

Choose Wisely!

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Father, we just thank You, Father. I thank You, Father, for Your faithfulness. All these years, You have never failed me with the Word. I have failed You many times but You have never failed me. You have always given me the Word for Your people. From 1994 till today, never, Lord, have You failed me. I want to thank You for Your faithfulness. Thank You, Father. Often, Father, we have taken Your Word so lightly but it is the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us. It's the Word that brought salvation. It is the Word that sanctifies us. It is the Word that sets us free. It is the Word that will judge us one day. I pray, Father, that today, and in this coming year, You will give us a new hunger for Your Word, a new desire for Your Word. Renew us from within. I pray, even today, there will be open ears, that we would hear Your voice behind the Word. Mind that understands; for Your Word says, after Your Resurrection, You opened their eyes that they could understand Scripture. Believing hearts – after Your Resurrection, You rebuked Your disciples for not believing. I pray, Father, that today, there would be believing hearts and above all, Father, give us the strength, the will to obey. Help us to go one more notch, Lord, in our obedience in this coming year. For even about Your own very Son, Jesus, it is written, "In the days of His flesh, You heard Him when He prayed because of His reverend obedience." Help us, Lord, to walk in that same path You have shown us. Speak to us, Father now. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen!

All Marthas can cease and Marys can be seated. I know there are many things that concerns life. Ne still and know that He is God. We are at the end of the year – the 52nd Sunday. Tomorrow, another year. We don't know what the year holds for us. We always hope but let our hope be realistic. I always have to tell this – let our hope not be based on feelings and emotions because emotionally, feeling wise, we want all things to be calm and quiet. Things won't happen necessarily that way because Scripture doesn't say anything like that. Scripture actually says, "It gets worse and worse for God's people as we get closer and closer." What remains is, God remains the same; faithful, true and good to us. So, all our hopes should be rooted in Scripture and the reality of God's Word. So, another year is behind us, it's over. Looking back at 2017, every one of us here primarily has three choices. We can either sit and worry and rue about the mistakes and the failures of 2017 or take it lightly; ignore the mistakes and failures of 2017 and continue in them in 2018. That's one of the primary reasons in every school curriculum, you have history. People won't understand why the old fathers, ancient wise people put history as one of the subjects. It is so that you would learn from the mistakes of others. It's not just to know history. You can make the second choice of ignoring all that, taking it lightly. Continue. Then, the same way in 2018 or take the new year literally as a gift from God to make necessary changes and move on to a closer walk with God. The bad news is there is nothing you or I can do to change the past. But the future something altogether different. We can't change out past; we can only hand it over to Him. Repent, confess, allow the Blood of the Lamb to cover it. But the future is something else. But when we look into the future, *Proverbs 17:24* says this,

Proverbs 17:24

²⁴ Wisdom is in the sight of him who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.

A little difficult but to make it very simple what this proverb mean is – a wise man has focus. The fool tries to do so many things and ends up doing nothing or finishing nothing. That's what happens to lots of people. Today, many resolutions will be made and if you check out in the world, what I have understood is – one of the biggest resolution of 31st December of every year is to lose weight the next year but usually, it doesn't last more than a week. That's what it means here. The eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth. He has too many things in his plate. He decides but finally, ends up doing nothing. But a wise man is very focused. About focus, we will come back in the evening. We will look at focus, but keep that in mind. We need to have focus if you want to achieve anything; not just in the world. People in the world, all achievers in the world have focus but let's leave the world aside. In the Kingdom too, if you don't have focus, we end up actually not fulfilling God's purpose in our life. A wise man has focus. Most people don't have focus because they do not know what is important in life. That's what Scripture teaches us; like kids in school know, like when it comes to tenth grade, you will be told Mathematics, English; these subjects are compulsory. You cannot afford to fail. If you fail, you are detained. So, you know, though you have many subjects in school, all subjects do not have the same importance in the same way in life. Though we have may areas in our lives, many goals in our lives, all of them don't have the same importance. In the evening, we will look at that. But taking care of the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.

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One of the first things everybody needs to do if you want to move ahead with God and the life He has promised through His Son, *Galatians 6:5* puts it across this way.

Galatians 6:5

⁵ For each one shall bear his own load.

It means, if you really want to put aside all the mistakes and the failures of 2017 and start fresh with God in 2018, one of the first things you need to do is, take responsibility for life. Everyone needs to be responsible for their own life; accountable for their own actions before God. *Each one shall bear his own load.* Ultimately, you and I alone are responsible for our own life, though there are others around, ultimately, we alone are responsible before God. One day, each man, each woman, each child will stand before God alone and give account. The reason is that, we live in a culture dictated by false psychology where no one has to take responsibility for their life. You can always blame something or somebody and that's what permeated the final day's culture. You don't have to take responsibility; you can always blame it on circumstances, parents, schools, culture, nation and GTC because of sound doctrine. They have this incredible Scriptural term that even the little ones when they are struggling and caught with their hands in the cookie jar, "I think it is iniquity!" These are all excuses! Iniquity has its own place. You cannot come out of iniquity unless you take responsibility for your actions. So, Scripture says, "*Each one shall bear his own load.*" Each one of us are responsible for our own life. Like I said for people in the Church who are believers, everybody has been given the same salvation, everybody has been given the same word, everybody has been given the same spirit, everybody has been given twenty-four hours. In 2017. nobody got twenty-five hours. Everybody got twenty-four. That's what Paul records in the *Book of Corinthians* about Israel's history saying: "*Brethren I want you to remember our fathers who came out of Israel. They all ate the same food, they all drank the same water, they were all baptized in Moses, they were all brought out by God but God was not pleased with most of them, except three.*"

1 Corinthians 10:1-5

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

So, we all have been given the same Word, save through Jesus. Same Word, same spirit and twenty-four hours. We'll all be accountable for these three. All of us sitting here in this coming year and the year that passed, we all faced or we will face two kinds of circumstances, primarily, generally. One is circumstances over which you and I had no control. God knows that and Scripture proves that. He does not hold you or me accountable for it. For circumstances over which we have absolutely no control, for a simple example – nobody has any control into which family you were born. You have no control but everybody has control after that, what you are going to do in that family. There are lot of circumstances we have no control over and God doesn't hold us accountable for that. The way He puts it, beautiful, in the Book of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 31:29-30

²⁹ In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' (He says, "No!") ³⁰ But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

Not the children's. I don't blame you for circumstances which are beyond your control but for what is in your control, you have to bear the blame. So, God does not blame us for circumstances which are beyond our control. That is why Paul will say this beautiful verse in Acts, "*The seasons of ignorance God has overlooked, He winked at.*" If you didn't know it. He looks at the gentiles, the gentiles don't know what sin is, and He says, "Okay, I'm not going to judge you on IPC section one, two. He says, "General sin. You come to My Son, all that are forgotten. It's over. You didn't know." We do not have control over many things in the world, even in the freest democracy, we have the power of only one vote. Why nations will go down and nations have gone down is because a generation will arise always, that refuses to take responsibility for their lives and the actions. If I don't take responsibility for my actions, God cannot save me. I told you on Christmas day, God will never save a man in his sin. Jesus did not come to save us in our sin. Jesus came to save us from our sin. If He has to save from my sin,

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then the first step is taking responsibility for my actions. That's why Scripture says, "*He didn't come to condemn. He came to save.*" That's the first, when you deal with circumstances. Therefore, then comes the second set of circumstances over which we have control. What we have control over God says, "Be careful about how you respond to those circumstances." Each one has to bear their own load. I personally know of people when it comes to general life who have never held on to a single job for more than six months. You ask them, they always blame somebody else. It's always somebody else's fault. Honestly, people who lived like that and have retired, people who were never there for a blessing to their family, were always a burden. That's why they have to be very careful. There is an All-Powerful God who is willing to save us and save us to the uttermost and He has all the power to save but for Him to begin the work of salvation, there is one thing He expects us to do. Acknowledge! And be willing to forsake and He is able to save us.

They say, in life, there are three kinds of people – the accusers, the excusers and the choosers. At the end of the message, you can decide which one you want to be. The accuser – they blame everybody else for their problems and it began six thousand years ago in the garden. It didn't begin yesterday or today. It started with the old man, Adam. When he was caught, when he was questioned, he said, it's very interesting how he puts that. He's very good in grammar. "*The woman You gave.*" Construction of the sentence was fantastic. "The woman You gave me. I'm innocent!" But God has a different take on that argument to the first one. Do you know what he says?

1 Timothy 2:14

⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Meaning – the woman was blinded; deception; means – you were blinded and she fell. You went in it with your eyes open. You knew what you were getting into, she didn't. You didn't hear anything the serpent said, you didn't listen to his logic or argument, nothing. I believe this way. If you read Scripture because certain things were silent. Adam heard only one voice, Eve heard two voices. He heard only one voice and he disobeyed, knowingly, that voice, while the woman was deceived by the second voice, Scripture says, "Adam was not deceived," but he won't take responsibility. So, this is the first set of people. They are the ones called the accusers. And accusers cannot be redeemed. The merciful, kind, loving God cannot save accusers. Somebody said once, "When you point your finger at somebody, three fingers are pointed at somebody and one at God." But the classic case in the Bible is Ahab. We have learnt from certain characters. Certain characters are special characters in the Bible. You have to look at it that way. Like, if you look into the Bible, if you look into *Genesis chapters 1 to 50*, you have fifty chapters in the Book and you have Noah given a lot of space. And after Noah, Abraham is given a lot of space. Isaac comes. A little space. Jacob is given a lot of space. Joseph is given a lot of space. So, when the amount of space God gives to individual characters in the Bible means, stop and learn from them. Okay? One of the persons, interestingly, one of the persons who is given seven chapters in the Old Testament is Ahab. Seven complete chapters are devoted to this man. And he's introduced to us this way.

1 Kings 16:29-30

²⁹ In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. ³⁰ Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him

Before that, you don't have to turn there, but Scripture will say that Omri did evil more than all the others before Him. This is the guy who overshadowed his father also. So, when God devotes seven chapters to a man who is introduced to us in this manner, God says, "Take a break. Learn of this guy. Never go his route." God shows His longsuffering and patience with people. It actually reveals the heart of God if you study the heart of God and how God deals with people. He's evil and we know Scripture so well by now, a prophet will suddenly appear. *1 Kings 17:1*; in today's language, he gives him a weather report. What does he say?

1 Kings 17:1

¹ And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

Today's people will read this and say, "It is global warming." God says, "No. It is My word. It's going to be pretty hot in Israel for the next three and a half years. Don't even hope for dew. No rain. No dew." Now, pause a minute. Wait a minute. Now,

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when you read stuff like this—I'm teaching you how to read Scripture—when you read something like this which says, "It shall neither rain nor shall there be dew," then you need to go back and ask Scripture, when did God say this last in Israel's history? There is always a precedence. Turn to *Deuteronomy 11* and see the incredible guideline, because physical facts how God dealt with Israel we translate that spiritually how He deals with us.

Deuteronomy 11:10-12

¹⁰ For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; ¹¹ but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, ¹² a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.

What does it mean? God says, "Your life and the life of the people in the world is different. The people of the world, they have to work hard. And they have to take care of themselves. But upon you, My eyes are there. And you are dependent on what comes from above. You will have mountain-top experiences and you will have valleys. But I will watch you from the beginning of the year till the end of the year." Their life and our life is not the same. Not the same. They feed by working hard and slogging. We are fed because we are faithful to Him. We serve a faithful God. In *verses 13*, He says,

Deuteronomy 11:13-17

¹³ 'And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹⁴ then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. (He says, "You will never lack the anointing of the Holy Spirit in your life. It is always there. The key is this – walk in obedience. Love your God and serve Him with all your heart and all your soul. Then,) ¹⁵ And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.' (On the other hand, He says in verse 16,) ¹⁶ "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, (you turn away from the living God and then, start pursuing other gods. Not necessarily idols, but focus is gone from God to other things in life. God says,) ¹⁷ lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

Heaven is shut. The anointing is gone and you are dry inside. You suddenly realize you are just wasting away in this life, because our life is different from the others and a lot of Christians say, "I don't know why this guy is prospering. That guy is prospering. He's lazier than me. He's more wicked than me. Nothing is happening." God says, "You are different. I've set rules for you which are not for them. It doesn't work the same way."

Deuteronomy 11:18

¹⁸ "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

He says, "Walk and serve Me with all your heart, all your mind and all the days of your life." He says, "From January 1st to December 31st, I will watch your year for you. You don't have to fear. You'll never lack anointing. The anointing will bring in everything. Was there drought in 2017? Was there drought in your marriage? Was there drought in your home? In your office? In your ministry?" God told Solomon, "A day will come when I will shut up heaven. Then My people who are called by My name and humble themselves and cry out to Me, I will hear your prayer from heaven and I will start the work of restoration." Get this very clear, children of God – our lives are not the same as those who do not know God. What we have is the life of Christ. That is God's beloved Son. Today, even now, when God is looking upon all of us, He doesn't see us. He only sees His Son in us in whom He is well pleased. And January 1st 2017 to December 31st, if His Son did not grow in us, He is not pleased with us. God is not pleased with anyone of us. No man. Because no one is good. There is only One who is good. It is Him. It's God. It's Christ. That's why I said – works make no difference to God. The only person who makes difference to God is Christ. Though God allows drought so that Christ can take over and not ourselves.

Even after three and a half years of drought, during these three and a half years of drought what was Ahab doing? One of his generals, Obadiah will tell us what he was doing?

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1 Kings 18:10

¹⁰ As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you.

God's Word has come. Because of God's Word, judgment has come. What is he doing? He is hunting for that fellow who brought that Word. We get mad at the Word of God. We get angry at the Word of God. It is basically at God. He is searching for the whole world to destroy Elijah. And Elijah is the only one who can save him. And all he had to do, instead of searching the nations, the only thing he had to do was search his own heart for the drought in the land. That's what David did. One year of famine. He said, "Okay." Second year of famine. Third year famine. He said, "Hang on." Three years famine, he said, "What's wrong?" He went to the Lord and said, "Lord, what is this?" God said, "You didn't do anything but your previous king did. Put that right and famine will go." He says, "Okay." But we don't want God intervening with rain. Because it demands change from us. So, we go to Baal. We also have Baals in our life. I'm not talking about this baal (hair). Baal baal, bach gaya! After three and a half years, when finally, God sends Elijah to meet him, because God has compassion on the people, listen to his response. Three and a half years of severe drought.

1 Kings 18:17-18

¹⁷ Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" (You troubler! You keep on preaching this word and only trouble in the lives of my people. Troubler of Israel.) ¹⁸ And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals.

He says, "I didn't. You did." The question is: in 2017, what am I? what are you? What are we? Are we the accuser, the blame game? You read that verse, in *Deuteronomy 11*, right? You watered it by foot. You worked hard. Do you have to work hard for the rain to come? No. Do you have to work hard to irrigate? Yes. You have to work hard to please man. But He says, "I am taking you to a land. It's a land of hills and valleys. Both are there. You'll have good times. You'll have struggling times, but water comes from above. It comes from above." Life is not a plain. Everybody in the world is trying to make life into a plane. Please, I don't want to struggle. I want to look at two terms in the Bible so that we understand the difference. In *John 14:27*,

John 14:27

²⁷ Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

So, world also gives peace. Christ also gives peace. What's the difference between the world's peace and Christ's peace? In the next portion in sixteen,

John 16:33

³³ These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

"In this world, you will have trouble; in Me, you have peace." In the world, you'll have tribulation. The only you can have peace with the world is if you compromise with everything the world says. Some Churches say, "We are never attacked." Because you never preach the Word. "I face no trouble in my work place." You know why? Somebody said this, "You have no trouble in your life that means you and the devil are headed in the same direction." There is a peace which the world gives and everybody in the world wants that peace. That peace. The price of the peace is compromise. It's compromise. You compromise with the world, there is no trouble. Even young people, that is the pressure they face, peer pressure: the pressure to become like the world – "Talk like us. Drink like us. Smoke like us. Listen to the same music. Watch the same movies." No pressure. So, we keep on preaching about Joseph and Daniel. Joseph and Daniel. Who wants to be a Joseph? Who wants to be a Daniel? So, there are two kinds of peace. One is the peace of the world. Other is the peace that Christ gives. But He promises you – "In this world, you will have tribulation." He did not say, "I just give you peace." He says, "Your peace will be in Me, if you stay in Me. Stay in Me."

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So, the land the Lord is taking us to is a land of hills and valleys. Egypt is plain ground. And these people don't want that. Remember the first generation that came out? "This is too much. This manna is tasteless. We're tired of this word. O, we remember Egypt! How we sat under that campfire and we ate fish and garlic and leaves at no cost!" Now, imagination is working. They forgot this – make bricks. Suddenly, that's how your imagination fools you. Suddenly, brick making becomes a hobby. Few weeks back, they were crying, "Lord, save us from..." Now, it's not so bad actually. Don't let the devil fool you. It was bad. That is Ahab, the accuser. Accusers will never take responsibility for their own lives. God cannot rescue you. Telling you honestly, He cannot rescue you. Because when Scripture says, "God is faithful," what is He faithful to? He is faithful to Himself. He is faithful to His truth. He is faithful to His ways. Not to our warped ways. He is faithful. These are the accusers, the first group.

The second group, these are what I call the excusers. They are not the accusers. They are excusers. They always have an excuse. There is a classic case in the bible. **John 5**, Jesus went to the pool.

John 5:3-7

³ In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. (Once a year, because of God's mercy, an angel would come and move the water. Whoever gets in, gets healed. So, they are all lying there.) **⁴ For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.** **⁵ Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity** (how many years?) **thirty-eight years.** **⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"**

Strange question, right? Who doesn't want to be made well if you've been a cripple for thirty-eight years? Do you want to be made well? Most people don't want to be. Jesus knows very well. What does the Scripture say in verse 7?

⁷ The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool..."

"Come on, man! Even if you moved one inch in one year, you would reach the end of the pool. Thirty-eight years, you've been lying there. At the end of thirty-eight years, you should be sitting there dangling your feet in the pool because you've reached that far. Right?" "Nobody to put me." Not only that,

...when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

Not only is there anybody to help me, somebody should look at me and say, "O! he's been here so long. Okay. I will wait till next year. You get in."

Somebody else's fault! God ask people, "Do you want to get well? Or you want to make another year of excuses?"

Proverbs 22:13

¹³ The lazy man says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!"

What did Jesus say? "Knock and it shall be open." Many people don't believe in it. They are waiting for the door to be opened without knocking. "I am waiting for a miracle." How? "God said that He will open a door for me." "By the way, did you knock? Did you send an application?" "No, I am waiting for the job to come to me." "Am praying for ninety, at least, for the Math." "Did you study, by the way?" The lazy man – what does he say? 'Full of excuses.' This is the TLB Version,

Proverbs 22:13

¹³ The lazy man is full of excuses. "I can't go to work!" he says. "If I go outside, I might meet a lion in the street and be killed!"

Excuse after excuse after excuse. That is our problem. Our problem is we struggle with truth. Our struggle is with truth. The Bible is very clear when Jesus came the kindness and goodness of God.

John 1:14, 17

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¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Verse 17 will say,

¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

What is this? The power of God available through the Holy Spirit meets every need in our life. The problem is not with grace. The problem is with truth.

I will repeat things, which I have repeated earlier. You see God is truth; truth is not an idea. In the world, truth is an idea. God is truth and since man was originally created in God's image, no man, no woman, no child can live without truth; nobody can. You have two siblings and they go to the kitchen, they take something from the cookie jar and you catch the small one and ask, "Why did you do it?" He will say, "She told me to do it." Why? Because you cannot live without truth. It's impossible to live without truth. So, what do we do because we don't know and God has truth, we create our own truth.

Jesus only asked him, "Do you want to get well?" He should have looked at Him and said, "Lord, what do I need to do to get well?" Then, the problem is with you, right? When I say, "What do I need to get well?" the problem is with me. No, "You see, you know why am I like this? Because of all these. Nobody is there to help me." So, we create our own truths. Accusers and excusers create their own truth. The problem, like I said, is here – grace or truth are not an idea or an opinion, it's not.

John 14:6; Scripture says,

John 14:6

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

He didn't say, "I will show you the truth." He said, "I am the truth." It is the Person of God. Truth is not God but God is truth. Therefore, God cannot contradict Himself. God is truth.

John 17:17

¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

So, people who do not want to change will always avoid the Bible. Why? Because the Bible demands the change because that is the only truth.

John 16:13

¹³ However, when He, (The Holy Spirit is,) the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

James 1:18

¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

If you have not received the word of truth, you cannot be born again. You just have religion. Everybody is born again by the word of truth. So, when the word of truth went, the Scripture says on the Day of Pentecost, that the hearts were cut, "What do we do?" It is the word of truth! He said, "This is what you need to do." Today, you are not told to do anything. They say, "Just repeat after me. That's enough. You don't have to do anything." So, people are not born again; they change religion. They are not born again. Salvation begins here because God is truth, His word is truth, His spirit is truth and you are born again by truth. Salvation means we grow in truth. Not only that in,

1 Timothy 3:15

¹⁵ but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God (what is this? The house of God), which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

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The Church cannot be built on anything else. Not built on science or wonders and miracles and charities. It is built on the ground and the pillar of truth. Nothing else. Because God is truth, the problem is when the truth becomes the person. When truth is not a person, it's okay. You can handle it and interpret in your own way but when the truth is a person, when you have to face in, we chose to run from Him. As long as Jesus did not come into the Garden after the fall, Adam and Eve were fine with their fig leaves costumes. "You look good and I look good. You ate and I also ate." They were looking good in their green costumes. And then, Scripture says in,

Genesis 3:8

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

Truth has come. Till then, they were living by their truth. "You look good; I look good." It's fine. And the animals have no opinion. We all are good. We all can live peacefully here as long as He doesn't come here we are fine. And then, He comes in and the Scripture says that

...Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

That's our problem. That's the world's problem. That's what is happening all around the world. Only one name they want to remove from the public square – it is the Name of Jesus. There is no issue with any other gods. No other god's name they have any issue. This God alone. Why? Because He is truth. When you realize that truth is a Person. Then, everything changes. We love to hear messages. We love doctrine. We are very good doctrinally. But the problem is this – in Christianity, doctrine doesn't frame Christ. Christ frames doctrine. You know what Jesus said?

John 5:38-40

³⁸ But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.

He is telling the Pharisees, "You got this word, you know it by heart but it is still outside of you. Why? Because you won't let Me in.

³⁹ You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; (but the eternal life is in the God of the Word) and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰ But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

That is why the Scripture is very clear on the Day of Pentecost after the baptisms. Scripture says that the Church gathered daily for, what? For the Apostles doctrine; not any other doctrine; not Martin Luther's doctrine, not Calvin's doctrine, not Zwingli's, not Wesley's – all of them, we love them; we respect them but we go back to the Apostle's doctrine. If Calvin depart from the Apostles doctrine that, we reject; if Luther depart from the Apostles doctrine, we reject. Anybody however great he is in subsequent centuries, it doesn't matter what denomination, what person; when they depart from the Apostles doctrine, we depart from them. Why? This is what the writer of Gospel of John says,

1 John 1:1

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—

We knew Him first and then, the doctrine. Our doctrine was not framed by a text; our doctrine was framed by a Person. That's the living truth – Jesus. People run from but He is only One who can set you free. Don't run from Him but run to Him. So, we struggle with truth. As a person; not as an idea. The idea of truth, we have no issues.

John 18:37-38

³⁷ Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, (What is truth born for? To rule. Truth will defeat every lie. Light will overcome darkness) and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Choose Wisely!

Unless you have not born of the truth, and that the truth, the Person resides in you, you will not hear His voice. You will get doctrine but not Him. The doctrine will only make you a Pharisee, who will reject the person of truth and yet, doctrinally sound. So, He says, "Listen to the doctrine. Pharisees learn of them; but don't be like them because they don't have Me in them."

What does Pilate say?

³⁸ Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all.

And he walks away. He is telling Jesus, "Let me tell You, Jesus. Let me tell You my truth right now; my truth is this – "I know another king, called Caesar. My crown comes from him. If I rub these people the wrong way, I will lose this. That's my truth. And I will live by my truth." You know, everybody in the world lives by that truth. This is true. This is also true. But this feeds me. This is asking for trouble. I will go by this. The eternal may be true but it is far away; the temporal is my truth. I feel anger, I feel pain, I feel pleasure, I feel hungry, I feel thirsty. "Where is this Moses? Where is this God? Make us gods, which we can control."

Take a close look at 2017. Can we face Jesus? I am not talking about this. After service, you go home, you decide to prepare for the night. You go and sit in a room and you open this (Bible) and He (Jesus) jumps up. What will you do? What will we do? If He steps out of Scripture, what will we do? Then, there are no arguments. That's why God is very clear. He tells His children, "Examine yourself constantly." Examine! Are you grown? Look at that question?

2 Corinthians 13:5

⁵ Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

That's the only answer. God doesn't say that whether you know truth, whether you know doctrine, whether you have memorized Scripture, whether you fast three times a day, whether you read your Bible? The only answer is – "Is Christ in you?" The Person of truth. If He is not there, then He says, "You are disqualified." That's what I said – when the Father looks down, He doesn't look at anybody; He is just looking if His Son is there. Is Christ there? "He is My Son in whom I am well pleased." Even when Peter starts mumbling at the Mount of Transfiguration He said, "Listen to My Son in whom I am well pleased."

Because we put a spin on it but that's not the answer. The answer is Christ in you. If you look at it, every issue, how do we deal it? We deal it doctrinally but not Christ. "What's the problem in your marriage?" "No, she doesn't submit to me." "Who told you?" "It's written." "What about Christ?" "Why don't you submit to your husband?" "Because he does not love me." That is doctrinally correct but what about Christ? Just ask these simple questions. Your doctrinal correction is not the point. The point is – will the Christ in you love your wife? Will the Christ in you submit to your husband is the question? Suddenly, you realize that you have no answer. Doctrinally right, life is absolutely false because there is no Christ. Christ never quotes Scripture. Christ quotes Scripture only at the devil. He lives Scripture! And God is looking at it and says, "Ye ah, argument right but both of you are false. Because My Word is right but both of you are false. Why? My Son is not living in you. You are living and using My Word." That's not what salvation means. Salvation means you grow. The question is not what should I do? But the question is – what would Christ do? Whether you are a man or a woman, father or mother, a child, student or an employee – what would Christ do? Because we always forget what salvation is all about.

Galatians 4:19

¹⁹ My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,

You know most of our struggles we are trying to form ourselves in Christ. God says, "No, that's not salvation. Salvation is Christ is formed in you." So, we ask ourselves: what was I this year? Was I an accuser? Was I an excuser? Or was I a chooser? Remember what God told Israel in the beginning?

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life...

This part everybody knows because everybody has this booklet written by this wonderful brother Derek Prince – Blessing and Cursing; because our eye is on blessing. So, everybody knows this

...that both you and your descendants may live;* (But we don't read what God actually wants to tell us) ²⁰ ***that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life...**

What is your life? He is your life. Let us say in Hindi, "Tu meri jaan hoon." Understood? All the young ones, understood? Can you really say from your heart, "Lord, You are my life"? The problem is – if you make a statement in English like that – "You are my life", then, where is my life? It's gone. Right? "You are my life." Not only that, we are looking at December 31st to January 1st. December 31st and everyone are waiting for their promise so that, "I can get my promise and live my life." And God says, "Wait a second! And what am I? I am the length of your days." The problem is in the temporal. We calculate everything. How many days there in a year? 365 days; 24 hours. God says, "Are you calculating time that way or are you calculating time as Me? I am the length of your days." That is why somebody said most Christians in the world, if they go to Heaven and they don't see Jesus there, they would not be very much bothered. They only want to live their life here and die and go to Heaven but very few, like Moses, "If Your presence doesn't go with me, I am not moving from the wilderness because You are my life. I didn't leave the throne of Egypt for the Promised Land, I left the throne of Egypt for You. You are my life." That is salvation. That is what he is talking about – you can be a chooser in 2018 and start getting everything into focus and say, "You know what? I am going to look at life in terms of a Person." That is why right there in the beginning, God created an incredible institution called marriage; for this purpose, man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife because they are one. Paul says, "I am a bachelor and I don't understand this in the temporal, but I understand in the spiritual – Christ is talking about the Church and His Bride, Christ and the Church. Question is: He shall leave His father and mother and shall become one; fight in the marriage is – which one? We shall become one but God did not very clear. "Why should I become like you? Become like me or we shall meet middle ground." we say, "Have 2 chapattis and pasta." God says, "No, it's neither of you. I am the One."

Let me ask you this question: if you take that struggle in marriages and Paul is talking about this Christ and the Church, will the Church ask, "Which one? Do I become like You or You become like me? Everybody knows it. You shall become one. Marriage is the symbol you shall become one in the flesh and you shall become one spirit; not two. That means we become like Him. That is why He came down and became like us so that we would become like Him. That is why Abraham will make Eliezer swear, "Put your hand under my thigh and swear you will not take my son back. Bring a girl for him who is willing to forsake all and come to him." "What if she doesn't want to go?" He says, "It doesn't matter but my son will not go again." She will come. When they ask Rebekah, "Will you go?" she said, "I will go." "Do you know him?" "No." "Will you go?" "I will go." "When?" "Tomorrow." I've said this many times but you have to hear over and over again to see the picture of salvation in the Bible – Rebekah and her maids get on the camel and they starting this long journey to Haran from Abraham's tent. How many days, how many weeks, how many months, we don't know. How many villages; how many crowds they saw; everything is silent. She must have talked, and talked and talked to Eliezer only one thing, "Tell me about Isaac. I want to know. Tell about the man I am betrothed to. I would want to know what kind of a person he is." One person who can tell that is Eliezer because he is the steward of Abraham's household who has known Isaac. From the time he was born till today, he has taken care of Isaac. So, he knows Isaac. Jesus said, "When the Holy Spirit comes, He will not speak about Himself, He will speak about Me." Is that our prayer? "Reveal Your Son. Anyway, I am going to be with Him all the eternity, reveal." How many people did she see? No questions but when she saw Isaac, she stopped and said, "Who is that man?" Eliezer said, "That is your lord and master." What did she do first thing? She gets off the camel and covers her head saying, "This is the one I longed for my eyes hadn't seen; now, my eyes see, I come under the subjection to your authority, I am yours." That is the end of salvation. Beginning of salvation – "Will you go? I will go." End of salvation – "This is the one I longed for." That is how you measure. That is what God is talking about, "I am your life. I am the length of your days." You see the length of our days? What does that mean? Not only that and you may dwell in the land which Lord swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give them so that we may live the life Jesus came to give us. It is physical for them but for us, it is spiritual. Therefore, I choose responsibility, take our responsibility for our choices and change our choices.

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Thank God *John 1:17* doesn't say, "Truth came through Jesus Christ," but, "Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." No, when truth alone came, it was with Moses. That is why truth without grace is called law. That is why Jesus said, "Not even a dot from the law can be broken because it is truth." But we don't have the power to keep it. Therefore, the grace. Grace is waiting in many, many lives grace is waiting. What is knocking at the door? Truth is knocking at the door. Jesus said, "I knock at the door. If you open," what comes in?" It is grace to keep that truth. Unless we open our hearts to the truth, grace cannot come in. That is what repentance means – turning from a lie to the truth every day, from the lie to the truth. What is truth? Christ. Anybody who thinks he don't have to repent has no clue what salvation is.

Ephesians 4:20-21

²⁰ ***But you have not so learned Christ,***

Read construction carefully –

²⁰ ***But you have not so learned Christ,***

When we are talking about learning Christ, you are talking about a Person. Learning about Christ is knowledge about a Person. That is not how you learn Christ.

²¹ ***if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus.***

If you have Jesus, you have truth. If you don't have Jesus, you don't have truth. God does not want a legal repentance. You know what is the difference between these two? Legal repentance is remorse over the consequences of sin.

Genesis 4:13

¹³ ***And Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!"***

"Poor me." "Your brother is lying dead over there." Not a word – "It's too much. I shouldn't have killed. I should be really sorry I killed him." "Why?" "Because the punishment is too much." That is the consequences of your sin. When you are looking at the consequences of your sin, you haven't really repented, because that's legal repentance, God says, "You know what? You will be a wanderer all the days of your life because you can never come back to Me, because you never have looked at what your sin really is."

Another one.

1 Samuel 15:28-30

²⁸ ***So Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. ²⁹ And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent."*** (What does he say?) ³⁰ ***Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel,***

"Okay? Please don't expose me. I don't want to face the consequences of my sin. Please. I know who you are. I know if you speak, everybody will know what I am. Please honor me before the people, before Israel,"

and return with me, that I may worship the Lord your God."

Why does Samuel have to come with him to worship God? So that people will think, "I'm okay." That's legal repentance. Did you get it? What is salvation? What did Jesus talk about salvation?

John 3:3

³ ***Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."***

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He says, “You will not see. You will not be able to see.” See what? The Kingdom of God. Can you see the Kingdom of God?

Do you know what Paul spoke to King Agrippa? All these things were very scared of Paul when he started because they come to question him and he gives his testimony, like today’s WhatsApp message (devotional) which you got. That’s why God’s people are sent into prisons and in front of officers so that they will stand there and say, “Mafi! (Forgive me)”? No, so that they will give their testimony. Look at his testimony. Let me come to that.

Remember the man born blind? The disciples had a very doctrinal question, “Did he sin or his parents sin?” Jesus said, “Neither. It is for the glory of God.” He said, “Go,” made paste, put it in his eyes, “Go to the Pool of Siloam and wash.” There was no other way his healing is going to come. If you want your healing to come, you have to obey the Word of God. That’s the truth. If somebody gives you a jug of water, it’s not going to happen. If you go to some other pool, it’s not going to happen. You have to do what God says because truth sets you free. He goes; his eyes are open. He had not seen Jesus. The Pharisees are very upset because it’s Sabbath. That is their truth. Their truth is they are angry with Jesus for healing him on Sabbath because He worked. What did He do? He took a little mud, spat into it. He worked! So, they asked the parents; the parents are very scared. They said, “We don’t know.” There are a lot of darpoks (cowards) like that. They don’t know. “You ask him. He is old. We don’t know.” They asked him; he said, “Look. Don’t ask me doctrine. I know one thing – I was blind.”

John 9:25

²⁵ He answered and said, “Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.”

That is salvation. Spiritually speaking, that is salvation. “I was blind; now, I see.” Jesus said, “When you are born again, you see.” What did you see? Listen to what Paul says to Agrippa. This is what the Lord said.

Acts 26:17-18

¹⁷ I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes (salvation first is an opening of eyes. What do you see?) in order to turn them from darkness to light...

If my eyes are not open to the iniquity and the darkness inside me, how will I turn away from it? That’s the first act of salvation – you are turned from darkness to light,

...and from the power of Satan to God...

You realize – “Oh my gosh! This is what I am!” This is to the point that the Apostles will see the darkness in him and say, “There is absolutely nothing good in me.” That is the end of salvation where you realize and see – there is nothing good in me. If there is anything good in me, it must be Christ. It’s not me.

darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me (Christ).’

That’s why Jesus said, “Your eyes will be open.” Not that you see a physical Kingdom of God; no. You see the darkness inside and the light that is available in Jesus. You see it. Constantly aware of darkness and light. It’s the opening of eyes. The rest is religion. Be a chooser this year. Choose God. Choose Christ. Because He is our life.

What did Saul say? “I have sinned but stand with me. Please.” He only saw the consequences of sin. What did Cain say? “My punishment is too severe.” But David? *Psalm 51* – “Against You. Person of God. My eyes have been opened. *Against You and only You I have sinned.*” It’s not legal; it’s genuine. From the heart. “I have sinned against You.” Because you have encountered truth as a Person. Because if you only see truth as an idea, you can always argue but you cannot argue with the Person of God.

Psalm 51:4

⁴ Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—

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“Bathsheba is okay with it. The nation is okay with it. My nobles are okay with it. Everybody is okay with it but it makes no difference because sin is defined by You, by who You are. It’s not just that I have sinned; I have sinned against You.” One is just an objective faith; the other is directed to a Person and actually becomes subjective. In *1 Samuel 15:30*, what he says is,

1 Samuel 15:30

³⁰ Then he said, “I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord your God.”

“I have sinned but please don’t expose me before the people.” But David? In *Psalms 51*. What does he say?

Psalms 51:11

¹¹ Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Did you see the difference? That’s an opening of eyes. Lord, I understand what salvation is – salvation is a Person. It’s a Person. The experience of salvation is when that Person comes into you and you go into that Person. That’s why Scripture says, “Everyone who has been baptized in Christ has put on Christ.” He’s a Person; it’s not a religion. You cannot argue with a person. You can argue with ideas. One idea can be counted with ideas. You cannot argue with the Person. That’s why we have to be very careful. Saul could never be redeemed because he was not willing to encounter the Person of God. It’s the same God. Compared to David, his sins were less. It’s not the quantum of your sins. You will look, “How did he get into the Kingdom of God? He was such a terrible fellow!” He says, “Yes, but he encountered Me and he was willing to accept My judgment. He wanted Me more than anything else. But you, you didn’t sin so much but you were not willing to encounter Me.” We think it’s the quantum of sins. God says, “No, it’s not.” In *Proverbs 29:25*,

Proverbs 29:25

²⁵ The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.

The fear of man is a trap and there are people in their millions (I’m not talking about people in the world; people in the Church) who are trapped by this snare. So many get caught in this, “What will man think?” First question is, “What do You think?” In *Luke 16:15*, Jesus told him,

Luke 16:15

¹⁵ And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. (He is telling the Pharisees,) For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

You are living a lie before people, pretending to be something else when your heart is not right with God. God says, “You are men-pleasers. Come before Me, like David, rend your heart before Me and I will say ‘you are My son’. I will not take My Spirit from you. I will not.” David had been caught in that trap for months but he chose. When he said, “I have sinned,” God said, “I know. You are not grieving like Saul. You are not crying like Balaam. You are not crying like Pharaoh. You are hurting because you hurt Me. I’ve taken your sin from you. It’s okay, son. I can handle these wounds. Come over.” Get out of that trap, Church. Choose Christ for He came to set the captives free. Those who are captives of money, captives of opinions of men, captives to fear, captives to laziness, captives to pleasure. You need to realize, all the young ones who are hooked on to drugs, why are they hooked on to drugs? Because there is pleasure in it. Why are they hooked on to pleasure? Because there is an eternal reality that in His right hand, there are pleasures forevermore. Everything that you and I desire inside was put in by God that it would be met in God and God alone. And the devil sells his cheap substitutes on the road and makes prisoners of young people. The real is Christ. “In My right hand, there are pleasures forevermore.” You will not desire one thing in your life if there isn’t an original in Christ. Leave that fake product and go for the original. Because He came to set the captives free. You should turn the tables to the devil and say, “If this drug gives me a kick, I wonder what Jesus is like! I ain’t going for this substitute; I’m going for the real.” That’s the lie of the devil. The truth is this – why do you, wives, long for something from your husbands? Because there is a reality in Christ. Why do you, husbands, long for something in your wives? Because there is a reality of Christ’s desire for His Church. There is a reality. If that reality isn’t there, you wouldn’t long for anything. The reality is in Christ and it is Christ God has given us. For unto us, a Child; unto us, a Son is given. He says, “This is the sum total of what I have to give you. This is salvation.” He, who has Christ, has everything. Therefore, the only captivity that is right is what Paul declares in *Ephesians 3:1*,

Ephesians 3:1

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles —

“Chains don’t bother me; jails don’t bother me; famine doesn’t bother me; earthquakes don’t bother me – nothing bothers me because I am a prisoner of Christ.” That’s the only captivity you should long for because He has taken me captive to do His will.

Grace is there. Christ is not just truth; He is also all grace. The Holy Spirit is not just the Spirit of truth; He is also called the ‘Spirit of Grace’. Read *Hebrews 10*. He is also called the Spirit of Grace. And I can do all the things He wants me to do because He is willing. That’s what Paul means in *Philippians 4*.

Philippians 4:13

¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

If you want to do anything through Christ, it can be done only through truth, what the Father wills. Other things, our truth. I can do all things. People take this and run away, “Okay, I can do all things.” God says, “No, you can’t do all things.” If you have to do it through Christ, then Christ must be formed in you. Each one of us can choose what we want to do in 2018. We can be an accuser; we can be an excuser; or we can choose God; for God is our life.

Remember, we started with Ahab. I told you – seven chapters. You know what Scripture says about God? God put these seven chapters about one of the most wicked kings of Israel just to show His heart towards people because He knows what we are like – grass – here today, gone tomorrow. He has pity on us. In *2 Peter 3:9*,

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

He doesn’t want anyone to perish. We think God wants to judge. God says, “That strange thing, I don’t like doing it.” Which father likes spanking his child? Do you like it? That big giant sitting over there and sleeping – in seventeen years, I’ve spanked him once. It hurt me more than it hurt him that day. Which father likes spanking his children? God says, “Judgment is something I don’t like. I’m longsuffering so that no one would perish.” He may discipline us but He doesn’t want to destroy us. Again and again, God confronted Ahab with His Word. Again and again. First, with a drought for three and a half years. “Okay, let’s have a challenge with your prophets and My only prophet.” He saw all that – fire came down and then, he says, “Okay, go eat.” And he should have said, “No, I saw the fire of God. I’m not going to eat. I’m coming with you.” No, he went to eat. Remember Elijah and Ahab on the mountain? Everything is over. Fire has come down. “I hear the sound of thunder. You, go eat.” He went to eat. People don’t realize if you give choices like that – “What do you want to do? Go eat.” They will not say, “No, Pastor. I am coming with you.” “Okay, thank you. I’m going to eat.” Jesus says, “Food is ready.” What do you do? You have to give people choices like that to see which way they will go. Elijah said, “I know where I am going. My work is not finished under the rain comes. I’m going back to pray.” He says, “Okay, I will go eat. You pray.” That’s how most people do. They don’t carry their burdens. “Okay, I’m going to work. Auntie Ailsa, will you pray for me? You bear my burden, okay? Because I’ve got other things to do.” I’m not saying you shouldn’t call her to pray but I’m saying – when it comes a habit, you are not carrying your burden. Because you don’t carry your burden, God is not able to put the burden of somebody weaker on you. It’s not right in the Kingdom. 2018, you will say, “Lord, I will carry my burden and I want You to put some more burden on me so that I can be like You.” Nothing will change Ahab’s heart. God intervenes. Next time you will see, Ben-Adad, the King of Aran with thirty-two other kings and come with a big army. God will say, “You deserve this. You changed My people to Baal worship.” He sends a prophet and says, “Hey! I’m with you, okay? Fight. You will win.” And he fights and wins. This is a massive army and God gives Ahab victory. You think that after victory, he will turn and say, “No more Baal; only Yahweh.” No. The prophet comes and says, “Remember. The next season, this fellow will come back again. So, be prepared.” So, they were prepared because they believe, “Okay, we fought. Because it was in the mountains, their God is the God of mountains. Next time, we shall go and fight them in the valleys.” God says, “We will teach them a lesson that I’m the God of valleys too.” He smacks them there completely. Destroyed. God had told him, “Kill the king.” Instead, do

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you know what this fellow does? He makes peace, “We are brothers. Ben-Adad, we are brothers. Go.” God is mad at him. You know what he says in *1 Kings 20*?

1 Kings 20:42-43

42 Then he said to him, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.’” 43 So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria.

Not upset. Not repenting. Not grieving. In anger. That’s what God is telling. “I told you to deal with that particular sin in your life in 2017, to destroy it completely.” “No, I am making peace.” God says, “You make peace with that one. That one, I will demand your life for that.” You say, “I’m angry with You. Why are You dealing with my sin?” That’s how people react. God says, “I want to save you. Instead, you are angry with the One who is trying to save you.” That is Ahab. After that, we know of Naboth’s vineyard. He kills an innocent man. His wife plots it all. He kills and takes his vineyard. Elijah comes, confronts, judgment is passed; he repents. God says, “Okay, I won’t do it during your time. I will do it during your son’s time.” He looks at his repentance and says, “Fine. I’m not going to judge you.”

Then, again. Jehoshaphat’s son has married Ahab’s daughter. What a wonderful alliance! Ahab wants to go to war. He pulls in Jehoshaphat also. Problem is—four hundred prophets and sitting and prophesying victory and prosperity. Jehoshaphat is a little confused because he has never heard prophecy like this. See, unlike Ahab, he watched only one channel. See, Jehoshaphat was used to one channel while Ahab used to watch many channels and every channel, they come because they want your money. They are forever prophesying good things about you. So, Jehoshaphat says, “There is something funny over here. Do you not have a man of God over here?” Do you know what he says?

1 Kings 22:8

8 So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, (I can’t stand him) because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” And Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say such things!”

A prophet’s job, the servant of God’s job is to speak the truth; not to tell you what you like. That is not his job. The servant of God’s job is to speak the truth, whether you like it or not, because only the truth can save you. “Please don’t say anything like that.” What a criteria to judge a prophet! “If you don’t say anything which I like, I’m not coming back to Church next week. Humpf! You preach for one and a half hours and nothing positive! I listen to Joel Osteen on TV and my skin and my everything stands on the edge.” But was there Scripture in his message. Forty minutes, he spoke like knife in a butter. But where was Scripture? What is he standing on? Thin air. No Scripture to back his message on. It’s a prepared script. Is it true? He does not prophesy anything good. Remember this one thing – God is good. Therefore, everything He says is good. It doesn’t matter how we perceive it; it’s always good. Nothing bad comes from Him. It’s good. Even His judgment is good. Truth is good. Choose, in 2018, to obey it.

God, in His mercy, still kept one voice in the midst of four hundred. Ahab’s downfall, like many people in Christendom, downfall will happen not because of lack of truth but because of the rejection of truth. You can understand the pressure this poor (it’s not Elijah) fellow called Micaiah. Elijah has experience. He is not afraid of anybody. He is Micaiah. Let’s see at verse 10.

1 Kings 22:10-14

10 The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on their robes, sat each on his throne, at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

They are sitting in their thrones, in their royal robes. Four hundred prophets are prophesying. In the middle, this fellow comes. Can you imagine his pressure? Not only that, the guy who went to call him; what does the messenger say?

1 Kings 22:13- 14, 19, 23

13 Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, “Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.”

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“Four hundred people, one accord. There is unity there!” He must have quoted from the *Psalms*, “Like oil from Aaron’s beard, brothers dwell in unity. You see, we are of one accord and the king is greatly encouraged! Please.”

...Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.” ¹⁴ And Micaiah said, “As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak.”

Can you imagine the pressure in ministry to change the message? God doesn’t buckle.

¹⁹ Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.

“Let me tell you, king of Judah, king of Israel – you are sitting in your coat, in your throne, in your royal robes with all these four hundred. I see another counsel. I see the Lord sitting and His counsel. That counsel will determine the counsel of this. ” There are two counsels. There’s a counsel that takes place in Heaven. There is a counsel that takes place in Delhi. There is a counsel that takes place in Heaven. There is a counsel that takes place in Washington. It will not be determined by Delhi or Washington; it will be determined by the counsel of God. “And I see that.” And he says, “I will speak that.”

²³ Therefore look! The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the Lord has declared disaster against you.”

“A decree. An order is passed in Heaven. Nobody can do anything. This disaster will happen. Decreed. If you don’t want disaster, stay home. If you listen to these guys and go out, the order is passed in Heaven. Decreed.” God has revealed everything Ahab needs to know to prevent disaster. Question is: will he listen? Will we listen? His heart is hardened and he is also very manipulative. Can we accept the hard truth of God? You know what the Holy Spirit tells through Paul about the people who perish? This is the reason they will perish.

2 Thessalonians 2:10

¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, (What is the only reason why they perish?) because they did not receive the love of the truth...

Ask yourself – when you go home and you have a TV and you have all these channels, which one will you pick? The fellow who speaks smoothly to you because you do not have the love of truth. He says, “They will perish,”

...because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

What can save us? Truth. What had keep on saving us? Truth. Why? Because we are born again by truth. We are given birth by truth. That’s what *James 1:18* says. God is truth. His Spirit is truth. His Word is truth. His Church is the filler of truth and those who perish, they perish only because they did not receive, what? The love of truth. We need to receive the love of truth. Not just truth, the love of truth. That’s what the Bible is talking about.

Ahab is good. He’s a smart fellow. He disguises himself. He says, “Okay. You see, four hundred people have prophesied this way. This one has prophesied differently and I believe this guy. Let me see what I will do.” Jehoshaphat is a naïve fellow. You shouldn’t be naïve. Scripture says, “Be wise as a serpent, gentle as a dove.” Instead, we are the opposite – we are wise as a dove who has no brains and gentle as a serpent. He was a naïve fellow. He told him, “Jehoshaphat, today, we will go to battle. I will just dress ordinarily. You wear the king’s robe.” And he would have thought, “What a chance! Israel and Judah, I will lead them!” When he went into the battle field, he didn’t realize that God is intervening supernaturally into the heart of the king of Aran and said, “Leave everybody. Just get Ahab.” Jehoshaphat goes over there and sees that everybody is looking for the king and he is running for his life. The answer is this – if God’s counsel has been decreed and you go out in opposition of it, no disguise is going to help you. No armor is going to protect you. There is no armor against the hand of God. There is armor against the hand of the devil. There is no armor against the hand of God. You can disguise yourself before man; you cannot disguise yourself before God. It’s not possible. Such a simple statement –

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1 Kings 22:34

³⁴ **Now a certain man** (name is also not mentioned. It's irrelevant because the focus is on Ahab. What did he do?) **drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor...**

Have you seen the armor? It's tied like this on the side. It went through the crack and killed him. No armor can protect you from the hand of God. No disguise can hide your face in the hand of God. Casual in the eyes of men but truth is not casual. Truth is not random. Truth is certain. It is certain. It has been decreed in Heaven. How He will pass out judgment, I don't know but it has already been passed out.

I want the Worship Team to come. So, we put our lives on this – the Person of Christ because it doesn't matter what happens in the world. Everything is happening according to the destined, determined counsel of God because God has seen the end from the beginning. History is just His Story. If you want to be part of the story, then Christ has to grow in us. Our story is not written. His Story in us is the only one that is recorded. Jesus told this – nobody can stop truth. Nobody can stop the march of truth. He told the representative of the greatest power on earth, that is Caesar, the representative asked the question, "What is truth?" Jesus would have said (he didn't wait; he just walked away), "I am truth and truth cannot be stopped." Everyone that is on the side of truth, Jesus said, "Listens to Me, My voice." To the young ones sitting over here, older ones sitting over there, those who are struggling in their offices, their lives, their marriages, let me tell you – there is only one truth. The truth is – what would Jesus do? Ultimately, we will all stand before the Person of God, that is, truth and be judged by the Word of God; that is also truth. Jesus said, "All judgment has been handed over to Me by the Father but I will judge no one. You will be judged by My Word." Simple. 2017.

There's an old hymn. This old hymn was a famous hymn during the American Civil War. Those were fighting to abolish slavery. The unionist. Abraham Lincoln's side. Not the confederates; the union army. And they used to sing in the night in their campfires. They used to sing. Because every battle is fought over a case. There is no battle that is not fought over a case but which cause is true? The question is: which cause is true? This was the song they used to sing – "Mine eye has seen the glory of the Lord. He is trampling on the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword; His truth is marching on." Two thousand years, post Christ history, every empire has collapsed under this truth. Every empire that tried to stop this could never. Empires have gone; civilizations have gone; nations have gone; everything has gone – the truth is still marching on because it is not an idea; it's not an ideology; it is the very Person of God. Shall we stand as we sing this song?

Closing Song: *The Battle Hymn of the Republic (His Truth is Marching On)*

Closing Prayer:

Church, a year is ahead of us and this should be our prayer. Forget the world. Just think about ourselves – Lord, I want Your truth to march on in me. Starting today, when I come back at the end of next year, I really want to know, Lord, that it's You who has grown and taken over my life. Your truth defines my life. Your grace is that empowers. I'm not living my life in that plain land of Egypt working by the strength of my body or my mind but I'm allowing You to lead me to the land of hills and valleys where my rain comes from above. Teach me, Lord, to love Your truth; to receive the love of Your truth that I might love You and serve You with all my heart, with all my soul. And everything that is not of You, every lie in my mind, every stronghold be broken in Jesus' Name and be replaced by Your truth and by Your Spirit. We thank You, Lord, that You didn't come with truth alone like Moses. You came with grace and with truth. The power to set us free. The power to walk in that freedom. As Your servant, Paul prayed, I pray, Lord, You will make us all prisoners of Christ; for we have been set from darkness to light, from the power of satan to the power of Christ. 2018 – I pray, the Church, everyone, would really experience Christ in us, the hope of our glory. There is no other hope. If we are able to sing, "Hallelujah, glory," it is because of Christ in us who is the hope of our glory; for in us, there is nothing, absolutely nothing good, Lord. for everything that is good is in You. we just surrender ourselves and as a Church, we just surrender. Let Your hand be upon us, O God. Guide us through this year. Thank You, Father. We praise You; we worship You; we glorify You, Lord. Thank You for Your faithfulness. Thank You for being true, Lord, to Yourself. That's why we are here. That's why we still have conviction in our hearts. That's why we still have remorse over our sins because You were true; You didn't prophesy falsely to us. Thank You, Father, for being true and faithful. This morning, we just pray that You make us true and You make us faithful to You. Nations will come and pass; dispensations will change but there is only One who is true. From everlasting to everlasting, You are still on the same throne. Ahab is gone. Jehoshaphat is gone. The counsels of men have been forgotten but God is on the throne and His

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counsel stands forever. Help us, like Micaiah, to see the counsel of Heaven and harken our ears to the decrees of Heaven and to walk in obedience to those decrees; for You are our life, our only life. This year, help us to be choosers of God; not accusers; not excusers; choosers of God. Thank You, Father. May Your hand rest upon everyone and empower us to keep what You speak to us every day. Thank You, Lord. now, we lift up holy hands and we bless Your Holy Name. Thank You, Father. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us, Amen.