

Proverbs 31 And The Wife Of Christ (Part Four)

Choose to Follow the King of Kings

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Please turn with me to Genesis the first chapter, verse 26.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them.

Now over to chapter 2, and in verse 15.

Genesis 2:15-18 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die." And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

Down in verse 23, after God created them, the woman from the man, Adam declares,

Genesis 2:23-24 "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

We started here in what I hope to be the last in the series of sermons on the Proverbs 31 woman and the wife of Christ for a vital and very important reason. For most of us who remember, in the last few years of his life, Herbert Armstrong seemed to start almost every sermon with the Two Trees.

Brethren, I believe that God inspired him to do that because all of life is about choices, the right and godly choices. From the very beginning, men were given the privilege to choose his life by following His Word and the only path that will bring us to an eternal relationship of absolute trust that we see perfectly developed in the Proverbs 31 wife of Christ, as it says in,

Proverbs 31:10-12 Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

From the very beginning all the way to the end of God's perfect plan to create all mankind in His image according to His likeness, choice has always been given to us so that we can learn to faithfully be the trustworthy companion of Jesus Christ.

Nancy and I were talking about this this morning, and we are talking about the fruit that was on that tree. And Nancy said, "Well, you know, it could have been bad. God knew whether it was bad or not." And I said, and we both agreed, that it was not what God saw to the men. To the men, it was what we always do with fruit. We look at it, it looks good. We smell it, it smells good. We taste it, it tastes good. Therefore, it has got to be good. And that fruit on that tree was probably just like that, but God said, "Don't take it." But they did.

Through the millennia men have made choices, some to follow God's Word. But always human nature, even in the finest of men, at some point comes to the "yeah but" conclusion, the choice they make with their "yeah but."

So this is the battle that continually rages within ourselves, choosing what *seems to be* good as opposed to what *is good* in line with God's truth. And now with us today, those who have been given God's Holy Spirit and a very significant role within His perfect plan to bring all men into unity with Him, our struggle is to always stay faithful to choices that are in perfect alignment with God. While fighting this battle, getting swept up in the deadly choices of the society around us, we have always got to be aware of this.

We are going to take a bit of a turn that you may consider an odd way to go in this sermon. And I really hope that you will stick with me through this sermon because it may seem kind of off to you at the time, considering the Proverbs 31 and the wife of Christ, but I think it is probably one of the most important things.

I hope it makes us more focused and does not sidetrack us from the importance of the lessons that we need to learn as we prepare for the return of Jesus Christ in the remarkable privileged position that we humbly consider we are in within God's plan and purpose. We always must keep in mind that God is working out His plan and His purpose beyond the limited thinking of men. Even during times and circumstances which had their origins in the minds of men that are in direct contravention to His Word, He is making things work out for the best.

This is such a vitally important thing for us to keep in mind as we continue this series of sermons on the Proverbs 31 wife of Christ and our most privileged opportunity that God has given us at this time. God expects us to make the right choices within a world making all the wrong choices while remembering God has called the weakest of this world to confound the mighty.

To me this is such an important issue that we are going to begin this sermon in a way that I hope will continue to drive home God's sovereign authority. He will work everything out to perfection, but we cannot get caught up in the arbitrary foolishness of men along the way. He makes things work out the way He wants, even as men make bad and very costly choices out of line with His Word.

During these very difficult and divisive times in which we are to prepare for the return of Jesus Christ and the incredible privileged responsibility He seems to have given us to be His perfectly prepared helpmate, I want to go over a few scriptures regarding, first, His sovereignty. These are just a few of the many scriptures I hope are always on our minds as we work within a world divided by the self-centered thinking of men, but knowing that nothing is out of His control no matter what He allows. Turn with me first to Psalm 115. We are going to begin right there in verse 1.

Psalm 115:1-18 Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth. Why should the Gentiles say, "So where is their God?" But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them.

O Israel, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield. You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield.

The Lord has been mindful of us; He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless those who fear the Lord, both small and great. May the Lord give you increase more and more, you and your children. May you be blessed by the Lord, who made heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men. The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord!

Now turn with me over to Proverbs the 21st chapter. Remember, we are trying to establish God's sovereignty and how we understand it.

Proverbs 21:1-5 The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts. To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. A haughty look, a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked are sin. The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.

Down in verse 30.

Proverbs 21:30-31 There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the Lord. The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord.

Now turn with me all the way into the New Testament to Romans and we are going to the 9th chapter. We are going to be picking up a few verses, verses 14 through 18.

Romans 9:14-18 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

God has given the earth to men to make choices, but even when they are wrong, He will continue to move His perfect plan forward under His sovereign authority, even as these poor choices cause pain and suffering that would not have happened by staying under the safety of His Word. It is absolutely vital that we keep in mind that God raises up whom He wishes and lowers whom He wishes. It is vital to keep in mind that God will never, ever be inconsistent with His law. It is the way He lives—yesterday, today, and forever.

Just because men determine to do things from their own minds and God works those things out to His purpose does not mean that those circumstances came from anywhere else but from the minds of men influenced by the spirit of this world and pride.

We are taking so much time on this because we must humbly recognize our privileged responsibility to prepare within a world built on choices out of line with God's Word. During these very divisive and difficult times, God's sovereign authority to do what He wants to do when He wants to will never

contradict His own Word, but He will use it to keep His perfect plan moving forward enough within it. Brethren, we are the weak and the base of this world, but called by God for a very special time of preparation apart from this world. We are not here to get involved on any side of the society that has been built on choices apart from God's Word.

Those around us are going to have the opportunity to be in God's Kingdom some day, but we are now under God's sovereign authority in this privileged position to humbly prepare to be of service to them without ever contravening God's laws and His way of life. That could happen if we lose focus on living the truth of His Word.

With this in mind, I would like us to look at a few of God's clear instructions that express what He thinks about removing ourselves from His divine authority and the painful consequences that will follow.

First, turn with me back to I Samuel, please, chapter 15. I am going to be picking up just one verse. It is good to remember this is the time when Saul had gone against God's word clearly told to him what he should do and he did a "yeah, but." Let us start back in verse 22.

I Samuel 15:22-23 So Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."

"Is the sin of witchcraft."

Please turn with me now over to Proverbs the 24th chapter. We will be picking it up in verse 19.

Proverbs 24:19-22 Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the wicked; for there will be no prospect for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out. My son, fear the Lord

and the king; do not associate with those given to change; for their calamity will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin that these two can bring?

Turn with me now over to Isaiah 30. Remember, these are God's specific instructions to all men, especially to us.

Isaiah 30:1 "Woe to the rebellious children," says the Lord, "who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin."

And now, let us go back to the book of Romans. Very familiar scriptures to us all, brethren. In verse 1 Paul writes, under the inspiration of God,

Romans 13:1-5 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

Now with these scriptures in mind, I would like to give an example of the difficulties we face as carnal-minded men, to stay focused on the incredible privilege God has given us beyond the circumstances of the lives in which we live. Over the last couple of weeks I have been thinking about this country and the blessings that God has poured out on every one of us who lives here, in spite of ourselves. This has been with more of a sense of me brooding than just a simple consideration, and I think it is based on how dangerously close we are to a cataclysmic disaster both in this country and in the world in general.

All around us we see division; the bickering, and the fighting that goes on among men who think their way is the right way and the only way. I think this fight that is going on around us may be leading us, who should know better, to miss the point of God's sovereignty and the magnificent privilege we have to work within these times without getting caught up in them.

Well, we are here by the grace of God keeping the Sabbath as God's Family with our citizenship in the Kingdom of God in heaven. God has placed us within this society on this earth to learn to live through the fiery trials, and one of those major fiery trials is not getting consumed with what we may consider righteousness, but is in reality something built on the from the minds of men and not from the Word of God.

This country is preparing to celebrate its 250th year since the Declaration of Independence from Great Britain and the rule of King George. Within my short 75 years, it seems like yesterday when we were preparing for this country's bicentennial in 1976, a time we certainly set aside for all of us who thank God for giving us the privilege to live in this golden land of opportunity and freedom.

In 1976 there was also a great divide in this country, but the celebrations went on, and then over the years God seemed to hold back the punishment that was undoubtedly deserved as a nation in a world that was getting farther and farther away from Him every day. We each could continue to live with a great deal of affection for this blessed nation. In the years following the bicentennial, things continued getting worse for a while, for several years, until God seemed to give us a period of relief.

But now, 50 years later, the division in which we must learn to do our work has become more profound and more intense. 24/7 news cycles and social media blasting at us all over the place, "join this side," "get on that side." It is all contrary to the foundation of God's Word.

As I was preparing the sermon, I was thinking about all those that had gone before us within God's plan, and both those within the Body of Christ and those outside that are floundering around within this world. Being someone that was raised to appreciate the blessings of this nation, these times certainly

have drawn a profound sense of sadness, almost a brooding, as I noted earlier. And with that, a consideration for those who went before us and how God continues working out His plan to suit His purpose even within circumstances produced by making poor humanly-determined choices apart from the truth of God's Word.

With this in mind, while considering the 250th anniversary of this country, I have been thinking quite a bit about those who have not had the priceless gift that we have been given but still exemplified self-sacrifice without having the most precious gift that we have been given of understanding the truth. Many have made incredible sacrifices for kin and country. Do we really appreciate what God expects us to be doing in our preparations now with outgoing concern for them?

One of my favorite classical composers is Aaron Copland. And while I appreciate so many of these multi-layered impressions of Americana, one of the most enduring expressions is his 1942 "Lincoln Portrait." While most of the 16-plus minute composition musically expresses Americana, the two or three minutes of narrative within the soaringly beautiful melodies is a narrative of the words of Abraham Lincoln.

Aaron Copland has been considered by many as one of the finest composers of classical American music. And in 1942 when the United States and the world was dealing with the tyranny of Nazis, Copland wrote "A Fanfare for the Common Man" and the "Lincoln Portrait." Both pieces were intended to inspire the lofty goals of the common man and self-sacrifice during the darkest of times.

Perhaps you may find this a stretch, but I think if we consider the lyrics of the "Lincoln Portrait" and try to apply them to ourselves and our position within the Kingdom of God and not as citizens of the United States but as citizens of God's Kingdom, it might help us to think more clearly about our own responsibilities that go way beyond what some really fine men like Lincoln died for.

But before we go further, let us remind ourselves of those who have made correct choices in accord with God's Word while living within troubled times of the poor choices of the old men around them. Turn with me to the

Hebrews, please. Again, very familiar scriptures, but very important to keep in our minds of those who have gone before us and what we owe God and them. First Hebrews 11. And we are going to start in verse 8. We are going to read quite a bit of section because I really think this is important. As a matter of fact, in John Reiss' *CGG Weekly* this morning, he talked about this.

Hebrews 11:8-22 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

Hebrews 11:24-26 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

Hebrews 11:30-40 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Now turn with me to chapter 12, verse 1.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race

that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Brethren, verses 14 and 15 of chapter 11 are key verses for us today within our calling out of this world and a society built on decisions, choices, apart from God's Word. These verses remind us something very important where it says,

Hebrews 11:14-15 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

Their affection did not lie with what they came away from.

But now, let us consider these words from Copland's "Lincoln Portrait" and try to apply some of them to us, although we are going to make another turn about this later on.

Where the narrator says,

Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. [That is what Abraham Lincoln said.] We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down in honor or dishonor to the latest generation. We even here hold the power and bear the responsibility. He was born in Kentucky, raised in Indiana, and lived in Illinois. And this is what he said. This is what Abe Lincoln said.

The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

When standing erect, he was 6 feet, 4 inches tall. And this is what he said. He said, It is the eternal struggle between two principles, right and wrong, throughout the world. It is the same spirit that says, 'You toil and work and earn bread, and I'll eat it.' No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.

Lincoln was a quiet man. As Abraham Lincoln was a quiet and a melancholy man, but when he spoke of democracy, this is what he said. He said, 'As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.'

Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States, is everlasting in the memory of his countrymen, for on the battleground at Gettysburg, this is what he said. He said that, 'from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.'

Brethren, I am an American with a great affection for the America as I have known it under God's sovereign authority, I suppose just as others have an affection for their own nations. Abraham Lincoln's words are stirring to us who are Americans and believe he was a man of great honor and integrity. And much of what he said we can apply to our own responsibility.

But Abraham Lincoln's conclusion was wrong. Not because of his lofty ideals of honoring those who have gone before us, noting their self-sacrifice, but wrong in considering that any government of this earth built on the foundation of choices apart from God's Word shall not perish from this earth. This earth is passing away because of all the poor choices that have been made starting from the Garden and the Two Trees.

We live in a country where choices made in abandonment of God's Word led to 620,000 deaths in the Civil War during Lincoln's days, all those people that died in the Battle of Gettysburg, all the division and strife that happened in this country happened because we broke God's law. It is as simple as that. We cannot allow ourselves to be part of this world, brethren, and let our great affection get us involved where we do not belong.

Our choices right now need to be in line with God's Word if we are going to properly prepare to be Christ's perfected helpmate at His return. As I said, I have a great deal of affection for this country, and I greatly appreciate the self-sacrifice of decent men and women trying to help others deal with the chaos and confusion that men have literally caused themselves. And with this in mind, I would like us to take a minute to look at what happened in 1776.

I think we may see that so much of the pain and the suffering that has taken place because of refusing to obey God's Word may very well have been avoided under the authority of a relatively good king. In order to suit their own needs, men will always find excuses to ignore the truth of God's Word. Instead of standing pat on the truth of God's Word not to rebel, which we read from God's Word a couple of minutes ago, the United States was founded in rebellion against the so-called tyrannical King George under the cry of "no taxation without representation."

Most certainly, the politics in England created many problems for the colonists in America over 3,000 miles away. But would such a costly civil war have even taken place if God's Word had been followed and the colonists stayed committed, remaining under the king that was under God's authority? Of course we know how God has made this all work, especially with the prophecies of Ephraim Manasseh. But did it have to go this way?

If I may, I would like to give you a little bit of history for the background regarding King George III. Now this account probably will not give us a totally accurate picture, but remember, George was king and God's Word regarding rebellion was absolute. I have a very limited knowledge of King George myself, so what I am going to quote was collected from the Internet.

George III was born George William Frederick on the 4th of June 1738 and died 29 January 1820 and was king from the 25th of October 1760 until his death in 1820. He was the first monarch of the German-born House of Hanover who was born in Great Britain, spoke English as his first language. He was a grandson of George II and the eldest son of Frederick, who had been in line for the throne until his untimely death.

George himself was born prematurely and was thought unlikely to survive. I wonder why he did. Following his father's death in 1751, Prince George became heir to the throne in his place, becoming king upon his grandfather George II's death in 1760. The following year he married Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and together they had 15 children.

George III's life and reign were marked by a series of military conflicts, most of which were victories, many which kept the Roman Catholic Church from becoming dominant in politics over the nations. Great Britain defeated France in the Seven Years' War, becoming the dominant European power in North American India. However, Britain lost the 13 North American colonies in the American War of Independence.

But wars against revolutionary Napoleonic France from 1793 concluded in the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, all under George. Also (this is important, brethren), in 1807, the transatlantic slave trade was banned from the British Empire under George. Perhaps if the colonists had stayed faithful to God's Word about not fomenting revolution, 620,000 plus Americans would not have died during the Civil War, not to mention all those that died in the Revolutionary War of 1776 on both sides.

At the time of George III's death, he had lived the longest of all his predecessors and reigned the longest, having ruled for 59 years and 96 days. He remains the longest lived and longest reigning male monarch in British history, only surpassed by Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth, who recently died. George grew into a healthy and reserved shy child. He could read and write both English and German, as well as comment on political events by the time he was 8.

He was the first British monarch to systematically study the sciences of chemistry and physics along with lessons in astronomy, mathematics,

French, Latin, history, music, geography, commerce, agriculture, and constitutional law. He was a well accomplished athlete and well educated in the religious beliefs of the Anglican Church and firmly had his faith in Christ as far as he understood. He also had a great sense of his own sacrificial duty.

At 21 in 1759, he fell in love with Lady Sarah Lennox, but for various matters of state, marriage to her was discouraged, and George followed the advice and abandoned thoughts of marriage while noting, "I am born for the happiness or the misery of a great nation," he wrote, "and consequently must act contrary to my passions." The following year at the age of 22, George succeeded to the throne when his grandfather George II died, as I mentioned, suddenly on 25th of October 1760. He married Charlotte the following year.

George never took a mistress, in contrast with his grandfather and his sons, remaining absolutely faithful to his wife, and the couple enjoyed a happy marriage through most of the rest of their lives, having nine sons and six daughters. George was deeply devout and spent hours in prayer, but his piety was not shared by his brothers. George was appalled by what he saw as their loose morals. In 1770, his brother Prince Henry was exposed as an adulterer.

But as far as politics went in Great Britain under his reign, and a parliamentary government, Lord North's government was chiefly concerned with the discontent in America. But to assuage American opinion at King George's request, most of the custom duties were withdrawn except for the tea duty, which in George's words was "one tax needs to be kept to levy taxes."

In 1773, the tea ships moored in the Boston Harbor were boarded by colonists, and the tea was thrown overboard, an event that became known as the Boston Tea Party. In Britain, opinion hardened against the colonists with Chatham, another minister in the government, now agreeing with North that the destruction of tea was certainly criminal. Though both the Americans and older British historians characterize George as a tyrant, he was hardly a tyrant but acted as a constitutional monarch, supporting the initiatives of his ministers.

George III is often accused of obstinately trying to keep Great Britain at war with the rebels, despite the opinions of his own ministers. However, later

historians defend George by saying that in the context of the times no king would willingly surrender such a large territory, and his conduct was far less ruthless than contemporaneous monarchs in Europe. George III hoped that, "The tongue of malice may not paint my intentions in those colors she admires, nor the sycophant extol me beyond what I deserve."

But in popular mind George III has been both demonized and praised. While very popular at the start of his reign by the mid 1770s, George had lost the loyalty of the revolutionary American colonists. The grievances of the United States Declaration of Independence were presented as repeated injuries and usurpations that he had committed to establish an absolute tyranny over the colonies. The Declaration's wording has contributed to America's public perception of George as a tyrant.

In pursuing the war with the American colonists, George III believed he was defending the right of an active and elected parliament to levy taxes rather than seeking to expand his own power or prerogatives. In the opinion of modern scholars during the long reign of George III, the monarchy continued to lose its political power but grew as the embodiment of national morality.

Should we have rebelled against that government under King George, especially since God's Word said do not do it?

Brethren, perhaps you feel I have spent too much time in this sermon focusing on this. But we will never be ready to do our job we have been called to do if we continue to get involved in the society that we have been called out of. We will not be aligning ourselves with the right choices from the Word of God to be made ready with eyes focused on the heavenly country and our preparation to do what is eternally right with God if we do.

I had intended to end this series of sermons today by tying in Ruth as recorded in the book of Ruth with the Proverbs 31 virtuous wife. After all, Boaz, a type of Christ, called Ruth *eshet chayil*, the woman of virtue, the wife of virtue, as discussed in the previous sermons. As opposed to Esther, another type of the virtuous wife, who was the physical descendant of Israel, Ruth is a type of those who God calls out of this world to be part of the virtuous wife of Christ.

But we have a number of sermons, articles, essays, etc. that you can go and dig into, to dig out the details within the book that explore the lessons we can learn from this book in detail. But right now, I would only like us to turn to Ruth chapter 1. We are going to be reading the opening 17 verses.

Ruth 1:1-17 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges [keep that in mind] ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited His people by giving them bread. Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go—for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!" Then

they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."

Brethren, all of you know this story very well. And as I said, we have a lot of information in sermons, articles, and essays that you can dig into the details if you have determined to do so and find the tie-ins with Ruth and the virtuous wife. But the most significant verse for all of the story of Ruth is not in the story of Ruth. It is in the preceding verse at the end of the book of Judges.

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

In the opening of the book of Ruth, we saw Elimelech, whose name means "God is king," make a choice to do what was right in his own eyes to save his family during a time of famine. His son's name means weak, so he was literally trying to do what he thought was the right thing to do in spite of God's word to His physical people, not to leave the land but to trust Him. In the end, there was the deaths within 10 years of him and his sons.

But in God's awesome sovereignty He brought someone from outside those people whom He had blessed with the truth of His Word, and she submitted to His every word as she learned to do it in outgoing concern for those whom she did not even know. God was indeed her King. And she was proclaimed by Boaz, a type of Christ, his *eshet chayil*, the wife of virtue.

The most important lesson is that God's church and those who have been handpicked by God to be within it, must be following what is right in *God's* eyes, making the choices daily that say, God is King. Choosing to follow the King of kings while steering clear of this troubled world of division that started with the Two Trees and choosing out of sight, tastes, touch, to

disobey God. Our job in making ourselves ready under God's direction is to live by every word of God and make the right choices even though we may stumble along the way.

Please turn with me again back to the book of Proverbs and again to chapter 24. This time we will be picking it up in verse 1.

Proverbs 24:1-14 Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them; for their heart devises violence, and their lips talk of troublemaking. Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is strong, yes, a man of knowledge increases strength; for by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.

Wisdom is too lofty for a fool; he does not open his mouth in the gate. He who plots to do evil will be called a schemer. The devising of foolishness is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to men. If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Surely we did not know this," does not He who weighs the heart consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?

My son, eat honey because it is good, and the honeycomb which is sweet to your taste; so shall the knowledge of wisdom be to your soul; if you have found it, there is a prospect, and your hope will not be cut off.

Proverbs 24:16 For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity. Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the Lord see it, and it displeases Him, and He turns away His wrath from him. Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the wicked; for there will be no prospect for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out [as we just already read]. My son, fear the Lord and the king; do not associate with

those given to change; for their calamity will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin that it can bring?

Brethren, these are very clear marching orders from God, especially in the insanity of this world, so divided by failing to choose to follow the perfect Word of the ultimate King of kings. But I would like to end this sermon with what Richard assigned to us toward the end of his last sermon, because I think it really makes it clear why we need to be absolutely dedicated to this time of our preparation, without holding on to the affections for anything not built on the foundation of right choices and in keeping with the truth of God's Word.

Please turn with me to chapter 45 of Psalms. And I hope Richard will take this psalm apart one of these days in a sermon, cause it is chock full of magnificent glory of our King of kings. But I am going to read it to you from The Message Bible. Although not necessarily something I would recommend you to read all the time, I am only reading it because of the soaring beauty of the language in it. And it expresses the overwhelming emotion at the marriage of the king to his wife.

"A wedding song of the sons of Korah."

Psalm 45:1-17 (TMB) My heart bursts its banks, spilling beauty and goodness. I pour it out in a poem to the king, shaping the river into words:

"You're the handsomest of men; every word from your lips is sheer grace, and God has blessed you, blessed you so much. Strap your sword to your side, warrior! Accept praise! Accept due honor! Ride majestically! Ride triumphantly! [Brethren, this is our Savior Jesus Christ at His return.] Ride on the side of truth! Ride on the righteous meek! Your instructions are glow-in-the-dark; and you shoot sharp arrows into enemy hearts; the Lord's foes lie down in the dust, beaten. Your throne is God's throne, ever and always; the scepter of your royal rule measures right living. You love right and hate wrong. And that is why God, your very own God, poured fragrant oil on your head, making you out as king among your dear companions.

"Your forest-drenched garments are fragrant with mountain breeze. Chamber music—from the throne room—makes you want to dance. King's daughters are maids in your court, the Bride glittering with gold and jewelry. Now listen, daughter, don't miss a word: forget your country, put your home behind you. Be here—the king is wild for you. Since he's your lord, adore him. Wedding gifts pour in from Tyre; rich guests shower you with presents."

(Her wedding dress is dazzling, lined with gold by the weavers; all her dresses and robes are woven with gold. She is led to the king, followed by her virgin companions. A procession of joy and laughter! A grand entrance to the king's palace!)

"Set your mind now on sons—don't dote on father and grandfather. You'll set your sons up as princes over all the earth. I'll make you famous for generations; you'll be the talk of the town for a long, long time."

Brethren, we are here to make choices. The Proverbs 31 woman of virtue and the wife of Christ and Ruth and Esther are clearly tied together. The church of God is the coming Bride of Christ, and we, as parts of that church, are to be preparing as the Bride by taking the time to choose to follow the King of kings.

I hope this has been a helpful, encouraging series of sermons and that we stay faithful to God in learning to live and make choices according to His very Word and not ever, *ever* take from the tree that He commands us not to.