

## God Works In Mysterious Ways (Part Five)

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The title that I gave to this sermon series is, “God Works In Mysterious Ways.” His ways are not mysterious to us, in fact, though there are individual acts of God that maybe puzzling to us, overall it is a reality that is quite clear to us. But they are clear to us because God initiated our calling, and voluntarily and purposely revealed Himself to us.

I gave this series that title because, left to mankind and his own natural inclinations, there will never be a relationship between the Creator and His creations. The important thing there is: left to mankind it will never occur.

Though we are created in the image of God, according to Genesis the first chapter, by nature we are far too different from Him to have a good relationship. I want us to be deeply impressed and appreciative of what the Bible reveals regarding the almost overwhelming wonder of this gift that has been given us in our calling. The gift has resulted in our present understanding, and with it produced our world view. What we have received we have absolutely nothing to do with regarding earning it. We do not know why it was given to us. We only know that we have it, and what are we doing with it is the issue that we face.

I want you to follow the course of the specific dispute that I am going to read of to you that Jesus had with His fellow citizens in Jerusalem as His ministry proceeded.

This occurred during a Feast of Tabernacles, as far as chronologists have been able to determine. This was about two years into Christ’s ministry, but He had not been to Jerusalem probably for at least six months. He had spent all of that time in His home area of Galilee. He continued right on preaching while He was there, almost as if Jerusalem did not exist. He made quite an impression on those people in Jerusalem, and they were continuing to follow Him as quickly as news could be gotten to them regarding what He was

doing in Galilee, and they were hearing what He was saying, in the sense of, even though it was coming late, they were hearing about what He was saying, and also people were being healed.

He had not been to Jerusalem for roughly six months, but since it is the Feast of Tabernacles He decides that He is going to go to Jerusalem partway through the Feast, at the urging of His brothers who said that He ought to go there and raise a storm, you might say, and get a lot of notoriety by the things He was able to do. He stirred up a storm, not so much by what He actually did, but simply because He was there, and they of course were questioning Him.

Now, follow this as we go through this. There are about six or seven sections of this chapter that we are going to read, and they have a common theme. It has to do with “God works in mysterious ways,” because here He teaches us in a way, pretty clearly, why He stirred up a storm everywhere He went.

**John 7:25-29** Then some of them from Jerusalem said, “Is this not He whom they seek to kill? [He just got there and the people knew that the authorities were trying to kill Him.] But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly Christ? [Notice the confusion, the rulers do not know whether He is the Christ. They were reacting to the storm that was being stirred up.] However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.” [That was one of the current ideas at the time, in the religious circles around the Jerusalem area, maybe the whole Judean area, that when the Christ actually came He would come unannounced and they would not know He was there, or where He was from.] Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, “You both know Me, and you know where I am from [He is speaking to the common people here. They knew He was from Galilee, and from Nazareth.]; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.”

Their knowledge of the Father was sketchy but they had no true idea, no great solid truth in their minds that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh, and that He was the Son of God.

**John 7:33-36** Then Jesus said to them, “I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me. [He is talking about His crucifixion.] You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come.” Then the Jews said among themselves, “Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What is this thing that He said, ‘You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am going you cannot come’?”

They are confused, and He is just telling them what is going to happen.

**John 7:43-44** So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him but no one laid hands on Him. [God Himself was intervening.]

**John 8:12-14** [Still the Feast of Tabernacles, still the basic occasion.] Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” [He is telling them plainly and openly what they need is a relationship with Him, so that they can understand what is going on spiritually.] The Pharisees therefore said to Him, “You bear witness of Yourself. Your witness is not true.” [These are the religious authorities, they are telling these people this is not the Christ, do not listen to Him.] Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me.”

He told them flat-out He was God. How plainly blunt can you get? There was enough already said so that they knew that the Father was God, and He called God His Father. He was telling them here that “I am God in the flesh.” and still there is confusion and doubt.

**John 8:19** [This is how thick mankind is without the revelation of God regarding God.] Then they said to Him, “Where is Your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.”

He corrected them but He is still not getting through. Do you understand why I am telling you this? This is how thick man is regarding spiritual truth. Why I said at the beginning of this sermon, if it is up to mankind there will never be a relationship between God and men. Mankind simply is not interested. That is what it comes down to. I will prove this to you as we go along.

**John 8:21-22** Then Jesus said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.” So the Jews said, “Will He kill Himself, because He says, ‘Where I go you cannot come’?” And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of the world.”

**John 8:24-27** “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; [They are not getting it, if they are dying in their sins it is because they have not repented, and they have not repented because they do not get it.]; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” Then they said to Him, “Who are You?” And Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.” They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.

**John 8:31-36** Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will be made free’?”

[At that very moment they were in bondage to the Romans!] Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if a Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

I will turn to one scripture that will, in a sense, put an end to this whole thing that we have been going through here, this occasion with Him. As to the connection they were missing, it is in Matthew 11.

**Matthew 11:25-27** At that time Jesus answered and said [this was a different group of people but pretty much the same kind of a dispute that was flowing back and forth between them], “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent [the ruling class of people] and have revealed them to babes. [by comparison, common people, people with no high educational degree] Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. [to operate His purpose that He is working out in and through mankind, the way He has] All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” [That is what happened to you and me. The Son willed to reveal Himself and the Father to us.]

The Bible is not a mystery to us, it is a mystery to the world. Who the Christ is, is not a mystery to us, He is a mystery to the world. What God’s purpose is, is not a mystery to us, it is a mystery to the world.

I have given five sermons on these three themes, why we understand, and why the world does not understand. It is because God, through Jesus Christ has chosen to reveal Himself to us, we had nothing to do with that. He did not choose us because of our works, He did not choose us because we are so smart, none of those things entered into it. We do not know why He chose us. It is a bit of information that is held by Him and the Son.

I will make a summarizing statement regarding this opening. God is operating His purpose as He sees fit. It is His creation, His purpose is His,

and He is calling the people that He wants to be a part of that purpose, and to learn of Him. I will make a dogmatic statement: Nobody dictates to God. He reveals Himself to those that He decides to do so. Mankind's knowledge of God is lacking because mankind literally gives little or no serious attention to what God says. Seeking God is a search mankind is highly unlikely to make out of sheer curiosity because he does know what to look for in terms of His characteristics and properties, and does not truly believe what He says. It finds the seeker ends with no advantage whatever even though they spend a great deal of time doing it.

The reality is, mankind as a whole pays little attention because the reality of Christ's incarnation as a man is simply not enough to interest him enough to attract his attention. The reality makes clear the truth taught in Romans 8—that mankind is under the domination of his carnal mind. That is the slavery that Jesus spoke of in John chapter 8. As you know from our studies in Romans 8, the carnal mind is focused on earthly things. That is a formidable barrier to a possible relationship. Therefore, even the possibility of what could be the dynamic appeal of the Creator God Himself, does not arouse a favorable impression for a warm and exceedingly valuable relationship in mankind's imagination.

This reality is taught in the Bible from its very beginning. We are reminded that Adam and Eve began their very first experience out in the world, beyond the borders of the Garden of Eden, by disobeying God. The Creator personally and directly gave to them a command. He clearly said to them, do not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the midst of the Garden, or you will die. That was a clear, absolutely unambiguous command not given in the midst of all kinds of distracting influences. They clearly heard what He said. Nobody but God Himself was speaking, so God seemingly had their full attention, or so it seemed at the time.

In addition, a warning was received from another way: a reminder from the Serpent, repeating basically what God said. Even that did not turn them. Their minds were not focused on Him. the carnal mind was doing its thing, it had their attention focused elsewhere. Eve was filled with desire for what she believed were the helpful properties of that fruit, from that particular tree she felt she could not resist eating from. Therefore her mind was niggling away at giving that fruit a try. As the episode is told it is clear her desire was not

focused on pleasing God. At the same time, Adam was standing by desiring to please Eve. But Adam could not resist pleasing her anymore than she could resist the fruit. God was already less important to them than fulfilling their desires.

According to Paul in I Timothy 2, Adam's sin was the more serious of the two, because Eve was deceived by the Serpent. Why was his more serious? Because he was *not* deceived and therefore his sin was *deliberate*. He was so caught up in his desire to please her, his sin was outright rebellion. That is why it was more serious. Here is a piece of vital information regarding stopping sin in its tracks before sin occurs.

We are going to get instruction from God regarding how to stop sin from occurring. It is not easy, neither Adam or Eve could do it. God took opportunity in the sin in which Cain killed Abel to give you and me some instructions. It is very helpful to understand what He says here. We will read it here in modern English. Turn to Genesis 4.

Understand that there is no doubt that Cain, the murderer, was emotionally overwrought by God's rejection of his offering, and he showed it in his demeanor. God remarked, why are you so down? He was depressed because he was proud of his offering, he thought it was the best thing going. He thought that he had really done well with the offering that he made. That is why it crushed him, he was shocked.

**Genesis 4:3-7** And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you so angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

What does God tell them? The first thing He did was tell Cain that in order to be accepted he must do well. It is an action, not *think* well about himself. He is not to be filled with self-congratulations, feeling about himself. That

makes it abundantly clear. He and his offering were clearly rejected on the basis of what they had been previously taught. They were not flying blind. They had been told what the offerings were to be. So, he did not do what God instructed them to do, he had not done well. Which in turn means that he had indeed been instructed regarding what was right and what was wrong as concerns this sacrifice. He had no one to blame but himself. God nailed him to the wall with his own actions.

The second thing, in order to make this lesson particularly vivid, God metaphorically animalized the sin into a beast ravishingly crouching just inside the door of Cain's mind or heart, lustfully looking for the opportunity to spring into action, by actually sinning. The sin becomes a beast.

The third thing God said is He warns Cain that in order to do well and be accepted, and therefore not depressed, it was his responsibility to rule over, to master, to overcome, the crouching beast—sin—before it escapes and creates its havoc.

The lesson is becoming clear. This is the way, from God's own mouth, how to stop sin. It is best to defeat sin while it is still in its desire stage, because once it is given permission to spring into action, it is almost impossible to reverse its course. The beast is out. Therefore, God is teaching that if we control our desires, we pretty much control sin. By keeping it leashed, it never gets out of the heart. It stays in the mind at the very worst. Cain let it out of the jar, and he paid for it.

**Matthew 16:24-25** Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me [be a disciple], let him deny himself [let him sacrifice what it is he desires], and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

When we put together Genesis 4 with this, what we understand, what we should know, what we should consider, that *timing regarding stopping sin is critical*. Do not let it escape the desire stage.

I had a vivid experience with a desire of mine recently that taught a vital lesson regarding how strong my desires can be. It began when I broke a



tooth. It was a clean break, but the roots were still embedded in my gums, buried there. I went to the dentist and I was told I had one of three choices: I could do nothing, just leave the roots buried in my gums, the second thing was replace the broken tooth, that is, the dentist would pull the root out and then replace it with an expensive, permanent false tooth, and the third option was, simply pull the roots out (about a thousand dollars cheaper) and replace it with a false tooth.

I chose the third option, and this is where the desire began to come. The test regarding desire came when I had to maneuver the tooth in and out of its place in my mouth myself, especially the first time. All the while that I was in the dentist chair the dentist was maneuvering that tooth and I was under sedation, no pain. I know a few things about mechanics and laws. It was building in my mind: what was going to hold that tooth to my gums? It is compression. In other words, the false tooth that they put in would squeeze my gums, otherwise gravity was going to eventually pull it out.

I was given instructions by the dentist that in order to get the best use out of this false tooth you are going to have to put the tooth in every morning, take it out every night, and keep that thing spiffy clean, so that no decay sets in either to the root or the gums or the tooth. I have been doing it faithfully, but I will tell you this, I was really concerned about the first time I had to put that tooth in myself with no Novocain, no pain killer, just shove it up in there. This was the desire: it was to avoid the pain I knew was coming when I did that. That first time it felt like my mouth was going to explode the top of my head right off! It really squeezed hard.

Now I can understand why the dentist told me to take that thing out every night put it back in every morning—in and out every day, keep it clean—because now the gum has conformed to the tooth, that thing is in there tight, but I do not get that shock of pain right through the roof of my head anymore, because the gum has conformed to the unyielding tooth.

Back to the episode involving Adam and Eve. Because of the circumstances of their sins, and because Adam and Eve were representing all of mankind, that episode illustrates in a nutshell why planet earth's overall quality of life is vain and agonizingly disappointing. The two episodes at the beginning of God's Book shows that mankind, under the influence of his carnal nature,

does not hold God as being all that important. That is the real baseline cause that there is no relationship ever really instituted by man with God.

Adam and Eve were a test case, Adam and Eve gave God a good understanding of mankind and his carnal nature. Mankind just is not all interested. He is curious, but not really curious enough to develop a relationship.

He had an answer regarding the relationship, or possibility of a relationship. He could see very clearly that self-satisfaction will very often win the day, so despite its simplicity, Solomon's perception of life, that "vanity of vanities, all is vanity," actually in many ways is incredibly accurate. How quickly Adam and Eve overlooked what He had warned them of, even though that issue was a life and death matter. Stop and think about this. Their lives were literally on the line, as it is with us and our sins. But in a very short period of time, they committed the sins and therefore committed their lives to the graves.

That is the way man is. They revealed, in their disobedience, that they did not trust Him sufficiently so as to prevent their relationship from being severely damaged. Here is the lesson: Do you grasp that, despite our calling, despite the fact that God has revealed Himself to us, revealed what He is, and what His purpose is, we still have that carnal nature? We have a major battle on our hands because of carnality.

One of the strategies this world's Christian organizations, in their efforts to increase their membership, their profitability, and enhance their worth before God, is to market salvation along a line of being a done deal as soon as one accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior. Jesus and the apostles did not do that, they gave people the truth. Christianity involves becoming and living one's life as a sacrifice dedicated in loyalty to God's educational program, so that we are prepared for living in His Family Kingdom.

Sacrificing is painful. We carry this carnality, along with its drives to keep us enslaved to it, with us everywhere we go in every circumstance. God is patient in persevering in His working with us to become a tiny measure of what He is as a wonderful gift. It is difficult to accurately define how long Adam and Eve had to resist fulfilling their initial desires, but the way the

episode of the first sin is told, it does not seem as though testing their understanding, their determination, and their patience took very long.

Let us look back to my previous sermon briefly in order to get back into the flow of where it was headed. Recall that sermon was not designed to be a documented study of God's existence and creative acts. It was designed to be nothing more than a handy guide, an overview for us to refer to, for whatever the reason we felt we needed the clear scriptural support of some references to God's creation acts.

Briefly we noted that planet earth had a beginning. In that previous sermon, we saw that the Father and Son both worked on project earth, with the Son given majority credit for being the literal Creator. He is Creator, not only of the physical earth itself, but the lifegiver to its life forms as well. He empowered those life forms to reproduce themselves, and only themselves, we saw that this Creator was later born as a human and known to mankind as Jesus of Nazareth. We saw that He created us not to sin; the deck is not stacked against us. Jesus of Nazareth is destined to inherit the creation and to share it with His Family members. It is also clearly stated in Scripture that He was foreordained to be put to death as payment for our sins against God.

When what we already searched out is concluded, it is no wonder that God states in Romans 1:18-20, that mankind is without excuse. We have plenty of excuses to make but God in His judgment said, "I have already given you enough information so that you are not without excuse regarding My existence, and what My purpose is."

There is more to add to this so that we have a broader overview, it is this portion that we are going to enter into right now of God's creative purpose that is not being fulfilled by this world's Christian churches. It is this portion of God's creative efforts that Jesus admonished people to count the cost regarding.

Notice the difference between what Jesus states to those people who are desirous to be a disciple of His. He does not say, "Hey! Come on all. Let's be born again." What He did was give an admonition that this is going to be difficult!

**Luke 14:25-26** Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and is own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”

That is a pretty steep cost, He is not hiding the requirements that He is going to lay on these people to be associated with Him.

**Luke 14:27** “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

What is the cross that we bear? It is the ability and proclivity to sin, to put us to death. We have to be willing to carry this carnal nature with us everywhere, under every circumstance, all the time, and realize that we are bearing it with us. Jesus did not hide the truth from people. This is going to be difficult. Christianity is not a Sunday afternoon walk in the park.

**Luke 14:28-35** “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’? Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

This is a solemn warning that being a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth is not going to be easy! That is why Paul called it what he did regarding Romans 12:1. The reason its is so difficult is mankind’s resistance to God is the cause. This admonition is given because we are invited into a creative program that will require a great deal of seriously focused dedication on our

part. God is not overbearing, but He perseveres in our carnality, He perseveres with us in our proclivities as part of mankind, and He patiently, perseveringly works with us. He is not demanding of us. But Jesus is warning that as we go along the program is going to have difficulties added to it.

I have determined in my mind that Adam and Eve apparently committed their sins within a very short time of leaving God's presence, so that neither the fear of God nor the fear of a penalty on themselves, such as death, nor any damage that might impose upon the environments, stopped them from sinning. They were already hooked to depend upon slavery to provide them with the satisfaction that they desired.

Adam and Eve were not enslaved to the extent Jesus was clearly inferring in John 8:31-36, where we began. But nonetheless, motivated by their desires, they had started down the path toward slavery as Jesus was teaching here. The Jews listening to Jesus most certainly misunderstood what Jesus was teaching in John 8. They applied what Jesus said in a national sense rather than a personal sense, but national slavery arises first from personal slavery to one's own carnality. As things now stand there is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that the Israelitish nations are plummeting toward national slavery, even as the Jews Jesus was speaking to were already in national slavery to the Romans and were denying that they were. How blind can you be?

Do you believe that if meeting took place on the streets of a modern American city between Jesus and the common citizen, as happened in John 8, that modern Americans would judge that this nation is enslaved to their nature? I do not think so, they are blind to it. Now not everybody is totally blind. There are people with the sincere desire to serve God, and to be saved, but they still do not get it. They do not realize how far off base they are.

The reason it is this way is because the greater amount of spiritual truths that Americans at one time did have, revealed to them as this nation was founded, had been obliterated in the spiritual war waged by Satan, his demons, and the secularists. As a nation Americans cannot make an accurate judgment regarding God. As a people we have pretty much lost touch with the valuable truths and attitudes that Americans once had, partly because being born again and the once saved, always saved doctrines have been emphasized

rather than the great body of truths available that we must grow into as we mature.

What we are going to read now is a major portion of the Christian religion that is not emphasized anywhere near enough, that this is what we must grow into. Turn to II Corinthians 5. This is invaluable truth, not everybody is blind to this, but this is the most neglected part of Christianity. It is mostly not taught.

**II Corinthians 5:5-11** Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God [prepared a life lived by faith in Him and His Son], who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. [God has given us the tool that we need to successfully go through this preparation for the Kingdom of God.] So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body [flesh] we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. [Not part-time Christians, because we want to be in the Kingdom of God and we have a mind that is open to go in that direction, and to give ourselves over as a living sacrifice in order to please God.] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. [We are being judged right now on our life, lived by faith.] Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord [we fear Him], we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

What drives us to give our life over as a living sacrifice, so that our faith is used as God intends it should be used?

**II Corinthians 5:14-17** For the love of Christ compels us [almost driven, as it were, to follow after Him and please Him in everything that we do], because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh.

Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.

Do you understand the force of that? This is our destiny. We are being created in the image of Jesus Christ right now. For years that has been happening to us, that is what God's project is that He is working out through Jesus Christ. We are a new creation. Picture yourself as a new Adam, as a new Eve. We are being created into something different, that is, in the image of Jesus Christ. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. This is what is not being taught in the Christian churches. Christianity is a full-time occupation, in yielding to the Father and the Son so that we are created in Their image.

We will add a little bit to this. We will go from here, understanding that we are a new creation and we have responsibilities that we have to meet, some of which Paul mentions in II Corinthians 5. We are going to go back to II Peter 3. This is our responsibility to the Father and the Son.

**II Peter 3:16-18** As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. [That is what is happening in the world of Christianity.] You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

It is our responsibility to yield our lives completely and totally to the Father and the Son, that They might work Their creative work on us. Turn back to John 8 and we will get back to the subject material that we had in the beginning. We will read from the Amplified because its expansion of what Jesus said here is helpful toward understanding what an awesome gift God has given us in our calling.

Remember there was confusion in the crowd of people who were around Him during the Feast of Tabernacles. He was teaching them and He said to them:

**John 8:43-47** (AMP) “Why do you misunderstand what I say? It is because you are unable to hear what I am saying [because their minds have not been opened to God yet]. {You cannot bear to listen to My message, your ears are shut to My teaching.} You are of your father the devil, and it is your will to practice the lust and gratify the desire [which are characteristic] of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning [Who did he murder? He murdered Abel through Cain.] and he does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a falsehood, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar {himself} and the father of lies and all that is false. [How can these people ever be converted when they are hearing lies from Satan and his spiritual organisms all of the time?] But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me {do not trust Me, do not rely on Me, nor adhere to Me}. Who of you convicts me of wrongdoing or finds me guilty of sin? Then if I speak truth, why do you not believe Me {trust Me, rely on, and adhere to Me}? Whoever is of God listens to God. {Those who belong to God hear the words of God.} This is the reason you do not listen {to those words, to Me}: because you do not belong to God, and are not of God or in harmony with Him.”

Jesus makes it very plain. People are going to persecute true Christians all the time.

**John 15:21** “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.

Here we are in the 21st century, and what Jesus was teaching all the way back there in John 7. 8, and so forth, it still holds fast and true.

The first thing I learned from John 15 is this: Mankind, on its own, even though we are made in the image of God, and have a human spirit, is far enough from God mentally, emotionally, and especially in terms of



character, that there would never be a relationship with God unless God initiates it.

The second is that, unless God mercifully, faithfully, and frequently forgives us, and in addition strengthens us (after we are called) with additional gifting, as Romans 5:1-5 shows, we, like Adam and Eve, would be too inconsistently weak in our love for Him to maintain our part of the covenant relationship we have made with Him. What this means is, if we chase out what John 15 is about, Jesus says in that chapter, “Without Me you can do nothing.” Do you understand that? Do you believe that? What that means is, we need Him if we are going to be in God’s Kingdom—*desperately*! We cannot produce fruit that glorifies God without a relationship with our High Priest, Jesus Christ. It is that simple.

Let us just put a cap on this regarding our carnal nature and why we cannot have a relationship with Jesus Christ until it is put in proper place.

1) It is set, focused, and cannot be turned from earthly things except by divine intervention. 2) Its primary desire is for self-satisfaction. 3) It is deceitfully enslaving, not liberating. 4) The time to defeat it is in its desire stage.

This is the culmination of these five sermons. It must be mastered, and this is accomplished *after* our calling. And why is it our major enemy? Because to be carnally minded is death. Everything about God is life.