

Flag Of Our Father

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As we begin this sermon on the 6th day of June, many are mindful of the 82nd anniversary of one of the most painfully sacrificial days in American history. On this day in 1944, there were many told and untold stories of self-sacrifice on the beaches of Normandy during World War II. But I only mention this because I would like us to consider self-sacrifice (and Joe's sermonette probably fits really well into this) and the courage it takes to do things. However, even within the most noble of causes under the flags of men, they will never accomplish the lasting peace, safety, and unity that God is working toward in the continuous self-sacrifice of His elect under His flag, even within the continuing chaos and confusion of mankind.

So with this in mind, I would like us to start right at the beginning of the Book again. So please turn with me back to Genesis the first chapter where we will begin in verse 31.

Genesis 1:31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Genesis 2:1-4 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of them were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

Genesis 2:7-9 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in

Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant in the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Down in verse 15.

Genesis 2:15-18 Then the Lord took the man, 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 22.

Genesis 2:22-25 Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said, "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. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.

I know I have started many sermons in and around these verses, but it is a vital starting point for all of us to continue to understand the world in which we live. Mr. Armstrong began so many sermons in the last several years of his life with those Two Trees, one of life and one of the knowledge of good and evil, because this is the reality of our lives now within the opportunity to live with a clear vision and God-given ability to be under the Tree of Life through Jesus Christ.

In these first two chapters of the Book, God certainly created and pictured the ideal life—but with a warning. It was an incredible blessing that God had given to man whom He was in the process of creating in His own image and likeness. We started with Genesis 1:31 because I wanted us to have it firmly set in our minds that when God created all things, the heavens and the earth,

this earth where we now dwell was part of a *very good* creation untouched by the horror and pain that comes from disobedience to the pure truth of God's Word. It is only a snapshot.

It is not known how much of the picture God gave Adam of the consequences that would come from disobeying His Word beyond the dire final consequences of sure death, but we do know that God would not have left Adam and Eve without everything they needed to do the works of the law, as clearly stated in Deuteronomy 29:29, where it says that the secret things belong to God, but He gives everything to us and to our children to do the works of the law. But in these first two chapters, God gives us a very significant declaration that we need to consider today.

In Genesis 2:25, after Adam acknowledged the fact that within God's very good creation, the woman who was taken from his own flesh was now in perfect unity with him. I suppose if we consider that this is the closest thing mankind would have to a God-plane relationship, we could almost say that their relationship was so close that it should have been well on the way to, if you knew one of them, you knew them both.

Genesis 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Within God's magnificently wonderful creation, He had created mankind to be different from one another. But that difference within God's very good creation was not a difference toward division, but a physical difference representing God's perfect path toward unity to be better together than they were apart.

But now let us pick it up in Genesis 3, verse 1.

Genesis 3:1-7 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of the tree of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the

woman, "You shall not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

It has been postulated over the years as opposed to the picture drawn from the minds of men of an apple from Eve to Adam, that the actual fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a fig. So here in chapter 3, verse 7 we see another very significant hint as to what happened from taking of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Verse 7 tells us the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

The first thing that man did after the sin of taking of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, disobeying the truth of God's Word, was to see their physical differences not from God's perspective toward unity but in the perversion of disobedience and the mind of men towards division. Then taking the leaves from that very tree, they determined for themselves to protect their own different parts that God had made to perfectly unite them physically.

Nancy and I were talking about this metaphor the other day and concluded that this may have been the very first act of selfishness in determining good and evil from the mind of men. What had been created for the sake of unity under God's very magnificent plan of creating everything that was good, suddenly became within their own limited thinking perverted by disobedience, a source of division.

Please drop down to verse 20 in chapter 3.

Genesis 3:20-24 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife, the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know

good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever"—therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword turning every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

We see here stated in verse 20, that these two not only passed their physical nature to all men, but the emotional and mental proclivities that came with the disobedience as well. Failure to stay under the banner of God in the truth of His Word that should have led to unity within the magnificent beauty of God's garden, barred them from the Tree of Life. But as opposed to what Adam and Eve did in Genesis 3:7, to rely on their own newfound knowledge of good and evil and selfishly keep each other from the unifying parts that God made to bring them.

In Genesis 3:21 we see where it says, "Also for Adam and Eve the Lord God made tunics of skin and clothed them," God gave the first indication of what it would take to bring us back to Him. He sacrificed an animal and covered Adam and Eve, picturing what He would do to ultimately unite all mankind and bring them back to Him. Here God gives the first picture of the promised perfect sacrifice that would once again bring unity to the very good differences that God had created.

Today in this sermon, I plan to give a couple of examples of how deeply ingrained the division is that we are battling and then the solution God expects us to use consistently in every aspect of our lives even though it sometimes seems too much for us to bear and very hard. (Even what Joe was telling us in the sermonette seems very hard to do.)

But before we go there, I would like us to read what sin did and God's perfect judgment on man going forward because of taking of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We must remember that everything God does is within His ultimate intent to patiently bring all men to repentance, salvation, and knowledge of the truth. So even the curses that He places on man will be, in the long run, a source for eternal life lessons that each of us will learn in some very difficult circumstances, some of our own making and many from the very divided society in which we live.

But through all of it God is giving us the road map to keep us on the path to true unity and peace behind Jesus Christ through the truth of His Word, navigating through the chaotic division started by Adam and Eve that makes this life so painful. So let us drop back to Genesis 3:14.

Genesis 3:14-19 So the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. But I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said: "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it, and all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

Although God placed specific curses on the woman and on the man, there is something we need to pick up from the second part of the curse that God declared in verse 16 that very profoundly affects us all. Verse 16 tells us: "To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children;' and in part two: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

Before moving farther along in the sermon, I would like to read to you Richard Ritenbaugh's comment on this verse as cited from his 1998 Forerunner article, "The First Prophecy (Part Two)" because it directly ties to this sermon and what we have to deal with during our conversion process in this world. Richard wrote:

The second of Eve's curses deals with her relationship with her husband. It explains why marriages fail and why many of the rest

are unhappy. As mentioned before, human relations are just as likely to fail as to succeed when men and women rely on human knowledge [Keep in mind the sewn fig leaves, brethren.] rather than the revealed godly wisdom. The New King James Version's rendering of the latter half of Genesis 3:16 is typical in many translations, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." From this we can see that the two clauses cannot be parallels. Instead, they form a statement of action and reaction because the woman "desires" her husband, he will "rule over" her. Yet this does not make much sense as a curse. Why should a woman's desire for her husband cause him to dominate her?

Most men would gladly accept his wife's desire for him, causing him to treat her more gently rather than roughly as implied in this verse. How are we to understand this? The key is in the word "desire" translated from the Hebrew *tesuqah*, which the Brown, Driver, and Briggs lexicon calls "unusual and striking." It occurs only three times in the Old Testament: here [in Genesis 3:16], Genesis 4:7, and Song of Songs 7:10. It can carry the sense of sexual longing (as in the Song of Songs), but its usage in Genesis 4:7 shows another side, that of a desire to overcome or defeat another.

"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," is what it says in verse 4 verse 7. Richard continues,

[Sin's] desire is for you, but you should rule over it. This latter meaning fits Genesis 3:16 better than the former. Thus, God is saying that a woman's desire will be to gain the upper hand over her husband, but because she is the weaker vessel, her husband will put her down by force, if need be.

The curse is that, in the main, women will lose the battle of the sexes. History bears this out. Until the advent of the women's rights movements, women were virtually their husbands' property, treated as heir-producing machines, given little freedom, and forced to

serve their husband every whim. In many cultures, men bought and sold women like cattle. Some cultures maintain this custom even today.

Brethren, I would like us to think again about what I said regarding Adam and Eve's immediate decision from the wisdom of men to cover up the differences God had given them. Within His very good creation those differences should have led to a shared bond of unity, but very possibly this was the very first act of selfishness in the human relationship and the first manifestation of division. Therefore, within the context of Richard's commentary, God's judgment here in Genesis 3:16 was self-inflicted. God was only telling them one of the most prominent consequences of the sin from that point forward.

Richard finishes this cited section with these words:

Only where true Christianity flourishes is there any real ease of this curse. Ephesians 5:22-23 teaches how we can decrease its effects within our marriages—by emulating the virtues of Christ's relationship with the church. Thus, wives are told to submit rather than contend, and husbands are commanded to love rather than dominate. It takes conscious effort to overcome the evil, ingrained habits of 6,000 years of misguided practice.

Please keep in mind that this curse has affected all human relationships, not just marriages, even though it is most prominent in marriage as the closest of human relationships, which I had planned on touching on toward the end of the sermon, but I do not think I will have time. But for now, considering all that has been said so far, I would like to show how deeply embedded this division that we must overcome is in the world in which we live. I plan to draw a couple of lessons out of two nationally recognized events that will be happening within the next couple of weeks.

However, before we go into this, I want to make it clear I am not telling you that the people of God's church should not observe the days we are going to talk about because hopefully we can observe them as they agree with God's Word regarding respect for both the governments under which we live and for our own parents who we are to highly honor. As long as things are not at

cross purposes with God's Word, there is nothing wrong with them, even if they may sit on a foundation laid by the division of men.

The first one is the national observance, one week from tomorrow, known as Flag Day. The second one is two weeks from tomorrow and the national holiday of Father's Day. I think it will surprise you with what we can glean from thinking more carefully about these two national observances than what is on the surface and the foundation of the Genesis 3:16 curse under both of them. Both are examples which show how deeply embedded division is within our society and the difficulties we face that resulted from Adam and Eve's original choice to open the Pandora's box of division. But within them, they both ultimately point to the solution and the unity that can only come from the Word of God.

So please stay with me as we go through this and hopefully we will be able to wrap it up towards the end with the very strong encouragement regarding overcoming all the difficulties we face personally and the absolute success that we are guaranteed if we stay under the banner of God's word.

As noted, one week from tomorrow is Flag Day. Although not a federal holiday, it is a day by traditional direct declaration of the President of the United States to be set aside as a day to show our respect for the banner of this country and what it represents as one nation under God. It commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States on June 14, 1777.

By resolution, the Second Continental Congress, the flag resolution stated that the flag of the 13 United States use 13 stripes, alternating red and white, that the union be 13 stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation. Flag Day itself was first proposed in 1861 to rally support for the Union side of the American Civil War. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson issued a presidential proclamation that designated June 14th as Flag Day.

Brethren, the flag of this nation or of any other nation is typically held high as a rallying point of strength and unity of a particular people. Within the unity it inspires comes a sense of self-sacrifice towards the greater good to continue pushing forward regardless of the cost in unity. As noted, in the Civil War, it was meant to be a rallying point for the Union soldiers. Just as

on this day 82 years ago it inspired ordinary men from ordinary lives to become extraordinary heroes in self-sacrifice to make sure that the American, the British, the Canadian, the Belgium, and the French flags were all planted and held high at the end of the day on the beach of Normandy.

But again, the flags and the unity they inspired on that bloody beach were the consequences of division of men and self-centered pride and desire to control other men. Although considering the flag as a sign of respect in this world, it ultimately works toward division within the foolishness of men. Although, as I said, it is not against the principles within God's Word for us to participate in a national day of respect for the emblem of the government under which we live, so long as it is not an idol to us, but ultimately a sign of our respect for God and His authority over all the nations.

However, again, under these flags, these banners, mankind becomes more divided and not in a good way.

But let us take a look at the first place where banner is used in the Bible because it points directly to the flag we must be under that assures our victory over all the evil that comes from the minds of men. So please turn to the first place that banner is used in the Bible. As I mentioned in a previous message a few weeks ago, although it is not a single word for banner but part of God's name, Jehovah Nissi, please turn with me to Exodus the 17th chapter and verse 8.

Exodus 17:8-16 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up on the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the

book and recount it to the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out from remembrance Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; for he said, "Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Brethren, right here is the first use of banner under which we must conduct our fight together against the real enemy who is stirring up all the devious attacks against us. It is not by our might and strength that we will overcome, but in carrying out our responsibilities in the place God has put us to support one another in unity with our arms raised under God, who is our banner.

Let us add one more important piece to this and what we must do that will reflect our absolute respect for the banner under which we live with our citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Here is the first time the actual word for banner is used. Turn with me please to Psalm 60. We are going to be picking it up right there in verse 1.

Psalm 60:1-4 Oh God, you have cast us off; You have broken us down; You have been displeased; oh, restore us again! You have made the earth tremble; You have broken it; heal its breaches, for it is shaking. You have shown Your people hard things; You have made us drink the wine of confusion. You have given a banner to those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of the truth.

The word here in the Hebrew is *nes*, and it means flag. Brethren, as we go through the hard things of this life in subject to the surprise attacks of Satan and his minions, we can be assured God in His truth will be the rallying point even during the time of chaos and confusion around us. We must learn the fear of God and live under the banner of truth of His Word within all the circumstances of our lives through Jesus Christ.

If we stay under this banner with profound respect and fear of our great God, learning to live in truth, using His wisdom, no matter what the circumstances of our lives, through Jesus Christ, we will not fail.

Now, I mentioned earlier I was going to give us an example of how deeply embedded the curse of division that started with Adam and Eve is in every

aspect of the things from the minds of men. But again, remember that just because the source of something has developed within the division of this world does not necessarily mean we should not celebrate it. As long as it is in line with the principles of God's Word, we can still find something very profitable within it towards our relationship with God.

Remember, brethren, one of the things that God is doing with us is teaching us to do what is pleasing to Him as we participate in this life under His wisdom, always with deep and abiding respect for Him and living according to the truth of His Word. I think you might find it interesting how much the tentacles of the Genesis 3:16 curse extended into the origins of Father's Day, as well as Mother's Day in the United States.

The traditional history of the inspiration for Father's Day was the Civil War veteran William Jackson Smart, who reared six children after his wife died. It was first celebrated in 1910 after a Spokane, Washington woman named Sonora Smart Dodd, who was one of the six raised by William Smart, championed the idea, but it did not become a permanent U.S. holiday until 1972. After hearing a sermon about Anna Jarvis and Mother's Day at the Central Methodist Episcopalian Church in 1909, Sonora Dodd told her pastor that fathers should have a similar holiday honoring them.

Now, Anna Jarvis was the driving force and founder of Mother's Day in the United States the previous year, on May 10th, 1908. Although Sonora initially suggested June 5th, her father's birthday, the pastors of the Spokane Ministerial Alliance did not have enough time to prepare their sermons, and the celebration was deferred to the third Sunday in June. A bill to accord national recognition of the holiday was introduced to Congress in 1913. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson went to Spokane to speak at a Father's Day celebration and wanted to make it official. But Congress resisted, fearing that it would become too commercialized.

U.S. President Calvin Coolidge recommended in 1924 that the day be observed by the nation but stopped short of issuing national proclamation. Two earlier attempts to formally recognize the holiday had been defeated by Congress. Then in 1957, Maine Senator Margaret J. Smith (who by the way, was the first woman senator in the United States Congress), wrote a proposal accusing Congress of ignoring fathers for 40 years while honoring mothers,

thus singling out just one of our two parents. In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson issued the first presidential proclamation honoring fathers, designating the third Sunday in June as Father's Day. Six years later, the day was made a permanent national holiday when President Richard Nixon signed it into law April 24th, 1972.

As noted, there is nothing conflicting with God's Word that prevents us from observing Father's Day. We certainly are commanded by God to honor both our mothers and fathers. However, to the point of this sermon, I just wanted to show that even things like this are connected to the tentacles because of sin, to the curse as stated in Genesis 3:17. Although what I am now about to read to you is a minor thing, it still is a bit of evidence that at the heart of almost every decision that men are making is the war of division that has gone on from Adam and Eve until now.

The following comments I found on an Internet search. And keep in mind that both Father's Day and Mother's Day began to be pushed forward at the beginning of the 20th century in the early 1900s. Anna Marie Jarvis, previously mentioned as the founder of Mother's Day, was actually following on the idea based on the direction of her mother, Anne Reeves Jarvis, who was a progressive social reformer back in the Civil War time seeking equal rights for women. Again, please know I am not trying to diminish the role of men or women in any way, nor all the injustices that have taken place throughout the centuries, but I want to point out to you how deeply embedded the Genesis 3:16 division is in this world in which we must live under the flag of our Father in truth.

We live in a world under sin where men and women determine for themselves how to effect change. As a matter of fact, contrary to God's way of doing things, on the banner page of a website known as the National Women's History Alliance is the following quote from Frederick Douglass: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will."

In the late 19th century, into the early 20th century, there was a progressive women's rights movement that began in Great Britain and spread to the United States. These women were known as suffragettes.

The following is cited from an article entitled, "Thanks, Feminist Movement, for Making Father's Day Better for Dads":

The suffrage movement and Father's Day share a fascinating history. Early feminists and suffrage advocates often worked to elevate the role of nurturing fathers. Today, Father's Day is celebrated in mid-June. It is seen as a time to recognize dads who share equal parenting responsibilities, a shift directly influenced by the women's rights movement.

Then under the subheading of "The Cultural Shift" it says,

Anti-suffragette posters in the 1910s often featured mocking imagery of befuddled dads left at home to take care of babies while women went to the polls. In reality, the suffrage movement helped dismantle the strict, stoic stereotype of the distant Victorian patriarch. By demanding equal rights, feminists laid the groundwork for modern hands-on fatherhood, where dads are actively involved in raising their children.

Is this not what God wanted, us to be actively involved in raising our children, but not co-parenting the way that this world looks at it. The following is a compilation, additional comments from the Internet regarding the tie-in to the power struggle between men and women in the modern celebration of Father's Day.

1. Feminist roots of Father's Day. Father's Day was celebrated in 1910 thanks to Sonora Smart Dodd from Spokane, Washington. She was raised by a single father and wanted to honor dads just like people did their mothers. Sonora was an active part of the progressive and feminist movement at the time. Many early advocates of Father's Day saw it as a way to promote more active, equal parenting. Early feminists viewed the holiday as an opportunity to encourage men to step away from the old patriarchal stereotypes and become more involved in their children's lives.

2. The suffra-gents. Many men actively fought alongside the women to help pass the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. These men

were called suffra-gents. These dedicated fathers, husbands, and brothers worked hard to change the voting laws. Many female suffragettes were inspired by their own politically active fathers. Frederick Douglass was one of the most famous male suffragettes. The quote we read about being demanding rights. He and his children signed petitions for women's voting.

3. Equal parenting. In the early 1900s, anti-suffrage posters often showed a terrified father, as we talked in the past, stuck at a home doing chores while his wife went out to vote. People back then feared women's voting would destroy the traditional family. Today, the modern Father's Day celebrates the exact opposite: co-parenting. Because early women's rights activists challenged strict gender roles, modern fathers are now encouraged to be equal partners at home.

Brethren, my purpose here is not to have us stop celebrating or observing Mother's Day and Father's Day, which in and of themselves clearly agrees with God's Word that we should honor our mothers and fathers daily. Setting apart special days each year is not out of line with God's Word. What I am trying to point out to us is that God expects us under His flag of fear and truth to understand why we are doing what we do within the society of minefields built on division from the minds of men and not on godly wisdom toward real unity built on the sacrifice of outgoing concern for others that is the hallmark of any good marriage—self-sacrifice of both the mothers and the fathers, husbands and wives.

There is nothing wrong with Flag Day, Father's Day, or a Mother's Day. But for us brethren, they need to be taken a step further into knowing why we do what we do with godly wisdom while understanding the reason this journey is so hard. We have been called out of because to continue to live in a world that continues to be driven by the Genesis 3:16 curse that Adam and Eve brought on themselves and passed on to generations is very, very hard. But through Jesus Christ, we once again have access to the Tree of Life, and we need to be living our lives under the flag of our great God. We need to be living our lives with great abiding respect for God and living under the banner of the truth of His Word in each situation that we go through in this life.

So turn with me now, please, to the scripture that Richard referred to earlier in Ephesians 5. We are going to be turning to Ephesians 5 but we are going to begin back in Ephesians 4, verse 1. This is our command, brethren, where God tells us of the apostle Paul,

Ephesians 4:1-8 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, within all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [There is no peace in marriage without self-sacrifice.] There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says, "When he ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave men gifts."

Down to verse 11.

Ephesians 4:11-16 And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

And then in chapter 5, verse 1:

Ephesians 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Ephesians 5:9 For the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:15-17 [under the heading of Walk in Wisdom] See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools [covering yourselves with the fig leaves] but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Ephesians 5:20-25 Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church.

Ephesians 5:28-31 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

Ephesians 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you

may live long on the earth." And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:14-16 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Brethren, as Ted said last week, these seem to be an almost insurmountable journey for us as we walk this road, as we live in this self-centered world, and walk the path while striving to stay under our Father's flag of truth.

But as we draw toward the end of the sermon, I want to end with words from a mighty witness of faith that has gone before us, and he created a picture that we need all relate to and the remarkable strength God has given His elect to keep on keeping on. While I read this, I want you to hear his voice that most of you know very well as he pictures the journey that we are all on and the assured goal at the end.

The following is from the end of Kim Myers' 2012 "Be Prepared" sermon where Kim proposed a very hypothetical for all of us on this path under our Father's flag. Remember, keep Kim's voice in your head. He said:

Now let us say that a man came to you with a lottery ticket, and he says, "I will give you this ticket. It is the winning ticket, but there is something you have to do to receive the prize. There is a narrow road about four feet wide, ten miles long, and at the end of the road there will be a man with \$125 million. He will give it to you, and he will also give you eternal life when you give him your winning ticket."

Then the man says to you that there are rules you must abide by if you agree to take the winning ticket. He says there is a time limit. You have 40 days to go 10 miles. So you need to average about a quarter of a mile a day. If you fail to walk 10 miles in 40 days, you will die on the road, and your carcass will be kicked off the road,

and you will be forgotten. Also, along the way there will be other paths that you can take, but they do not end up with the prize. There will be also people along the way who will try to delay you by inviting you into taverns to have a beer in order to get you drunk and disoriented.

There will be great amusement parks that will delay you for some time. If you decide to enter and play there. There will also be topless bars, dancers along the way that will try to entice you off the road and confuse you. There will be great shopping malls and great sales on merchandise and people there beckoning you to come in, shop, and spend a few days with them to slow down your progress. There will also be buildings full of pornography and houses of ill repute, full of prostitutes that will try to entice you to forget about the goal and the prize. They will say, "Let's just live for the moment. Let's have fun."

There will be rain, snow, hail on your journey. People will put all kinds of debris on the roadway. They will put rocks, logs, branches in your path to slow you down. There will be icy patches and oil slicks along the way designed to put you off the path. There will be all kinds of toys for you to play with along the way, boats, cars, motorcycles, you name it. That will also slow down your progress.

There will also be people along the way that will tell you that you cannot make 10 miles. It is too hard; it is too long. They will tell you that it is impossible to achieve the prize. There will be people along the way that will offer you drugs of all types. They will say, "Just try this. You'll not believe the experience you'll get."

Then the man says that if you are not careful and you do not heed my warnings, they will destroy you and you will lose your way and your prize. Along the way you will be offered fame and great possessions if you just get off the path and follow their ways. Your journey may be filled with much tribulation, many hardships, and many trials.

But the man says, "I will help you. I will put men along the road every tenth of a mile to encourage you and remind you of the prize. They will counsel you to keep you moving forward. Remember, I warned you of other paths along the road that do not end up at the prize. At the entrance of these paths, there will be men that look like and act like they work for me, but you will know them. By what they say and how they live their lives. These men will try to get you to follow them down, down the wrong path. These men will tell you, 'it's shorter over here on this path, follow me.'"

Then the man says, "I will be with you, and I will help you. I will also put a guard rail along the path on both sides to make it hard for you to slip off the road. But if you choose to climb over the guard rail to play and to get sidetracked, just remember it is just as hard to climb back over the guard rail, to get back on the road and continue your journey as it was to get off the road. I will not let them put debris, logs, branches, and rocks on the road in your path that are too heavy for you to remove. And from time to time when you get discouraged and despair sets in, I will remove the debris, the logs, the branches, and the rocks before you. I will help you along the way."

So the question I want to ask you is, do you think you can make the journey? Can you go 10 miles in 40 days?" I think all of us can make it. We have been told what to expect from God in the Bible, so I think the wise thing is to prepare for our journey. . . .

And then Kim finished with,

God is telling us that He loves us before we were even capable of love. That is how much He loves us. He loved us when we were still in the womb. He called us. We did not call Him. I know that I was not looking for God or this church when He called me. I had no interest at all, but yet here I am. Brethren, our future is sure as long as we heed the warnings and stay on the path.

Kim finished:

Brethren, we are living in very dangerous times spiritually, but if we stay on the path and heed the warning, we will receive the prize. God loves us. He is with us, and He will continue to help us to stay on the path. Do not let the prize slip away now. We have already traveled nine and a half miles, brethren. We are close!

Please turn with me to Zechariah the 9th chapter and a very encouraging scripture.

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of the donkey.

Zechariah 9:16-17 The Lord their God will save them in that day, as the flock of His people. For they shall be like the jewels of a crown, lifted like a banner over His land—for how great is its goodness and how great its beauty!

Brethren, we are living in a world where division is becoming more obvious every day from the self-inflicted Genesis 3:16 curse, but it is up to each one of us in our own circumstances, our own trials, to learn to stay under the flag of our Father, making all of our decisions of life based on the truth of His Word as only those who have access again to the Tree of Life through Jesus Christ can. As we do this, we become part of that flag of our Father.

As we live the truth of God's Word in the face of all the trials of this life, always keep in mind the closing words from one of our contemporaries, a hero of faith who has gone before us. As he said, "Stay on the path. Don't let the prize slip away now. We have already traveled nine and a half miles, brethren. We are close!"