

Wilderness Wanderings (Part Three) - Handpicked Children

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The subject of my first Day of Unleavened Bread sermon was that if we are going to impress Jesus Christ positively in our relationship with Him, it is because we hold a clear, firm awareness of sin within ourselves and in the world around us and determinedly hold it in check. By contrast to what Israel went through in the wilderness, large numbers of the original Israelitish wilderness wanderers failed miserably in that regard. I do not want that to happen to us.

The focus in the message on the last Day of Unleavened Bread was if we are going to be successful on our walk to the Kingdom of God following our calling and conversion it is because we have our focus on the right end goal and hold it as the highest and most dominate aim in our life.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God is the beacon that draws our time and attention. The Israelites left Egypt with a high hand, but they very quickly along the way frequently lost their bearings because they let their attention get misfocused on relatively unimportant matters and had to be redirected frequently.

We cannot lose focus on the end goal for what we are involved in. The right goal is a major segment of our overall treasure given to hold our heart and provide motivation to act as God commands. It is a reality that what we treasure is what we pay the most attention to and thus protect so that it is not lost.

Now let us continue on by looking again at a brief series of verses that Moses used in the last month of his life as he reviewed certain high and low points for their benefit, that is the Israelites benefit, just before they crossed the Jordan river into the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 8:1-3 “Every commandment that I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers. And you shall remember that the Lord your God has led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled, you allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know [had no previous experience with] nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.”

It is a solemn warning to those of us who are on our journey now. It has not ended yet (mine and Evelyn's began in 1959 and it is 2020!), and we cannot allow ourselves to get distracted as the Israelites did. They literally squandered their lives away, and frequently were all over the place spiritually, while in the wilderness through a lack of faith. They lost their focus frequently despite the fact that the cloud and the fire were clearly visible and therefore *God was there*, I mean right there. He was right in their midst all the way even as He is in ours.

God was accomplishing one major goal for their ultimate benefit and it was to humble them by clearly showing them they were not anywhere near as great as thought of themselves as being.

A second element that was involved in those three verses was to start on the way to convincing them that without what He supplied, they were absolutely nothing. Zilch, nada. They were by comparison, in reality, dead men walking. He exposed for our benefit that in most of their hearts, they were not focused on Him personally, nor on His great purposes that He had for them.

Have you noticed that in Exodus through Deuteronomy, despite all that the Israelites had seen through displays of His power—devastating Egypt, dividing the Red Sea so that they could cross on dry ground, manna that He supplied every morning, water from rocks, and healings—very many of them never seemed to show consistent real deferential respect for Him or for Moses.

By way of comparison to that demonstration, have you ever noticed how frequently the Bible's writers glorify the Creator God? Considering that it is the Bible one might happen to be looking at, that is understandable. But I want to draw your attention to something perhaps you have already observed and maybe even talked about as well. This is something that you are very familiar with.

It is that Americans, except for those firmly anchored in the religious area of this nation's 300 million or so population, do not glorify God much in their speech. In fact, mentioning God at all times comes pretty close to be touching on a forbidden topic because very few, I believe, know anything about Him and the Bible is not often read as a source of knowledge regarding Him. By many Americans, it is deeply distrusted. It is, in fact, I think you and I will admit, an intimidating challenge for anyone to read it.

Now what types of personalities do Americans generally talk about? Except for a very few, one thing is clear, is that Americans almost never talk about God. We will begin there. Instead Americans especially tend to glorify entertainment figures, such as actors and actresses, musicians, especially singers. And then there are the political figures, some business leaders, athletes who are glorified such as football, basketball, hockey, and baseball figures. Most of these personalities tend to be those who attract a crowd to watch *them* perform. Now here is a question: How beneficial is what they perform that they are so admired? Why?

What a contrast when compared with what Jesus did. When He performed, He was preaching, He was literally delivering a great service by teaching *absolute truth* everybody listening to could use to benefit their life. In addition, He occasionally healed people, and sometimes He even miraculously fed thousands of people at one time. But in the end, this most admirable Man of all mankind who ever lived was rejected by those who should have most admired and honored Him. They not only rejected, but viciously murdered Him.

That illustrates how deceptive carnal nature is, and how tragically misguided our judgments motivated by it can be. So why do people talk about those we do talk about in a positive way? It is because those personalities we talk about give us a measure of pleasure in the quality of what they did, and we therefore admire them right along with what they did because we thought well of them. That gives you a pretty good hint about why we do not talk about God. We do not think well of Him at all, almost nothing, zilch.

I believe that I can give you two reasons why so few talk about God here in America. One is, despite almost universal awareness of Him, people know specifically little or nothing about Him. Another reason is related, because many people fear that they are about to be entrapped into an attempt to convert them into a church they have absolutely no desire to be apart of. Boy, the church has a good reputation too, does it not.

Now here though is the bottom line as to what is driving this ignorance. Let us turn to some scriptures that you know right from the very moment I mention them.

Romans 8:5-7 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh [not on God but the things of the flesh], but those who live according to the Spirit, set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

This antagonistic influence is silently pushing at humanity, which is to say us, away from an interest and a relationship with God, and we will not push back on our own unless we are truly motivated to, silently forced to, to find out what we can about Him.

Let us look at a reality that is connected to this and it is in the book of Colossians. It is interesting that this paragraph begins with an “If.” It is as though Paul is wondering, “Am I writing to people who are also converted?” He is.

Colossians 3:1-5 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

The carnal man, the carnal woman will not willingly do those things. Here we are reading what the apostle Paul wrote to converted people, and he uses the term “IF.” I think maybe he should not have to do that writing to converted people. But it tells you that when we are converted this carnal mind is *still there*, and it is silently influencing us to turn away from God even as it managed to do it rather easily to the Israelites who were on the walk to their Promised Land.

It is a warning to us, that the apostle Paul had to use “If.” But he was familiar with conversion and its weaknesses and he knew that people in the church, even though they were converted, the weakness was still there wearing away at the constant state of what they, maybe intellectually wanted to be, but rationally and actually were not as steady as they were at beating back their carnal nature.

So even when converted the influence of the inborn nature is so strong we have to be appealed, implored to continue to seek Him out to truly come to know Him to the point of continuous admiration. Now do not doubt me. It is as though we have to be grabbed by the neck and *forced* to control the carnal nature. It is there, it is a reality we have to deal with, and God does not just take it away, He leaves it there to wear at us. He wants to see what we are going to do with the influence of that nature.

I believe that this lack of desire to talk about God is not isolated to America. It is a worldwide phenomenon that each culture has those who are held in high regard and these people are spoken about with some measure of praise. And thus Christ, in most cases, is gently pushed aside and out of our minds, at least to some degree. We have to be aware of it always, because with us it becomes a life and death proposition.

Now I am not beginning a public campaign to increase public discussions of the heights of the merits of Jesus Christ. But on the other hand, I do want us to grasp principles upon which knowledge of Him, and therefore discussion about Him, builds because it is one of those building blocks which is necessary for each of us to rightly admire and value Him.

Now this world's Christianity has a doctrine that invites people to deceive themselves regarding having a relationship with God. Through the years, I have come to call it the "whomsoever will may come." This doctrine gives those who use it permission to *invite themselves* into a relationship with God, seemingly have their sins forgiven, and salvation tendered. Now they cannot be well read in the Scriptures or they would know that such is not possible.

Mankind is certainly invited to seek God while He may be found, and call upon Him as He is near, and it says that directly in Isaiah 55:6. But I want you to understand that that invitation does not guarantee that one will have salvation opened to the seeker, and also know that that invitation does not nullify Jesus' declaration in John 6:44 that those who come to Christ must be led to Him by the Father.

Now let us look at that scripture because I want you to see that what I just told you is true.

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.

That seems like an open and shut, positive comment from him encouraging people to do that. Now I said that did not nullify John 6:44. Now let us read verse 7.

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that He may have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Do you see that the invitation is going to somebody who *already had been invited* into God's presence? That is the way God always does it. He Himself invites them. That is not an open invitation to everybody to just come as they are to Him. Not at all. And yet, people think that they can just come into God's presence and the door is always open for them. No, it is not.

Everything is done in God's purpose, in God's order. Nobody barges or pushes their way into God's presence. So this invitation we just read does not nullify Jesus declaration in John 6:44, that those who come to Him must be led to Him through the Father.

Now regarding those who do what I am saying, it is as though God has no operating plan or authority and/or control over His operations including even that of whom is going to be in His Family. It almost seems that they picture Him as being insecure and almost desperate to save people. Now to these people, His door is seen as being open at all times, that He has no systematic plan and time schedule that He is following despite the fact that He is governing and providing for seven billion humans right at this moment. And who knows how many angelic beings He employs right near His throne in heaven?

It appears that faith in Him is *assumed* simply because these people show up seeking some sort of assistance, and there is no demand from Him regarding repentance. I guess it too is assumed. I know

this may sound like an exaggeration, but it is not. Some people believe God's governance is that loose, free, and easy. It is not, brethren. Everything is proceeding at the pace that He sets, and nobody bumps Him off track, regardless of who they are.

Now the problem is that their approach to Him is in reality greatly ignorant, highly disrespectful, and contains a great deal of pride on their part because His position is rarely, if ever, really thought through by connecting His intelligence and His power with reality.

One reality is His awesome greatness and His sinless purity.

A second reality is Americans have so much in the way of freedom and material goods from our huge bounty, we have become a nation of acceptors, almost as though everything is a right. People accept that appearing before God is a right, not truly thinking through whether we really have a right to go before Him.

While we are here, we will read of a response of a man who really did have a relationship with God. Notice his attitude.

Isaiah 6:1-5 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said [this is what Isaiah said]: "Woe is me, for I am undone [I am destroyed]! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

All Isaiah did was see a very, very distant glimpse, and far as he was concerned, his respect was so high, he was ready to die. Does it not say in John 1:18 no one has seen God and lived! Yet Americans think they are just invited into His presence and they can come anytime they want. We are a nation of people with rights—and the pride to go with it.

It is no wonder people do not talk about God, a generality here, they talk about themselves. They talk about people that they admire but they must not admire God except for very few, as I said, who are in the religious area in this nation's population.

So here we have a man who really did have a relationship with God and what he exclaimed when he saw Him ever-so-briefly.

Now, I have something I want to play with you, just a little game, I have done this before. But I am going to do it again, so let us see if you are going to cooperate.

I want you to shut your eyes and keep them shut while I talk with you for just a moment or two. You cannot see very much, can you? You can make out a little bit of light, but even shapes may have become indistinct. You cannot really make things out, can you? Now what if I told you that up here on this stage with me is a bear? Now open your eyes and behold, a bear.

There is a point to this. In a somewhat like manner to what you just experienced with your eyes shut, before the intellectual eyes of your mind were miraculously opened, when your eyelids flipped open, that is our perception—the perception of the unconverted of spiritual things from God Himself. You could not distinctly perceive the spiritual things God desires you to see.

You may have tried in the past to do so, but all efforts fell short of what you really needed to operate successfully in that realm. What kind of thoughts went through your mind while your eyes were closed? Did you feel a bit foolish? That may be what happens when people begin to talk to somebody who is not really familiar with God at all. They feel foolish, or maybe they feel suspicious. How about uncomfortable, unsure, distrustful, perhaps even fearful that at the very least *you* are going to be made to *seem* foolish.

That is the way many in the world are regarding God until they really begin to know Him. They have bits and pieces of true information, but much *disinformation* and thus not really able to discern the true shape of spiritual things. But as a result, they feel the same uneasy qualities about what they have even though some of it might be correct.

Now let us go back to the New Testament once again. Jesus says to Nicodemus:

John 3:13 “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.”

I wonder, before your conversion, did you ever read the Bible? You may have, and at least occasionally, perhaps you attended a Sunday school class or some Bible studies. But how often did you read this very scripture? And it meant absolutely nothing to you. You probably know somebody who has read that scripture, maybe you even said it to them. It meant nothing to them in most cases.

Did the verse Jesus stated correct your ideas regarding going to heaven? Did it change any ideas you had about eternal life, that you had in you an immortal soul? Did the verse really correct you, that nobody—except for Jesus—ever went to heaven, and is free to come back and teach? The world does not look at this the same way that we do.

That is the way it was with Nicodemus. That verse does not correct most carnal people. Christ gave Nicodemus a couple of clear analogies in order to give him spiritual teaching and that spiritual teaching went right over his head, even though he was a highly regarded teacher in Israel, that is what it says in verse 10. Jesus rather chided him because the verse says, “Jesus said to him, “Are you a teacher of Israel and yet you do not know these things?” Nicodemus did not get it.

So, let me straighten you out. What Jesus is saying here is that no human has gone to heaven to experience heaven’s realities and to receive instruction and then returned to give it to men. But, coming directly from Christ, who has firsthand experience to Nicodemus, the lesson here is this: Jesus was teaching that revelation, not human experience or human discovery, is the basis of saving faith. This is what Jesus was really teaching, and He was teaching it to Nicodemus, and now He can teach it to us.

God must be revealed to us. The real Jesus has to be revealed to us, and the real purpose of life has to be revealed to us. God’s truth has to be revealed to us. Having an open door to us before conversion, before receiving God’s Holy Spirit, we do not have it until it is revealed to us.

Deuteronomy 29:4 “Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.”

There is no open door before unconverted man. Moses is reporting that to the Israelitish people and now we begin to see why they were all over the place in their beliefs about God, about Moses, about all those things that they saw worked by the God of heaven so that they were even able to make it to where they were at that time, which was on the shore of the Jordan River and they were about to Passover into the Promised Land.

God has to *give* us entrance into His presence. It begins with a calling from Him through Jesus Christ.

Judges 2:11-13 Then the children of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

At this point, the Israelites have crossed the Jordan River, they are in the Promised Land, they have lived through the period of Joshua’s rulership of the Israelitish people. I just touch on this because I want you to see that they crossed the river, they were in the land, they were there for 30 years or so, Joshua had died, and that quick they turned away from the good leadership they had with Joshua, and fell back into their carnal ways once again. So I just title it: “The Continuing Saga.”

Now one would tend to think that the context in which they experienced life for forty years would have helped them to understand, that is, in Egypt, starting way back then and remembering the ten plagues and the wilderness and the manna every morning. The Bible’s record shows that it did not help them because they had not been given a *heart* to grasp. I say this to remind you of how every part of what God does in our time of conversion is important. We need the heart to go with the invitation. And we have it.

I want you go back with me to the New Testament once again. I want you to see how strong this pull is, and why we have to keep on top of it. If we do not, we are going to fall back.

Romans 3:9 What then? Are we [the Israelites] better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written [Listen to this condemnation and let it sink in because he is giving what all of mankind is like]:

“There is none righteous, no, not one;
There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one.”

“Their throat is an open tomb;
With their tongues they have practiced deceit”;

“The poison of asps is under their lips”;

“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”

“Their feet are swift to shed blood;
Destruction and misery are in their ways;
And the way of peace they have not known.”

“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Here the apostle Paul writes, and I am giving it to you now so that you understand that we have to be on the ball with what we have been given. We have to use it in a right and good way. We already saw a little bit of it there in the book of Judges, how that as soon as the leadership died, Israel fell right back.

The apostle Paul makes a clear comparison between the Israelites and the Gentiles. (I think I am an Israelite, but I am not sure.) He asks, are we Israelites better than Gentiles? Well, absolutely not. Nobody is better than anybody else. Everybody is plagued with the same problem. We are detached, separated from God by the carnality that is within us.

The Israelites are every bit as spiritually blind as they are. We Israelites may be even more guilty than they because we are judged by higher standards.

Romans 11:1-2 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

So an answer regarding judgment is the issue in this part of God's Word.

Romans 11:7-10 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. [We brethren, hopefully, are the elect.] Just as it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, to this very day.” And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their backs always.”

Romans 11:25-26 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

Romans 11:32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

Do you see what I am telling you, brethren, and what I am aiming for? What I am aiming for is that our appreciation for what God has done for us is elevated to the place where we are unafraid to talk about Him, unafraid of standing before Him. He has opened your mind, and my mind as well, so that we are able to go in His front door, as it were, and have communion with Him.

Brethren, I want you to understand in areas of judgment of the peoples of Israel we have to be careful of that, that we do not run them down too much because this blindness fits into God's purpose and they are blind very possibly because God's blindness is still on them. And they cannot help the way they are until God removes that. But what I am aiming for is that our appreciation of what God has done is on our minds and we are thankful to Him for what He has done in opening up our eyes.

So an insensitivity exists in mankind to the true God and it began with Adam and Eve. So strong is this that Romans 8:7 says that there exists an outright enmity against God.

So why does God take the Israelites to task? In some places He does do that. God is the kindest judge that there is. The reason is because we Israelites do not live up to the very low standards that God sets for those He does and has revealed Himself to. Where do you stand?

We are going to go back to Job. I just want to go back here because of something that is said regarding how long this blindness has been. Job is the speaker here and he is talking about the carnal.

Job 21:14-15 Yet they say to God, 'Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. [Is this not what Americans say? They might not literally say it, most of them, but they have no knowledge of Him that is to the level of the knowledge that we have.] Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?'

I want you to see this, because it is just a general statement coming from Job regarding all the wicked which we just saw there in the book of Romans and that includes all of us at some time in our lives. The enmity was known by Job way back then. It was not something the apostle Paul just dreamed up as he was writing the book of Romans. It has existed from the beginning, it has existed from Adam and Eve, because it is a God-conceived tool for Him to use for His purposes. For you and me, it has to be overcome. In the world it has not been overcome yet and they are in many cases unaware.

Yet brethren, by and large, in most Israelitish nations, most of mankind thinks that they love God, and they serve God, and have done it since they were a child. Now, I want you to see something that Jesus said to some Israelites that were before Him. Jesus told them right out. This came right from our Creator.

John 8:43 "Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to hear My word. . . .

John 8:45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. . . .

John 8:47 He who is of God hears God's words. Therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

What a teaching! The only reason that we can grasp it is because God has enabled it. Do you see these things I am lining up so that you know clearly what a blessing, what an awesome gift that you have been given and why there should be appreciation for Jesus Christ and what He is doing in our lives right now? We are understanding things that the multiple billions of people in the world do not even begin to grasp and yet they think they do.

To these people Jesus was speaking to, Jesus was saying (I am going to paraphrase this), “You are unable to hear *with understanding* what I say.” It was to those listening on that occasion, as if He was speaking to them in a different language. Indeed, in one sense, He was because they were of a different family. They were unconverted.

In terms of the truths of God this world lives and operates in a well-managed and blended mass of lies, distortions, and falseness that we have all grown up in, accepted at times in our lives, and basically believed as true.

The truth of God was a foreign language to those who were before Him at that time and we ought to be able to clearly see the truths of Jesus’ statement. But we might say, “Yes, but Jesus was talking to Jews who were opposed to Him. What about His apostles, surely, they got it?” They did because God had gifted them even as He has gifted us. But let us chase this thought out a bit further.

Luke 18:31-34 Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.” But they understood none of these things [He was talking to the apostles!]; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.

Now what do we need to understand this? There are things we may hear in sermons or whatever and we do not get it. That is a little bit confusing, we want to understand everything well, but sometimes even those closest to Jesus did not get it. It was not a part of their thinking yet, that such a thing would occur.

Now I know when you begin thinking about this later on, you are going to realize that this happened actually, in a way, occasionally during Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John’s accounts. The apostles, especially, just did not get it. In this next set of verses, Jesus by this time has been resurrected.

Luke 24:1 Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared.

Luke 24:4-5 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee.”

Luke 24:9-11 Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.

Jesus’ closest human friends on earth did not believe them. They did not get it either! Does this mean we are capable of misunderstanding? Absolutely, absolutely.

Despite being with Him for three and one-half years at this point they were still very much perplexed. They could see, but yet, they could not see.

Luke 24:12 But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths by lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.

Seeing was not believing. Peter could not believe his own eyes.

Luke 24:13-25 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village named Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. [These were not apostles but they were part of the group. Probably part of the 120.] And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" [He wanted to nail them down.] So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but Him they did not see." [Remember, Jesus is walking right besides these guys.] Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

Can you imagine how foolish they felt after this was over? Here they were walking right alongside of their Creator God and they did not even know it, because they did not believe what He told them before He was put to death.

Luke 24:26-27 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

So, they had to be taught to because they did not believe. Converted people are capable of not believing God's truth. Now we do not want to make a practice of it at all, but these people repented very quickly when the truth was revealed to them. So, He had to make Himself known, and the verses tell us they were terrified, they were frightened, those two men, they were troubled, filled with doubt, and they still, even after He told them, could not believe with joy. It was to good to be true.

Now let us go, as we begin to draw this to a close, to II Corinthians 4.

II Corinthians 4:3-4 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

I want to remind you, that those who did not believe that Jesus was resurrected, even when He told them what would occur, they very quickly, though, recovered because this time, they did believe.

Now what we have seen is at least somewhat of a demonstration of what Revelation 12:9 says, that Satan has deceived the whole world. Do we believe to the extent that you are maybe having revealed to you at this time? That even the truth of God can be disbelieved because we do not have the right sense of it, the angle of it that needs to be had. But we also saw that Jesus took the occasion then to teach those people so that they would not be overly dismayed at what occurred to them.

Now this doubting resistance does not go away easily, is my point right here. It remains well into conversion. And if we do not exercise ourselves to be aware and choose to go the right way, it will continue to exert its influence.

Now why has God allowed Satan to blind this world? It is because God is working out the purpose of reproducing Himself through the creation of godly character by means of faith and free moral agency using even those forces seemingly bent upon destruction of that purpose to His own end.

The way that God is doing things gives Him a great deal flexibility in dealing with us. God, we have to understand, has planned that the cards were stacked against us, against mankind, and without His deliberate interventions and gifts, we would remain in that way. Again, He has done this partly in order to build within us a sense of admiration for God and for His Son Jesus Christ.

It was God that planned that mankind, in order to meet the standards of righteousness that God was shooting for, has to learn a great deal about his own nature, that is man's own nature, which all by itself has a strong pull toward self-centeredness. In addition, there is an alluring and distracting world and evil and invisible spirits also tugging away at him. In addition to these two elements, there would also be elements of time that would be wasting away, giving us a sense of urgency to satisfy himself.

What I just said in that section, I want you to understand, is that God planned that it be this way. He wants to see us deal with it and thus how concerned we are about driving ourselves to make it into the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 13:10-17 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. [Brethren, God has given us the truth that opens the way for us. And so what Jesus is teaching here fits us.] Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the heart of this people have grown dull. [Would you say this has happened in America?]' Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed,

lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear, for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

Then comes the Parable of the Sower, which I will not go into because I think that we have enough to get the point of my message here today.

We are blessed, greatly blessed because God has called us, because God has given us His Spirit that enables us to understand. And even though there are times that we fall short, the door is still opened into His presence so that we can receive forgiveness and truth can be restored to us and we go on our way toward the Kingdom of God once again.