

God Works In Marvelous Ways (Part One)

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Given 05-Oct-17; Sermon #FT17-03

Nobody has an accurate count on how many people are living on Planet Earth at this time. But those who delve into such things estimate the number can be somewhere between roughly five and seven billion people. Sixty to seventy billion have inhabited this planet in the whole of its existence. We should not be overly serious about looking for an exact number; just to be aware the figure is fairly high for my purpose here today.

Of the present day estimate how many of that five, six, or seven billion people are Christians? By comparison we could probably count them on one hand. Just throwing a figure at that. I know it is not true, but it is a disproportionate number between how many have lived on earth, how many are living on earth, and how many are Christian, or maybe how many have been all during the time that began with Adam and Eve?

Now again all we have are estimates but Christianity has the most adherence with over a billion people and Islam, second in number, also has over a billion and apparently growing rapidly—more rapidly than Christianity. But again, do not become overly concerned about being exact. I am only doing this at the beginning of this sermon as a means of contrast. Not a contrast between Christianity and Islam but do understand this: of those billions of human lives involved in those figures virtually none of them is truly worshipping the Creator God.

Even among the over one billion who claim to be Christian though they are indeed worshipping, they are not worshipping the Creator through their Savior Jesus Christ. They do not know either One of Them in many cases at all.

When God created Adam and Eve and set them loose on Planet Earth after instructing them, there was only one religion: the one that the Creator God Himself gave to Adam and Eve. Roughly 4,000 years later when Jesus founded the Christian church, there was one Christian religion. It is the one He wanted His followers to adhere to as guide for their lives. It was essentially the same one as given to Adam and Eve.

Wikipedia states that defining what constitutes a separate Christian organization is truly difficult to assess because why a given organization is separate from all others may have really nothing to do with doctrinal differences. But then again, it might have very much to do with that. People differ about a wide varieties of issues, besides doctrine, but why such intense infighting between those who are supposed to love one another without infighting.

Guess how many Christian religions Wikipedia now states there are today? The Wikipedia article stated a figure above 50,000. Is there division? Wow! The one point that is clear is that each organization is somewhat separate from the others but still considers itself Christian and loyal to Christ regardless of particular beliefs and practices, no matter how far out they may seem to be to others, including God Himself.

Now, why would I say including God Himself? We all know Christianity is clearly called *the way* right in the book of Acts. And that title indicates something specific clearly differentiating it from

other ways. Christianity is clearly a specific way that not all that many people are adhering to as Christ desired them to do.

Turn to James 1.

James 1:21-26 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

James does not seem to allow much deviation; he only mentioned one sin really; but that person's religion is useless. That is why I said a little bit earlier that almost nobody of the billions of people who have trodden on this earth actually worships the Creator God, because they are way off in their beliefs but sincerely believed in most cases that they believed that they were correct. But they were not.

James 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

We all know that James was not attempting to create a listing of doctrines in this context. Rather he was generalizing the direction of the conduct code from which true Christianity flows, and that direction is clearly for the wellbeing of others. That is why he said towards the end of that section, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." He really did not name a specific doctrine; he talked about the fact that if people are kind, thinking about the wellbeing of others, they would have within them the spirit to watch out for that person's wellbeing and take care of them.

Now James even uses the term, regarding the true religion, as *pure and undefiled and unspotted before God*. And if you were a betting man you would say that notions he had just a little bit of earlier about not bridling one's tongue would make that person's religion impure. And yet they may have considered themselves Christian. Or maybe they were Christians and just had something to overcome and hopefully they did whatever he had in mind about any given person. But he uses the term regarding true religion as pure and undefiled and unspotted before God. It is also a law of liberty that is implanted and that a person who was not continually engaged in living the way he describes then that person's religion is useless.

We had better start thinking this through; maybe we better start thinking about seriously overcoming. We can see that we may be aware of sin, but really have not done very much about it yet. And maybe we are to adopt what I was giving this morning about the apostle Paul's success there. Now that person is not living according to what James briefly describes as demonstrating he is not either a Christian, the person who does not bridle his tongue, or has not much that he believes he must overcome.

Well Jesus had a major confrontation with the Jews who had wandered from what the Israelites were originally given, for a multitude of reasons that they just justified before their very Creator when He was in their midst.

Matthew 15:1-2 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

Notice a doctrinal difference arises here and to us it may not seem as though it was not a big difference between Jesus and these people: "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat?" They were not really doing it for sanitary purposes; it was a part of their religion. It was a part of their way of life and if they were not washing their hands before eating bread, then, to the Jews, it was a bad transgression.

Matthew 15:3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

Jesus really elevated it.

Matthew 15:4 "For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother' and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'"

That is pretty serious by comparison to one failing to wash hands before eating bread. I want you to think about this as we go along in what that says. What did that one difference cause between Jesus and the Jews? Now where do we fit into this picture? Do we disagree with Jesus? Possibility, it is possible for all of us.

Matthew 15:5-6 "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God," then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition."

That difference cut them off from God. It was a doctrinal difference, in which they were sinning and denying helping aid to help their parents. Well what we are seeing here is where doctrinal differences from Jesus Christ leads to. It cuts people off from the Father. In verse seven, Jesus raises the ante.

Matthew 15:7-9 "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.' [They thought they were worshipping God.] And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

Now false doctrine cuts us off from God and God holds us responsible—all of us—to do whatever we can to overcome these differences between us and Him, fighting with all of our might to overcome and grow.

Matthew 15:10 When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand:"

Now He is talking to the people on the street who are watching what was going on.

Matthew 15:11-12 “Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.” Then His disciples came and said to Him . . .

First to the Jewish group, the religious group, then to the people in the street, and now to those who were striving to be members of the body of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 15:12-13 Then His disciples came and said to Him. "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted."

I gave you all those figures at the beginning Were those people planted by God within His Family? Not very many. That is why I confidently asked you: how many of those people actually worship God? Very, very few of them actually did; and if they did, did they do it with the doctrinal purity that they had available to? Hopefully they did.

Matthew 15:14-18 “Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain this parable to us." So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding? [He, Peter, was.] Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart [and this is the issue], and they defile a man."

I wonder how many people are out there in the population of the earth, who are doing their thing and are perfectly confident in their own mind that they are actually worshipping God? No wonder Jesus said, the job of the church is to preach the gospel, His truth. And that is what people need so that they can apply the truth of God and not the teachings of men.

Matthew 15:19-20 “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

How can we ever be one with God holding different concepts of right regarding conduct? God is creating a Family that is clearly also a team and intended to work as one in which all perform their responsibilities at the right time, place, and the uniformed level of performance. This is what God is doing. He is putting together a team of people that is also a family and such a family that they are all in His image.

Now do you think we are going to have doctrinal differences with God when that occurs? We just saw in the context here in Matthew what differences create; you cannot be part of a team if you think differently, act differently at the wrong time in the wrong situation as a part of God's team.

I think you understand that all the way back in Revelation 14 there is a group of 144,000 people who are going to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. This indicates that He is going to have a great deal of responsibility, a huge job to perform and these 144,000 people are going to be working with Him and they are going to be appointed to these responsibilities because the Father knows they are going to stick by Christ's side *no matter what* . And will listen to His command and follow it right to the "T." How can we ever be one with God holding different concepts of right and wrong regarding conduct?

David Maas just gave a sermonette about what drove the Worldwide Church of God apart; it was differences of opinion about multitudes of things until those differences got all the way to the top and were actually running the show. This is serious business trying to get the body of Jesus Christ all believing as much of the pure doctrine as James mentioned as we possibly can and applying it to our lives.

God wants unity so that far more of what He plans can be accomplished but the reality in regards to belief and practice is that chaos prevails because I am not encompassing merely the church at this time. I am talking about the world as well. And right now you are witness to what has happened in the United States of America because of differences of opinions, ideas about doctrines or what laws or whatever. It is driving us completely bonkers.

So, if you wonder why God wants doctrinal purity, what you have to do is look at the United States of America and understand why it is necessary that God's Family all agree with the Father, all agree with the Son. We might not practice as well as They do but we agree with Them and we strive with the abilities that we have to do things just like Them. The reality in the world as regarding beliefs and practice is that chaos prevails. Unity is non-existent and somewhere within the chaotic mix, disbelief truly reigns.

I believe this shows that sincere people believe that it is not necessary for doctrinal unity to be established with God. That is a reality: it is true. You do not see very many people trying to get doctrinal purity, I mean people out in the world. They believe that they will be acceptable to God on the basis of grace.

The sermons that I have prepared for this Feast are linked by a common theme; there is nothing unusual regarding the theme for us, it is not a complex theme and it is not unusual that it has Feast applications as well. Now what seems rather perplexing to this man is that it is rather bizarre that a theme so clear in the Scriptures to us, is so difficult for the unconverted to not only grasp, but they seemingly also are unwilling to accept and follow it. It really points out how bizarre we humans are, even those who believe in a Creator God hold back from God the kind of loyalty that He would like to have.

In this first sermon we are going to survey some of the things the unconverted say about God and His way, and of the spiritual chaos that is its fruit. The wearying pressures of spiritual battling it produces and the motivations that produce it.

Now here is a word that anybody who is my age will probably remember if you ever went through the army, especially if you went through it back in the forties when Second World War was going on. That word is "SNAFU." It is a word I first heard before I became a teenager; it is an acronym. An acronym is a word formed from the first letters of a descriptive phrase. Nobody knows who originated this term, "SNAFU," or who is given recognition for having first uttered it. But again, according Wikipedia, the term apparently arose from the United States Military during the Second World War or shortly before.

"SNAFU" stands for "Situation Normal, All Fouled Up." That definition is a kinder, gentler version suitable for church usage. It apparently was created by soldiers to describe the battle confusion that exists in times of warfare, especially at or near the front lines and during intense fighting. A SNAFU seems to occur during a period when communication and eyesight are very poor and nobody, whether on the front line or on the back, really has an accurate assessment of what is going on. It is a time

when confusion reigns and combatants feel more or less helpless. So they react on their battle trained instincts rather than clear understanding.

Now turn with me to Ephesians 6. This is a very familiar portion of the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:10-12 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

Paul here is making use of a military metaphor to urge us to be prepared, fully equipped with this understanding (the kind he is giving there), and the much needed mindset to make full use of the faith and other spiritual gifting God gave us when He called and sanctified us. I bring this up because we are living, really, in a perilous time in which the culture that we live in is putting pressures and influences on us to depart from the faith. It is very easy to do so, if we give in and if we fail to resist the impulses and influences that are coming from the world around us.

The evil days that Paul mentions here can be any spiritual contest during which our faith in Christ is being tested a degree or two more intensely than normal. The Greek in this word literally says, “*be made strong*.” That is very indicative of something. Paul did not just tell them to be strong; he was telling them to allow themselves to be made strong, thus indicating that the converts to whom Paul is writing cannot be strong on their own.

Now do we think we are going to receive much help if we are not doing things right according to God’s way because He has to fight the fight through our defenses before He can get to the place where He is able to really teach us and make us strong?

Why the concern? It is because the evil day mentioned here may very well be one of two things Paul could be referring to: (1) any time that we are undergoing a trial that is more difficult than normal, and (2) he may be referring to the Tribulation. And we may very well be living in the run-up to it.

I am not saying the run-up is going to be only a year on, or fifteen years, or whatever it turns out to be, but there are definitely things taking place in our culture which are making things more intensely aligned against us.

Now do we think that we are going to receive much help if we are not doing things right according to God’s way? We are already living in an especially chaotic environment that is more likely to develop into a “SNAFU” circumstance because of what happened in the Worldwide Church of God in the 1990s. This is another reason to make effort to make sure we are working at overcoming and being in alignment with Jesus Christ.

Why would it be more difficult for us now because of what happened in the Worldwide Church of God? First of all, because there is no central headquarters similar to what we had in Pasadena giving unified direction and it is a definite possibility that there is a chance one may not even have a congregation to fellowship with now that is to receive encouragement, comfort, and helpful suggestions. Every week when we put the sermon out over the Internet, I believe most of the people (not the majority because I think that would be going too far) that are listening do not have a congregation to fellowship with. So, they listen to our broadcast and fellowship, maybe, with nobody.

It is good to have fellowship; God loves that we have fellowship and he would like to give us more fellowship but there are some people who do not have it. So, Paul is urging this so that we do not merely endure but are victorious over our spiritual enemies even in these times Enemies, because there are spirit beings we may never really see. But then again, these enemies may be something lodged within our own heart as we read there in Matthew the fifteenth chapter.

Now, again, as I showed during my Trumpets sermon, spiritual warfare is a frequent part of our life in Christ because God's enemy, and thus our enemy, actively resorts to it. His reason is always to kill, but if he cannot accomplish that, it is to either confound and to confuse us in order to destroy our understanding and determination. He wants to break us down at the very least so that we give up.

Warfare occupies either the foreground or the background of many sections of the Bible. This is not because God is promoting the murderous killing between nations, but He is providing instruction in the attitudes we need in fighting our spiritual warfare. Thus, He provides tales of the exploits of Abraham and his three hundred men; Joshua; Gideon; David and his thirty valiant military leaders, plus a number of others who expressed their stalwart faith in God during Israel's history.

Since that time period when Israel was the singular nation of God living in one location, in this world's circumstances in the outworking of God's spiritual purpose, things have changed radically.

Now Israel is scattered all over the globe. It is not thirteen families united into a nation, but so divided and so detached from true history, its citizens, for the most part, do not even know who they are. That is disheartening for me to even think about it. They do not even know who they are!

On a positive side, Jesus Christ, during this period of time, was born. He lived a perfect life, and He died for our sins so we can be forgiven. While His life as a human was underway, He created the church identified in Galatians 6:16 as the Israel of God. I want to turn to that so you see that this is in the Bible and God means exactly what He says.

Paul was saying goodbye to everybody and he said:

Galatians 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule [that is the rule of God], peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

This clearly infers more than one Israel. In this case I do not mean the Israel that is in the United States, the Israel that is in Britain, or France or anywhere else. He is identifying the church as the Israel of God; the Israel that belongs to God because the nation of Israel is no longer God's in a sense that it was before. They left Him and He allowed them to go off on their own and create their own nations the way they are. I do not mean that God abandoned them; He did not but the Israel of God is the church. It is the Israel that belongs to God.

However, like the other Israel, the church, the Israel of God, is not a physical nation but a spiritual institution operating by faith. It too is scattered all over the world. But unlike the Israelitish nations, the Israel of God has no land it calls its own; it has no standing army; and on the surface each person's battle appears fought on their own. The Israel of God is mostly scattered people surrounded by a deep sea of disbelief.

Do you understand what that means? I said just a little bit earlier, it is likely that those people maybe who came out of the Worldwide Church of God as it was breaking up and are scattered all over the

United States, Australia, South Africa, Britain, France, or wherever they happen to be, have no local church to fellowship with. God was motivated by several reason for doing this, one of which was the spiritual condition of the church. But this was *the* major one. However, I want you to take note of something you already know, and that is He did not establish any one of the groups that broke away from the Worldwide Church of God as *His*; and that includes the Church of the Great God. And I think there is a reason why He did that and it is a very important reason to your salvation.

Number one: I believe that He wanted to break up, remove, disturb in people's mind that there was not going to be any church that they were going to be able to fellowship with.

Now He did this for a valid reason, and that is that our faith is not to be in the church. The church cannot save us. Jesus Christ is our Savior. He saves; a church can fall apart at virtually any time and a church is never designated in the Bible as being our savior. Jesus Christ is clearly identified as our Savior, therefore one of the major reasons why He broke up the Worldwide Church of God was to virtually force us to be loyal, to have our faith in, to have our relationship and fellowship with Jesus Christ. Not just a group of nice people.

We are to get to the place where we are so seriously committed and homed in on Jesus Christ that our talks in the morning are with *Him*, that our talks in the evening are with *Him*; that *He* is the One we fellowship with. He is the One that we trust. He is the One that we look to as our Savior, *seriously*, and that we do everything in our power to please Him—and we do that by overcoming and growing and removing as much as we possibly can the differences that exist between us and Him in every circumstance.

I know that I look at this every once in a while and what I always end up thinking of is Revelation 14: 5. "These follow the Lamb wherever He goes." That is the solution to salvation. We follow our Savior wherever—in everything. Walking in His steps is what we are commanded to do, and you cannot get any closer to the kind of life that Christ lived than walking in His footsteps, doing exactly what He did in order to remove what differentiates us from Him.

I said just a little bit earlier before I began this, that we fight battles and we fight much more alone, in a sense, than we used to because we are not fellowshiping with a congregation And because we do not have the congregation to go to, if we are smart we go to Jesus Christ and we talk over things with Him.

Now what about the battles? Where is He when the battles are being fought? He gives us an ironclad promise and we need to put our faith in this.

Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

In battles things get all snafued; they can be confusing, and easy ready-made answers are not available that might give us a victory. They are in short supply and in reality the battles might be a time quite intense and seemingly fought alone. Be assured that a Christian is truly never alone. That is His promise: "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

As I said a little bit earlier and I am going to repeat it again, I think that one of the reasons that Christ drove the church, the Worldwide Church, apart was in order to almost force us, if we have it within

us, to make sure that we are focused in on our Savior. Not the institution. It is the Savior that we want to be focused on.

Since this Israel belongs to God, as He was for the physical nation of Israel, He therefore is indeed on the side of His people. Do we believe and do we live by this? We must use this time to be prepared, knowing the reality of those who may attempt to break us, to break face with Christ. It is Christ who has decreed the spiritual battles must be fought on the basis of faith and other gifts He has equipped His Family with, so that they will be victorious. We are to look to Him in every case! Faith in God and His way of life are the *primary* issues in these battles. Those of you living here in the United States, I think you know that.

There are people all over the United States who may not have the truth, but they do have this desire to worship God; they know enough about Him that they respect Him; they try to honor Him and they try to be obedient to the things that they know are right and good. And so what happens to them? They get charged with crimes! They are run out of business. It has not happened to us yet; but it is coming. Will we be ready for it when we have to make a declaration before governmental official that we are going to obey Christ no matter what? So you lose your bakery. You lose whatever you have spent your life building up and you are not able to follow it anymore because the state has stolen it from you at the behest of some people who hate God. It is coming! And that, incidentally, is another reason why I believe that Jesus Christ broke up the church. It was to hide us; to give us more time, so that we are not out in the front.

Herbert W. Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God, everybody knew about them; and they cheered when the Worldwide broke up. They were encouraged, but the church is still there. It is not in Pasadena anymore, if you understand what I mean. It still exists and it is still carrying out its work under Jesus Christ. So, it is Christ who had decreed that the spiritual battles must be fought on the basis of faith and other gifts that He has equipped His Family with so that they can be victorious.

Faith in God and His way of life are the primary issues in these battles, and in these battles, the carnal unconverted are actually at a very definite disadvantage because they do not know God and therefore they have no real opportunity to believe God. The Bible clearly states why: it is because the carnal mind is by nature against God. In fact, the enmity of the carnal mind against God and His laws is legendary among his converted children and I am thinking of legendary in the sense of being very famous; well known, almost to the point of being fables of mythic proportion. Is that the way the carnal nature is to you?

(I believe in my next sermon, this is the way the sermon begins; I want to show you how powerful the carnal nature is. It may be deceiving us. Some of that may come in this sermon as well.)

Now we know that we have a carnal nature, but maybe not as well understood as it needs to be. Some of the reasons the unbelievers give why they disbelieve as they do causes us to shake our heads in wonder because so often their reasoning is so shallow and illogical. But be aware, because it is these very people who are most dangerous to the church. They have seized control of virtually every vital aspect necessary to the governing environment of this nation to disturb its peaceful functioning. Their disagreement with God, His way, and us are many and are firmly set, and over the past seventy five years, the humanists have accomplished seizing control of this nation in terms of government, in terms of morality, of education, entertainment, business, and media. They are running practically the whole show.

Now turn with me to Psalm 14. Humanists do not believe in God; there is no Creator according to them and they are running things. Notice what God calls them:

Psalm 14:1-4 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." [These people are fools.] They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none [of these fools] who does good. [Can you imagine that?] The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people [that is beginning to happen] as they eat bread, and do not call on the LORD?

Those who have taken control live and conduct their lives not believing God as a living reality. He is to them merely a comforting thought the weak fall back upon to complain to. But note what God says to them. They do not listen to that. Not one of them does good! That is hard to believe almost, but God is truthful, He does not lie; these people who do not believe in a Creator God, not one of them does good.

Now you know what the outcome of their lives is, until they change. This is one of the clearest statements in the Bible, what difference in doctrine, difference in belief, difference away from the way of God leads to.

Now these people are the driving source of this nation's zeitgeist. In this case especially it is our spiritual influence but the reality is that God in His good time looks down from His omniscient position and a judgment follows to deliver spiritual Israel. It will happen; and many many times the humanist claims everything pertaining to life very slowly came to existence by means of what they call resident forces. They believe that power and matter existed even before what they call the Big Bang! The depth and volume of their disbelief is great. Do they seriously consider how the resident forces and the materials the resident forces worked upon came to be? Their assumption is that they just happened to be here and no truly knowledgeable and scientific reasons are given. Can you actually say that a person like this is logical and sane?

I cannot see how it can be from what I know about God and what I believe about God. Now if they believe this way, how can they possibly be wise? And if they are not wise then how can they lead this nation out of the predicament that it is in right now? They cannot. There is no hope for change in the United States of America, Britain, Holland, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, and so forth. It just will not happen until there is a change in their attitude toward God. There is only one direction things can go in right now and that is from bad to worse.

I know that that is not a happy thought but we have got to understand how these people think and the root of their problem is they do not believe there is a God! That is the root, but you see that one difference begins to expand out in every area of life that they are involved in because they cannot possibly be wise the way God is wise. Because in order to be wise the way God is wise, we have to have truth. So, things can only get worse until there is an action taken by God to produce a great deal of change in the hearts of these people.

I gave that little study last night regarding the fourth turning for the purpose of helping you to understand that even if there are people in government in terms of even giving counsel to the

President and the people surrounding them, it is highly likely that the resistance is so great, by those whose entire lives depends on what they believe regarding government and regarding God, there cannot be any change.

I think, brethren, that is the way we have to proceed. More fervently than we ever have before, we have got to dedicate our lives to our relationship with Jesus Christ, and pleasing Him with our obedience, talking with Him, walking with Him, loving Him with all of our heart, so that we are in good position and He hears us when we cry out to Him.

Do you know every once and a while, there is one of these people who at least weekly believe that there is indeed a Creator God but they make an excuse for themselves. Their justification is: well He changes His rules from time to time, and this despite the fact that He says, "I am God, I change not." They find a way to wiggle free of responsibility of having to answer to God. That is the way the carnal mind is. In addition, Jesus, the Father and the Son, clearly say in His book, that is the Bible, that once He begins a project He does not change because He is faithful to His purpose.

And of course it is possible that these people have not really read what He says! There are others who believe the God of the Old Testament and the New Testament are two different Beings, not only with different sets of laws but also diametrically of opposite temperance, thus establishing a sort of Divine "good cop/bad cop" situation. The Father is mean, the Son is mild and generous.

There are some who claim that under the Old Covenant people were saved by their works. If their works were judged as good enough, they were saved. The same people may now believe that God made it easier under the New Covenant and now salvation is simply a gift by grace, as they say. Simply because one is forgiven, an effect of believing in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, and off you go to heaven. Nothing else is involved but to be saved.

Well I hope that I am registering a little bit on your mind of the many, many, many ways they justify believing there is no God and these separations produce differences that are bringing us to fight against one another; not us, but the nation.

The sum of that belief that I just gave you is that God's purpose is merely to give people salvation. No other distinctive purpose of God is perceived in that concept—that God just gives salvation on the basis of forgiveness in Christ's blood. Do you know that there are people who believe that they only must obey the words of Christ? These people actually have a name given to them in the public; these people are called red letter Christians! Do you know where that came from? The series exists because some Bible publishers print Bibles in which Jesus' words appear in red. But that is their justification.

Are you sure you have no justifications for why you allow yourself permission to do things that you know are kind of yucky about and you wonder is the roof going to fall in?

But then again you could do as Thomas Jefferson did. Overall he gave strong support to the Bible because of the high level of morality that it teaches. However, his conclusions regarding other things in the Bible's content led him to excise things he personally did not believe happened. For instance, he excised all mentions of miracles.

I have given you a multitude of reasons why so much confusion exists here in the United States of America and I know that it is the same in Britain, in Holland, and in France as well because people do not believe God exists even though they claim that they believe in God.

I will give you one more and that is there are people who are waiting for God to open their minds. I mean this is what they say, to open their minds and convert them; they are waiting on Him. But why does He not respond to them? They cannot accept the fact that He does not want them. That is why He does not respond and there is almost always a reason why they are not converted. The reason is, it lies in the power of the carnal mind to influence mankind's approach to the way those unconverted people perceive God. You know this scripture very well but turn with me to Isaiah 66.

Isaiah 66:1-2 Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

What is He saying here? He is saying that these people are living their lives as though God owes them something. They want something from Him so that they receive something from Him. They would be serving for the entirely wrong reasons. Let me go back to I Peter 5, where Peter talks about the humility that is necessary for our relationship with God.

Mankind expects things from God in the wrong attitude. Now we can expect things from God, that He is always going to love us, and that is good. We know that He will give us gifts, but not if we whine, if we wail, if we demand, or act toward Him in such a way as to show Him that He owes us something.

I Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

It is very clear. You compare this with Isaiah 66:2 and you will find that they are essentially saying exactly the same thing. God resists the proud and that is why He does not look upon, as Isaiah says a little bit differently, because of their lack of humility. "God resists the proud, but gives grace, gifts to the humble."

I Peter 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.

We do not want to be pushy around God; that is not too good. It is actually abundantly clear that all these different perceptions of God and His way prove that God is being evaluated on the basis of the unconverted carnal wisdom which is not wisdom at all. The carnal mind then acts according to its perception of God and constantly arrives at wrong conclusions.

God, who judges the heart, can easily see what is going on in there and in almost all cases lets it lay there until later doing nothing because of what He sees, and what He sees is a lack of humility, a heart that is groused towards him, demanding things of Him, and taking advantage of others. So He will not bend, He will not stoop to help them out of their circumstance.

I mentioned something a little bit before. The bottom line in this group of people at this point is that the carnal mind approaches God and His way as though God owes it something. Therefore it is not ready yet to be humbled and so He does not call them.

Now here is another possibility as to why so much confusion exists. It is at least somewhat understandable considering the overwhelming amount of false teaching most of the world has received through the centuries from those they hold as their ministry. Some of those reasons are considered in this sermon but I want to take another look at the original sins from a slightly different angle.

This angle is part of our battle too and in a way I am going to not quite repeat something that Richard said this morning. But we are going to turn back to Genesis 3 and we will pick up the flow because to me this is very interesting. This is just a little bit different approach that I know that I have ever taught before.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

I will tell you right off what I believe the major reason why there was so much confusion. Satan did not waste any time attacking by means of deception in what he immediately perceived was a place of vulnerability within Adam and Eve. There is nothing mysterious about this regarding this point. Mankind's problem is nothing esoterically deep. God made sure He recorded this episode so that we would understand why. *It is that from the beginning, starting with Adam and Eve, the only two humans, mankind has not believed God to the depth necessary for consistent obedience.*

God said to Adam and Eve: "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." And Adam and Eve did not believe Him. How could it be any clearer? This is almost to the point of being head scratching incredible. I am going through this because I want you to see how dense the carnal mind is. And it is dense because it is always protecting itself from intrusion, from anything that would root them out of the human being. They did not believe Him in the face of the fact until that point of time when they committed their sins that all their instruction only came from Him. He was the only source of information they had. God had no competition with Adam and Eve, He was the only One teaching them. Why would they disbelieve Him?

That shows you that the disbelief was rooted right within their nature from the very beginning! And as soon as a counterthought came to their minds they were easily persuaded to sin.

As far as we know they did not have any competition for instruction from Satan or any other angel, any other demon, whatever. The Bible does not reveal any other living and communicating being they had contact with. God had no competition giving contrary advice to their minds but they still did not believe Him.

Here is what we must consider because we are dealing with the same carnal mind. We have become more fully aware of the powerful deceptive influence of our heart. Yet our natural heart generates sin along with a resistance to reject truth. So how strong is our carnal self-centeredness elements of which we still carry in our daily life?

Now without a doubt Satan did his work in throwing in his reasons why they ought to follow their own desire rather than what God taught them. But God taught them without competition from any other being and they followed the other being the very first occasion. That is, something different

from what God said came up. Do you see what I am getting at? The carnal mind is so tricky, so deceitful, so strong it is doing everything in its power to get its way. And even God, face to face, could not give a convincing argument to Adam and Eve regarding what they did.

I hope that I am accomplishing something in helping you to see how strong that nature is. We really fight a battle to stay, not just to overcome it. I am talking about fighting a battle to make sure that we are close to Jesus Christ all the time because He is the solution to the powerful carnal human nature that we bear with us. He can give us the strength to see the holes in the arguments of our carnal nature and reject it with all of our might. "No! I will not do that." We can do that if we are in contact with Jesus Christ and He really is to us our Savior and we are training ourselves, honing our understanding of Him to be so strong that we will not do anything that deviates from what He wants us to do.

That is what happened to all these people who have the kind of instruction that they get from the world and causes them to go off in these weird directions that they go on, the kind of weird directions we went on before God called us and began to straighten us out by straightening out our understanding of the carnal nature. Do you see what I mean?

Everybody starts out from the same place. And every once and a while God intervenes and He straightens out somebody really, by giving them the ability to perceive what they really are, humble themselves before Him, and throw themselves on His mercy so that they are pleasing Him and He becomes the Fountainhead of our relationship for all eternity.