

A Firmly Rooted Faith – Part IV-B
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1 & 2 Kings
February 23, 2014

Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Kings 13. I mentioned that we are continuing a series of messages where we survey the Old Testament, and this is actually the fifth message in that series. We've titled it 'A Firmly Rooted Faith', the series, and the idea is that we're trying to see that our faith is rooted not just in the doctrines of the New Testament, but in the doctrines of the whole Bible. That the doctrines of the New Testament are found in the Old Testament. God's word is one perfect unity from Genesis to Revelation, and so we have begun looking at the way the Lord works in the lives of His people. We said it this way, that God not only spoke to Israel, but He spoke through Israel. That is that in His dealings with Israel, He was teaching to them, and also those who were watching, how He is to be known. That His acts in their history, the way that He dealt with them, was communicating something of how sinful man can come to know a holy God. And as you look at the history, it is striking how the events, and the way God dealt with those events in history, are teaching with such clarity the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We've come to our fifth message. Forgive me for my over-sensitivity to precision, but this is 'A Firmly Rooted Faith – Part IV – B' because I really didn't finish Part IV last time. I've tried to keep the parts as the general segments in Israel's history. Part I we looked at the Pentateuch. We covered the Pentateuch in one message. In Part II we looked at the period of the conquest, and the period of the judges, but particularly the period of the conquest when they went into the land, the possession of the land. And Part III we looked at the United Kingdom, the United Monarchy, under Saul, David, and Solomon. Then Part IV, we've begun to look at the divided kingdom, and we looked at it beginning last week, and we're looking at, the passages of Scripture we're really focusing on are 1 Kings 12, all the way through the end of 2 Kings.

We start at Chapter 12 because that is where the death of Solomon happens, and the division of the kingdom happens. One nation, Israel, one people before God, the twelve tribes, was divided in 931 when Solomon died. The Lord judged Solomon's sin by dividing the kingdom. So for more than three centuries, the Lord worked in the lives of His people in two different kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom, and the Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom retained the name Israel, the Southern Kingdom is known by the name of Judah, because the tribe of Judah was in the south. Of course the tribe of Judah is the tribe of the Messiah, the

tribe of David. Jerusalem is in Judah, the Southern Kingdom, and so God is dealing with both of these kingdoms, and as He is dealing with the Northern Kingdom, and the Southern Kingdom, we noted how when you read 1 and 2 Kings, also true of Chronicles, you have this movement back and forth.

The spotlight is on the Northern Kingdom, and the king of the Northern Kingdom, and the condition of the Northern Kingdom spiritually. Then the spotlight will move to the Southern Kingdom. We'll talk about a king, and how he impacted his kingdom spiritually. It goes back and forth, and we cover all 19 kings of the north, and all 20 kings of the south in this book, and the book ends with the exile of the Nation of Israel. So there is this emphatic statement. You have two exiles, the Northern Kingdom exile in 722 B.C., and the Southern Kingdom exile nearly 150 years later in 586 B.C. So both kingdoms are basically vomited from the land, to use the language of Leviticus. The land spews them out.

So the question that is begged through the book is: *What must we do to dwell in God's land? What must we do to dwell in God's land with God's blessing?* So the idea is, it is addressing the question that the whole Bible addresses, and that the whole Old Testament addresses, which is: *How can sinful people come to dwell with a holy God in Heaven? What must we do to go to Heaven?* God is teaching this through the history of His people in His dealings with them. How good He is to condescend to us, to show us in story form the message that He's laying out for us. What must we do to live in God's land with God's blessing? We see that that question is answered in 1 and 2 Kings, with this overarching answer: To dwell in God's land, with God's blessing, we must become true worshippers of the Lord. We must become true worshippers. That is a great definition for what a Christian is. When someone is lost, and they are saved, what happens? They have gone from being a hater of God to being a true worshipper of God. They've gone from not knowing the Lord, and worshipping themselves, and worshipping things, to worshipping the Lord. Now as we become a Christian, then the struggle is to keep worshipping on a day-to-day basis. That is what sanctification is. We are learning to worship Him, and worship Him more, but before we are saved we are not a worshipper at all. We may go to church. We may be members of the church. We may be leaders in the church, but if we're not worshipping, we haven't been saved. If we haven't become a worshipper, there is not something fundamental that has happened in the heart where we want to worship now.

Now from experience I can tell you personally, you can allow the embers to grow incredibly cold. You know how you have a fire, and the fire is really, really hot? So hot that you can't sit on the hearth? You know how you get that kind of fire

going sometimes? Before we had the gas starter, which is the easy way, the easy way to start a fire, which I'm very thankful for because when we first got married we were in seminary and they bought these condominiums the year we moved in at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. We were going off to seminary to stay in seminary housing, and you know, our expectations were low. We were going to seminary housing, we were suffering for the Lord. When we got there they had bought these condominiums that were two-bedroom condominiums. Patti and I didn't have any children at this point. Two-bedroom condominiums, covered parking outside, fireplace, new washer and dryer, all new utilities because they had just upgraded everything because it needed to be done. We walked in and all the older students had had the option, "You can leave the campus housing to go down to Clinton and stay in the condominiums, or you can stay in Clinton," and not one of them went down to Clinton.

They started calling where we lived *'The Hyatt'*. "You guys are in the Hyatt." Steven and Joy Gaines lived in the Hyatt I believe too, a few years after us. Well we had a fireplace, but we did not have though a gas starter, so we really were suffering. So you know, I bought some green wood, not knowing what I'm doing, and for that whole first year of using that fireplace, every fire was an adventure. I mean, "How can I get this thing going?" I start getting the paper right, it starts up, then it dies. I wasn't a boy scout so I didn't know how to put the wood together exactly like it needed to be. But anyway, then I'd get a fire going that was really hot and you think, "That is so wonderful, now we can't even get close to it." But isn't it something that no matter how hot the fire is, it will go out? No matter how hot the fire in your heart for loving God, and worshipping God is, when you are born again, if you don't nurture that fire, it will tend toward going out.

But if you are truly saved, it won't ever totally go out. It is just like when you think the fire is out, and you take the poker, and you stir the ashes, you see those coals, those embers underneath. If you blow on those carefully, and you put the fuel there, you can rebuild a fire again, can't you? Because the fire hasn't really gone out. That is what happens we are saved. We now have a heart for true worship. There was none before. There may have been a heart for going to church to be seen. There may have been a heart for going to church to enjoy the experience of the emotion that I feel, but there wasn't a heart to truly exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. When someone is saved, they become fundamentally different in that they become a worshipper of Christ. And then that fire, as they are sanctified, they learn more and more what it means to be a worshipper, and there are going to be times where the fire dies down. What do they need to do? They need to blow on the embers and get in the presence of Christ, and let Him feed the fire with the fuel of His glory.

But this book is about that issue. It is basically adding to the things that we've seen already in the unfolding of God's word, from the Pentateuch, and the other books, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel. It is adding to our portrait of what it means to be saved, and what it means to be saved from this book is it means to become a true worshipper of the living God. With that major question being the main point of Kings, then it unpacks that for us with great clarity by first of all asking the question *Where?* It asks this question with great, emphatic force. *Where do you go to worship the living God?* We saw how that is such a major emphasis in this book.

In the Northern Kingdom, *'the sin of Jeroboam'* which is mentioned 14 times, another 6 times *'walking in the way of Jeroboam'*. Remember, that was the first king that made those others places of worship? God had made clear that you go to Jerusalem, to the temple. That is the one place where man meets God. That is the one place God has appointed for sinners to come into a relationship with Him. That is the one place where He's made for sinners to continue to abide in a relationship with Him. We noted how at first glance it seems rather insensitive and impractical. Why does everybody have to go to Jerusalem? Back then it was a lot harder to travel, the distance of 60 miles could take four days. You are taking your sacrifice with you, you have to keep up with the lamb, you've got to keep up with the ox the whole way. "Why can't we have franchises," and so Jeroboam made franchises in Bethel and Dan. He made places of worship, and God judged that and hated that sin. So much so that He continually rebukes every other king of the north by saying, "You continued in the sins of Jeroboam which he caused Israel to sin."

Then we saw that even in the south, where they were in the vicinity of Jerusalem, Jerusalem was in the south, in Judah, that even in the south, in Judah, they also struggled to worship just in Jerusalem because they had the problem of the high places. Twenty-four times in the books for 1 and 2 Kings, it talks about the high places, the high places, the high places. Even in some of the best kings, that lament is, "Though he walked in the way of David, his father, yet he did not remove the high places." What are the high places? They are the places that were dedicated to worshipping the Lord, or worshipping God, or worshipping other gods. Many of them dedicated to worshipping Yahweh, but it wasn't Jerusalem. So you could go to the high place and offer a sacrifice, and God says He hates that. The reason is, He was teaching us that there is one place where man meets God—it is His temple, it is His designated, appointed place, and we see that He was doing that so that we would be protected from idolatry, and from deception, and we would know that when He sent His Son, that His Son was the temple. The fulfillment of all the Old Testament tabernacle and temple, Jesus Christ, in whom the fullness of God dwelt in bodily form. He is the place of meeting. He is the tent of meeting, and there is

no other place. There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. There is not another way to Heaven, there is only one. He made that emphatic, and when you read 1 and 2 Kings, and you see how upset the Lord is by these failures of Jeroboam, and the southern kings, to make central the worship in Jerusalem. You understand how God feels about that, and we should not entertain the idea that there is any other way to Heaven. There is just one—Jesus Christ.

Now that is *Where?* What must you do to become a true worshipper of God? You have to first of all go to the place He's designated. So how do you get saved from the penalty of sin? How do you get saved from the wrath of God? How do you get saved from the certainty of hell that we all deserve? You must go to the one meeting place between God and man. You must go to Christ Jesus Himself. It's the only place you can go, but the good news is, He is saying, "Come." I was listening to a song this week. I think it was one of the Getty's songs, Keith and Kristyn Getty, and in one of the songs the lyrics are: *Hands that should have pushed me away, bear wounds that tell me, "Come."* That is the glory of the Gospel. He says, "Come, but you must come only through Christ." That is why it is ordained that the preaching of the Gospel happened all over the world. This message must be taken everywhere. So *Where?* is the first thing. We must become a true worshipper of the living God. That means *Where?* At the foot of Jesus Christ, and it doesn't just end there when you get saved. Let me just say this, where we are going to end up at the end, trying to understand how to apply this.

What we're going to see is that this *Where?* is the thing that matters every moment of every day. How do you lay hold of the power of God to save you from the penalty of sin? You go to Jesus, right? How do you lay hold of the power of God to save you from the power of sin? How do you face temptation? How do you change the situation? You know when you are struggling with sin, when you are in the middle of it, you know how it is when you are in the middle of it? For me, one of the ways I see this is when I'm being angry, or I'm being irritable. You know irritableness is anger, just restrained. Grumpiness, we have all kinds of ways we like to airbrush these things, but you know when you're feeling frustrated, and you're feeling justified in your anger, your frustration? How hard it is to stop? "I know I shouldn't be doing this." That thought comes in. The Spirit is working on us. Our conscience is working on us. "I shouldn't be doing this. I need the power of God to help me. I need God to change me." Where do you go? What do you do in that moment? You go to Jesus Christ! You try to run to Him.

Now the question this brings up, the second question that 1 and 2 Kings hammers home with the same kind of force that it hammered home the first question, *Where?* and that is: *How do you get to Jesus?* It is a very important, very relevant question. How do you get there? To decide, “Lord, I need You right now.” We certainly pray and call out to Him, right? “Lord, I need You. I need Your help. I need You to help me.” But to really get into the presence of Christ, I mean prayer should be a two-way dialogue where we are listening, but what are you listening to? There are some who would have you just quiet your mind, still your mind, empty your mind and listen. Many Christians, professing Christians teaching that. That is that the way to get to Jesus, the way to get into the presence of God is just to meditate, to empty yourself, be silent. We are helped by getting away by ourselves, and quieting the noise of our life, but if they mean silence by emptying the mind, and just letting the mind go, they are very foolish indeed, and unbiblical. Completely unbiblical.

The Bible nowhere teaches that you get to Jesus by emptying the mind, disciplining yourself not to think about anything else. That is basically just Buddhism, or Hinduism, it is other meditation techniques that come from the world. We don't need to borrow any of those to find God. In fact, that was the whole problem you keep seeing in 1 and 2 Kings, they were always borrowing ideas. “Hey, we need high places.” “Hey, let's use a golden calf.” We don't need to borrow anything, we need to listen to what God has said. God makes very clear, how do you get to Jesus? You get to Jesus through the word. The dialogue that you have in your heart as you pray to Him, “Lord, I need you,” even then as you fill your heart and your mind with the word of God, you try to lay hold of Him by clinging to His word. “What I know about You,” and the more we know about Him, the more we can draw into His presence. This is the means He has ordained to get us there, and we see this in the emphasis the Scripture lays on the word of the Lord.

Now, I want to read a passage that we've read before. We read this last time, but I'm going to read it because it illustrates this second point as well as it illustrated the first point last time. We're reading 1 Kings 13, and we're going to read beyond what we read earlier. We are going to read it again, and read beyond. This is where Jeroboam has set up the altar in Bethel. This is the worship place he has built, the franchise he built for his people in the north to be able to worship God closer to home. The Lord sends up a prophet from a man of God, and the phrase '*man of God*', listen for how many times it is repeated. '*Man of God*', we don't have his name, we just know he is a man of God. The man of God is sent from Judah to go up and rebuke him, and reprove him, and judge him, and he has the word of the

Lord. As he speaks the word of the Lord, we see the power of the word of the Lord. This introduces the theme that is going to dominate the book of 1 and 2 Kings.

It is really astonishing when you look at these things. I want to mention three things to you real quickly, make note of them. You are going to need to study them on your own, and when you read these books, watch how they just jump out at you. The phrase *'the word of the Lord'* occurs 140 times in the Old Testament, the word of the Lord, *the word* of Yahweh, 140 times. It occurs 47 times in the book of Kings, one third of all the references, *'the word of the Lord'*, this important phrase, this essential phrase, one third of them occurs in a book, when you count 1 and 2 Kings together, basically five percent of the Bible, of the Old Testament. Five percent has a third, 33 percent. Another key phrase, I just mentioned *'the man of God'*. *'Man of God'* is a phrase that is first used in Deuteronomy 33:1 speaking of Moses, *'the man of God'*. It is spoken of an angel in Judges 13. He is *'the man of God'* they heard. The idea is a messenger from God. *'Man of God'* is a formula, a divine formula, used for the man who has been sent by God bearing the message of God. It is another way of saying *'prophet'*, the man who speaks for God. That is another important phrase in the whole Bible, but in the Old Testament it occurs 75 times, *'man of God'* in the Old Testament. Do you know how many times it occurs in 1 and 2 Kings? Fifty-four times! Fifty-four, 70 percent of all the occurrences of that phrase in the Old Testament occur in 1 and 2 Kings. What is happening here? God is saying, "Look at the word of the Lord. Listen to the man of God."

Another important point, you're reading 1 and 2 Kings, the title of the book. And Solomon at first is the spotlight, and then you have other kings, right? We mentioned 39 kings that are talked about, but who are the other main characters in the book of 1 and 2 Kings? You could argue that after Solomon the next major king, the next major characters are not kings at all. They are two prophets named Elijah and Elisha. If you take away the first 11 chapters of 1 Kings because it really belongs to the United Kingdom, that's Solomon's reign, right? And you have 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 25, you have 36 chapters. Nineteen of those chapters, 19 of the 36 are about Elijah and Elisha. Seven and a half about Elijah, 11 and a half about Elisha. They are the focus. It is as if we are talking about the kings, we are talking about the kings, we're talking about the importance of worship, how the king is so central to worship, and basically the message is, *As the king goes, so goes the people*, and basically they are going down. We are going down. Kind of like the message, the waterfall is ahead. We just keep getting closer. That is what is happening as the progression of 1 and 2 Kings, but the prophet, the word of the Lord, the man of God, and then these two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, what is

happening is God is saying throughout the book, the answer is the word of the Lord. How do we become, how do we go to the place where we are supposed to go? How do we become true worshippers of God? We need the word of the Lord. We need the word of God. So back to 1 Kings 13 now. We'll read the first 10 verses, and then we'll read on after that.

1 Kings 13:1-10 ~ Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. (Here is the king ready to burn incense to dedicate His temple, as it were. Just like Solomon dedicated his temple. He is burning incense, is going to offer prayers to the Lord in this place. But the man of God in Verse 2...) 2 He cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'" 3 Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, 'Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.'" (He's decreed that one day this altar is going to be defiled by a child named Josiah, prophesying the end of Bethel, when Josiah the king would come. And here is the sign, the altar is going to be split apart. Now Verse 4...) 4 Now when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, "Seize him." But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself. 5 The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. 6 The king said to the man of God, "Please entreat the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me." So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him, and it became as it was before. 7 Then the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward." 8 But the man of God said to the king, "If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place. 9 For so it was commanded me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came.'" 10 So he went another way and did not return by the way which he came to Bethel.

Let's pray together...

Father, we pray that You would continue to bless us as we read Your word. Grant us clarity of understanding by Your Spirit and grant us repentance and faith that we might follow our Savior. We pray in His Name, Amen.

Now, what you see in this particular passage, the reason I read it again is you see the power of the word of the Lord. The prophet basically makes his first prediction. “There’s going to come a day when this altar is going to be defiled. As you dedicate the altar, I’m telling you what God says about this place. There’s going to come a day where He’s going to burn human bones on that altar to in an ultimate way desecrate and dishonor this place, because that’s how God sees it. It is a dishonorable place worthy of desecration.” That was fulfilled—this is basically 310 years later. Josiah came up to the north. You can read about this in 2 King 23, and he’s careful to say, and you read this formula. I’m going to tell you what it says there and you can check it out yourself later.

Basically Josiah is tearing down all the high places, and he goes up to Dan and he destroys Dan, and he goes to Bethel and he destroys Bethel, and it says while he’s there, he said, “Hey, what are those tombs over there?” Those are where the prophets are buried, and so he says, “Let’s dig up their bones and burn them on the altar,” and so they burned them on the altar, and then the author of Scripture says, “This he did to fulfill the word of the Lord which came by the man of God,” and that’s really the formula you see throughout. The word of the Lord comes to the prophet, comes to the man of God, he speaks it, and then you’ll see that what happens, and sometimes it happens a chapter or two later, “This happened to fulfill the word of the Lord which He spoke to Elijah the Tishbite. This happened to fulfill what God spoke through the word of the Lord given to Elisha,” so that really on display in the middle of this moral and spiritual decay of both kingdoms is the exalted power of the word of the Lord.

It is the silver lining, and in fact, it’s not just the silver lining but it is the ray of hope. It is the spotlight in the book, that what we need is the word of the Lord. We need God to send forth His word which is mighty to make us true worshipers. That’s essentially the message, and the power of the word of the Lord is so great. Let me tell you what happens. I’m not going to read it, the rest of this chapter. There are events in the book of 1 and 2 Kings when you’re reading it where I love how God reveals Himself, because He has a way of stepping on our sensitivities. He has a way where it’s kind of like ruffling our little order that we have in our minds, and He doesn’t do it haphazardly. He’s a God of grace and compassion. He does it because we need it.

Let me tell you what happens in this next story. Some of you will remember it from reading it before, but I encourage you to read it again. This man of God says Jeroboam tries to entice him into disobeying the command of the word of the Lord, saying, “Hey, come home and I’ll give you a reward. Come home with me.” The man of God says, “No, I can’t come home with you. I can’t eat bread or drink water in this place. I can’t stay in Bethel. I’ve got to go back home because the word of the Lord which told me to come here also said, ‘Don’t eat bread, don’t drink water, and don’t come back the same way.’” That’s what He just said, right?

Well, he starts making his way back and he’s going a different route. If he came up 85, he’s going home 400. He’s on his way, he’s just left town, and there’s this other spiritually sensitive guy who I guess was just so excited that the word of the Lord had come to Bethel, because you get the sense as you read it he’s a godly man, although he does a very ungodly thing. He’s so excited, he wants to spend time with this man of God from Judah, and he runs after him and he says, “Please, come to my house and refresh yourself.” He’s trying to give honor to the man of God, and the man of God says, “Look, I cannot stop. I can’t stay here. I can’t come back to Bethel. I can’t eat bread or drink water, for the word of the Lord came to me and said do not do that,” and he repeats what He said. And this man says, “The word of the Lord also came to me, and the word of the Lord said that you’re supposed to come to my house and to eat bread and to drink water, and then you can go home.”

So the first man of God thinks, “Well, the word of the Lord came to him. Okay, I’ll go.” He goes and he sits down to eat with him, and they’re sitting having a good time. I imagine the guy is talking to him and they’re talking theology. “I’m so glad you came up here. Can you believe what’s been happening with Jeroboam? How can he miss this?” They’re having this talk and then the word of the Lord comes to the second guy. Remember the guy that enticed him in by the lie? The word of the Lord comes to that guy and he says this basically: “Oh dear! Oh my goodness! You have disobeyed the word of the Lord!” and this guy who enticed him pronounces judgment on that guy. That’s why I’m saying it offends your sensitivities a little bit, doesn’t it? “Well, wait a minute. This doesn’t seem right. This doesn’t seem fair.” Initially we like to judge things, don’t we? This is where you humble yourself and say, “Lord, teach me,” and when you do that, you find out God’s always right. His way is always perfect. It’s you and me that are way out of balance. He says, “The word of the Lord has come to me, and now you are surely going to die. You will not be buried with your fathers. You’re not going to make it home.”

When the man of God realizes he disobeyed the clear command of God—the word of God doesn't contradict itself, does it? There is no contradiction in the word of God. God doesn't say, "Go that way," and then tell you, "No, don't go that way." The Scripture is perfectly complimentary, and so the Scripture tells us that the man of God, the second man, is hurting that he did this, but he basically puts the guy on his donkey and he takes off, and he goes back into his house, and he gets word that as that man is going, the first man who God brought up here to pronounce this wonderful judgment that needed to be pronounced, a lion comes out of the forest, kills him, stands over him, and does not touch his body. The donkey stands beside the lion and they apparently stand like that for hours. People walk by and they're like, "What is this?" There's a lion who has killed somebody he's not eating, and there's no prey. He's sitting there. It's like he's been appointed just to stand there, and the donkey should be running. I mean, you know, why isn't he getting to safety, getting away? He's not. He's stands there.

They come back and tell the second man of God what happened, and he says, "Surely the Lord has done it," and he goes out there. He walks up and it said when he gets there, the donkey is still standing there, the lion is still standing there, and there's the dead body. He picks up the man of God and he puts him on another donkey, and he takes him and buries him not far, right there actually, not far from where the temple that Jeroboam built was. And he laments this man of God who was killed this way, and he says, "When I die, bury me in the tomb with that man of God, for surely what He has said will come to pass." Now, what was God doing? God was putting exclamation points and highlighting and underlining this, that the word of the Lord is absolutely reliable. It is eternal. It will not fail, and that what we need is the word of the Lord.

Now, there are other things that happen in the book that are kind of like that, that just unsettle you a little bit, and you have to look at it and keep looking at it. "But wait a minute. Well, what God did is just. The man didn't listen to His word. He of all people should have known." Most of the time, God is gracious and merciful. It's very rare that He does something like that, because how about you and me? If He wasn't gracious and merciful, we would all be sitting out somewhere dead. It would be coyotes or something like that. Coyotes have a tough time killing us. I don't know what it would be, a bear maybe. We all deserve to die. How gracious He is, but you see in His word He has put these circumstances and these events together to make the point very clear, and so what you see throughout the book of Kings is the word of the Lord comes, the prophet speaks it, and it happens. It happens. It happens. It happens.

Now, and think about what the word of the Lord really was telling them all along anyway. Where do you worship? What's the word of the Lord that came to that man saying? Don't worship in Bethel. Worship in Jerusalem. So the word of the Lord was sent by God up there and it was really an act of His grace to call Jeroboam back from his sin, to call all the people in the north back from their sin. "Do not do this. Look how I punctuated it with this miracle of judgment. Do not worship there. Go to Jerusalem."

So now let's think about how this applies to us. It's where do you go and how do you get there? In our salvation, when someone comes from darkness to light, they go to Jesus Christ. It's not that they go to the front of the church, it's not that they go to someone, I mean, the Lord can use different means and methods, but when salvation happens, there is the going out of the heart to Jesus. That's why it doesn't have to happen at the front of the church. It happens in your heart, and it can happen in your home. It can happen when you're driving along the way. And many times you don't remember when it happened. I think it's much more normal than people think. It's not unlikely but it's very likely that you may not know exactly when you were saved. You'll say, "It was sometime during this period. I don't know. God was working on me and I was thinking about these things, and then at some point, He caused me to be born again, because I'm telling you, now I'm a worshiper of Jesus Christ. I wasn't. I know what I was. Like the blind man in John 9, all I know is I was blind and now I see, and it's Jesus that did it."

So the place we have to get to is Jesus to be saved from our sins, to be saved from the penalty of sin. How do you get there? How do you get someone there? How are you going to get someone saved? Is it your clever reasoning? I mean, the Lord is going to use our experience and our testimony, and it's important to share that. It's a part of witnessing, but what is the heart and soul of witnessing? If I'm really going to get somebody to Jesus, I've got to share the word of God, and everything else is just the frame. The picture is the word of God, because the word of God is what Jesus has revealed. I mean, He's in every page of Scripture. Here He is in this book, because what is it that we need to become true worshipers of God? He's the place. He's the *where* and He's the *how*. He's the Word of God. The whole book, He's given the whole book. What's His name in John 1? The Word, and He says, "Look, you search the Scriptures, but these they are that testify of Me. The whole Bible is about Me."

Now, that's salvation, justification when you get saved, and if you're lost or if you're unsure of your salvation, what should you do? You must go to Jesus Christ. You must go not because of who you are. It's not about even your sincerity. It's not about your seriousness. I mean, the Lord is going to get your heart where it needs to be. What you have to do is realize, "Lord, it's You and Your lovingkindness. It's who You are. I cast myself upon You and all of my hope is in You. All of my hope is in Jesus, because in Jesus I see how glorious and wonderful You are." The song we sang earlier, *Meekness and Majesty*, what a beautiful song, that God is omnipotent and infinite, and He comes in lowliness and He washes your feet. Bow down and worship for this is your God. Do you see that? Jesus is the fullness of the revelation of God. That's what draws the heart of the sinner.

I mean we should be broken of our sins and when God shows us our sins, He does break us and it happens for the rest of our life. He breaks us more and more and more, because He shows us more and more and more, in deeper and deeper ways how sinful we are. But Jesus is the answer, and what draws us is not hearing more about our sin. What draws us is seeing the glory of God revealed in the face of Christ. "Lord, You're a God of lovingkindness. You're a God of compassion. You're a God who is slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and truth, who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin. I'm running to you because I know that's who You are. I'm afraid. I look at myself and I see I'm unworthy, but I'm running to You because I see who You are. And I see who You are completely in the eyes, in the face, of Jesus Christ, and where do I see the eyes and the face of Jesus Christ? I see it in this Book and nowhere else."

A lot of people are trying to come up with new revelations. Some of them come from circles that I think maybe they really are saved and they're just—I think some of them are, and they're just messed up in their theology. Next Sunday morning Bible study, next week we begin a book study that Steven's leading on Jesus' Calling. This is one of the number one books in America. In fact, he was telling me it's like number one, number six, number eight, and number nine on the bestselling books in Christian books, because you know it's like the large print edition, I don't know, the happy anniversary edition, or whatever. One, six, nine... it means it's number one, and it's basically written by somebody who seems to come from a fairly solid background, but she's basically, the book is her writing down her devotions, and what she received when she was listening, and so what you're reading are the musings of her heart which she thinks Jesus was saying to her, and it's selling like hot cakes.

We were watching a sermon Wednesday night where Steve Lawson made this point. He said, “You know, in many churches today, when the pastor gets up and if he says, ‘Turn in your Bible to the book of Matthew,’ people kind of yawn, but if he says, ‘Let me tell you what God said to me on the way to church this morning,’ everybody wakes up and gets their notes out.” Let me tell you something. That is from the pit of hell and it smells like smoke. This is where God has spoken (the Bible), and this is where we need to run with great eagerness, because this is the place where we see Jesus. God has not left anything undone. This is a perfect Book, a glorious Book. Everything we need to know about salvation, everything we need to know about Christ, and this is where we sometimes are guilty, because sometimes we in Christian circles forget that the Book is about Jesus. We know it.

I have to confess this is something that I’ve been struggling with recently, what the Lord was dealing with in me when I was ill. It’s possible to handle this Book to know it’s about Jesus, to go there expecting to find Jesus there, but to not really meet with Jesus yourself. That’s one of the perils I think of teaching or preaching, and every Bible teacher and biblical counselor and every Christian needs to—I mean, aren’t you tempted a lot of times when you’re listening to a sermon to say, “Boy, I wish so and so was here”? What are you doing? I mean, it’s appropriate to have that thought and then pray for them and say, “Lord, I want to be under this message. I need what You’re saying.” It’s very easy in preaching to always be preparing and not be sitting under the word myself. That’s what God just exposed in my heart. He just like showed me, “You’ve forgotten Me in the midst of these holy things, and so the embers in your heart are getting cooler.” How can that be? How can we prepare a message about Jesus and yet not truly worship Him?

That’s the amazing power of sin and the foolishness of being a sheep, but the Lord of grace and mercy came after me and He hit me with His staff, and He had to pop me a few times, and He made me hurt, and in the hurt I could say, “It was good that I was afflicted, for now I run to Your commandments, and now I see that I need You more than I need anything else, and it doesn’t matter—I mean, it matters, but it’s secondary. I want to obey Your word. The reason You’ve given me Your word is so that I can obey it first, and then I want to tell whoever You want me to, out of love and a knowledge, an experiential knowledge of the glory.” But when we’re living like that, then we can say to those people who are looking for an experience, “Listen, there’s something so much better.” We have to be aware of just rejecting them based on their errant theology. They need to be rejected based on their errant theology, but they need something more.

They need us to be able to say, “Listen, you are missing it. Yes, you seek Jesus because you don’t find Him by getting quiet and filling your mind with whatever’s there, because you’ve got all kinds of baggage in your mind from Satan and the world and your flesh that will deceive you, and ruin you, and may lead you to hell, but if you get in this precious Book, if you read this Book and you study this Book, and you labor to understand this Book, and as you’re doing it, your heartbeat is, ‘Lord, I want to see You. Lord, I want to know You more.’ If that’s your heartbeat, God will bless you. He will open your eyes. He will open your heart and He will unveil His glory, and you will be filled to fullness with the fullness of God.”

How do you really apply this? We have opportunities every day. I mean, we ought to be seeking the Lord in the morning. Like the Psalmist says, we ought to be seeking the Lord in the evening. One or the other, or both. We ought to be seeking Him throughout the day. We ought to be having His word trying to graft it into our hearts, but a very practical way is we have an opportunity every time we come to temptation, and the good news is we’re going to have lots of opportunities for application even today. We’ve got those sins that beset us, that at times feel like they reign over us, at times lead us to despair, even the true believer. What do you do when you feel that emotion rising up within you, that attraction to a behavior?

I mentioned earlier frustration and anger. You know, frustrated and irritable, and I was just, “It feels good to be this way right now, but I know it’s wrong. I want to turn. What do I do?” I’ve got to go to Jesus. Well, how do you go to Jesus? You either get in the word or you recall the word. “Lord, I’m being angry right now. I’m being selfish. I shouldn’t be like this. The word tells me that You were not selfish at all. The word tells me that You lived Your whole life out of a desire to please the Father, that Your meat and Your drink was to do the will of Him who sent You. The word tells me that You were always elevating the needs of others above Your own, that You did bow down and wash the feet of those filthy disciples, because You were looking to please Your Father and looking to bless those around You, and therefore, You’re a perfect Savior who offered a perfect sacrifice. Your blood was paid for this sin that I’m even doing right now that is so heinous and so awful that I would be thinking about myself the way I am, and I thank You that You died for that, that Your payment was so wonderful that there is no wrath remaining in heaven against me. There’s not even a level of disappointment, in a sense, against me. It changes God’s countenance toward me.” He can discipline me and He can address that, but it doesn’t change how He sees us.

“That’s what You’ve done, and not only that but You gave me a perfect righteousness so that as God looks at me right now, He sees me as if I’d always obeyed. Even in this moment He sees me as if I had been like You in this situation, in that situation, and not only that, Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness. You’re my strength. You who are perfectly meek are available to me right now. I cannot believe that You are such a great Savior, that not only did You cleanse me from sin, not only have you given me perfect righteousness, but You’ve ordained to be my strength right now that I am crucified with Christ and nevertheless I live, but not I, but Christ lives in me. You want to live in me. You want to give me Your power. You have meekness. I don’t have it. I am selfish, but You are meek. Lord, I’m looking to You to give me meekness.”

And what’s happening in this moment is you are becoming a worshiper of God. For every temptation, the question is: Who will you worship? Where will you worship? Will you worship at the altar of your own selfish desires, self-glory, your own vanity, your own preferences, or will you worship at the feet of Jesus? And when you decide to worship at the feet of Jesus and you go to the word in your mind, the verses that you’ve put in your heart, or you get away and say, “I need some time with the Lord,” and you go and you spend time with the Lord, and you worship at His feet, then what happens as you begin, as you go through temptation, it’s not about just saying no to some sin because I’m not supposed to do that. You can see how it’s very much a horizontal issue. “I don’t want that. It makes me feel dirty. I don’t want to be like that. I hate that I hurt people.” Those are all good arguments, but that’s not enough to overcome sin. The issue is an issue of worship.

“Lord, I know I don’t want to do this, but I need to come into Your presence. Right now I need You” You run to Him in your heart. You’re yearning for Him like the Psalmist says. “Lord, my flesh and my heart fail, but You are the strength of my heart, my portion forever. Please help me.” And you think about the glory of Christ, how He’s exactly what you need. He has covered your sin. He has given you righteousness, and He is your sufficiency. When you meditate on that, your heart begins to break in brokenness over sin, which is swallowed up. Even as you’re broken, that brokenness is swallowed up by incredible, overwhelming joy that my Savior has washed me. He’s even working in this to draw me to Himself. He uses this circumstance to draw me to Himself. “What a glorious God. I want to serve Him. Lord, I want to give myself to You right now. Help me be a blessing in this situation, not a curse.” And then we walk in victory and we’re walking, following Jesus.

Do you see that? We're walking right behind Him, the Good Shepherd, worshiping, adoring, satisfied. It's an issue of worship. The question is: Where will you worship? Will you learn to always go to Jesus, and how do you get there? There's only one way. It's the Word of the living God.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

Our Father, we are so grateful for who You are. We marvel, Lord, that You're a God of such compassion, such tenderness. Forgive us for being so foolish and selfish, and forgive us for doubting You. Forgive us for forgetting You. How could we do that? And yet we marvel that You're a God who gently comes after us. You're willing to do whatever is necessary, but You do no more than is necessary, because You're so tender. If You afflict, if You wound, You will bind up. Teach us when we feel ourselves being wounded, to run to You. Make us people who are so delighted in You that the joy of our countenance, the joy of our lives, is attractive to more and more people in the dark. And in this day when there's so much deception, may it truly be seen that the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. We pray this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

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