who are in need, but don't deserve to be helped. But once Adam and Eve had sinned, by eating of the forbidden tree, they were immediately cut off from the blessings that flowed from God's grace. Now their picture radically changed. Their point of contact now was no longer with the love of God. Their point of contact with him now was His justice, which imposed spiritual and physical death on both of them. Their point of contact now with God came to be the need for the grace of God to save them from eternal death in hell. The pipeline of divine blessings from the love of God, which had flowed so freely up to the point of their sinning, now was clogged by sin. The justice of God demands that the blessings of God be directed only toward the absolute righteousness of God. Since sinful Adam and Eve lacked absolute righteousness, God's love had no target in them to bless them. Consequently, love could not do its job for them. God's love, never blesses a person unless God's justice is satisfied toward that individual. And that's the summary statement of all of this introduction. And you must remember that statement. God's love never blesses a person unless God's justice is satisfied for that individual. That is true about the unbeliever; and, it is true about the believer.

In Romans 11:22, Paul points out that God is just in that He acts in both kindness and severity. The general public does not think of God as a God who is both kind and stern. But the Bible says that because God is justice (He is absolutely fair), He is both kind and He is severe, depending on the situation. He acts in love toward those who are not in violation of His justice. He acts in severity toward those who are violating His justice. For the unsaved, the justice of God is satisfied by accepting Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior.

**Accepting Jesus Christ as Savior**

So, 1 John 2:2 tells us that God has been satisfied toward the sins of the world. John 3:16 tells us that those who accept this Savior will have that satisfaction of the justice of God applied to their accounts, and they will go to heaven.

**Confession of Sin**

On the other hand, for those of you who are Christians, the justice of God is satisfied when you confess your sins, which is indicated in 1 John 1:9, that tells us that if we do confess those things, He will forgive us. His justice is satisfied then by our admitting our error.

1 Peter 1:15 also indicates that God is holy, and that we must be related to Him as those who also are walking in holiness. Once justice is satisfied, in either case (in the case of the believer, or in the case of the unbeliever), then the love of God is free to pour out blessings toward the target of absolute righteousness which is in the person. Until God places absolute righteousness in you, and God's justice is satisfied, both in terms of eternity, and remains satisfied in terms of time, his love cannot pour out His blessings upon you. The rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior thus divine severity upon the Jews, so that they were removed from the tree of blessings in the Abrahamic covenant that God's love wanted to share and to pour upon them. They (the Jews) fell from the grace of God in both internal and temporal blessings. We have seen that in Romans 10:3-4.

**Eternal Security**

Today, the Jews are still in this cut off position from God's blessing. The acceptance, on the other hand, of Jesus Christ as Savior, brought God's kindness (or love) upon the gentiles by grafting them into the tree of salvation, blessings, promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. The gentiles received the grace of God in both eternal and temporal blessings. The eternal blessings of salvation from the love of God cannot be lost, since the death of Christ on the cross has permanently satisfied the justice of God on that issue. So, you don't have to worry about satisfying the justice of God once you have accepted Christ, because that has been done. For that reason, we saw, in Romans 8:1, that there is no condemnation ever again for a believer.

**Confession is to God only**

The temporal of blessings of the believer, however, are another question. And that's the direction in which this verse is moving. The temporal blessings of a believer can be lost unless God's justice continues to be satisfied by the confession of known sense to God the Father. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. He is God the Father. You do not run around confessing your sins to people. You do not stand up and foul up the whole congregation, in their thinking and their walk with God, because you have fallen into grievous sin, and you want to get up and confess it to them. I realize that you have been exposed by the public media, and the religious programmers, by repeated declarations that that is the way to do it when one is in some kind of vile sin. You stand up and make public confession of that. There is no such thing in the Bible, and all you do is extend the destructive effects of what you may have fallen into. So, we hope that you will understand that, when we say that the justice of God must be satisfied by you, relative to your sins in time, it is satisfying the justice of God by talking to him about it.

I do not appreciate the periodic expression that I get from people who suddenly give me a phone call (somebody that I haven't seen in years), and they now want to confess something to me, because they went around saying that they thought my ears were too big, and that they looked like they were flapping in the wind. And they wanted to confess it to me, and I couldn't care less. You wouldn't believe the things that people want to tell me that they're sorry for. And they are sorry, in my estimate, for telling me that, because I don't care. I'm not interested in having you bring up something that makes me think ill of you. I don't like to think that about people.

So, important to understand this principle – that God forgives when His justice is satisfied by your confession to Him. And that's the first thing that 1 John 1:9 tells us. Please do not listen to the popular preachers on television, who tell you that certain categories of immorality that must be confessed publicly. The confessing is to God, as David, in Psalm 51, said, "To You, and You only have I sinned." And it is to God that the confession is made.

So, if the Christin does not maintain this temporal fellowship, he will indeed be cut off from blessings in time as was as the Jew. The whole problem revolves around believing God's Word, and taking appropriate actions accordingly. Paul now points out that positive volition response to the Word of God, in fact, will open the door of new hope for the Jew to be restored to God's blessings.

So, in Romans 11:22, we found that God is both kind and severe, and that His justice is satisfied on both accounts. And the gentiles are complimented for the fact that they did believe the Word of God, in contrast to the Jews, so they have come under the blessings of God. But at the end of the verse, Paul says, "Watch yourself, because you too can be cut off from God's blessing." What does he mean?

Well, I've just indicated to you that God's justice, relative to your salvation, and relative to your eternal destiny, has been satisfied permanently by Jesus Christ. Romans 8:1 says, "There's now no condemnation to those who are in Christ." You cannot again be lost. But what he is talking about is that you can be cut off from the blessings of your day-by-day life – in your daily walk with God. And that is a very important subject.

So, we begin today with the hope that the Jews have in Romans 11:23-24. Paul says, "And they also," referred to these unbelieving Jews: "If they abide not still in unbelief." The word "if" is the word "ean" in the Greek Bible. And when we see this word for it, we know this is third-class. That indicates to us that we are dealing with one of those issues that says, "Maybe you will; and, maybe you won't." So, he says, "If any Jew does" (he may not – he may; or, he may not). But if a Jew does, something very dramatic is going to happen if he does trust in Christ. If he does change his mind, something very wonderful will happen. If he changes his mind about what? About "abiding" in something. The Greek word looks like this: "epimeno." And all the word "meno" ordinarily means "to abide." When you throw on this little preposition "epi," it means really staying in there. It's an emphatic word for a Jew stubbornly staying in his attitude of unbelief toward Jesus Christ.

So, Paul says, "If it may be possible that some Jew will change his mind on his own action, and he will change his mind about what? About his own belief. The Greek word is "apistia." And this refers to his attitude toward Jesus Christ as the Messiah Savior. The idea is: "If a Jew should trust in Jesus Christ for salvation." If he should depart from his unbelief, then something wonderful can happen to him; namely, he shall be grafted in. The word "grafted" looks like this: "egkentrizo." "Egkentrizo" means "to be reinserted" into something. Here, it is to be reinserted into the divine olive tree of blessing. This is in the future tense, which tells us that, at anytime in the future, a Jew may upon Jesus Christ and says, "I'm wrong. He is the Savior. He has all the credentials. And I will trust Him as my Messiah Savior." He makes his personal act of faith. Then something will happen again for him. He will be grafted back into the tree of God's blessing.

When he does this, he returns to what was his right in the first place. And Paul says that this is not something that we should be amazed that. For he says that: "God is able to graft them in again. The word is "dunatos," which refers to the power of God. This indicates that God has a capacity to be able to do something through His omnipotence, and He is justified in doing it.

Now, in the world of horticulture, you can't do this. You can't go breaking off a branch, and then, later on, take it, and put it back into the tree, especially after the thing has been cast aside, and it's dead – you don't put it back in. So, here again, God is talking about what is obviously the power of God to do something. And that's why anybody, following this analogy of grafting in and grafting out, will have a little bit of reservation. So, Paul says, "It might bother you to think about this in that way, but I assure you that God is able to do this." What he is telling us is that God is going to put the Jews back again into the place of blessing that he properly deserves.

**At the Second Coming of Christ**

When is this going to happen for the Jewish people? This is going to happen at the Second Coming of Christ – when He comes again to this earth.

**Dominion Theology**

And this is very important that we stress this once more. And I'm going to take the time to read a few verses in your hearing, because the battle is mounting out there, in the theological world, about the Jewish people. The whole vast array of amillennial seminaries and churches are gearing up to resist and to fight the idea that the Jewish people have a future. They are calling it Dominion Theology – that God wants us (we Christians) to be in a dominant position, and to take charge of our society. Well, indeed, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were told to exercise dominion over the world that God had given them.

However, you will also remember that once they sinned, somebody else was put in charge. The Bible says that Satan is now the God of this world, meaning that he has dominion. We, as sinful human beings have lost control of our world. Therefore, we have to operate within the devil's world, not our world – not one over which we will ever have dominion. We operate in the devil's world, according to the principles of the Word of God. That's why the moral code of the Ten Commandments applies to believer and unbelievers, because it is a way of preserving freedom and life within the devil's world. And when a society operates on those principles, the society can prosper in spite of the fact that Satan runs the system, and owns the world, and the kingdoms of this world.

Jeremiah 23:5-8: "'Behold, the days come,' says the Lord, 'that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and the kings shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness (that's talking about Jesus Christ). In His day, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely. And this is His name whereby He shall be called: 'The Lord, our righteousness' (the Jehovah Yahweh, our absolute righteousness). Therefore, behold, the day is come,' says the Lord, 'that they shall no more say, 'The Lord lives, Who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' but: 'The Lord lives, Who brought up and who led the seed that the house of Israel, out of the country, and from all countries to which I have driven them, and they shall dwell in their own land.'"

Now here is a prediction that God Himself has made. It has never been fulfilled. The Jews now look back, and think how wonderful it was that God brought them back out of the land of slavery, into the land of promise: out of Egypt: and, back to Palestine. But this Scripture (verse 8) says that the time will come when the Jews will not look back to that as the frame of reference. But they will look back and rejoice how God brought them back from being scattered all over the face of the earth – back to their own land. Now, you tell me when the Jewish people been brought back to their own land from all over the world. Some of them are in their land, but most of them are scattered over the nations of the world to this day. We have a future prediction here. Now, is God kidding us, or is this true?

Paul says that they're going to be grafted back in. Here are the prophets describing that very event. Jeremiah 30:7-11: "Alas, for that day is great, so that no one is like it. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." This is describing the period of the tribulation – the seven years of hell on earth that the Jewish people will experience. This is the time of Jacob's trouble, but God says that the Jews are going to survive. Not all of them, but some of them are going to survive: "'For it shall come to pass in that day,' says the Lord of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers shall no more enslave them.'" God says, "I'm going to break the back of the antichrist, and I will free you from his grasp: "But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them." David will be resurrected to rule over the people in the Millennial Kingdom: "'Therefore, fear not, O My servant Jacob,' says the Lord, 'neither be dismayed, O, Israel. For lo, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. And Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.'"

When have Jews ever been in their land where they haven't been afraid? Would you say that that's their condition today? Do you see the problem that the amillennialist has? He's talking foolishness. He's telling us that all this has been fulfilled.

Verse 11: "For I am with you,' says the Lord, 'to save you, though I make a full end of all nations to which I have scattered you. Yet, I will not make a full end of you. But I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished.'" God says, "Yes, I'm going to correct you. Yes, I'm going to punish you. But I'm going to tell you right now, Israel, when I'm through with you, you're going to be back in your land. You're going to be back in the olive tree of blessing.

Paul knew what he was talking about because Paul knew what God had promised to do. The amillennials are wrong. The Dominion Theology boys are all fouled up. Ezekiel 20:33-40 reinforce that same promise: "As I live,' says the Lord God, 'surely, with a mighty hand; with an outstretched arm; and, with fury poured out, I will rule over you. And I will bring you out from all the peoples, and gather you out of the countries in which you are scattered, with a mighty hand; with an outstretched arm; and, with fury poured out.'" God has never regathered the Jews. You know that; I know that; and the amillennialists should know that too: "'And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and they I will enter into judgment with you face-to-face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you,' says the Lord God." God, at the end of the tribulation, will gather all the Jews into a secluded place, and He will judge them one-by-one. Those who are born again at the end of the tribulation will go into the millennium. Those who are not born again will be put to death. And that's what he's talking about here. But He's telling us the conditions when they will be reinserted into the olive tree of blessing.

Verse 37 tells about putting to death those who are the rebels: "'And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. And I will that from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me. I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord. As for you, O house of Israel,' thus says the Lord God, 'go serve everyone his idols, and hereafter also, if you will not hearken unto Me, but pollute My Holy Name no more with your gifts and with your idols. For in My Holy Mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel,' says the Lord God, 'there shall all the house of Israel, all of those in the land, serve Me. There I will accept them. There I will require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things.'" God says, "Go ahead. Keep serving your false gods. Bear the consequence (as indeed they did). Lose your blessing." But God says, "I'm going to bring some of you back, and you're going to be back in My family, and back in My tree, and you will be back worshiping Me, and not your idols.:

Ezekiel 37:21-25 adds to that: "And say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God. Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations to which they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king to them all. And they shall be no more two nations. Neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms anymore at all. Neither shall they defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions. But I will save them out of their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them, so they will be My people, and I will be their God. And David, My servant, shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall also walk in My ordinances, and observe My statues, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob, my servant, in which your fathers have dwelt. And they shall dwell in it: even they and their children and their children's children forever. And My servant David shall be their prince forever.'"

There again, you have a clear promise that God is going to give the land of Palestine back to the Jews. He has already started doing that. And there again, at the height of their return blessing, David will be their king, ruling over them.

How is it going to be brought about? I'll give a little clarification of that picture near the end of the Old Testament. In Zechariah 12:6, the prophet Zechariah says, "In that day, I will make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the woods, and like a torch of fire in a sheath." He says, "I'm going to make the ruler of Judah come on fire: "And they shall devour all the peoples roundabout, on the right hand, and on the left hand. And Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, in Jerusalem." The Jews are going to return to the holy city of Jerusalem, and they're going to burn up anybody who tries to keep them from it. They've already started doing that: And the Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, and the glory of the house of David. And the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah." It'll be very dangerous to resist the Jewish people: "In that day, the Lord shall defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And he that is feeble among them at that day shall be like David. And the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them." There will be supernatural power to the Jews and to the nations. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." That's the last thing that Jesus Christ is going to do when He returns. At the Second Coming, He will destroy the nations who have risen in war (in battle) against Israel.

Finally, verse 10 says, "And I will pour upon the house of David (the Jewish people), and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look upon Me, Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." The Jewish people will turn their eyes toward Jesus Christ, in Whose side is the spear wound. And they say, "There is the One. We sent Him to the cross; the Romans pierced His side. He was our true Messiah. And certainly, in a day, a nation of Jews will be born-again believers once more trusting in Christ. And you know that that has never happened.

Finally, Zechariah 14:4: When the Lord does come back, here is what it will be like: "And His speech will stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the East. And the Mount of Olives shall cleave in its midst, toward the east and toward the West. And there shall be a very great valley. And half the mountain shall we moved toward the north, and half of it toward the south." We are told that there is a fault line in the Mount of Olives, and an earthquake is all that it will take to split the thing open. And that is going to happen when the feet of Jesus touch the Mount of Olives, from whence He departed into heaven.

So, I think that we must say that any rational person who reads the Old Testament with integrity, and without trying to squeeze it into some preconceived theological position, must say that the Old Testament prophets, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, made it very clear that God was going to bring terrible chastisement upon the Jewish people. He's going to wrench them him out of all the blessings that the Abrahamic covenant open to them. He's going to remove them from His love. But the time will come when they all come back. They are going to be put back into the olive tree of blessing. And this concept today, that what God wants is for us to prosper, and to find that the Americans become the people who dominate the world with righteousness and integrity – all of that is fine, and well, and good, but that is not a biblical view of the condition of life today, or where God is moving. God is moving this world toward its disaster, so that out of it, He can bring prosperity for the Jewish people. So, God indeed is able to do this?

Then in Romans 11:24, Paul points out the reasonableness of the re-grafting of the Jews. He says, "For, if you were kept out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature." This "if" is first-class condition: yes, you were. You were cut out, as we have seen before. You gentiles were growing in an uncultivated olive tree. And the word "cut out" is the Greek word "ekopto." He says, "You gentiles were removed from a wild tree (you were a wild shoot). And you were taken out, contrary to nature, you were grafted into a good olive tree.

**Grafting**

The natural process of grafting is to take a good shoot from a good tree. You take a shoot from a cultivated tree, and you insert it into a wild tree. That's the natural process. Here the opposite is done. A wild gentile shoot is grafted onto a cultivated tree. That's exactly backwards. But here again, he's saying that God is able to do the impossible.

So, what he is saying is: "If you gentiles were cut out of the olive tree, which was wild by nature (you were a natural, wild olive tree), and. contrary to the natural horticultural processes, you were put into a good olive tree, how much more can we expect the opposite to be done; namely, that these Jews, who have been cut out, who belonged in that tree in the first place, who are the natural branches, will be granted back into their own olive tree again? This is just a little sequence of logic the Paul is saying. He said it should not be wildly foreign to your thinking to believe that these people could be brought back into that which was their natural place in the first place, since God has omnipotence to do all these things.

So, what's he talking about? He is talking about, and warning here, these gentiles of a time that is coming which will terminate gentile superiority. And this interests us, as gentiles, and as Christians very much. And the time is coming when the Jew is going to be returned to the place of blessing, and indeed to the place of superiority in this world. And I read you several Scriptures from the Old Testament, and I remind you that this is just a few out of many, many, many Old Testament Scriptures (vast portions of Old Testament Scriptures) that describe what God is someday going to do for the Jewish people in this Millennial Kingdom on earth. The good times are going to roll for the Jews again. The good times are now rolling for the gentiles. The point is that God says, "Be careful. I've pulled the Jew out of the good times, and I'm going to pull you out of the good times at a certain point as well, for the same reason: unbelief (that "apistia")." They say, "I will not believe the Word of God and act upon it.

**The Times of the Gentiles**

The gentiles' period of opportunity in the tree of blessing is called, in the Bible, a phrase you that should become acquainted with. It's called in the Bible: "the times of the gentiles." This is a definite period of time on the face of the earth. This expression is found in Luke 21:24. This is the era in human history which began with the conquest of Israel by the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar. And it's going to be terminated at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to this earth. Daniel 2:34-35 and Daniel 2:44 describe this condition and this termination. Revelation 19:11 and Revelation 11:21 also describe this termination of the era of the times of the gentiles.

During the times of the gentiles, the gentile nations are in domination over the Jewish people. And the city of Jerusalem is under the powerful influence, if not outright control, of the gentile nations. Today, the city of Jerusalem is back in Jewish hands. That doesn't mean a thing. We who know Bible prophecy know that the antichrist (one of the last of the great gentile rulers) is going to come along and jerk the city right out from under them. And he is again going to dominate.

So, the times of the gentiles have not ended. It is the still the era of gentile blessings opportunity in the tree of God's olive tree of blessings. During the times of the gentiles, God is gathering to Himself a royal body of saints called the church. This was indicated, for example, in Acts 15:14, where we read. "Simeon has declared how God first did visit the gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name," referring to the incident in the house of Cornelius when Peter brought the gospel to them, and they believed. And they saw that God was starting to take a special group of people out from among the mass of human beings.

**The Fullness of the Gentiles**

During the times of the gentiles, God is gathering to Himself a special group of people called the church, the body of Christ. It is totally distinct from Israel. When this purpose of having the gentiles in the olive tree of blessing is completed, which is to gather the church body – when this objective is reached, it is called "the fullness of the gentiles." This term is found in Romans 11:25 and it is described the Ephesians 1:22-23. "The fullness of the gentiles" means that the body of Christ is completed.

So, here are two terms that you should be acquainted with. One is "the times of the gentiles," from the time Nebuchadnezzar stormed in and took over the Jewish nation, until the time that Jesus Christ returns from heaven the second time and conquers the antichrist. "The fullness of the gentiles" is from the day of Pentecost until the rapture of the church, after the last person in the body of Christ that is supposed to be in there. Then the fullness of the gentiles will be completed in the tree of blessing, and they will be taken out to heaven. With the completion of the church, the gentiles are then removed from the olive tree of blessing, and Israel is again reinserted. So, this is the condition of the gentile in the tree of blessing – to form the body of Christ.

Now, during the period of the times of the gentiles, there has been a devotion to the Word of God. And when that has happened, there has been great blessing upon gentile nations. Indeed, the descendants of Japheth have mightily prospered under the spiritual benefits of the descendants of Shem, just as Noah predicted. But as the gentiles abandoned God and the Bible, they bring about their own removal from the tree of blessing.

**Christendom Today**

So, where are we today? Take a look at Christendom; churches; religious groups; TV evangelists; para-church groups; and, the whole scene out there. Call that Christendom. It has to do with Christianity and the Bible. Today, Christendom is filled with false religious teachers who are becoming wealthy on the gullibility; the greed for prosperity; and, upon manipulating the emotions of people. I don't have to take time to expound today on the examples that we are seen currently, brought to our attention in the public media, of religious leaders who are false teachers, and who, at the same time, are supported by huge numbers of people with vast material prosperity.

**The Doctrines of Demons**

The doctrines of demons and the traditions of men are now being taught as the Word of God. 1 Timothy 4:1 and Colossians 2:8 indicate that that's exactly what would happen – the traditions of men. Human reason toward religious matters would be exalted. The doctrines of demons would be exalted as the truth. And Shirley MacLaine is right out there in the forefront of everyone, because she believe she has been called to convey a special message from "the masters of wisdom." Translate that as "the demons." And she is out there, bringing to us the enlightenment of the doctrines of demons.

Well, the Bible says that Christendom, as it approaches the time when the gentiles are ready to be snapped off the tree of blessing – this is what's going to happen. Today, emotions, experience, and human reason are elevated above the doctrines of Scripture, and seeking the mind of God. How do you want to find what God wants you to do? "Well, it's how I feel about it." Well, how do I find what God wants me to do? "Well, it's the experience I had. I had this marvelous experience, and God told me this is what He wanted me to do, through this experience. Or, I sit, and I reason my way." After all, Thomas Aquinas, a great doctor of the church, told us that the mind was not affected by the fall: "My mind is one of the purest, cleanest, best minds I know of. And I can reason my way to the God who is up there."

Laugh at it if you will. But this is what people are doing. They're following their emotions, their experiences; and, their reason. Visions of material prosperity are preached as the Christian's right, and that it is God's will for him to be prosperous, if only he releases his faith. That is Dominion Theology again. You see the guy out of Carrollton here. He is a wonder. I'm fascinated by him, as I listen to his con program, and his telling people that they've got to release their faith. Finally, the people asked, "Well, how do I do that?" He said, "I'm glad you asked that. I'm going to tell you." And there we are, right through the television screen, carrying this on: "Send your offering – not what you can afford, but what you can't, so that it is an act of faith. God is going to help you to survive after you have sent me the $1,000 check." People say, "I'll do it, because he said that will give you 30-fold; 40-fold; or, 100-fold return. That's a good deal.' This is Oral Roberts' seed faith-planting technique. And I sit there and say, "You cannot be serious. You won't get enough money to stay on this program."

However, I grew up visiting in Chicago; turn the TV on; and, this guy from Carrollton, speaking in tongues ever now and then, and pitching the same thing. He's everywhere because, for every hour he's on, he can expect on the average that 44,000 people will respond to him with money. That's big dough. And this is Christendom today. Who is sounding for the Word of God? And who is paying attention to those who are sounding forth the essentials and the truth about security, and giving people a right perspective on their wealth and their material situation? Religion is seeking today to lead people to heaven via rituals; sacraments; and, human good works, and even promising a second chance in purgatory, if you shouldn't make it the first time around. The gentiles are now cut off from the Bible, so they have become bigoted, arrogant, materialistic, immoral, and blind to all spiritual realities. In 2 Timothy 4:3-4, Paul told us that that's exactly what was going to happen – precisely what we could have expected.

Self-righteousness now assumes that it has a claim on God and eternal life in heaven without going through Jesus Christ. That's the world in which we live today. Self-righteousness says that I could get there without him.

**Narrow is the Gate that Leads to Heaven**

It is interesting to observe that Matthew 7:13-14 tell us that the way into heaven is a very restricted way: "Enter in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction (that is, to hell), and many there be who go that way (most of them), because narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way which leads into life, and few there be that find it." Why is the gate into heaven so narrow? What is the gate into heaven?

Turn to John 10:9. And if the Bible is true, you cannot dismiss this. Jesus says, "I am the door (I am the gate). By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved. He shall go in and out, and find pastures." Jesus says that you cannot go into heaven except through a very narrow gate. Who is that gate? Jesus Christ. You cannot go to heaven except through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it says, "That the way is very narrow. It is not a broad highway. It is a narrow way because there are not many people on it.

What is the way into eternal life? John 14:6 gives us that answer: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes unto the Father but by Me." So, Jesus is not only the gate into eternal life, but He is the very pathway that you must follow.

All this is a gift from God's grace. Now, what are we doing in the world today? Not this. We're being told that all of you can go to heaven. Sometimes I listen on Sunday mornings, briefly, to the religious round table of the air. A Roman Catholic father sits there; a Jewish rabbi sits there; a Baptist sits there; and a couple of other Protestants sit there; and, a Salvation Army man was on there this morning. And they're all discussing religious subjects. And I told Mrs. Danish this morning that they were talking about the subject of lying. Is there ever ant justification for not telling the truth, and so on? And not once, in the whole time, did any of them go to the Bible about the subject. The Catholic priest said, "I believe it's wrong to lie because the Ten Commandments express natural law." However, the Ten Commandments express God's Law and God's righteousness. Indeed, he was on target in saying that it applies to everybody, but nobody ever brought up, even though I kept yelling at the television set, "What about Rahab?" She lied about the direction that the Jewish spies took, so that the people of Jericho, who were out to get them, would go in the opposite direction. And God said, "You're coming to heaven. Furthermore, I'm putting you in the line of the descendants of Jesus Christ. Through you will be born the Savior of the world." So, how do you like those bananas for a girl who didn't tell the truth? Well, I don't want to get into that, but I can't figure out where the Bible fits into society today.

Even when you're sitting at a round table with religious leaders, they don't ever go back to the Bible and say, "Well, here's the answer; here's the answer; and, here's the perspective. Gentiles are cut off from that. Self-righteousness assumes that it has a claim on God and eternal life. And those fellas sitting around the table all believe that they're all going to heaven in their own way.

**Eastern Mysticism and Charismatics**

The doctrines of Eastern mysticism are propagating the idea of the innate deity of man, and the progress upward through reincarnation. And I need not remind you that the charismatics are throwing out there the promise of miracles. So, they're sending people out, chasing after the rabbits of tongue-speaking and miracle healings. The crazies are running amuck in Christendom today. And all of this is preparatory to the fact that the gentile is going to be broken off. This is what Paul is warning about. They're going to lose their place of blessing. The Jew is going to be reinserted into the place of blessing again.

**You will know the False Prophets by their Fruits**

I want you to turn, as we close today, to Matthew 7. Here we have a very serious passage of Scripture from the Lord Jesus, warning against the false teachers in Christendom, which you and I most certainly take to heart. in Matthew 7, just after verse 13-14, which we just read, about how narrow is the gate into heaven, and how narrow is the path; mainly, Jesus Christ alone, we come to verse 15. It says, "Beware of false prophets (false teachers) who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves (ferocious wolves). You shall know them by their fruits." Then He goes on, having set that principle: you're going to know the false ones, to put you on guard, by their fruits. What does that mean to you? What does it mean that you will know somebody by his fruits?

He goes on to expand the analogy here by saying, "Do men gather grapes of thorns, of figs of thistles existence? (No.) Even so, a good tree brings forth good food, but a corrupt tree brings forth bad fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit. Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." The tree here is the speaker; the preacher; and, the prophet. Every tree that brings not forth good food is hewn down to cast into the fire: "Wherefore (He gets back to His basic premise again) by their fruits, you shall know them." How are you going to know the false teacher? You'll know them by their fruits.

**False Teachers**

Now, you and I, as believers, must protect our blessings from God in the tree of God's blessing by recognizing false teachers who are misrepresenting the mind of God. These false teachers are parading as sheep in the family of God (as believers). And, in fact, they might even be believers. The false teachers are, however, in fact, whether they're believers or not – they're ravenous wolves that are ready to eat you up. They're ready to prosper and profit by you, and they are leading you away from God's place of blessing. These false teachers may even be believers who are under Satan's control. They're self-deluded about the truth.

Now, their identifying mark, whatever their condition is, is that we would know that by their fruits. You are prone to look at this and say, "What is fruit?" Well, that's how they live. That's what they do. And that is wrong. And I want to clarify that today. Do not fall into the trap of saying, "I can spot the false teacher by what he does."

One of the most devastating false teachers is a Korean named Yonggi Cho in Korea, who has a church membership of 500,000 people. He spends hours a day in prayer, and he has his people broken up into groups where they spend vast quantities of time in prayer. What may we conclude concerning this man? Is prayer a good thing? You betcha. Is vast time spent in prayer valuable? You betcha. Is this the thing that the Word of God tells us to do? You bet it does. Is this man a false teacher? You bet he is, because it is this same man who has widely propagated the idea that, by visualizing what you want to be; visualizing what you want to possess; and, visualizing where you want to go in life, you're going to get there. He says that there is an omnipotence (an innate deity) in man that just needs to be turned loose. That is a serious false doctrine. And this passage is dealing with teaching – not with living. The fruits that He's speaking of here are the message. That's how you identify the false teacher.

One of our ladies today came up and asked me if I had watched Kenneth Copeland on TV this morning, and I hadn't. She said, "Well, he went through all the pitch and all the routine, and then ended with leading people in visualization to get out of life what they want." All of the things that people may recommend to people to do, that are in the Bible, that we would accept as desirable, is countered by the fact that he has taught one serious, false doctrine in visualization, let alone all its charismatic teachings that are false. Therefore, he is a false teacher. It is not whether he is a good moral person, as fruits that we will decide this. It is his teaching. As you can see by this context here, the Lord is telling us that we are going to know these people by their fruits. And how is that confirmed? Well, it's confirmed in the very next section there. Verses 21-23 say, "Not everyone that says unto Me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father who is in heaven." What is the will of His Father? John says, "It is to trust in Christ as personal Savior. This is the will of God for you:" "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord Lord, have we not prophesied it Your Name, and in Your Name cast out demons, and in Your Name done many miracles?' And then I will profess unto them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me who work iniquity."

Here, Jesus Christ is indicating clearly that these people have been false teachers. You could not have faulted them for their fruits. They were healing people. They were performing miracles. They were casting demons out. And they were doing it in Jesus' Name, telling the Lord that He has the credit for it. And they were calling Him Lord. They were recognizing His superiority.

Do you see why the Bible says that, in the end times, these people will be so slick that even those who are genuine believers are going to have a hard time distinguishing who's in and who's really out. This would have been a tough group to be associated with, I think, in view of the demonstration of what was going on. Only with the reference point of doctrine would you have been able to see that these were false teachers, and they were teaching people what was not true; and, at very vital, critical points, to the eternal destruction of these people.

**The Message**

Furthermore, note what comes next to you Christians? What kind of a foundation are you building your life on? What false teacher are you listening to out in Christendom? What Oral Roberts are you listening to the seed plot (the money-seed principle) such that you're being suckered into, that is building your house (your life) upon sand – your service to God which is going to be judged? And what this is talking about is the kind of a life that you, as a Christian, are living here. This has nothing to do with your eternal life. This is how you are living as a Christian: "Therefore, whosoever hears these sayings of Mine." Do you see what He's talking about: "by fruit?" That is the message. What Jesus Christ has taught is true doctrine? "And does them." You have to not only a hearer, but, as James says, also a doer: "I will like him unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock (a good foundation – the Word of God). And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

Oral Roberts came, and Copeland came, and Yonggi Cho came, and Robert Schuller came, and all the positive-thinking boys came back. They all came, and they kept hitting against this Christian's life. And the Christian didn't snap. The Christian didn't bite. The Christian was not impressed by Norman Vincent Peale. He understood that these were false prophets, and that they were bringing a lying testimony which was not compatible with the Word of God.

Verse 26: "And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof." That kind of a Christian becomes a sucker, and he loses his eternal rewards.

So, the identifying mark here of the false teacher is that he is teaching what is contrary to the principles of doctrine. If you do not know what the Word of God teaches, you can't make that judgment. A false teacher, yes, often prays a lot. He promotes works of mercy for the sick and needy. And he has a huge following. He will have pictures of himself with a huge auditorium filled with people as far as you can see. And the guy is just as false a teacher as he can be, at some critical point. The charismatic are a prime example of this. He emotes a great deal about God. He'll pull his handkerchief out, and he'll begin weeping right there in the service, and honking his nose. He zealously praises God repeatedly. Yes, and sometimes they're not all playing hanky-panky. Some of them are even very moral. They sponsored big programs of all kinds of activities that people love. And they have an abundance of financial supporters. They think that if God is pouring money in like that, what you're doing certainly must be from God. Tell that to the apostle Paul, who had to go back, and sow, and make tents, so that he could have enough to eat.

By the context of Matthew 7, the fruit refers to the message of the false teacher. And this same teacher may teach you many things which may be true. You have to watch the zingers at the critical point. That is the error. The message is not compatible with true doctrine and its essentials. The false teachings are the bad fruit which will rob the unbeliever of the blessing of salvation, and will rob the Christians the blessing of his rewards in heaven. People who know Bible doctrine, thus, are able to spot the false teachers who do not speak for God, no matter how glamorous they may appear – their fame and the devotion that they express, or the wealth that surrounds them. You know it is that wealth and success that gets people every time. Their natural inclination is to think that that must be where God is working.

The Jews were cut off from blessing because they listened to false doctrine about Jesus Christ. The gentiles today are repeating the same mistake. The consequence for some of those listening to the false teachers was ending up in hell, as we saw in Matthew 7 here, where Jesus said, "I never knew you." The consequence for Christians who are listening to false teachers is wasting their whole life so that the rewards in eternity are forever lost to them. And that's the person who has built his house upon the sand.

So, what has happened? Well, what the apostle Paul is saying, and what the Scriptures are confirming, is that God has warned us gentiles to expect religious teachers to come to us who will try to con us with smooth, loving words. And, in the process, they will become wealthy off of us.

2 Peter 2:1-3 sum it all up this way: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you who secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil-spoken of. And through covetousness, they shall, with vain words, make merchandise of you, whose judgment now, for a long time, lingers not, and their destruction slumbers not." Yes, they're getting very wealthy. They're very slick. They're very smooth. But God is going to break them off from the tree of blessing. And when these people stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, if they are believers, they are really going to have something to answer for. And the loss to them will be so enormous. It will be a huge contrast with the high-riding fame and fortune that characterizes them now.

We, who have the Word of God, have access to the truth. We, who ignore it, are sitting ducks for every con artist that comes along. And Christendom is full of it. Beware that you do not fall into their clutches.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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