

## John (Part 18)

John 11:1-57 Conquering the Debilitating Fear of Death

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The events in chapter 11 seem to follow right on the heels of the events in chapter 10. The things from here to the end of the book of John take place in a very short period of time. We are going to move very quickly through the last couple of weeks of Jesus' life. In John 10, the events were right around the period of December. In John 11 occurs more or less within a week or two of the events of chapter 10.

**John 11:1-5** Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

It is kind of interesting because there are not too many individuals that are pointed out as people that Jesus loved. We take it for granted that, in a general sense, He loved the whole world. We take that from His attitude towards the world and the things that He did. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," and Jesus of Nazareth was right in harmony with what the Father wanted to do.

But here, the connotation has a special significance to it. In other words, these were people like the apostle John that Jesus not only loved, in a general sense of setting His will to do the right thing, but these were people that He really got along with. They were people that He liked. They were people that He had an emotional tie to, as well as the *agape* love which is something that is of the will, something that is of the mind and the intellect. So these were intimates who were not apostles, and that is kind of interesting. Again, there are not too many of these people that are pointed out by name. Maybe these people would not have been pointed out by name either, if it had not been for the death of Lazarus.

I think that we can say that these people had a large place in Christ's heart. He must have looked upon their home as kind of a sanctuary. This is not the only place in the Bible that they are mentioned. In Luke 10 they are mentioned again, and it seems as though whenever Jesus was passing through the area, He went out of His way to see

Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

Martha and Mary are an interesting case. On the surface, it would appear as though Mary was the one who was the better of the two, the one who was kind of liked a little bit more. But is that true? I do not know, but I have my own feelings about it.

**Luke 10:38** Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village [We know that was Bethany.]; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house.

There is a little bit of information there: it was *her* house. I think that we can assume, and assume correctly, that Martha was the older of the two girls, and the oldest of the three. It seems as though their ages were probably Martha the oldest, Mary in the middle, and Lazarus was the youngest of the three children. No parents are mentioned, and it is likely that the parents were either dead and they had inherited the property, or it is possible that Martha might have bought the place on her own. I think it is more likely that the place was inherited, but it was looked upon as being her house. It is not Martha and Mary's, it is hers in the book of Luke.

That tells you something about her. That is probably a pretty good indication of her character. When we read other things about her, we find that she was quite a competent person.

**Luke 10:39-42** And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

It is that verse that tends to make people think that Mary was the better of the two. When you put this together with what we are eventually going to see in John 12, where she anointed the feet of Jesus, it certainly seems to indicate that there was something in Mary that made her better than Martha. Let us examine this a little bit more thoroughly.

In John 12, you put that together with the things that we are going to see in John 11, and you get a picture of Mary as being emotional, extravagant, apt to be swept away by

emotion, her mood, and to do things off the top of her head. I do not mean that to be denigrating in any way. That just seems to be the way she was.

There is a fairly good comparison that we can make regarding the ointment that she used to pour on Jesus, and it amounted to a very, very large sum of money. It was better than a half a year's wages for a working person. That is pretty extravagant, to just take it, pour it on somebody's feet, and have it run off His feet and onto the ground. How many of you have ever done that, thrown away—I should not say "thrown away," that is the wrong connotation—but spent a half a year's wages just on what appears to be an extravagance. We normally do not do that. It gives you some insight into the way her thinking was. She was apt to be swept away. It was a real loving thing to do, there was nothing wrong with it—it was her money. She had the right to do it, but most normal people would not do something like that. Well, Mary was not normal. She was given to extravagances.

On the other hand, Martha is the kind of person that you want around when there is a job to be done. The Bible shows her as being a very able person. She seems to be self-restrained, in contrast to Mary who just gave things away in extravagant moods. Martha is impressive in her loyalty to Christ, I think that there is no doubt at all about that. She is a very stable person; stable in terms of physical responsibilities, stable in her faith. We find her also being a person who is busy about doing things. In fact, she might almost be considered to be a little bit fussy about things.

I remember one time, that we had a deaconess in one of the churches that I pastored. When Stan Rader came through that area, he was going around to all the radio stations and having news conferences. This was at the time back in 1979 and 1980, whenever we were undergoing that lawsuit, and he was trying to help the work along as he could. When he came into this city, we had this deaconess who reminds me a great deal of Martha. A little bit fussy, but always looking for an opportunity to serve somebody. After spending several hours with this woman, Mr. Rader remarked to me that "she's the kind of person you would just have to thank 50 times a day." Always on top of things, "thank you, thank you, I didn't think of that, thank you, thank you." That is just the way she was; it kind of wears you out. That is kind of the way that Martha was.

We are also going to see as we go along that Martha was a thoughtful person, and kind as well. We are going to see that Mary was self-absorbed, she did not seem to be aware of anything that was going on except what she was interested in at the time. But Martha was always thinking of others, and Mary kind of sat around and let Martha do all of the work. So Martha got kind of irritated, and at least at that one time, Mary chose the better thing to do. They were not always going to have the Savior with them, and it

would have been better for Martha to pay less attention to the physical things at that one time than she did. But over the long haul, I will tell you—you will take a Martha before you will take a Mary, anytime. That is the kind of person that you want around when things need to be done, because she will be right on top of things.

In John 11:4, how did Jesus know that this was not to be a sickness unto death, but for the glory of God?

When we left Him, back in John 10:40, He was quite a number of miles away, maybe 15 or 20 miles. He was across the Jordan. Bethany was six or seven miles north of Jerusalem, so they were about 15 or 20 miles apart. They did not have any telephones. There is no indication that He had received a message from anyone else, but when the message came, somehow or another, He knew that He was going to let this man die and resurrect him. How did He know that?

The Bible does not explain, but He was what they call today “prescient.” He just somehow or another seemed to know. Maybe God inspired Him, I do not know. But somehow or another, He determined that that was what He was going to do, that He was going to resurrect this person.

**John 11:6** So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.

Why did He delay? We have ample examples that He did not have to go to Bethany; He had healed people from a distance. And yet He determined that He was going to do what He was going to do. So He stayed two more days to make sure that Lazarus was dead.

I am going to give you a couple or reasons why He delayed, of course, understanding that He knew that He was going to resurrect him. He did it first of all to make sure that Lazarus was dead. There was a reason why He had to do this. The healing of Jairus’ daughter, which takes place beginning in Mark 5:22, and the widow’s son, in Luke 7:11, took place immediately on the heels of the death of those two children.

It could have been argued, and maybe argued successfully, that Jesus had not really raised these two young people from the dead, but rather, it had been a very accurate diagnosis. We of course know that this is not true; the children really were dead. God does not tell lies. But being on the scene, somebody could have said, “Well, He just diagnosed it more correctly than anybody else, and He knew that they were going to get

up from that sickbed.” You could not argue about somebody who had been dead for four days! If Lazarus was to the place that he was stinking, and if he had been dead and buried with witnesses looking at those things, then there was no argument that he really had been resurrected.

There is another reason, a spiritual reason. That is, to forcibly impress it upon the minds of those witnesses that the effect of sin is not a temporary misfortune, but a serious, deep-seated malady that is perpetually corroding life. That is very important, because humanly, it is a pattern in our life, to denigrate, to think that the effect of sin is not really all that important. I could not help thinking about “because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the hearts of the sons of men is wholly set in them to do evil.”

If sin is not met with an immediate pain, we tend to think that somehow sin is not so bad. That is a trap that we have to somehow get out of, a trap of thinking. Somehow or another, we have to recognize that sin kills! Before it kills, you go through a great deal of pain! The pain is to our physical body, and the pain is also mental, psychological, and emotional before you die. Sin is harmful in every aspect of it. *It has never solved any problem; it has never done any good.* It is not a means to an end, except a means to pain and to death.

Maybe the lesson needed to get across to Martha and Mary more than anybody else, or to Martha and Mary and to His disciples. It needed to be impressed upon those that He wanted it to be impressed upon, that sin kills! And sin stinks! And sin degenerates, disintegrates, and corrodes whatever it touches. He was going to use a stinking man, whose body had been corrupting away, to make sure that his most intimate associates got the point. I hope that we can get the point, before it is too late.

There is an interesting angle to Genesis 2:16-17. I picked this up from a sermon when we were going to Ambassador College, when we were going through that part of the book of Genesis. It says in English, “in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.” What I was told in class was that it does not really say that. What it literally says is, “in the day that you eat thereof, you are as good as dead.” In other words, what God was telling Adam and Eve is “don’t expect that if you eat the fruit of that tree that you’re going to die immediately, but die you will.” It is something that we have to deal with. We always have to recognize that just because we sin, and the penalty does not come immediately, does not mean that the penalty is not going to come—it will come! So Jesus uses this as a forcible example.

I do not know of anything that stinks worse than chicken, after it has rotted a few days. After you cook it, and you maybe even bone it, and you put the bones into a bag. It only

has to be in there for three or four days and it stinks worse than anything I have ever smelled. It is an example; I am bringing this up because, can you imagine Lazarus lying in tomb, in a hot area, and all of the little bacteria and viruses eating away at his body? And he comes out of that tomb, not smelling like a rose, but smelling like an old dead chicken.

Sin corrodes. Sin corrupts. Sin degenerates. Sin stinks.

That is the second reason: He was going to forcibly get that across to His most loved companions. This is what sin does.

The third thing was, also kind of important—Jesus is always shown doing things on His own initiative. I mentioned this to you before. He thinks things through; He does not do things on the whim of other people. Here were His closest associates, people that He really loved. And you know that if somebody that you really love came to you with an urgent message, “Can you help us? We *know* that you can help us.” You know that you would probably respond very quickly.

But He was not forced into anything. That ought to tell you something: this is the mind of God in action. *God does not take orders from us*. God is going to do what He thinks is right, even for those He loves the most. Even though it meant putting Martha and Mary through the pain of watching their brother die, even though it meant that Lazarus had to go through the pangs of death and whatever led up to it, whatever he was suffering from. Maybe there was not any pain at all, but then again, maybe there was pain.

Nobody orders Christ around. He is the boss, and He did what He felt was going to advance the cause of Almighty God, and to bring the greatest glory to God that could possibly be wrung out of any situation. And it was going to help those other people more, as well.

Even though we may feel very urgent in our requests to Him, understand that He knows best, and that He is going to do what is best in every situation for all concerned. He has to take His Father into consideration, as well.

**John 11:7-8** Then after this He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?”

They were surprised at His courage. Normally, a person would not walk back into the

lion's den after he had just gotten out of it.

**John 11:9-10** Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

What did He mean by that? There are three things that you and I can learn from it. A day's time is fixed, roughly divided up into two twelve-hour periods. Nothing can be done to shorten or lengthen it. The lesson is, Jesus is saying that there are some things that cannot be changed, so do not worry about it. Some things just cannot be changed.

A second thing, He was also letting them know that there was no need to rush. There is time to do the things that I need to do. "Are there not twelve hours in a day? I have enough time." Again, He is His own man. He is going to do things in the right way, at the right time, and He was well enough organized that He had things under control. Nobody was going to push Him into doing something before the optimal moment. There was no need to rush; there is time to do whatever needs to be done.

The third thing: there is time enough, but there is not too much. So we have to use what we do have to the best advantage. So what He is saying is, prioritize. Since you cannot lengthen a day, and you do not want to go about doing things frantically, make sure that you prioritize and use time to its best advantage. Finish the work while you have time; prioritize. Do not spend your time on useless extravagances.

**John 11:11-12** These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well."

They misunderstood. He was dead! But they understood Him to use the word sleep in the sense of somebody going to sleep at night and waking in the morning. They felt that was probably the best thing that Lazarus could do; it is good for your health to sleep. So if he sleeps, he is going to get well.

**John 11:13-14** However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."

Again, I do not know how He knew that, and nobody else knows how He knew it either. Who knows, He may have even prayed to the Father, "Let him die." I do not know; that is just an assumption.

**John 11:15-16** "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him." Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

The "Him" there is Jesus; he did not want to die with Lazarus. He wanted to die with Jesus. I think that we have to say that Thomas showed a bit of courage here as well, because these were the same men that just warned Jesus, "Why do you want to go back there, because they're going to kill you."

I saw a very good description of courage, I believe it was Mark Twain who said this. He said that courage is not the absence of fear, but the overcoming of fear. What he is saying is that everyone fears. It is a natural part of life. But there are those who overcome it. In other words, they face the reality of their predicament and do what has to be done. I think that is a pretty good definition of it, because we are always going to be dealing with fear.

**John 11:17-19** So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

I want to say something about the type of funerals that they had in those days. Their mourning procedures were quite lengthy, ordered, and we might even say, ritualistic. Up until about the time of Christ, the procedure that they used for burying people was very expensive. In fact, you can even see some of that in the death of Christ. He was buried in a very fine wrapping. In addition to that, there were many, many, many dollars of costly perfumes that went on Him to anoint His body.

Shortly after that, there was a drastic change that took place, so that historians tell us, because it was getting so expensive to bury a person that people would actually go to the poorhouse in order to provide for a loved one who had just died. A noted rabbi named Gamaliel II (I do not know if that is the one that the apostle Paul learned under) put a stop to all of that nonsense. He decided that when he died, all he wanted to be wrapped in was a cheap linen cloth and put into a tomb, and that was the end of it.

Everybody was grateful to Gamaliel after that, because it made funerals a lot cheaper.

Their procedures were quite lengthy. First, the person was wrapped in a linen wrapping cloth. Folded within it were very expensive spices. I do not want to pay too much attention to that, because I want to pay more attention to what happened to those who were living.

The period of mourning for a person was 30 days. In the house of the dead person, as long as the body was present, it was forbidden to eat meat, to drink wine, to wear the phylactery (the fringes on the garments), and to engage in study. No food was allowed to be prepared in the house. Anything that the people ate had to be brought in by their friends and neighbors.

As soon as the body was carried out, all of the furniture in the house was turned around to face the wall. I do not know exactly why they did that, but they did do it. For that period of mourning after that, people sat on the floor, at least for the next seven days.

After the burial, a meal was eaten, which is pretty much what we do today. It consisted of bread, eggs that were hard cooked, and lentils. That is what the ritual prescribed. You and I might have potluck type thing, but they prescribed everything that was to be done.

Deep mourning lasted for a period of seven days. They were expected to spend the first three days after the person died weeping. During that seven day period, it was forbidden for anyone to anoint themselves, which meant to bathe and anoint their bodies with oil. They were not allowed to wear shoes, and were not allowed to study, engage in business, or wash themselves.

On the way to the burial place, as they were approaching the burial place, the procession had to be led by women. This is kind of a cruel twist, but the reason why they prescribed that was that they were blaming sin on Eve. Since she was the first to sin, she was responsible for death being brought upon mankind. So they had to be the first to go to the place of the dead, to the cemetery.

As they approached the grave, people would separate into two lines. The family of the deceased would pass between the two lines of the people. This gave the people the opportunity to express any last minute condolences before the person was actually put into the ground. At the tomb, there was a very simple service, but then came eulogies. The eulogies would last for a goodly period of time, and apparently anybody who wanted to give a eulogy was free to do so at that time. Any final good words that needed to be said were said at that time. That would be followed by 30 days of lighter mourning.

So they had a fairly elaborate structure to burying people. That is what was going on in John 11:17-19.

**John 11:19-20** Many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.

Again you see Martha, right on the ball. Mary was self-absorbed, doing what? Probably weeping. But there is no indication that Martha was doing a lot of crying. Martha, the restrained one, had herself under control. She was no doubt directing everything, making sure that everything was done in due order, and making sure that everything came off the way that it was supposed to. So as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, she was right there to take care of things and to greet Him, and to (I am sure) see to His comfort as well.

**John 11:21** Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

You almost have to think that this statement was half said in reproach, sort of like “You could’ve helped, but you didn’t come. We got the message to You in plenty of time, why didn’t you come?” Yet, on the other hand:

**John 11:22** “But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

Martha was just like a lot of us: “God, why didn’t you answer my prayer? I know it’s still not too late for You.”

**John 11:23-24** Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

At least she did believe in the resurrection of the dead.

**John 11:25** Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”

The key word here is the word *believes*: “He who believes.” Now *believes* means to stake our lives on God’s Word. Perfect trust. That is awfully hard to live up to. But those who believe will live; those who have that trust, the way a child trusts his parents. A little child does not question that mommy and daddy can do anything. Do we trust God that way? We have questions, because we are adults, and because we have doubts and we have fears, and because we have seen so many things. We are sophisticated, we are educated. We lose some of that trust that a child has for its parents. Somehow or another, that has to be regained in our relationship with God.

**John 11:25-26** “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Brethren, we live in the land of the dying, and we know that. It is a certainty, and we are aware of that certainty. Do we really believe that death can be overcome? Are we as certain that death can be overcome as Christ was that He could resurrect Lazarus? Christ *knew* that death could be overcome. But we are afraid of death, and I think that we would be less than honest if we said that we are not afraid of death.

I am going to show you that we are afraid of death. The only time when we are not afraid of death is when we are not thinking about it, but we think about it often. The older we get, the more we think about it, because we know that it is going to happen. We need to think about how much death is controlling our life.

What Jesus Christ did is bring into light the certainty that death is not the end. That is why He says, “I am the resurrection.” He is saying, “I am the means to a life that never ends.” Until Christ, there was only the certainty of death. That is why it says that He confirmed the promises that were made to Abraham. Abraham believed those things, that Christ was the promised Seed.

Until Christ did what He did, all the promises hung in the balance. In order for us to inherit those promises, there has to be eternal life, because the promise was eternal inheritance of the earth. You cannot eternally inherit something unless you can enjoy it and use it and benefit from it eternally. So Christ brought into light the certainty that death is not the end.

When we get to this place—that life does not end at death—it brings on a new

perception of life. Christ meant this, I am sure, in two different ways. On the one hand, He was talking about the resurrection into spirit life. On the other hand, having the fear of death removed from a person ought to change his perception of the way that he lives his life right here and now. It is this which opens up the way to the abundant life. As long as you are constrained by fear, you cannot live life abundantly.

One of the most dramatic examples of this is agoraphobia. That is the fear of going outside. I ran into a young man, 17 years old, already wrapped up in fear. This was a kid who was a strapping example of strength, energy, and vitality. But every morning, that young man had to crawl out of the front door. He had to force himself to go to school, because he was afraid to go outside. It seemed that once he got outside, and got into open places, it began to leave him. But he was literally terrified of going outside the front door.

That epitomizes what fear does to a person: it constrains your life. Perfect love casts out all fear. The last fear that we are going to get rid of is the fear of death, because that is the last enemy to be destroyed. I am leading up to something that is important in the context of this series of verses.

When Jesus said "I am the life," when we begin to open up the door, as it were, death has no claim on us any longer, and it opens up our life to being able to live without the fear of death. Life begins to take on a new purpose. You have something new to live for. You begin to see that there is no room for selfishness. Do not psychologists say that our primal instinct is the preservation of the self? That is probably correct, but we cannot really begin to live until this begins to evaporate. He who denies himself finds life.

So vanity and competition have to go. That is all part of the survival mechanism that we have, this fear of death. Along with it, anxieties, self-condemnation, guilt. There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). There is no room for these guilt complexes that we develop. Certainly, we should feel guilty if we sin, but that should be overcome with repentance. Read it in II Corinthians 7:10, the fruits of repentance.

When we finally get to the place where we begin to overcome this, even sin gradually ceases to be a problem, because our concern is for God, and not for ourselves. It is this fear of death that makes us concentrate on self. I am going to show you how this affected Christ.

**John 11:27-28** She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying,

“The Teacher has come and is calling for you.”

Again you see the way Martha is, always thinking of ways to help other people. She went secretly, in order not to disturb the other mourners who were all around and inside the house, mourning because of the death of Lazarus. She went and got her quietly.

**John 11:29-32** As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, “She is going to the tomb to weep there.” Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet [It does not say that Martha did anything like that, you see the emotionalism. I am not saying that is wrong, she is just a different personality. She does not seem to be the stronger of the two sisters.], saying to Him, “Lord, if You have been here, my brother would not have died.”

Almost the same thing that Martha had said, both thinking the same thing.

**John 11:33** Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping [Again, the emotionalism.], and the Jews who came with her weeping [Probably more like a hysterical wailing.], He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.

Now we are at the place that I have been leading to. There is quite a bit of controversy over this verse, as to exactly why He was troubled. Was He troubled because of these people’s outlook on death? I think that we can safely say, yes. But in what way was He troubled? I am going to show you three other places where the word *troubled* is used. In some Bibles, in the margin, it says “deeply moved.”

**Matthew 9:30** And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them .

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The word *sternly* is the same word that is translated *troubled* in John 11:33.

**Mark 1:43** And He strictly warned him . . .

The word *strictly* is the same word that is used in Matthew 9:30 and John 11:33.

**Mark 14:5** “For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they criticized her sharply.

The word *sharply* is the same word in John 11:33.

In John 11:33, the word *troubled* is the same word that in Greek literature is most commonly used for the snorting of a horse. It is also used to indicate indignation, anger, rage, flaming wrath. If you read that in the King James, and it is encompassed with the weeping that is in verse 33, and “Jesus wept” in verse 35, the best that you can normally get out of that is that He was kind of overcome with a sympathetic emotion.

I do not think that is what He went through, since the word means “to snort” or to be enraged, or to be indignant. I feel that He was angry! He was not on the verge of weeping because of sympathy, He wept because He was angry at the way these people misunderstood what was about to occur, and angry against death and sin.

Let us look at a couple of other places.

**Genesis 2:16-17** 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 that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

God was warning Adam and Eve, and you and me, from the very beginning, that even though death does not appear right on the horizon, whenever we sin, we are going to die because of sin. It is the beginning of a warning that preceding that death, there is going to be a great deal of mental anguish, emotional pain, and physical pain that is going to come right along with the sin. We have lived through almost 6,000 years of man’s history, and we are able to look back upon—I do not mean just us, I mean all of mankind. They do not look upon sin as being the cause of all of the anguish on earth, we can do that because we understand the Bible. But mankind is able to look upon life and see that it is not very pleasant. It is not very good. It is a fearful thing, and it leads people to conduct their lives in a certain way.

**Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

What effect has that had on mankind's thinking?

**Hebrews 2:14-15** Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

You think that the fear of death does not have something to do with the way that you conduct your life? By God's own Word, He says that all of our life we have been subject to bondage, to the fear of death. We do not think about it all the time; it is not something that we like to think about. So we put it off, we put off thinking about it. We conduct our lives as though death really does not exist. But it is always there.

Let us go back to the book of Job, and see a cynical—cynical, but true—remark by Satan, because he understood what motivated men to do what they do.

**Job 2:3-4** Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause." So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man as he will give for his life."

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life, and He that believes in Me, though he dies, yet he lives." Christ brought into life the certainty that death is not the end. This is what opens up to mankind an abundant life, but not until somehow, because of our belief in Christ, we are able to throw off the fear of death so that it is not dictating to us the way that we live. If we fear death, we are going to be highly competitive in everything. If we fear death, we are going to try to get all that we can while the getting is good. To the degree that we fear death, we are going to "live life to its fullest," as long as we possibly can, and get as much as we possibly can.

**I Corinthians 15:26** The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

So what was Christ angry at? Why was He troubled in spirit? Why was He snorting, why

did He groan? Why was He enraged? He was getting ready to march forth as our champion, sort of like David going out against Goliath, the implacable enemy, the one that is always dogging man's heels. Christ is going out to do battle with it, and He is going to conquer it! So like a flaming champion, He went out to represent us, and He is going to overcome it, man's implacable and greatest enemy, our arch foe. He was going to show His closest friends that He could overcome it.

Remember what David said when he went out to meet Goliath? He said "Who is this uncircumcised heathen, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" And then he ran out to fight him! He did not plod, he ran. That is what Christ did here. The enemy was not Goliath, the enemy was Satan and death. Christ was angry at all of the pain it had brought into people's lives, so He is weeping (although there is undoubtedly some sympathy in it). I feel He was weeping in rage, in anger at all of the pain that had come upon mankind because of Satan's deceptions and death, and how he kept us in bondage. He was trembling in rage, I feel sure about that. His heart was wrung with anguish.

**John 11:34-37** And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

The book of John appears to be written for a Greek-speaking audience. If you read I, II, and III John, in companion with I and II Peter, and Jude, you get a pretty good picture of what was going on in the church towards the end of the first century. They were very influenced by Gnosticism. One of the basic beliefs that the Greeks had about God, or the gods, were that they were apathetic. We say that our God is sympathetic. It means that He feels *with* man. Or we say that He is empathetic. There is a difference between empathy and sympathy. With sympathy, you feel with a person. With empathy, the idea is that you are almost *in* the person. You feel *in*. It is a deeper feeling than sympathy.

Apathetic means without feeling. To them, the gods, or God, was without feeling. There is a reason why they believed that God is without feeling; it is part of their philosophic approach to life. They believed that if a person has an effect upon us, if they get an emotional response out of us, it means that they have power over us, because they can make us respond with an emotion. Since God was greater than all, He could not in any way be touched by anybody, because He was more powerful than anybody. Therefore, He was apathetic, nobody could get Him to respond. Really strange, weird. So they believed in a God that was without feeling.

Here was God in the flesh. God weeping? Could God be touched, could He be influenced, could He be persuaded by human beings? That is what John was getting across: yes, He can be influenced by human beings. He can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and He responds with an emotion. It may be anger, it may be sympathy, compassion, pity. But all of the emotions that we are capable of, He too is also capable of. That was one of John's points—to show God in the flesh, capable of sharing the emotions of a human being, and being effected by what effects humans.

John 11:37 shows very clearly that whenever Jesus did anything, division occurred immediately. They are asking questions.

**John 11:38-41** Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me."

Notice, it is written in the past tense, "That You have heard Me." There is no indication of a prayer being made at that time. When did He pray? From the indications earlier in the chapter, as soon as He heard that Lazarus was sick, He already had this in mind, that was what He was going to do. He took it to the Father and said, "This is what I want to do, do You approve?" And apparently God did. So God had already heard the prayer, so Jesus said something there in order to let the people know that He was in contact with the Father.

**John 11:42-44** "And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

This was the last straw, as far as the authorities were concerned. They realized now that they really had a problem on their hands. Either accept Him, or brand Him as a blasphemer and an insurrectionist. We know which way they chose to go. Incidentally,

this was the last of the seven signs.

**John 11:45-46** Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did.

It never seems to dawn on them to really ask whether Jesus was right. It is a quirk of human nature.

**John 11:47-48** Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

There is the motivation for what they did. You can see that they were judging things, not in the light of truth, not in the light of principal, but in the light of their own career. "Will take away our place and the nation."

**John 11:49-50** And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."

This is ironic, because here is the enemy being used of God to utter a prophecy that was going to be fulfilled.

**John 11:51-52** Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad."

So we find Jesus using the enemy to utter a prophecy that would result in the formation of the church, or result in salvation for mankind.

**John 11:53-54** Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from

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there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.

He did not court danger recklessly. I do not think that He tempted God in any way. He seemed to be able to know when to go forward and when to withdraw, and this was one of the times to withdraw. So He went to Ephraim which was about 15 miles north of Jerusalem. It would be close enough for the holy days which were approaching; He would be in the area. It was close enough so that others coming into the area, hearing about Him, would at least have a little bit of contact with Him on their way to Jerusalem for the holy days.

**John 11:55** And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.

There were plenty of things on the way to Jerusalem that would ceremonially defile them. Before they would be acceptable for worship during the Passover season, they had to go through various washings. They had to wait their turn with millions of people coming into Jerusalem, and I do mean millions. I have a figure somewhere that was calculated from the amount of rams or lambs that were killed during the Passover. The Romans did the calculation. Even taking the figures that are given in the Bible, roughly ten people to one lamb, it indicated that the population of Jerusalem during the Passover and the tabernacle season would swell between one and a half to three million people.

So the crucifixion of Christ was not done in a corner. There were plenty of Israelitish witnesses to what occurred there. God made sure that many, many people were witnesses to that event.

**John 11:56-57** Then they sought Jesus [Because people were talking about Him.], and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, "What do you think—that He will not come to the feast?" Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.

I think that many people probably thought that He would not come because of the danger. But they underestimated Him. It is a pretty good indication that Jesus did not fear doing the right thing. But I think that what He did fear was *not* doing the right thing.

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Him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin.

So He feared not doing the right thing, and you know very well that He would keep the Feast. He would keep the holy days in the appointed place where God said. Even though it was dangerous to Him, He went anyway, and met His destiny there.