

## Knowing God

### Singleness of Mind

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 18-Oct-03; Sermon #FT03-08-AM

Have you ever held conversations with yourself? I think that everybody does this at one time or another. It is a way we use to determine answers to perplexing problems. It is almost like we make a register of questions on one side of a piece of paper, and then on the other side we put possible answers that we have gleaned from our experiences found to be true. We go back and forth in our mind through a process of elimination until we arrive at what must or must not be done. We do this to balance the scales as it were, in order to hopefully discover where the most positives or negatives lie.

Now which are you? Are you the one asking the questions, or are you the one answering them? The truth of the matter is that you are both, but it is almost as if they are different parts of the same person. Some poor folks are bipolar or schizophrenic or manic-depressive and these poor souls' minds are so divided the different parts are at times clearly seen as antagonist, fighting for dominance. That sort of person's life is tossed to and fro, and the lives of everybody around them become unsettled, occasionally greatly, as they try to adjust to the sometimes very sudden changes of personality and behavior.

A number of years ago a psychologist in Augusta, Georgia wrote a book about his experience with a woman patient. It became a movie that won an Oscar for the actress Joanne Woodward, who played the title role. The movie was titled *The Three Faces of Eve*. Eve showed the world *three* distinct personalities.

In Luke 8 we have a person revealed here in the Bible who apparently showed a great number more personalities than Eve in Augusta did.

**Luke 8:26-30** And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. And when he went forth to land there met him out of the city a certain man which had demons a long time, and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the

tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, you Son of God most high? I beseech you, torment me not. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters: and he brake the bands, and was driven of the demon into the wilderness.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is your name? And he said, Legion: because many demons were entered into him.

How many? Who knows. A Roman legion consisted of anywhere between 3,000 and 6,500 men. At the very least the word is used to indicate a large number, certainly leading one to understand that this poor soul was really twisted about, and confused as very few people in all of history have been. Imagine him trying to make up his mind about even the simplest daily things. It is no wonder that he was naked. He probably could not make up his mind even what to wear.

**Luke 8:2** And [a] certain woman, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven demons.

Mary was nowhere as bad as Legion, but there are still great possibilities for confusion and misdirection in her life. What we are looking at here in these two passages are minds divided into many parts so that confusing changes of direction, of attitude, of conduct in one's life are always right on the cusp of occurring. These people cannot get their lives straightened out. They zigzag through life in a disorderly mess, succeeding in accomplishing very little of their potential, while at the same time succeeding in creating a great deal of trouble for others in their wake.

A divided mind can have very severe, serious ramifications for us. I want you to turn to Matthew 6.

**Matthew 6:22-23** The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!

In verse 22 the word "single" here means whole, undivided, seeing things in their reality, or something that is not diseased in any way. In verse 23 it says, "if your eye be evil." Here the word means divided or unhealthy. He is using this illustration in order to indicate that if the eye is in good health and is able to see clearly, a person has a good opportunity or a very good chance of being able to see at least the physical reality clearly.

But if a person's eye is diseased, if there is macular degeneration, or there are cataracts forming, or if the muscles of the eye of an old person are not working properly so that the person loses maybe his close-up or distant vision, we know that these people are not going to get a clear picture unless those conditions are corrected in some way.

The real subject of Jesus' saying in these two sentences is to show the importance of being able to be focused in order to enable one to fulfill one's purpose in life.

**Matthew 12:25-26** And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how shall then his kingdom stand?

We looked at one place and Jesus' teaching about singleness of purpose. That requires an undivided mind that is focused in the right direction in life, and so the illustration with an "eye" or a vision that sees things clearly, focusing on what it wants to accomplish in life. On the other hand, we begin to see here what happens when a mind is divided.

I think that you can see here that Jesus placed division as being very serious, and having destructive consequences. He mentioned a city. He mentioned a house, meaning a family or a dynasty. He mentioned Satan. None can endure division because of division's destructiveness. He did not mention a single individual, but the consequences are the same for a single person with a divided mind. There are very serious consequences here.

I want you go back to I Kings, chapter 18. This concerns Elijah and the question he asked of those who were assembled before him as he was challenging the prophets of Baal.

**I Kings 18:21** And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt you between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

The term "halt you" that he used is actually giving a literal picture of what Elijah said. It is suggestive of a person staggering, unable to catch his balance, and unable to accomplish anything of any consequence because the mind is divided. The person in such a circumstance cannot get a grip on life. These people were wavering back and forth, which was typical of the Israelites. In another place it says, "They worshipped God, and served their idols."

They tried to syncretize the two of them. That is division. That is a divided mind. "No man can serve two masters, because he will hate the one and love the other." But the one that he hates is still a part of the mind, and it is going to cause some measure of problems.

In Elijah's word-picture there, he is indicating that there is nothing wrong with the rest of the body, but because there is no focus in the mind, there is no direction in the body's efforts. This sets up a situation where at best there is going to be little direction—that is, little accomplished, and at the worst there will be no direction at all, but just staggering, first this way, then that way. There is no productivity in that sort of situation.

This leads to other things, one of which the apostle Paul mentioned back in II Timothy 2. The overall subject he is addressing here is things that create division within a congregation, and Paul is instructing Timothy about how to handle these things. In verse 24 he is reaching a conclusion.

**II Timothy 2:24-25** The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

That term "oppose themselves" is actually one word in the Greek, and it is translated in most modern versions as "those who are in opposition"; that is, in opposition to sound doctrine and practice. But the interesting thing is that the King James Version is also correct. Both translations are correct. The word is capable of being interpreted either way. There is a difference though. The sense of one is toward *others*. They are just in opposition. The sense of the other is toward the *self*, and that is the way the King James translators chose to translate it.

Either way, the word connotes some measure of division, of disunity, of opposition, either toward doctrine, or with others in the congregation because of offense (or whatever), or within the self. Regardless of which it is, the consequence is destructive. Division destroys. It is that simple. Division destroys, and the important aspects (within the context of this sermon) are that the division is within the self, and destructive to the self—"those that oppose themselves."

Paul then is instructing that those who disagree with the doctrine of Christ actually oppose themselves, because in the end truth will prevail, and those who disagree with the doctrine are bringing the penalties upon themselves. It is like shooting yourself in the foot, or in the knee, or in the hip, or ultimately in the heart, because truth cannot be broken without some consequence, unless it is repented of.

Richard mentioned something in his sermon, and I had a note about it here. Division in the mind actually causes us to fight against our own best interest. I just thought of this illustration, which is something that probably all of us have done sometime. We will spend our income foolishly on trivialities, taking ourselves into debt, thus putting ourselves under the painful obligation of paying it off, plus the interest, which is in reality a form of slavery. Because the mind is divided between wisdom and foolishness, people like

this (and this includes all of us to some degree) go nowhere profitable in some direction until we get it harnessed.

By way of contrast the Bible shows that unity is stronger even than a single mind that is in pretty good shape, being pretty much undivided. We are going to go back to one of the first places God shows this principle, because it is taught from the very beginning.

**Genesis 2:18** And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him a help meet for him.

God is beginning to show that unity is better than singularity. He does not say how much better. He just begins the principle. It remains for other places to show how much better it can be, and we are not going to go in that direction very far. This is a positive example that God begins establishing right from the very start, and that is that being united in marriage is better than being alone. But—there is a "but" to this—a marriage's degree of success is going to be determined by how much the two minds are in agreement.

Nobody—man or woman—has all the answers. That is why we are commanded in the book of Ephesians to "submit ourselves to one another." The idea of submitting to one another is for the purpose of producing unity so that the two united can work and produce much more than one person can produce by himself. As I mentioned, God does not go into all the benefits here, but He does assure us that two minds and lives that have become one are better than one working alone.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-11** Two are better than one [that is pretty clear, is it not?] because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falls: for he has not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

This is very simple terminology, but he is getting the point across that unity produces more than even one mind that is fairly well organized and undivided. But two minds that are in harmony are *way better* than one alone.

**Ecclesiastes 4:12** And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him: and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

He begins to give intimations that three are better than two. There is nothing wrong with that, but it is showing again the principle that unity is better than singularity, and as people who are likewise unified with those who were there before, the institution, the family, or whatever, keeps getting stronger and stronger. As long as all of the minds are undivided singly, they add to the strength of those who are already there.

God shows His desire for uniformity in a large number of ways, even in terms of figuratively. For example, the uniforms of the high priest and the regular priests were all exactly alike. They had to be worn when serving the people at the altar. The coals for the incense altar were required to come from *one* fire only; that is, from the brazen altar that God Himself lit by fire from heaven.

Israel had only *one* national place for worship, and that was wherever the Tabernacle happened to be, and later the Temple when it was built, dedicated, and put into service. There was only one place for the Feast to be held. How would you like to go to the same place every year of your life? We Israelites get nervous with that. That place was old Jerusalem.

How about this? There is hardly a person in here who does not love variety in food. How would you like to eat manna every day for forty years, and to know that God, by a miracle, was giving it to you directly, that this was the best food that you could eat under these circumstances? It is good to think about these things every once in a while in our quest for variety. God made a huge variety, but He is not requiring that we participate and experience it all. We will see more of this as we go along. So it was for them: forty years without variation in the food.

There was only one set of rules for the sacrifices. There is one God. This begins to become important.

I Samuel 8 records a very important occasion in the history of Israel.

**I Samuel 8:7-8** And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you: for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto you.

**I Samuel 8:19-20** Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said, No; but we will have a king over us: That we also may be like all the nations: and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles.

This circumstance here highlights Israel's insatiable curiosity for variety that continuously revealed their badly divided mind toward God and led them astray. They did not want a king in Israel like God wanted. God indeed was going to give them a king. The rules are laid out in the book of Deuteronomy regarding that. God had nothing against them having a king, but He wanted that king to be a man who was subject to Him. That was the only real stipulation.

But they did not want a king like *God* wanted. They wanted the kind of king that the other nations had. This is why God said they had rejected Him. In rejecting the kind of king God wanted to be there, they were also rejecting God. This fits into the same pattern they had followed from the very beginning of their relationship, and that is why God mentioned what He did there in verse 8.

God provided us with this curiosity; however, by nature it is undisciplined, and it needs to be more wisely managed. It is right here that the underlying problem between God and man lies in that we have a powerful tendency to not believe Him, and thus we will not willingly listen to His counsel, and that creates division. It is this strong need for variety, mixed with prideful stubbornness, that keeps telling us that we know better than He does. Therefore, humanly we are often driven to simply ignore Him and His wise principles.

Despite our age, we are very frequently like children. I am thinking right now of teenagers. They get in those teen years and they begin to think that they know more than their parents, and the rebellion and the hardness of heart begins to come to the fore. They start looking on their parents as though they are awfully dumb or not really hip or not really with it, and not really knowing what is going on. It is as though you had no brains almost at times.

In this situation here in I Samuel 8, Israel thought that the solution to their national and personal problems was to have a despotic king like the other nations—one who would rule with iron-fisted control. They apparently never stopped to think that the real problem was in each one of them, because *they* had divided themselves from *Him*. Samuel's son (as the beginning of the chapter shows us) had divided himself from Samuel, and the Israelites were just like Samuel's son in that they too had divided themselves from Samuel and from God.

All of us have divided minds to some degree. This is why some have said that all of us are to some level insane. This points out why Paul said in II Timothy: "the Spirit of God is one of power, of love, and of a sound mind." Now by way of contrast, God's mind is totally undivided. It has no parts to it.

**Deuteronomy 6:4** Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.

Several times in "the Beast" sermons, I mentioned that Israel is driven by a streak of discontented and impatient fickleness. This proclivity actually dwells in all of mankind, but it is exemplified in all the Bible by Israel. It is this proclivity that is responsible for much of the division in our minds. I want us to understand what it is doing to those of us who are responsible to God.

This verse has something to say to us in regard to showing a contrast between God and us. The verse states that God is one. One of the understandings that can be extracted from this is that God is whole. He is undivided. He is unified. He is complete. He is unchanging.

I want to give you a number of scriptures that are familiar to you because I want you to see how frequently this principle is brought to our attention.

**Malachi 3:6** For I am the LORD, I change not.

You look at that in that context and you can begin to understand a little bit about the unity of His mind.

**Romans 11:29** For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

There is no change. They are irrevocable. Once God uttered it, it was going to be carried through. Regardless of men, He would work it out so that the gifts, the calling, and the promises that God made to Israel are going to be met.

**Hebrews 1:12** And as a vesture shall you fold them up, and they shall be changed: but you are the same, and your years shall not fail.

This is worded differently, but it means the same thing as Malachi 3:6, and it is going to mean the same thing as,

**Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

God's mind is absolutely undivided. What this means in practical application is that His sovereignty can never be separated from His love. His grace cannot be separated from His omniscience. His judgment cannot be separated from either His mercy or His wrath. It means that God is absolutely constant, because His faithful providence cannot be separated from any other of His attributes. It means that God is whole and complete. Under every circumstance He is never confused or uncertain about what to do. He is always headed in the same direction, and that is to complete His purpose.

It is absolutely impossible for Him to do anything that is not wise and, at the same time, loving. It is He who tells us how to live and how to be like Him.

What God is has awesome ramifications for us because we are so different, and He wants us to be like Him, to be *one* with Him, to be *one*, to be whole, to be complete, to be undivided in mind like Him.

There are problems here because becoming this way requires some measure of cooperation from us. Compared to God, our mind is all over the place, and thus we are so easily distracted from our focus.

A Greek philosopher named Parmenides, who lived in the 6th century BC, is remembered because he concluded, apparently after a long period of time, that what is, is! Define "is"! "What is, is!" Remember this. More specifically, he held that immutable being is the only knowable reality, and that change is an illusion because it is not permanent. Now if you are thinking, you might know where Parmenides was headed with this.

A little bit later in time, about 500 BC, another Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, came along. He maintained that strife and change are natural conditions of the universe. The conclusion of these two—Parmenides and Heraclitus—seemed to be opposite, and they are. However, both of them are partly right, and both of them are partly wrong.

One of the illustrations that Heraclitus used to argue his point was that it is impossible to step into the same river twice because the water is constantly moving, and one steps into different water each time he steps into the river. They really have this down to a fine point! To illustrate change, he also argued that a wooden chair was not always a chair. It was once a tree, and as a tree it was in the process of *becoming* something else. This was central to his argument. "Everything," he said, "is becoming something else."

Heraclitus, on the surface, appears to have the stronger argument of the two. There is no doubt that he was correct in regard to mankind. We *are* becoming. The question for you and me is, "*What* are we becoming?"

Remember those verses in the Bible about conforming. There are two ends for mankind that have had the revelation of God. We can allow ourselves to become conformed to the world simply by doing nothing, or we can cooperate with God, and we can become in His image. What you are seeing here is this "becoming" is something over which we have some measure of

control. But if we just float down the stream, we have relinquished our control, and the end result is death. Which will it be?

We still have to consider Parmenides, because he was correct in regard to God and spirit. This is central to Parmenides' argument, because to him *reality* is spirit, and material things an illusion because they are not permanent. And so to him, thinking in terms of spirit, "What is, is." And that is correct.

Now, God is. He is absolutely unchanging. God is certainly not becoming like man. He greatly desires, because we are *becoming*, that we become like Him. We are going to become something. We will either become completely conformed to the world and die, or we can make the efforts to go along with God, to cooperate with Him, and we can become like Him—whole and complete, and absolutely constant in our character.

You should be able to see where I am leading. In order to become like God we have to begin working to develop an undivided mind.

**Exodus 3:12-14** And he said, Certainly I will be with you: and this shall be a token unto you, that I have sent you: When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain. And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers has sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you.

God's very name, when He revealed Himself to Moses, was "G<sub>OD</sub> *is*!" God is not becoming. He is one. He is not becoming something else. God is *pure being*.

Jonathan Edwards, who is often considered to be the greatest theologian America has produced, was once asked, "What was God doing before the creation?" Jonathan Edwards replied, "He was making hell for the curious." This is really a thought-provoking, insightful statement. He meant that there is only one God. He meant that there is only one way. But people in their

insatiable curiosity of their unbelief were constantly creating new idol gods to devote their life's attention to.

American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote: "We must be very careful about what we worship, because what we worship we become." That brings us right back to the subject of this sermon when I consider what drove Israel in her relationship with God, and with the peoples of the world. Israel is driven by an unbelieving, impatient, fickle curiosity to faithlessness to responsibility.

The carnal mind is hopelessly divided because it lusts after variety, not believing that there is only one way to become like God. It is interesting, in light of this, to recall what God has called the world. He has called the world Babylon—"confusion": confusion in great variety, and stressful turmoil is its fruit. It is diametrically the opposite of the unchanging, undivided, peaceful God.

Israel would rather have pleasure and fun in seeking a wide variety of experiences outside the parameters of God's commandments and God's way than submitting to Him, because we, like a teenager, feel His way is restrictive, narrow, confining, and according to her, not a "barrel of fun." It requires discipline. "Narrow is the way," Jesus said. Israel will do this, even to gamble with their lives to do this. Will Israelites ever learn that just because God makes seemingly good things available that it does not necessarily mean they should make use of it?

Human nature will sacrifice in order to have fun. It will sacrifice in order to accomplish something that is vain and carnal. A very clear example right at the very beginning of mankind's existence is Adam and Eve. They *gambled* on the pleasure of that fruit, and of possibly experiencing things from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and they lost.

All you have to do is remember that it says right there in Genesis 3 that the fruit really looked good to the eye, and it looked good to eat. There was pleasure in that, but God said do not do it. It was that simple. But it was a "good" thing that God did not want them to experience. At least Adam and Eve thought it was good.

Let us touch bases with John 17.

**John 17:11** And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me, that they may be one as we are.

**John 17:20-23** Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me. And the glory which you gave me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me.

It is a measure of how important "being one" with the Father and Son is, that in this most important prayer delivered on the last night of Jesus' life, He made this request of the Father that we be "one with them" *four* times! In that sense *it is the most important request in this prayer* that we become *one* with them.

Will a human being sacrifice for a good and moral purpose? Yes, we will, *if* we believe God, and believe that God loves us. That last one is not easy. It takes a lot of experience with Him to know that He *loves us*, and that He loves us every bit as much as He loves Jesus Christ. That is what verse 22 says: "even as." It means "equal to." We have no trouble believing that God exists. We have a *lot* of trouble believing that God loves us, but it is necessary for becoming one with Him, and returning that love back to Him. Human beings will sacrifice if they can get a good handle on their life, believing God, and believing that He loves them.

Becoming one with Them is accomplished through a number of factors, but none is more important for us right now than beginning to live the same way the Father and Son live in preparation for being with Them. No other way of life is acceptable to Them, because no other way of life is in harmony with the way that They live.

We are going to go back again to the Old Testament, to Ezekiel 33.

**Ezekiel 33:1-11** Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he sees the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people: Then whosoever hears the sound of the trumpet, and takes not warning: if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning: his blood shall be upon him. But he that takes warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned: if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity: but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So you, O son of man, I have set you a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore you shall hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die; if you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hand. Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. Therefore O you son of man, speak unto the house of Israel: Thus you speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live, says the Lord GOD. I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

The statement, "As I live, says the Lord," is His answer to this question in verse 10. The background that raised that question and answer is this: In the first nine verses Ezekiel is appointed by God as the watchman for Israel, and it was his job to warn Israel of their many sins. He was to clearly connect the news events he was reporting to their sins. It was his job to raise the issue of cause and effect in their minds.

He was to tell them that the famines were occurring because of their sin. He was to tell them that an enemy army was approaching because of their sin. He was to tell them that their nation's government did not serve them, and that the courts were unjust because of their sin. He was to tell them that blight was destroying their trees, that the rains were not falling in the right amount and in the right places because of their sin. He was to tell them that their lives were in danger in the country or the city because of their sin, and so forth. I think you get the point.

The purpose of God raising up Ezekiel was to remove any ignorance of why evil things were happening, and to show them that there was a direct connection between their individual lives, their individual conduct, and the heavy oppressive weight of hopelessness that they were experiencing.

Brethren, the trumpet is sounding through the multitude of the end-time signs that are occurring—things that we hear of in our daily news. Are we hearing? Are we taking advantage?

It was God's purpose to create some frightening and painful conditions—an atmosphere in which repentance would occur. And so God prepared Israel with what to say so that the Israelites could do the right things, and that is, what they must do in order to take advantage of God's merciful warning given through the combination of pain and the watchman.

Some of the questions the Israelites might ask are in verse 10: "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" They are asking, "What should we turn to?" I am going to paraphrase God's response: "I am not interested in your death. Turn and live as I do. That is, live life as I would if I were a man."

Verse 11 is especially interesting because of the phrase "As I live, says the Lord God." This appears many times in the book of Ezekiel, but every other place, except here, that I have seen it, it appears to be nothing more than an oath, adding emphasis to what He just said. But here there is a difference. In this case He is telling the people to live like He does. "*As I live!*" That is, to live in the same manner as God lives.

This is a plain and clear directive to walk in His steps, to imitate Him, even as Paul said in I Corinthians 11:1, that we are to follow him as he follows Christ. Striving—doing this—living like God lives, when combined with God's Spirit, is how we become one with Him. That is so plain. If you want to live, He says, "Turn you, turn you, and live like I do!" He says, "Do not die." This is sort of like Moses and the Israelites at the Red Sea. God said, "Don't just stand there. Do something!" In this case He said, "Turn, and live like I do, and you shall live."

Now this does not come naturally, because our fickle, curious, proud, stubborn nature rebels against doing this. Doing this requires discipline, and we naturally desire our own pleasure. All the while the world stands ready to distract us and fulfill our desire right to the very brim. It never does fill us though, but we keep falling to its allure time after time. It is right at this point that Israel failed time and time again, and we must not walk as they walked, making the same mistakes as our ancestors did, or we will never become one with God.

**Isaiah 65:2** I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walks in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.

Paul quotes this verse in Romans 10:21 as evidence of Israel's sorry record of their failed relationship with God. The word that he used in the Greek means he called them "a contrary people."

I want you to notice the advice of others of God's servants, and we are going to go to II Chronicles 15. Here comes the solution to our dilemma. I am not going to try to kid you and say it is an easy solution. It is easy for me to teach it, but it is not always easy to do.

**II Chronicles 15:1-2** And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: And he went out to meet Asa. . .

Asa, at the beginning of his reign and for many years, was a very fine king. He was upright, and he turned the Jews around and got them to worship God by the kind of high-quality leadership he gave to them. It was moral, and it

was focused on God, and it was good. And so Azariah, the son of Oded, came out to meet him, to encourage him to keep on going.

**II Chronicles 15:2** . . . and said unto him, Hear you me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you, while you be with him: and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.

This is reciprocity, getting back to my offering message. It is a principle that we have got to understand. The Bible shows pretty clearly that God deals with us as we deal with Him, and if we are seeking Him and applying His way, He will respond in far greater measure to us in blessing. Nobody out-gives God. The principle of reciprocity, which I showed, was part of the much broader principle of "whatever one sows, one reaps," brings it down to a finer point and makes it very personal. We have got to realize that this principle is at work in our relationship with God.

Now let us turn to I Chronicles 28, not forgetting that Azariah said that if we seek God, He will be found. In verse 9 David is the speaker, and he encourages Solomon to go on after he dies and build the Temple.

**I Chronicles 28:9** And you, Solomon my son, know you the God of your father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts: if you seek him, he will be found of you: but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

David, in brief, told Solomon, "Know Him. Serve Him. Seek Him out." So there is clearly reciprocity in our relationship with God, and He does indeed react toward us in much the same manner as we react toward Him, and actually others. But brethren, never lose sight of the fact that God has all the power, and there is absolutely nothing to be gained by being negligent.

Psalms 78 is a record showing how Israel dealt with God.

**Psalms 78:1-8** Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will

utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he has done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation: a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.

**Psalm 78:17-18** And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

**Psalm 78:21-22** Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation.

Amos 4:6-7 was recorded some several hundred years after the thing with David and Solomon, and look what happened.

**Amos 4:6-7** And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have you not returned unto me, says the LORD. And also I have withholden the rain from you, where there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

**Amos 4:11-12** I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have you not returned unto me, says the LORD.

Therefore thus will I do unto you, O Israel: and because I will do this unto you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.

That is not written in a good sense. The long and short of it is that they *did not* repent.

Amos 5 gives us advice once again. When Amos wrote those words in chapter 4, they had not made any change yet, but there was still hope. They were alive. God is patient and merciful.

**Amos 5:4** For thus says the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek you me, and you shall live.

Connect this to the principle there in Ezekiel 33:1-11: "Seek you Me." "How should we then live?" "As I live!" "Seek you Me," He is saying through Amos, and it is the same thing.

**Amos 5:5-6** But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: [They were centers of pagan worship.] For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought. Seek the LORD, and you shall live: lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.

While we are here at the Feast, we are looking forward to the fulfillment of the most wonderful hope a person can have. We are looking forward to the return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and an endless life of continuous fulfillment. We are looking forward to working directly under Christ, establishing Israel as a holy nation, and then spreading out that holiness to Assyria and Egypt, which are mentioned, and perhaps to other unnamed Gentile nations until beyond the Millennium when all of mankind will have the opportunity for salvation.

We are at a critical place in our calling in that we stand at its pivot point, because everything for us now depends on whether we will seek God and be one with Him. We must discipline ourselves to do this. It requires discipline, because human nature is so easily distracted by this world's allurements. Our mind is fractured to some degree.

We seek God by means of prayer. We seek God by means of study. We seek God by means of meditation, sorting things out so that we understand, to know the mind of God. We seek God by means of obedience, and like the other three, obedience is an absolute necessity because it is in the actual practice of *doing* what we know and what we have learned of God that ingrains that knowledge, understanding, and wisdom into our mind that can be used in a practical reality as part of our character.

Each of these is a separate but necessary part of the process of seeking. But what is it, brethren, that *drives* all of these separate parts? It is the combination of thankfulness and desire. One who is thankful is one who is aware of and appreciative of a benefit received. A thankful person is one who humbly considers what has been done for him and given him. He is one who thoughtfully considers the sacrifice made for his benefit. He is one who recognizes a service and knows that it is not owed, and that he is not worth it.

Are you thankful to know God and His purpose? Are you thankful for His forgiveness? Are you thankful for His Spirit, and thankful to have access to Him, and thankful to know that we can be loving, wise, generous, and immortal like Him because we have access to Him? But thanksgiving is not enough. It must be combined with desire to make good use of what has been generously given.

**I Thessalonians 2:17** But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

Do you know what that phrase "taken from you" literally means in English? It means, "We have been torn apart from you." It is intensely passionate. This verse clearly shows the meaning of the kind of desire that the apostle Paul had to be together with his brethren, to be sharing with them the things that he knew and understood so that he could make them a part of his life. He was not only a thankful man. He was passionately desirous, that what was in him could in some way be communicated to them so that they in turn could seek God with thanksgiving and with desire.

Turn with me all the way back to Song of Solomon, chapter 7, and verse 10. The young lady says:

**Song of Solomon 7:10-12** I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards: let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I will give you my loves.

She wants to experience love with him.

**Song of Solomon 7:13** The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.

This young woman is full of the love of her husband, and her marriage is so satisfying that she feels complete freedom to initiate love. Her sexual desire had a free and lawful outlet to it. She was burning with desire to be with him, and that is the point. Solomon is writing here of the love of the church for Jesus Christ, and there is passion there in those who are doing what? It tells you very clearly that she wants to seek to have experiences with *Him*! Nobody else matters. It is Him that she desires.

There is an interesting verse in Ecclesiastes 6, and it brings us back to something else again.

**Ecclesiastes 6:9** Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

This is a Solomonic, "bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" saying. What he is showing here is the problem with a divided, unfocused mind that I spoke of earlier in this message. It is, as we would say today, all over the place, seeking fulfillment in a host of things, pursuing a wide variety of goals, but rarely, if ever, coming to grips with the pursuit of revealed truth.

Brethren, a lot of us have television to thank for having a mind like this because it has played a major role in destroying peoples' attention span. The attention span of Americans is now getting down into the neighborhood of seven minutes. That is how long it is between advertising on television. We have a hard time focusing for any period of time, and television is pushing, pushing, and pushing all the way into our minds, making it difficult for us to do something that is necessary for us to do, and that is, to spend time in heartfelt prayer, and heartfelt study, seeking, seeking, seeking. The chances are very great that we sit down to read the Bible, and our eyes get heavy, and we go to sleep. It is because there is no passion for Jesus Christ there.

God is teaching us there what defragments our mind. It is seeking *Him* with passionate desire to be like Him which defragments our mind and makes it one with Him.

**Deuteronomy 4:24-31** For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. When you shall beget children, and children's children, and you shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of anything, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD your God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto you go over Jordan to possess it: you shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and you shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. And there you shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But if from thence you shall seek the LORD your God, you shall find him, if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in tribulation, and all these things are come upon you, even in the latter days, if you turn to the LORD your God, and shall be obedient unto his voice: (For the LORD your God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake you, neither destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which he sware unto them.

Our last scripture is in Haggai 2.

**Haggai 2:7** And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.

Jesus Christ is the desire of all nations. He is what people are yearning for, are longing for, even though they do not know it. But they are yearning for solutions. They are yearning for wisdom. They are yearning for power and understanding, and vision, and love—and He *is* those things. That is what He is going to bring with Him. He is going to bring with Him what He is—His undivided mind that is filled with the way that He and the Father have lived for all eternity. He is going to be instilling this into their minds.

The solutions to man's problems will come, because He is sitting on the throne of nations. But we must seek Him now and not fail where Israel failed. It is in the process that we become just like Him. This is what God expects us to do with our life now, and we must do it. We must show Him that we are thankful for our calling, thankful for forgiveness, thankful for His Spirit, and then seek Him, that we might be one with Him.

I have given you the solution now to both coming out of Babylon and avoiding Laodiceanism. It is to seek God with all of our heart in order to have the oneness of His mind. We are not to seek Him just to find Him, because He has already taken care of that by calling us in order that we might have access to Him. Our seeking is that we might know Him in order that we can be like Him. And so prayer, Bible study, meditation, occasional fasting, and obedience, driven by gratitude and passionate desire to be like Him, and with Him, are the keys to oneness with Him.