

Healing The Breach

Assisting Christ in His Work

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Given 11-Jun-00; Sermon #453A

During the Napoleonic Wars, of the first few decades of the nineteenth century, warfare was a human meat grinder. It really has not improved any since then. In modern time, we kill more people—just in a little bit "cleaner" way. But during the Napoleonic Wars, it was a very personal, up close, bloody business. A main stratagem of general officers was just to throw wave after wave after wave of men—at an opposing objective—just simply to overwhelm it, by sheer numbers.

In the case of a siege of a walled town, cannon fire would make a breach in the wall; and then they would throw all their men at it. But still, during this time of very close combat, even though they had guns, they still did not shoot very far accurately; and so it was fairly close up work, a lot of the times, after a volley or two, it was bayonet time. And this went into the Civil War time, in our own country.

You know the British army—all spit and polish, and duty and honor and discipline. Well, they tried to refine this butchery a bit. Especially in the area of a siege on a walled town, where they had to open a breach in the wall—if some officer did not volunteer his soldiers for the job, which was often the case, because it was considered an honor to lead the charge into the breach, the commanding officer, then, would choose a regiment from among the several that he had under his command. And he would title them "the forlorn hope."

The term, actually, is not an English term. Even though we have words that sound like "the forlorn hope," the word is actually from the Dutch. It is "verloren hoop." And that Dutch phrase means, "the lost band." Now you understand why the Dutch called it that. A soldier, if he was chosen to be part of *the forlorn hope*, had about a one in ten chance (maybe even less) of surviving *the forlorn hope's* assault on the enemy's breach.

The reason why there was such a high death rate, in *the forlorn hope*, was that the enemy knew exactly where the attack was going to come. In fact, in some instances, the army on the outside (the besieging army) had been assaulting this one spot for days—or maybe even weeks—with cannon fire, because they had to open up the wall. They had to make a breach in this wall. And so, here they were—shooting from several hundred yards (or more) away—to try to make sure that this wall came down, at least in one spot. Then they could send their men in, with their bayonets.

Thus, the enemy knew exactly where they were coming. And so, the defending general officers would set up crossfire. They would set up their own cannons—filled with shot and canister, shrapnel, as well as just regular cannon balls. And they would pour fire down into this small area where the forlorn hope was coming.

The forlorn hope—to secure the breach and enter the town, and thus win the victory for its side was a nearly certain death penalty. But the British (like I said— with all of their duty, and honor, and discipline) considered it an honor to die as part of *the forlorn hope*. At least, the officers did.

Now, spiritually, Jesus Christ was *our Forlorn Hope*. In His bloody death, He secured the breach—giving us access to the Father in heaven. Let us begin in Matthew 27. If you know the subjects of the chapters, then you know that Matthew 27 is part of Christ's crucifixion.

Matthew 27:50-54 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Let us go now to Hebrews 10. We will begin in verse 19.

Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

I read these two sections to show one of the effects of Christ's death on the stake. What it did was that it rent the veil that kept those who were not welcomed out of the Holy of Holies. And it opened up, as Paul says here, "a new and living way" into the presence of the Father. It is by Christ's blood that we step over that line—into God's presence. And then His blood also cleanses us from all sin; and we, then, have the opportunity for salvation.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, has done nearly all the work; but *we* still have a part to play in God's plan of salvation. Not only must we work out our own salvation, as it says in Philippians, "with fear and trembling," but God is also shaping us. We are His firstfruits. He is shaping us into *an advanced team* to work with Christ *to heal the breach*. And not just to heal the breach, but to heal it completely. Christ did most of the work in healing the breach between us and God; but there is still work to be done to heal the breach between all of mankind and God. And He has called *us*—His church, His firstfruits—to play a role in doing that. This is part of the meaning of the day of Pentecost that we are keeping today—that we have been called to assist Him in healing the breach.

Now, what do I mean by "breach"? Obviously, the imagery of *the forlorn hope*, and what they were trying to do there, is very instructive here. But I want to read a dictionary definition of what a breach is. The dictionary defines a *breach* as "infraction or violation of a law, obligation, tie, or standard." This makes it a very broad term.

Another definition is "a broken, ruptured, or torn condition." As in: We have a breach between us. That means we have a ruptured, or torn, condition between us—in our relationship. Of course, another definition is the one that we used with *the forlorn hope*. "A gap, as in a wall, made by battering." And then finally, another one that applies here: "a break in accustomed friendly relations."

So we have an infraction or violation of a law, obligation, tie, or standard; a broken, ruptured, or torn condition; a gap made by battering; a break in accustomed friendly relations. Spiritually, *all* (except the one about the gap in the wall) apply here. Violating law, obligation, and standards; rupturing a covenant; and having a condition of it being ruptured at the present time; and breaking friendly relations with God are all part of the breach between God and man.

Let us go to Ezekiel 28, because the breaches began even before man arrived on the scene.

Of course, this is one of the sections in the Old Testament on Satan's fall.

Ezekiel 28:14-16 "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you [says God. I put you there.]; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within. And you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones.

The angel, who became Satan (in the Hebrew, Helel), began the breaches in the harmonious relationship with God. He was the first to break away, and to cause this breach. And he was accompanied—as we find in Revelation 12—by one-third of the angels. They were the ones that were under him, on the earth. It says that his tail drew them. So already now, before man was even created, one-third of the creation of God (what is called 'the sentient creation of God') was in rebellion. A breach between God and one-third of the angels!

It says here, in Ezekiel 28, that the "offenses" were iniquity, sin, and violence. In other places, *pride* is thrown in—which many call the root of all sin. And for these things, God cast him out of His government. That is what the symbol of the "mountain" is. God cast him out of His mountain, out of His government. Satan no longer is part of the government of God. He was then confined to the place of his servitude—here on earth.

But you see what happens when there is sin. *Sin causes God to react violently*—to put that profane thing out of His presence! And once that happens—once there is a gap, a breach, between a person and God—that must be *overcome* if there is to be any *reconciliation*. In the case of Satan the Devil, and the one-third of the angels that he drew with his tail—there is no indication in the Bible that there is ever going to be any reconciliation. That breach cannot be healed. And all that God can do to remedy that situation is to eternally imprison those angels and their leader, Satan the Devil. It is pretty sad—that they *chose*, for all eternity, to have a breach between themselves and their Creator. And there is nothing that can be done to solve it.

Then men arrive on the scene. We go back to Genesis 3 and we find that immediately there is a breach between God and man. And guess who is there? The one who originally made a breach with God—now he is there, to cause more problems.

Genesis 3:1-4 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 every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of 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 it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."

He is like the cannon fire against the wall—trying to pound, and pound, and pound until the wall is breached. And he does it through lies, and subtleties, and the influence of his satanic nature.

Genesis 3:5 "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."

And this is true; but he put a negative spin on it, that made them think. Well, actually, he put a positive spin on it—making them think that they would be God immediately, and that this was something desirable, and that God was keeping it away from them.

Genesis 3:6 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.

Now immediately, *effects* began to show.

Genesis 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

Well, immediately, they noticed that they should be ashamed—that they were naked, that they did not have anything on in front of this other person, and they were ashamed of it. It is interesting that that was the first thing that registered with them—a sexual thing.

Genesis 3:8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Another effect was that they wanted to hide from God—that they had some dirty little secret that they did not want God to know. There was some part of their lives that they wanted to put in a closet and not reveal to anyone. And so we can see immediately that the gap between men and God was widening at an ever-increasing speed.

Genesis 3:9-10 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid . . .

Here is another effect. On top of shame, and secrets, and hiding—there is also fear that comes onto the scene.

Genesis 3:9-10 I was afraid because I was naked . . .

That is interesting. Why would you fear because you were naked? I do not know that I have a good answer for that. Anyway, he says, "and I hid myself."

Genesis 3:11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

And then another effect begins. They start blaming one another—pointing the finger. Let us drop down to verse 24. It did not take long for God to pass sentence on them.

Genesis 3:24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

God, once again, had to react violently—because of sin. He had to cut them off from Him and from eternal life, which was symbolized by the Tree of Life. He did not want them to face the same consequences that faced Satan the Devil. Satan had chosen the way of sin. Here, this new creation, Adam and Eve, had chosen the way of sin again. But God had an immediate remedy for the situation. He did not solve it, necessarily; but it was a stop gap measure. That is, death. Mankind can die. And so He blocked the way to the Tree of Life, so that He could resurrect them at another better time and repair the gap—repair the breach.

So, He was able to stop the process from going to its ultimate conclusion, which would have been the same as what had happened with Satan the Devil—eternal separation from God. And so this violent act of thrusting them out of the Garden, and guarding the way back with this flaming sword wielded by an angel, was a good thing. It was kind. It was loving. It enabled Adam and Eve to repent one day, and to have eternal life. So God's violent actions, in these cases, are not evil. They are actually good for mankind. Let us notice God's reasons, here, for doing this.

Genesis 3:22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. . . .

Now, He repeats what Satan said would happen after they took the fruit of the tree.

Genesis 3:22-23 . . . 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.

That succinctly says what I just mentioned. What it did was that it opened their eyes. They knew "the good" through God, because that was all that He had taught them. But now they had other avenues of pursuit—"the evil" side. They were no longer innocents. They had real choice—to choose, not just what God offered but what Satan offered. And He said, "We've got to make sure that they don't become immortal, until they are ready." And so He closed off the way to the tree of life.

Well, it was not very much longer until God decided that He had to destroy all of mankind—through the Flood, saving only eight people. Another breach occurred after the flood. *A worldwide breach*, I should say. It affected all of mankind. When Noah, and his sons and daughters-in-law, and wife got off the ark, God told them to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." From this, we have understood that part of Noah's commission was to repopulate the earth by spreading the people around. Thus, giving people a lot of elbow room and letting them go to the lands that God directed them to go in—and, by that means, to have peace.

If they had done what God wanted them to do, then our history probably would have been somewhat different. But what happened was that mankind rebelled against this, and the result was the tower of Babel. They did not want to be put all over the earth. They wanted to stay together.

Genesis 11:1-2 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.

What this says is that once they left the area around where the ark landed in Ararat, they went somewhat to the east and found a plain that was just Garden of Eden-like to them (compared to what they knew).

Genesis 11:3-4 And they said to themselves [and to one another], "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.

Russell brought up something very interesting last week in his sermonette, when he went through this. They possibly could have lined this thing with the asphalt in order to be protected from another flood, which they thought might happen. An interesting thought in this regard is that they were going "down" in elevation. They had been up in the mountains, where they may have felt somewhat safe. That is where the ark landed. Now they were going down into the plain, where it was well watered. There they built a tower, a high thing; and they lined it with pitch, with asphalt—so that it was waterproof.

Then they wanted to make a name for themselves—meaning that they wanted all the glory to themselves. That is, to do something apart from God. They did not want to do it for God's name, which is interesting. Hold that thought in your mind. They wanted to do it for their own name, and glory.

Genesis 11:5-6 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what

they begin to do [meaning, this tower is just the beginning of what they can do]; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.

The thought here is that man being united and having started out like this—in, actuality, such a very huge leap in technology and architecture to begin with, would lead to other very large advances in other areas of technology. Soon they would begin doing whatever they thought up. Whatever man's mind could conceive, they would be able to do. All of their brains were on one frequency, and they could communicate their ideas without any hindrances.

And God says, "It's not time yet. I don't want this to be able to happen for another five thousand years or so." And we are just getting, now, to the place where we can do that once again. That is, where we have used technology to overcome the barriers of language. You can communicate in computer languages now days. You do not even need speech.

Genesis 11:7-9 Come, let Us go down [God said], and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Well, God had His way! His will was done. And even though Noah's descendants had not done what God had said for them to do, God did it—by confusing their speech. Some, that spoke proto-Chinese, ended up in China. And some, that spoke proto-German, ended up in Assyria. Those who spoke some of the Indian languages, ended up over in this country, and so on. God scattered them abroad over the face of this whole earth. This was another event of a breach.

Now, remember that I said that they did this to make their own name, or to glorify their own name. Let us go to Zephaniah 3, verse 9, to see where God is going to solve this problem Himself.

Zephaniah 3:9 "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language [Now, listen to the reason.], that they may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord.

God said, "I am going to confuse your language because you would not give *Me* the glory. And when I restore a pure language, I'm going to make sure that you use it *to call upon My name*." That is how He is going to restore that breach. And who knows what language that might be.

Notice the other reason: "That they may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord." *Unity*—exactly the opposite of what happened with the tower of Babel. They were trying to make unity, to become united, through their own means—to give themselves the glory. And God said, "I'm going to give you a pure language, so that you can call upon My name and have the proper unity"—that serves God. And when God does something like that, it always works out for the best. Much better than man, whose "touch" tends to ruin everything.

Let us go to II Kings, and we will see another breach. Israel has said, on Mt. Sinai, (in Exodus 19:8) "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." Now notice what happened about seven hundred years later, or so.

II Kings 17:5-17 Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. Also the children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the L

LORD had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger, for they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing." Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets." Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them that they should not do like them. So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, make a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

This is all that Israel had done, even though they had said, "All that You say we will do." God's reaction is very true to the pattern.

II Kings 17:18-23 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone. Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight. For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.

And it is still in effect! They are still away from their own land. They still do not know who they are. Only a very small remnant of people knows where "Israel" is; and this separation—this breach—continues.

You might want to jot down II Chronicles 36:15-21, because God says almost the exact same thing about Judah when He sends them away under the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. But with them it was slightly different. The breach is still there; but He made a small *exception* in their case. He allowed a small group of Jews, Levites, and Benjaminites to come back to Judah; and there to raise up the temple once again. And to prepare for the first coming of Jesus Christ, because the Savior must come from Judah and He must have a temple to return to. He must be born "in the land." For all of the prophecies to be fulfilled, He must be born in the city of Rachel—in Bethlehem, of Judah.

And so, He made an exception for the ancestors of Jesus Christ, and for other people who were necessary for the running of the Temple, and for the refoundation of a small society so that His Son could come (the first time) and do His work. And do you not know that just forty years after that (approximately) God totally destroyed Judah again. That was the beginning of the end—of the Diaspora, where the Jews were scattered all over. Or, maybe I should say the end of the beginning—of the Diaspora, where they are still (most of them) living outside of the land.

Do you know what the Romans did, when they came up against Jerusalem, laid siege to it, and finally conquered it? Well, the Temple was covered in gold; and, when they burned the Temple, the gold melted. Their greed was so great that they, pretty much, plowed the entire area—scraped it clean—to make sure that they got all the gold. It was like God, through the Romans, was saying, "I'm going to just wipe all signs of Judah from off this place!" They took everything. They scraped it clean—even the gold that had melted down between the rocks. A *breach*—between God and His people Israel, and then with Judah.

Let us go to Revelation 3, because the breaches have never stopped. There have even been breaches in the church—between God's people and Him. Here's one—maybe the most famous of them all.

Revelation 3:14-16 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. [I wish that you were one way, or the other.] So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit [spew] you out of My mouth."

Another breach! A violent act, by God, to separate Himself from sin. The breaches continue, and this must really hurt God. It must really put a hollow spot in His belly, in His heart. To think that the people who He had raised up to begin to help *to repair the breach*—they themselves were the cause of a breach! He had to just vomit them out, and find a remnant that would do His will. And that is, I think, a very good reason (a very good example, a very good illustration) of what has happened *in the church* over the last dozen years, or so.

Let us pinpoint the reason for these breaches, a little bit. We have already seen it, generally; but I want you to see it in black and white here, and show some detail.

Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you.

The reason for breaches is sin . Plain and simple—sin and iniquity causes God to turn away. It causes a fracture in the benevolent, accustomed friendly relations (going back to the definition of "breach"). It causes a cessation of normal friendly relations, when there is sin.

Isaiah 59:3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity.

Those are commandments Numbers 6 and 9—murder and false witness.

Isaiah 59:4-5 No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and

bring forth iniquity. They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; he who eats of their eggs dies, and from that which is crushed a viper breaks forth.

This is talking about plans and things that people conceive in their minds; and then, when they come to fruition, they destroy other people. Other people pay the price.

Isaiah 59:6-7 Their webs will not become garments, nor will they cover themselves with their words; their works are works of iniquity, and the acts of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil . . .

It is not like they sneak upon doing something bad. He is talking about a people that *rush* to sin.

Isaiah 59:7-8 . . .and they make haste to shed innocent blood. [That is, to take advantage of those who cannot defend themselves.] Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace.

Do you think that we have peace in the church of God? God says, "As long as we are still rushing to do iniquity, we won't have peace." You do not find peace down that road. And when we start seeing *peace* in the church, we will know that things have turned a corner.

James 3:18 The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

That means that we have to be beginning to cultivate that fruit of the Spirit, by doing good. Once we have an atmosphere of *peace*, then we can begin harvesting the fruits of righteousness. It is very, very difficult to grow and overcome during times of tumult, during times of warfare. Oh sure, there are

heroes who step into the gap; but for the most part, a lot of overcoming and growing is not done during war. You do not have time for it. You are too busy fighting the war. You need peace to cultivate righteousness.

When people *quit fighting* over inane doctrinal detail that they place so much importance on—to the exclusion of everything else, that is more important to this life of righteousness that we have been called to—when that stops (the bitterness and the infighting)—then we will begin to see some growth!

Isaiah 59:9-11 Therefore is justice far from us, nor does righteousness overtake us; we look for light, but there is darkness! [Is it getting any better, as we wade through this cloud of darkness and gloominess? We look] For brightness, but we walk in blackness! We grope for the wall like the blind [Is that not what it says about the Laodicean?], and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as at twilight; we are as dead men [Does it not say that about Sardis?] in desolate places. We all growl like bears, and moan sadly like doves; we look for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us.

Not in time, but in distance—if you understand what I mean. Christ may come back bringing salvation very soon; but *we* may still be very far away—if we do not turn that corner.

Isaiah 59:12 For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against them; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them.

They are not secret sins. They are the stuff that we have been dealing with all of our Christian lives. We just have not gotten over them!

Isaiah 59:13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

That shows you where it all is. It is *out of the heart* of a man that defiles a man.

Isaiah 59:14-15 Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. . . .

Those who are really on the ball, and trying to overcome, find themselves under oppression and persecuted—and who knows how bad it will get. Amos says that those who are prudent just keep silent, unless you want to bring this persecution on you—because that is how bad it has become.

You wonder why the churches of God cannot get together? Because these attitudes are still there—in us! I am not saying, "Oh, yeah. They're all in United (all these bad attitudes), or all in Philadelphia, or all in Global, or Living, or you name X-Church of God." No, they are here. And we fool ourselves into thinking that we are superior.

Remember what Darryl's been preaching about over the past month or so. Self-deception, and such. Self-justification, and self-righteousness. Begin here! And then we may begin to repair the breach among the other churches. Begin with *yourself!* Begin in *your family.* Begin with *your congregation.* And then, we will go from there.

Isaiah 59:15 . . . Then the LORD saw it, and [one of the big understatements of the Bible] it displeased Him that there was no justice.

God is fighting mad! And to say that it 'displeased Him' is very, very understated.

Isaiah 59:16-20 He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor [Meaning that there was no leader that could lead the whole shebang.]. Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies. The coastlands He will fully repay. So

shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him. "The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," says the Lord.

Like I said, our God is *fighting mad*; and He is going to come up *against* those who will not change. It begins in the church. Read Ezekiel 9—"Begin in My sanctuary," He says. Read Revelation 11—"Measure the temple, and leave out those who are in the court of the Gentiles. Measure the altar (the ministry, those who are in service to God)." It is going to begin here. The Redeemer will come; and He will save those who turn, who repent—who, themselves, seek to heal the breach that has been caused by sin.

We know that on Pentecost in AD 31, while the disciples were gathered together to keep the holy day, that the Holy Spirit filled them; and they began, immediately, to preach the gospel and to make disciples. It says there (toward the end of the chapter) that on that very day 3,000 people were baptized. And the church had a sudden influx of people to help in the work.

Not necessarily the influx, but this same process has been happening ever since. God calls some, and He puts them into His church—to do the work, to overcome, and to grow. Why did Christ raise up the church? What is its purpose? Well, of course, I have mentioned many times today that part of it (the part that I am dwelling on here) is *to assist Christ* in repairing the breach. That is, the breach between God and man.

Let us go to Luke 24. This was after Christ had risen, after He had appeared to His disciples.

Luke 24:44-46 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day."

What we have seen, up to this point, is that Jesus gave them understanding of what had taken place up to that time. He explained to them, from the Bible, how it had prophesied of Him, and what He would do, and how what He went through would work out for salvation. It was necessary for Christ to suffer and rise from the dead that third day. That gained us forgiveness and justification before God. It opened the way to have access to Him, and it started the ball rolling for our salvation.

From verse 47 on, He tells them what they need to be doing **from that point on**.

Luke 24:47-49 "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His [Christ's] name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry [wait] in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

He explained to them what had happened, and He explained to them what they were to do. They were to preach repentance and remission of sins in all nations. That was the job of the church. But, He says, "This cannot be done, until you receive power from Me to do it."

Now, let us add a little bit to this—in Matthew 28.

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

There is a little bit more detail here. God the Father had given Christ *all authority* to get things done. So, His disciples (Christians) do not have to worry that things are not under control. They do not have to worry about not having the strength, or the truth, or whatever it takes to do the job. He was comforting them here. "Look, you twelve. You're not the greatest group of guys in all the world; but I'm going to be with you all the time. And, look,

that's all you need—because all authority, in heaven and on earth, has been placed in My hand. So things will get done! You just go out, and you preach in all the world; and you make disciples. You do your work, that I give you to do."

Now, let us go to John 16. This is a succinct explanation of why Christ had to die and ascend to heaven. And then it explains the work of the Holy Spirit (that would come in His place).

John 16:5-7 "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. [They were probably dumbfounded.] Nevertheless I tell you the truth. ["Look, this is reality here," He is saying. "This is the way it has to be."] It is to your advantage that I go away ["That I return to My Father, He says. "That I go through all these things."] For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send It to you."

This is interesting. Christ was one being among the thousands, or whatever, that were in Judea. He was able to do a work. But really, at the end of it all, only 120 people had been converted. And Christ says, "Look, I must go to My Father. If I don't go to the Father, I won't be able to send the Holy Spirit. And what that means is that I won't be able to multiply My efforts. But if I go to heaven and dispense the Holy Spirit Myself, then the work that I do through you will be multiplied inconceivably. And I can send you here, and there, and over here, and over there. And you can all do the work with the same power that I did among you. So it's important that I send the Spirit—My Spirit (Me, living in you)—so that you can do the works that I've just showed you how to do." That is, through His life.

John 16:8 And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

It will do these certain things—because, when the Holy Spirit appears, it does these things. It shows us sin! It convinces people that there is sin present, because God's Spirit is holy and pure. And it shows such a great disparity between sin and itself (and God's way). So, it will convict of sin.

And, of course, it will convict of righteousness as well. It will convince us of what is true and right. It will, therefore, also give us the power *to do* righteousness.

And of judgment as well, because—if there is this gap between what is right and what is wrong, and God [Christ] is the Judge—there will be judgment between what is righteous and what is not righteous. So, when the Holy Spirit comes, it does these things.

Also, He mentions Satan in here (the ruler of this world). When the Holy Spirit came, Satan got upset and angry. Whenever the Holy Spirit is at work, the ruler of this world is there to contend it. He knows that judgment is upon him as well, and he wants to stop the work of that Spirit everywhere it is.

John 16:12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

They did not have the Holy Spirit yet. They could not quite accept it all, until they had the Spirit.

John 16:13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak of His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."

The Holy Spirit acts as a conduit, if you will, to get the truth of God into us. And it also gives us insight of the way things are going to turn out. Plus this, it helps us to understand the prophecies. It helps us to understand the way things work. It helps us to understand God's plan. And so it reveals to us these things, because it is *Christ's mind*. If we are 'hooked in' to Christ's mind, and *if* we are becoming in His image and we are taking on the mind of Christ—then we will know these things. That is, what is in His mind—because it is Him living in us.

John 16:14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

That is how the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ. *It puts Christ in us!* It will take of what is His, and it will put it in us.

John 16:15 "All things that the Father has are Mine. . . .

Now, this opens it even wider. It is not just that we have the things that are Christ's. But, because everything that Christ has is the Father's, we will also have the mind of the Father. And we will be doing, hopefully, the things that the Father does.

John 16:15 . . . Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

The giving of the Holy Spirit to the church crushed that gap, and should have made it healed. *If* we do what is right—*if* we continue in "the way"—*then* we can heal the breach, personally, between us and the Father.

Let us now go to Colossians 1. Paul takes an entire chapter to say all of this. Paul being Paul, he kind of goes 'round about.' He mentions this and goes off the track, and then comes back and picks it up here and tells us some other jewel of wisdom that we really need to know; and finally gets back into the line of his thought, and winds it up with a bang. Well, that is what Colossians 1 is all about. He starts out praising the Colossians and talking to them about the way they had grown.

Colossians 1:9-10 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

You see the breach closing here, if we do these things.

Colossians 1:11-12 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

He is talking about our *calling* and our *justification* have qualified us, through His grace, to be partakers—to be part of His Family. To be part of "the good guys"—the light.

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed [translated] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

God already sees us as part of His Family and in His Kingdom. That is part of His confidence. That is the gap being closed. He considers us part and parcel of His Family.

Colossians 1:14-15 In whom [in His Son] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

And if there is a firstborn, it implies *more born, later born*.

Colossians 1:16-17 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Our Savior, and our God, is *everything* to us! We heard the sermon "All in All" not too long ago; and this (in verse 18) is where it comes to hit *us* very close to home.

Colossians 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Paul slips in here that we are *connected* to this All Wonderful Being. We are connected at the neck. He is the Head. We are His Body. Now if He is all of these things, and we are connected to Him—what does this say about what *we* are to be?

Colossians 1:19-20 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

This was "*the forlorn hope*" that I talked about earlier.

Colossians 1:21-22 And you [getting back to the Body, the church], who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled [He has healed the breach!] in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

That is what Christ's sacrifice does for us, before God. It presents *us* this way, before the Father. That means that our salvation is assured if . . .

Colossians 1:23-24 If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.

Paul is saying here that he is happy to give himself in service—whatever suffering and persecution it takes—in order to help the Body.

Colossians 1:25-27 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

He said a mouthful there. Basically what it is, though, is that he said that God decided and was very happy to reveal His plan to the church, *to us*. Now, why? Of course, He wants us in His Kingdom, personally.

Colossians 1:28-29 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily [through the Spirit, I could add there].

Now why did he say He revealed it to us? —So that we can reveal it to every man, and perfect every man. That is a huge job! We are His Body. What is He doing? He is trying to save *everybody*; and we have been called to do the work of salvation. We have been called to assist Him in *healing the breach* for everybody who has ever lived, and will live. That is because we are part of the firstborn. We are part of the firstfruits. We are His Body—the church. That is our job. *His job is our job*.

You might want to write down Revelation 20:4-6, where it says that those who are in the first resurrection are "blessed" because they will reign with Christ—as kings and priests—for 1,000 years. And do you know what it says there? They were given thrones and judgment was given to them. Judgment is a very interesting thing to give to a people. But what He basically says there is that we will be given the tools to assist Him to bring that breach to a close—because that is what He is doing with us.

Who is the Judge? Christ is the Judge. It says in I Peter 4:17, "Judgment must now begin at the house of God." That is us! So, we are being judged.

How are we being judged? Through the experiences of our lives. What is He trying to do? He is trying to convert us, make us in His image, and give us salvation. That is what He does as Judge, and High Priest, and King.

And when we come into the Millennium, and come into His Family, and become a part of the Kingdom of God, what are we going to be? *Judges, kings, and priests—just like Him!* Who do you think the "kings" are—and the "lords" are—in the title "King of kings and Lord of lords"? That is you and me! We are the "kings" and the "lords" that He is 'King' and 'Lord' of.

We have been called to heal the breach between God and man—for all mankind—for all eternity.

I Corinthians 6:2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

He is saying, "You should be beginning now to be able to make wise, godly judgments."

I Corinthians 6:3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

"Start doing your job!" he says. "Judge righteous judgment," Christ said.

The day of Pentecost symbolizes God calling *a group of people*—His firstfruits—out of this world, giving them the Holy Spirit, and forming them into *an elite unit* to work with His Son to heal the breach between God and man—forever.

Revelation 21:1-4 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. [All mankind will be His

people.] God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Remember those things that Adam and Eve brought in, when they created a breach between them and God? Fear, shame, and hiding from God, sorrow, and eventually death. And God says, here, that all of those things will have passed away.

Revelation 21:5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Here is *the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan*: The breach is healed! The church will have done its job. God lives with men. There is peace. Pain and suffering will have ended forever. All is right with the universe. And God says that these words—these things—are true; and they will come to pass—just as He said!