

Jesus, we just thank You once again this morning. Thank You, Father. We come to You in the Name of Jesus. How great Thou art, O Lord! Yes, truly, there is none like You. There is no God like our God. Under earth, on the earth, under the sky, there is no God like our God. Forever, O Lord, Your throne is established in the heavens. Forever! Yes, Lord, Your Kingdom rules over all. You are sovereign. Many kings may wear a crown but You reign. You reign, O Lord! This morning, we want to come once again to Your presence, in the name of Jesus, through the body and the blood of Your Son, to the throne room of grace that You have made possible for us by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that we could obtain mercy and grace, especially during this time of need, O Lord. Yes, Lord, we need You. I confess, O Lord, that I am absolutely inadequate to even proclaim Your Word, Father, but You chose me and this morning, I just want to humble myself. I pray Lord Jesus even as we meditate upon Your Word, even as we study Your Word, grant us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, not the thoughts of men, not my thoughts, Lord, but Your thoughts. For Your ways are not our ways; Your thoughts are not our thoughts. Father, I pray Lord, that You would truly grant us revelation this morning and understanding of the times that we are in so that we will be prepared. To that end I pray Lord Jesus, that as we meditate upon Your Word, speak to our hearts and anoint us. Speak to our hearts and prepare us. Continue to prepare us, Father and use us in the days to come for Your glory. We praise You. We worship You. For in Jesus' Name, Amen.

The Lord is speaking to all of us. Amen? Everything that we have learned over the years, I am telling you honestly, I am excited because the Bible has never truly come alive for me more than these days. It's unbelievable! It's like all the things I have learnt especially after having come to our Church for past 12 years, everything is becoming relevant, at least to a greater degree. It was already relevant. It is getting more and more clearer even as I look at the things that are around and see how things have changed. All the nations have forgotten God. Truly! They are saying "2020 Olympics!" They are saying, "We will conduct in 2021 but we will still call it 2020 Olympics." They have already planned for 2024 - Paris, 2028 - Los Angeles. They have already planned! How hardened man is! They never factor in God. They think that things will go on as usual. It is just an aberration. God is speaking to all of us. He is blowing the trumpet. *Woe to those who are at ease in Zion!* I am telling you, honestly it is not so much for the world because the world cannot understand. It is only we as children of God have perspective. Nobody else has any clue as to what is going on around the world. They can explain it off as a 'virus' but this is something else. God is screaming for our attention and particularly the attention of His people.

Look at what *Proverbs 19:21* says. When I look at all these plans that people make –

Proverbs 19:21

²¹ There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the Lord's counsel—that will stand.

Proverbs 19:21 (NIV)

²¹ Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

That's exactly what is happening. He says, "You made lot of plans, right? You planned to go here; you planned to go there. You planned to do this; you planned to do that. I shut down everything." I hope we as a Church will understand His purpose and we will align ourselves with His purpose even as we meditate upon His Word. Why is this happening? I believe these are redemptive judgments. It's like birth pangs. So we need to be prepared because that day is approaching and it's very near to us.

1 Peter 4:17

¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God...

It starts with us. It is not just house as a Church, but individually and as also a corporate Church. God is telling, it is time for us to start shutting down everything and begin to examine our own hearts because we are the house of God. We are the temple of the living God and we are also together the body of Christ; the temple of the living God. We are the Church of the living God. We are supposed to be the pillar and the ground of truth. What has happened to us? Are we really, truly the pillar and the ground of truth? Are we truly, truly acknowledging the fact that we are supposed to be the light to this world? Are

we really judging our hearts? Do we believe and we trust and we behave as if we are the sons of the living God? Continue to judge ourselves. These are all redemptive. They are not judgments which God is saying, "I am going to send them and destroy you." No! These are not destructive but redemptive judgments. Thank God for His timing.

1 Peter 4:17-19

¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" ¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

That's of course a quotation from *Proverbs 11:31*. He says, *righteous will be scarcely saved*. Look at *Proverbs 11:31* to understand what it means.

Proverbs 11:31

³¹ If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, How much more the ungodly and the sinner.

God is doing it. He is disciplining us. He is redeeming us. He is sending judgments (redemptive) to bring us back to Him. So don't lose heart. Thank God, He is sending these judgments into our lives so that we can take notice and He is screaming.

Amos 3:1-2

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying:

That's exactly how God introduces Himself. "*I brought you out of the land of Egypt.*" If you just do a search (we have incredible Bible apps these days), just put in quotes "*I am the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt*" and you will see incredible lessons you will learn. God says, "I am the one who brought you out of Egypt. Don't have any other gods, other than Me. I am the one who has brought you out of the land of Egypt. Be holy and separated people unto Me." So many things we learn. He is reminding us. So how do we, as a Church, apply to ourselves? We are the people for whom Jesus Christ died. We believe that. We are the people who have accepted Him as our Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ is the Lord, who died for the sins of the whole world, not only our sins but we believed it and we came under the blood of the lamb. We accepted the fact that we were supposed to be the people who should have died in His place but we have accepted by faith, the work of Jesus on the cross and He says, "Yes!" He is bringing us back to that.

² "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

"Because I have known you of all the families of the earth, I am going to bless you." No! Look at the contrast. "Because I have known you of all the families of the earth, I am going to comfort you, I am going to encourage you." All that is fine. But because I have known you of all the families of the earth, what am I going to do? *I will punish you for your iniquities*. Some people say, "my God is not like that." Scripture clearly says- *consider the goodness and the severity of God. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*. Okay? *Nobody can pluck you out of My hand*. Scripture also says, *if you do not continue believing, I will cut you off*. So I am not a person who is going to make a doctrine out of one verse and just run with it. I am going to read the Scripture completely. It is written- nobody can pluck me out of God's hand. It is also written- if I am once enlightened and if I keep on sinning, there shall be no more sacrifice for sins. I read all. I am going to read the 'whole' counsel of God. I am not just going to read one part and make a doctrine out of it and say, "Once saved, always saved!" I am not going to read that way. Sorry! Don't put words into my mouth. I just want to read the Bible. I am not questioning anybody's doctrine. I am not from Bible college. I only read the Scripture and I have studied Bible for myself and I have been taught this way to read. You have to read it holistically. Don't just read one part and just run with it. Don't say- "My God will not do this! He is a good God." Because He is a good God! So He will punish.

This word 'punish', sometimes, when you look at it, who likes punishment? Nobody likes punishment. Everybody wants to run for their lives. What does it mean when you look at this word 'punish'? What do you get? As I said, I like to dwell into words little more. When I read this word 'punish', it comes from the Hebrew word 'paqad'. What does it actually mean? It

has several connotations but I just want to look at three. First is 'punish' means to hit with a stick. Second, 'I will pay attention to you'. Third, 'I will visit you'. Turn to *Genesis 21:1* to get an idea as to what is going on here.

Genesis 21:1

And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken.

The Lord visited Sarah. That is what the word 'paqad' means. Did the Lord punish Sarah? No! He came to Sarah and He completed her. 'I visited her' means I came to Sarah and I want to complete her. I want to see what is missing in Sarah. What was Sarah before she was 'Sarah'? She was 'Sarai'. What was Abraham before he was 'Abraham'? He was 'Abram'. What does 'Abram' mean? It means 'exalted father'. Abraham means 'father of many nations'. There is an alphabet in the Hebrew Bible called 'hei'. 'Hei' is fifth word; it means 'breathing'. It's very interesting. It has a gap or a window from which God breathes. God breathed into Abram. Abram was absolutely dead. He could not do anything to create something of God in his life. Sarah's womb was dead. *The deadness of Sarah's womb*, right? She could not produce anything which is of eternal value. She was absolutely dead. Jesus says, we were all dead in our trespasses. What does God do? He comes to Abram and He changes his name to 'Abraham'. "I am going to breath My Spirit into you and I am going to change your destiny. Sarai, I am going to breath 'hei' into you and I am going to make you 'Sarah' and I am going to change your destiny. I am going to visit you and I am going to complete that which is lacking inside of you." That is what 'punishment' means. Now do we like the word 'punish'? Something is lacking in all of our lives. What is it? "I want to pay attention to you and I want to fill the gaps in your life."

This is my daughter's math PACE. Of all the subjects that she does, the first subject I pick up is not English, not creative writing, (Bible reading, she is doing it); one thing that I pick up is her math. She says, "Papa, I got 100." I am not really satisfied. So you know what I do? I go through her PACE. What am I doing now? I am 'paying attention'. "So many mistakes in this page? What happened?" This is what I did yesterday when I went home. The half hour of fellowship I had with my family, I took math PACE out. "Papa, this is only a silly mistake. Calculation error!" I said, "Calculation error is a bad habit." I told you, right? Habit die hard. If you take off 'h' of 'habit', you have 'abit'; if you take off 'a', you have 'bit', if you take off 'b', you have 'it'. So what do I do? I pay careful attention. In this PACE, of course she got 90 out of 100. Then I went to every page, I went through a check-up. "In check-up, you got 95 out of 100. That should have been a 'red flag'. That means you are not thorough." What am I doing? I am visiting her and I am paying attention to her. What am I doing? I am punishing her for her iniquities. What are iniquities? In- equities! Something, which is not equal in our lives. "This is what math requires and this is where you are. I am bringing you up to step." Do you understand what I am talking about?

What an amazing God we have! I being an evil father can pay attention to every page in her math, how much more my Father in heaven will pay attention to every detail in my life? "I am interested. What is this over here? You didn't understand probabilities. O my goodness! What is going on? You didn't understand what 'dozen' is! Dozen is twelve." I am going through every detail. Even a zero is important for me. Zero in the right place! "Zero has no value!" Non-sense! It has lot of value. It is very, very important for me. What am I doing? I am closely watching every detail in her life and she thinks, "Dad! You are punishing me." That's what she feels but do you know what I am saying? I am paying attention to her. Lot of people want God's attention. They don't know what they are asking for. Attention seekers! Do you want God's attention? So Jesus is saying all of us as a Church, "My dear brothers and sisters" and God is saying, "My children, I want to come and visit you. I want to see what is incomplete in your life so that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing."

So what is the pass mark to enter into heaven? 100! Sorry! Thirty fold, sixty fold and hundred fold! But do you know what the same parable in Luke's Gospel will say? 100! Do you understand? So don't think 'punishment' means He is hitting me. No! He is paying attention to you. He is paying attention to every detail in your life and every minute detail. That's the reason why God says, "you build a tabernacle according to My specifications" and He gives the specifications to a T and He says, "Moses, I am giving you all this blueprint and you should find some people who will build it, who will make this tabernacle." He chooses a man from the tribe of Judah. His name is Bezalel. Do you know what 'Bezalel' means? The person who is hidden under God. That's what it means. From the tribe of Judah! He is going to build the tabernacle. "I am going to fill him with the Holy Spirit and wisdom and I have given you the blueprint and he is going to build the tabernacle exactly to the specification that I have given because I want to come and dwell among you. What kind of God I am? Perfect God! So I don't want to see iniquities in your life. I can't tolerate."

"It's a small thing, God!" No!

“It’s a small sin!” No! I will tell you something. For some sins in the world, He might let people go but in His children, even the minute detail is important to God. My dear brothers and sisters, that is my God. If you have any other God, I don’t know which God you are worshipping. “Oh, we are already clothed in the righteousness and in Jesus we are already complete!” Sorry! You are only taking one part of Scripture. It also says, *the bride has made herself garments ready*. She has knit her garments. What are these garments? *The righteous acts of the saints!* *Purge out the old leaven inside of you so that you may be made a new lump as you truly are*. That is the truth. You already are a new lump in the sight of God but purge out the old leaven, which is inside of you. Purge it out. “Small, little leaven!” One leaven is enough to leaven the whole lump. You just keep that one sin, it is enough. Therefore God is giving us this time. Why is He giving us this time? David says, *Lord, search me and try me, seek me and see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the paths of everlasting life*.

You see, this is very important for us to understand. So don’t have this negative connotation about punishment. Punishment means God is paying attention to us and He is giving attention. “Do you know what? I want to pay attention to you. You fellows are always running.”

It’s like: “I want to teach you math.”

“Dad, I want to go for tennis coaching.”

“I want to teach you math.”

“I want to go for music class.”

“I want to teach you math.”

“Dad, I want to visit this friend.” You have all these avocations, right?

“I want to teach you math.”

“Dad, I am not available because I have got so many other things to do.”

“Do you know what I am going to do? I am going to shut down everything now so I can teach you math.” Why? Because I want to pay attention to you, my dear brothers and sisters. That’s what He is telling all of us. I want to give My attention to you.

Can you imagine (so many of us,) if you have an excellent music teacher, to employ him, how much you have to pay? You have to pay through your nose, right? Why? Because if he is giving you time! Some musicians are hard taskmasters. First of all, they look at the posture. In my home, when my children are studying, their posture is very important to me. My daughter has this habit. I say, “what is that sitting first? Get up! Sit properly. Let’s do it now.” First, the posture is important. *If you incline your ear!* Your posture is important. Don’t be obtuse. Obtuse angles! Indifferent! Incline. So God is asking for our attention so He can give His attention to us. Posture is important. So we need to be ready for that. Therefore He is shutting down everything and says, “Give Me your ear so that I can attend to you.” What an awesome God!

See, we pay through our nose for all these fellows who promise- “If you send your child to ‘Narayana’, JEE seat is guaranteed.” We and GTC will not give you any such guarantee but if you come into our school of learning, the probability for you entering into heaven is high. That’s what every coaching centre will say, “If you come to our coaching centre and if you follow all the guidelines, if you do your homework and all these things, the probability of you getting into IIT is very, very high.” Why? “Because we will have tutors, we will have teachers, we will have all kinds of people who will give attention to your child.” What do we do? We pay through our nose but God says, “My attention is free of cost; I just want your time.” Of course, that is the price we need to pay. Salvation is free but discipleship, you have to pay the price. You have to count the cost. Do you want God’s attention? That is the reason why He never gave the crowds anything. Parable of sower- some fell on this ground and some fell of that ground, the birds of the air came, the thorns choked it and some had harvest. *He who has ears to hear, let him hear*. Gone! Then disciples come to Him and say, “What’s up with that? What was that?”

“Let me explain. You give attention to Me, I will give attention to you.”

Do you know what is God doing now? He is giving us opportunities to choose Him but will we choose Him, that is the first question. Therefore, don’t get worried with the word ‘punish’. ‘Punish’ is good; Biblical punishment is good. What does it achieve? It’s a question. First, it reiterates His love for us. What does it do? It reiterates His love for us. Turn to *Psalms 89*. It is a beautiful Psalm by Ethan the Eremite, who is singing; he is remembering the covenant that God made with David.

Psalms 89:30-34

³⁰ “If his sons forsake My law And do not walk in My judgments, ³¹ If they break My statutes And do not keep My commandments, ³² Then I will punish their transgression with the rod, And their iniquity with stripes. ³³ Nevertheless My

lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, Nor allow My faithfulness to fail. ³⁴ My covenant I will not break, Nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.

What an awesome God! He is saying, "I love you so much. I want you to get 100." My wife is very tough in her corrections, okay? Especially when it comes to her children, she is even more tough. I go through my daughter's exam, I go through her math PACE and I say, "Small calculation error!" She doesn't know why am I so worried. Because I am just not looking at her 'probability exam' here; I am looking at her if she gets into this college. What will happen if she doesn't get her foundation right over here? "It's a small error. You know it. Why did you not do it?"

"She knows the concepts."

"I don't care." Some teachers are like that but I want her to do that. "If you had done this, you would have got 100." The joy of getting 100! Sometimes you need to know the joy of success and God gives us those joys. "You could have got it. I want to help you." Then I do a lot of things and shout at her and scold her because I want her to get 100 because I love her; she is my daughter.

So, first, it reiterates God's love for her. One thing- once we are God's children, nothing can change that. Abigail is my daughter, my child. She can deny that she is my child but the fact remains that she is my child. I can't stop being a father to her. I love her so I am concerned. Most of the times when you are concerned about somebody, you get angry with them, right? When your child gets hurt, what is the first thing? "Not careful?" Irritation comes! It's a good sign. Anger is not always wrong.

First, it reiterates God's love.

Second –

Proverbs 22:15

¹⁵ Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

You know what, we are actually fools. We are foolish people. We are not wise. We don't take wise decisions. We think that we make wise decisions. Smartness does not necessarily mean that you are wise. Lot of smart people are fools eternally. You are really smart and really wise if you factor in eternity, if you are able to see the unseen. It's like the way yesterday pastor was encouraging and exhorting us: they saw the unseen. There is a reality there. We are all foolish. There is foolishness. How many of you think that you are very wise? None of us! We thought we knew everything but we don't know anything. I taught in a university for a long time, eight years I taught in the university. All these guys who come to the university, they're like the cream layer. They're the top thousand ranks, fifteen hundred ranks. Very smart kids. But the problem is they think that they know everything. And they come to university, the first thing I dispel is all their preconceived notions about university. Where do they come from? They come from universities and colleges where they have been pampered and spoon fed and they come to university, I look at them and I say, "Yeha aisa nahi chalega. (It's not going to work here.)" What is the syllabus? Whatever comes out of my mouth, you are accountable. What I speak in the last class, the last minute, the last second also is part of the syllabus. And you should see the first year they think that they know everything. They come to university, engineering is at this level and there's huge gap that has to be filled. After the first mid-term or the assignment then they know and they realize. Everything comes to normal level. Then they will know, "Arey! I thought I was a thope. I thought I was a mega-pand. I'm nothing. I'm a fool." One test was sufficient to dispel all false notions about your life. So that is exactly the reason why, God has to expose our foolishness and then do you know what He does? First of all, to dispel all false notions about ourselves God allows situations into our life and then disciplines us; the rod of discipline drives it away. "Baludu sahajamuga murkhudu (a child is foolish by nature)." That is what Telugu proverb is. By default, every baby is a murkha, a fool in other words. That's the default setting. He needs to discipline us to take away foolishness from our heart. You see ultimately it is a heart-problem. See, the heart has several desires. Wisdom is not here (head), it's here (heart). Knowledge is in the mind and wisdom is in the heart. That's the reason why wisdom has built her house and knowledge furnishes the house. What did I say? I didn't say, Proverbs says that. Wisdom builds her house, knowledge furnishes the house. What is the whole point in buying furniture from Ikea and you don't have a house to put it in? The best bed, the best mattress, the best dressing table and all the tables you bought and put it outside on the portico why? Because you don't have a house to put the furniture in, interior decoration. Wisdom is in the heart. That is the reason why Solomon asks, "Give your son a wise and an understanding heart." The heart

is important. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, then comes the mind. If the heart is not there, your affections, your core being should desire God. *2 Thessalonians 3:5*, What does it say?

2 Thessalonians 3:5

⁵ ***Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.***

First, it reiterates God's love. Punishment. The rod of discipline. Second: it drives foolishness from our heart. It shows us where our affections are. Where your treasure is there your heart is. What do we truly desire? We think that we are desiring God when we may be desiring something else. That foolishness, He has to take away. Third: it shows us again that God if He doesn't discipline us, look at it again,

Proverbs 20:30

³⁰ ***Blows that hurt cleanse away evil, As do stripes the inner depths of the heart.***

You see, again, God is after your heart. So, what is He doing? He's cleansing. He's doing what? He's reiterating our love. He's driving our foolishness and he's cleansing deep. That is the reason why David says, "You desire truth where? In my inward parts and in the inwards parts you make me to know what? Wisdom" It's the one that is inside which is important. Cleansing our hands, like pastor was telling us, cleansing our hands is important. But what goes into the mouth doesn't defile a man, but what comes out of the mouth, comes from where? From the heart. Out of the heart comes what? "Fornications, thefts, adulteries, all kinds of things come from the heart and I'm after your heart."

Proverbs 4:23

²³ ***Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.***

The heart is the central part of your being, the core being. That is where cleansing is important. So, *Proverbs 20:30* will say, "Lashes and wounds scour evil, cleanse away evil, as do stripes the inward parts." It shows us the inwards parts. Turn with me to,

Hebrews 4:12-13

¹² ***For the Word of God is living* (First everybody say living. Living. Second: powerful. Then,) ***and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit...*****

See that is what pastor was talking about. There is something in the first level, there is something in the second level and there is something at the third level and what is important? For us to be cleansed it the soul so that we can start discerning the things of the spirit, which is in the third level. Revelation is in the third level. Therefore, he who worships God must worship Him in the spirit and in truth. It comes in the spirit first and the soul next.

...and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Word of God cleanses, right? that's what we see—the washing of the water by the Word of God. The cleansing happens you know why, there is a discerning that is happening over there. The living Word of God and goes deep inside your deep most parts and says, "This is what your intention was behind the act." We're just not looking that the act, we're looking at the intention behind the act and we're looking at the thoughts that have made that intention possible and the act possible."

¹³ ***And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.***

Therefore, lashes and wounds scour evil and beatings cleanse the inmost parts, is what one translation says. So, there's a cleansing that happens when we are disciplined. He's visiting us why? To cleanse us. That is the reason why it says, "Don't forsake the assembling of the saints," if not physically, then virtually. God has given us this virtual platform and this possibility that we can, doesn't matter which part of the world you are from and whatever time frame you are in. this is what we want to do. We want to examine our hearts in the light of God's word and say, "Lord, cleanse me deep down. Cleanse my motives. Cleanse my intentions." Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, why because man's intentions and

Preparing Spiritually - 6

thoughts were evil continually from his youth and God says, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever." So, He's giving us this time. It's an acceptable time for us so that we can allow Him to examine our hearts and cleanse us. What an amazing blessing! Right? what an amazing blessing for all of us as believers.

Proverbs 20:30 says, "Lashes and wounds scour evil or cleanse away evil, and beatings go to the inmost parts and become a part of us."

Proverbs 29:15, This is powerful.

Proverbs 29:15

¹⁵ The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

All of us left to ourselves, what will happen to us? Do we automatically choose God? No. If we are left to ourselves we will do anything but choose God. That is the reason why Jeremiah says, "Lord, it is not in man to keep his way right." It is not in man. Left to ourselves, boss, we are going to hell. That is our trajectory finally. And what we do in the process is we bring disgrace. That's what parents say: if I don't make you study now, tomorrow they will ask me what is your son? Disgrace to me, especially in India. We are a shame based culture. You know what my son is doing? He's a great engineer. He's working for software company. Google, Apple, Microsoft, MIT, Stanford. Why? God also has same desire. Each of us, He wants us to be a trophy. Have you seen my servant Job? He wants to display us to the entire world, the universe and the entire fallen angels. And He wants to display to the angels. Angels also are trying to get wisdom from the Church. He wants to display us as trophies. It's amazing, right? if my daughter does well, boy! Think about it. I'm just giving an example. Let's say Abigail gets admission to Princeton, my dream destination. And she gets her identity and her acceptance letter and she sends it to me and says, "Dad! Dad! Look at my acceptance letter from Princeton. I've been accepted with a scholarship." What will I think? "Thank God. It's not going to be difficult for her to get married now." Will I say that? "Thank God, she can make a living." Will I say that? "You know what? It was worth it – all my sacrifice, all my labor and visiting her math. Boss! She's my trophy. God wants to display every one of you as a trophy. Do we have a desire? "Test My son, Job. Test him. None like him." Satan, "Does Job honor God for nothing?" God, "Take away all these." Of course, He visited Job also. And after He cleansed and purged Job, look at him now. "Can you touch him, satan?" No way. This guy is a true guy. He can be displayed as a trophy. That is the reason why it says, "The world was not worthy of them." And one day, God is going to display His trophies. That's the reason why, "As stars differ in glory, so will be My saints." He wants to display us as trophies. What does 'star' mean? Do we become a blinking point in the sky? No. That means they'll be shining like stars, trophies.

Daniel 12:3

³ Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

That's what medals are like, glory. "Look at the medal, my medal compartment. My trophy compartments That's what Roger Federer will say. "Look at all my grand slams." Useless ultimately. With all the trophies, he was the leper. Who? Namaan. They don't realize with all these grand slams, he's a leper. And one day, God will take us leprous people whom He has wrought glory for Himself and He's going to take us into His trophy compartment and He's going to display us to the entire world. "This is My trophy compartment and these are My people." So, is it good for God now to visit us? Amen. Thank God for that. Finally, *Proverbs 23:13-14*. I deliberately put this in this order because I want to get a message across.

Proverbs 23:13-14

¹³ Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

On the other hand, if you do not punish them with the rod, he will die eternally.

¹⁴ You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell.

Why does God punish us? "Ultimately, I want you to spend time with Me in eternity." He scares us and He brings us back. That's a good thing, right? It's very important for us to be visited by God.

Proverbs 19:18

¹⁸ Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction.

That is the reason why He's chastening us. There is hope now. In the grave, can anybody give thanks to God? That's what David says, "Can anybody give praises to God from the grave? No." As long as you're here and alive, there is hope. Once this window is closed, there is no hope. *It is appointed for man to die once and then, there is judgement.* While there is hope, he wants to chasten us. Thank God when we are chastened by the Lord. That is the reason why it says, "Some of you have been chastened and many of you are weak, many of you are ill and many of you are fallen asleep. You have died before your time." Let us not die before our time. Let's allow God to visit us while there is hope. Why? Why is this important?

Proverbs 29:1

¹He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy

What an amazing warning to all of us! He's sending rebukes after rebukes, chastisements after chastisements. Pharaoh is hardening and hardening. Finally, he still hardens his heart and he's running after God's people and God says, "Now, finished. I'm going to get glory for Myself even through this. What am I going to do? I'm going to break your neck, completely without redemption." That is the reason why it says in *Psalm 32*, "Don't be like the horse and the mule. They have to be dragged." Look at this attitude.

Exodus 13:13; We know this very well. We've heard this many times in different contexts.

Exodus 13:13

¹³ But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. (Why? This fellow is stubborn.) ***And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.***

Are we irredeemable? That's the question we need to ask. Why is it important? Why is the rod of correction important for us as believers? Why is it important for a rod of correction as believers? Turn to *Hebrews 12:4* onwards. We know this very well.

Hebrews 12:4-6,8

⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. ⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ For whom the Lord loves He chastens, (And we know, we studied that and we understood that.) And scourges every son whom He receives."

⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

Illegitimate. The word in Telugu is very powerful. The word in Telugu is, "You are of the wrong seed." We are all born of the seed of the Word of God. You are of the wrong seed. You are of the father the devil. "All My children will be taught of the Lord and whoever is taught of the Lord will come to Me. And you're not coming to Me, you know why? Because you are not born of God."

Matthew 13:28 onwards. This is the parable of the wheat and the tares.

Matthew 13:28-30

²⁸ He said to them...

That is the angels will ask Jesus who are these people, the tares and who has done this?

... 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

You know what God says? He said, "No." In other words, don't go and gather. Leave them alone till the harvest. What is the harvest? The end of the age. He's going to send His angels to the four corners of the world to find all the people who are wheat and also tares and separate them then.

²⁹ But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

So, how do we know we are wheat or the tares? How do we know as believers? Simply, if we are of the right seed, we are being chastened by the Lord and if we are of the wrong seed, we are left alone. It's a very tough truth to handle, my dear brothers and sisters. If you are left alone by God, it's a very horrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If you're left alone to your own ways, thank God. That is the reason why He is a Father to us. Thank God for fathers, fathers who really take the place of father in our life and start disciplining us. Thank God for shepherds. You see, in our school, we expect a lot from our instructors. What we expect from the instructors is that you take responsibility for the child and see what is wrong in every department of the child. Make it a holistic thing and you have to have that passion to do it for the child. Otherwise you just come for the salary.

You see, when I went to the university, teaching was my passion. I didn't do it for a salary. I used to handle the entire course myself. One course which is like 250 students from the lectures to the lab to the assignments and correction of the papers. Everything, I used to handle because I was passionate about it and I wanted myself to enjoy what they were doing. So, I used to go to the lab, sit with them, do the circuits with them, do everything with them. I used to take responsibility for them. I'm responsible for you. I'm visiting you because I'm interested in perfection in your life. I want you to have a holistic experience. So, tomorrow, if the university would not give me a salary, I would still do it, because I'm passionate about it and I never did it for a salary. That's the difference between a shepherd and a hireling. That's exactly the reason we were discussing yesterday in *Numbers 27*, Moses says, "Lord, after I'm gone, I want a guy who's a shepherd to Israel, who'll walk in and out, who'll go for them in war and who'll really be with them and shepherd them and who'll not be a hireling." Men of God, servants of God are not hired. Once they are appointed, they are never fired. We know many Churches where they'll hire and fire the pastor. It's not going to happen that way. That is not genuine, that is hireling business. What does a hireling do? When he sees trouble coming he'll run for his life. In other words, he's not interested in the well-being of the child. "Cheste chesadu, lekunte ledu." I don't want to be like that. That is the reason why Paul tells in *1 Corinthians 4:14* onwards. He's tough with them. He's laying it on them.

1 Corinthians 4:14-15

¹⁴ I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. ¹⁵ For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ (They are all in Christ by the way. They are not just ordinary teachers, they are instructors in Christ.), yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

You know what he's saying? There are so many fantastic teachers on the internet. There are so many teachers, but none of them have a responsibility for your soul. They'll say, "Okay, fine. You can see. Take it or leave it." But why is a Church important? Why is a shepherding important? Because we are responsible for your soul. That is the reason why in Hebrews, those who are over you are worthy of double honor and when they are serving you let it not be a grief to them, because they watch over your souls and they have to do what? They have to give an account. How many of the teachers on the internet can give an account for your soul? No, not many. They just teach and go, but shepherds have to give an account. We need to ask ourselves, as men of God, as teachers of the Word of God, one of the things I always gets exhorted about is, do we really have a shepherd's heart? Shepherd meaning what? He wants to go in and out. One thing is to be shepherd.

Second –

1 Corinthians 4:16-17

¹⁶ Therefore I urge you, imitate me. ¹⁷ For this reason (What did I do?) I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord...

So, there is a father and there is a son. Now, Paul is father and he had so many people who were close to him and he had very few sons.

...who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every Church.

And then, he wrote *Timothy*; you know why? Because the two epistles to Timothy one of the most powerful, beautiful, pastoral epistles upon which the entire doctrine of the Church and running of the Church stands is because Paul had a son in Timothy. It's not just important for us to say, I need a father, are we ready to be a son? Elisha said, "My father! My father! The chariots of God and the horsemen thereof." But he was a true son of Elijah and Elisha also had another fellow. He also said, "My father! My father!" But was he a true son? No. How many times should I hit it? One. Two. Three. Enough? You should have done it six or seven times till you destroy the enemy. That's what we tell. Hundred problems a day. Why do you think I bought this math pace? I said, "Abigail, I'm going to make an assignment and send it to you. And you're going to do it as homework. You have a lot of time on your hands. You are shut in. You are quarantined." I got her a math pace. I'm going to type out in my afternoon time. How many times? Three, four, six times, eight times, do it until you get it boss. Don't call me 'father, father' and not do it. Why do you call me father, father? Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do the things that I ask you to do? What's the whole point? He said, "How many times should I do it? Is three times enough?" Amma! I should do it another time. That's exactly what that fellow said. "Father! Father! The chariots and the horsemen thereof." One two there, enough? That's a remarkable thing, right? How does Elisha do it? He says, "Take this bow. Open the east window." You know how he makes him shoot? I'll show you. Come here, Peter. Imagine I am Elisha and he's that king. He's saying, "Hold it like this. Shoot now." Literally, Elisha puts his hand on the king like this and he says, "Come on! Shoot now." Empowers him. That's exactly what teaching does. "Come on! I'm going to be with you. Come on. Shoot now. Learn to shoot. Learn to shoot properly. Strike the ground now. I taught you to shoot. Strike the ground now." "How many times should I strike?" Elisha – he wanted the best for him. Which father would come and do this – sit with you and make you practice? And finally, you say, "How many times should I do it?" "How many times should I come to Church?" "How many times should I do it?" You should do it every day. Until you come to a point where coming to a Bible Study, where if you don't think that coming to a Bible Study, your life is dependent upon it; you will never come to the Bible Study.

You know, I tell children, when they come to me for studies. How do you study? "How should I study?" You should study as if your life is dependent upon it. Ollu jagratha petukoni chaduko. You know what that means, right? Really, focus. Complete attention should come there, as if your life is dependent upon it. So, God is a Father but does He have sons? That's the question. So, if you are a son, you know what? You will be happy when He is visiting you. "I will visit the iniquities of My son with stripes but My lovingkindness, I will never depart." Thank God for that.

So, what is the end result? Let's go back now to *Amos 3*. I promise you I'm not going to end very fast today. We've got lots to go. Ultimately, why is God doing that?

Amos 3:3-

³ Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

We will just stop there.

³ Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

God is perfect. Thank God, He doesn't have to change. If God is constantly changing, we are having a problem. I remember that beautiful example that Ravi Zacharias gives – "Truth is, by default, objective." We cannot change. Truth is absolutely something which cannot change. He says, "Just imagine that is a traffic intersection over there and there is a signal over there. There is a pole on which the signals are in. The green and yellow signals are there and the pole is right there. You come to a halt at the traffic signal when the red light comes. If you feel that the pole is drawing close to you, what do you do intuitively? You slam the break even more hard. Because you are saying, "I'm just crossing. I'm shooting the light." So, you slam the breaks hard so that you would bring the car to a stop. Now, just imagine if the pole is moving and you are stopping. What is hope for you? If truth moves, where is hope for you? If the reference point is gone, what is right and what is wrong? That's precisely the reason why we have a generation which do not know his left hand from his right hand. That's exactly what God tells Jonah about Nineveh, "They do not know what is right and what is wrong, what is sin and what is not sin." Why? Because they have changed. They have called darkness light and they have called light darkness. That is the generation that we are living in. And God is saying, "I cannot change. I will not change. That is My nature." See, that is God. God says, "I cannot change but I'm a God who will visit you so that you can become like Me and so that We can walk together." That's the whole idea. I can't change. Don't ask me to change. That's exactly why are we so tough from the pulpit even if we are erring, we always erring on the side of safety? You know why? Because we don't want to conjure up and define a God which is out of

our own imagination. Gods of this world can change. Tomorrow, he can say one thing and the next day, he can say another thing. But our truth cannot change. And we have to conform to it. Our truth is always going to confront you. It will contradict you. That's the reason why every relationship; when do relationships become really active and healthy? When we deal with controversies. If there is a controversy. That's the reason why God says, "I have a controversy with My people. If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you." That's exactly what He tells in *Leviticus 26*. What is happening? We are busy changing God so that we can fit us. No, God says, "I cannot be changed. I am a God who will not change. I will not repent." That's exactly what He told Balaam, "What do you think, that I am a Son of Man that I should repent, lie and change My mind? Sorry. I don't do that." So, what is He saying? "Agree with Me. You agree with Me." That is the Greek word 'symphonao', from which we get the word 'symphony'. Symphony is beautiful. Acapella is a symphony, mildly. Acapella is like four people singing different parts. It sounds so beautiful. You don't need music. You don't need any accompaniments, right? When people are singing in parts, do we need accompaniments? Those are all accompaniments. That's only a prop. God says, "Be symphonized with Me." Otherwise, you can cacophony. You get Cacophonix the bard. He says, "Tie him up, please, till he knows how to sing in tune." That's exactly what a lot of worship leaders or people who are conductors of different, big orchestras, when one fellow is going out of tune, you should see his face expression. You know what he is actually trying to do? He does his face like this, hoping that his expression will change the tune and bring it back in step. That means, at least, that person would feel, "Okay, I'm doing the wrong thing. Let me start doing it the right way." "Just agree with Me. I'm the One who's doing all that." And if the conductor is doing a lot of different things, what will happen to the music? Can you imagine? Why do we pay through our nose to go to a concert and pay through our nose to listen to Itzhak Perlman? Why? Because deep down inside of our hearts, we have this yearning that we have to symphonize with the Creator. That is the reason why He says, "You are God's workmanship." What is 'workmanship'? Poem. He is writing music. He is writing music. He is writing a musical note so that He can sing along with us. We have to agree with Him.

³ *Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?*

Let me explain this to you with an example as to what it means – in different levels. These are just examples here. First,

Matthew 5:21-26

²¹ *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'* ²² *But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' (Empty head, in other words,) shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Now, this is, essentially, what you are doing – you are judging your brother. You have an animosity or something. This is, essentially, you cannot agree. There's some kind of a disagreement with a brother. There's one level which you can understand this verse. Look at what it says. Suddenly, it shifts the narrative. Look at what it says.

²³ *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

Till here, you say, "Okay, fine. That means I should be reconciled to my brother. Unless and until I'm reconciled to my brother, God is not going to accept my offering," which is right, which is not wrong. That's a fantastic interpretation but look at how He takes it a little higher.

²⁵ *Agree with your adversary...*

Who is your 'adversary'?

quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

Now, think about it – He is comparing it with your relationship with your brother. And then, He says, "Until you pay the last penny, unless you agree," with who? It's like this – you have to agree with your brother. Meaning – there's something kind

of a disagreement; come to an agreement. Do we agree with God in every area? No. If we don't agree with God, what does He do, ultimately? He will deliver us until we pay the, what? The last penny. When will we finish paying the last penny? One man of God (his name is Trap or something), he says, "First, you are showing your good works, right? First, we will do one thing. First, you pay for your sins and then, God will pay you back for your good works. How much time will it take for you to pay for your sins? All eternity. First, you finish that eternity paying for your sins. And then, ask God to create another eternity so that He can pay you for your good works." Just imagine if God starts to have a controversy with you and you say, "Okay, fine. I will pay You," how much should you pay? You think your good works? See, your relationship with God will directly show your relationship with your brother. You are saying, "I want to have a good relationship with God." God is saying, "You see, there is a disagreement between you and Me because you are not reconciled to your brother. There's something there. There's a controversy. You have not forgiven him. There's bitterness in your heart. I forgave you. You want instant forgiveness for yourself but you are still not reconciled to your brother, right? You have not forgiven him, right?" I'll show you. Why is this important, my dear brothers and sisters? Turn to *Psalm 50:16*,

Psalm 50:16-21

¹⁶ But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth, ¹⁷ Seeing you hate instruction And cast My words behind you? ¹⁸ When you saw a thief, you consented with him...

You agreed with the thief. And you have been a partaker with, what?

...And have been a partaker with adulterers. ¹⁹ You give your mouth to evil...

See, that is the reason. Why do we tell that people pay through their nose to go for a movie? Whenever you go into a movie, when you paid for it, you are agreeing to it, in some level or the other. You cannot say, "I have filter with my brain which will only accept the good and take away the bad." Nonsense. Don't give me all that. I remember, Pastor talking about Richard Wurmbbrand. When Richard Wurmbbrand's wife was persuading him to take her to the movie, he said, "No, no, no." She said, "Why? It's a very good movie." And you know what he said? "If at all there is something in that movie contrary to the Scripture, I would have paid my money." In other words, "I would have given my consent to it. I do not want to agree with it. I do not want to put myself in a position where I will agree, which is absolutely contrary to the Word of God. No, I'm a man of God. I cannot do that." What argument can you have with a man of God like that? No wonder he was persecuted!

...And your tongue frames deceit. ²⁰ You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son. ²¹ These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you...

"You have made Me in your own image and I'm not like that. I'm sorry. I don't change. You agree with Me. I don't agree with you."

...But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes.

So, my dear brothers and sisters, agree with God. Agree before it's too late. And if you don't agree with Him, you will not be let go of until you have paid the last penny. And do we have the sufficient deep pockets to fill God, to pay God? What? Can you pay God, my dear brothers and sisters, your good works? God says, "First, let us settle the sin account first. You pay for your sin first. Then, I'll pay you back for your good works." The wages of sin is, what? Death. So, what do you do? Before we reach that counsel, we have to get an agreement with God, where we accept that He will pay our price and when we say, "You know what, Lord? You have paid the price for me. I have accepted Your gift, Your salvation is a free gift. Thank God for Your mercy." You know what we do? We also start extending mercy to others. Otherwise, you know what God will say? "Until you have paid the last penny, you will not be let go of." And that is the reason why you know what one of the Psalmist will say? "Lord, if You should mark iniquities, who can stand before You? And there is mercy with You so that You may be feared."

Psalm 130:3-4

³ If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.

You see? Agree with God, my dear brothers and sisters. Otherwise, you will have to pay. In other words, there is no salvation apart from a free gift and if you have accepted the gift of God as a free gift, that's exactly what He tells in Matthew 18; this

Preparing Spiritually - 6

fellow owned so much to his master and the master forgave everything but when he goes, he goes to his servant and he demands that he should pay back and he puts him in prison. You know what the master says? "Take this fellow and put him out." Agree. That's what we call as – God has paid the penalty for our sin.

Luke 7:27-35

²⁷ This is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'
²⁸ For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." ²⁹ **And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John.**

You know what they are saying? "Lord, You are right." What does 'justify' mean? "We agree with You, Lord, that we are sinners; not by our works but it is Your work and therefore, we go into the waters of baptism." You know what? Whenever we go into the waters of baptism, you know what we are doing? We are saying, "Lord, we should have died in Your place but we acknowledge the fact that You took our place. Therefore, we declare that You are just and we agree with You. You are just." Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me. Buried, He took my sins far away; rising, He justified; freed me forever, one day, He is coming back, O glorious day! That is how we agree.

And what happens? The next verse.

³⁰ But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him. ³¹ And the Lord said, "To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like? ³² They are like children...

Can you imagine calling the Pharisees, "You are children"? Can you imagine calling a Pharisee a "bacha (children)." No wonder they hated Him!

***...sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not weep.'* ³³ For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.'** ³⁴ **The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'** ³⁵ **But wisdom is justified by all her children."**

I don't want to go into the details but agree with Him. Justifying means – agree with Him. Agreeing with God. What is justification? God has accepted you. He has agreed with you, not because of you; because you believed in His Son and you agreed with His work on the Cross and you believe, saying, "Lord, You should have died in my place and I accept that as a free gift," and God says, "Okay, fine. Now, I'll let you go. But now that I've let you go, what will you do with your brother? Will you forgive him or not?" So, that is what agreement means.

Second level of agreement. *Romans 8:5,*

Romans 8:5-7

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

There's a fleshly mind. Like Pastor was saying, "Flesh is scared of mined, essentially."

⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God...

It will not agree with God. It will not submit to the law of God. And therefore, what we need is a transformed, renewed, continuously being renewed mind so that we can start agreeing with God. But the problem is – the mind has an attitude. He's got an attitude man. The mind has an attitude.

Ephesians 4:21-32

²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

NIV will use the word 'attitude of the mind'. What does it mean? The mind has a mind-set. It is set in a particular way. It has got a point of view. It has got its own opinion. It has got an attitude. I told you, right? It's like Vivekananda. I can do all that because I'm on camera. I like acting, by the way. I'm not acting by the way. I write my characters well. What is it? It's got an attitude. It's got a Vivekananda pose, "Who are you to tell me?" He says, "Be transformed in the attitude and the spirit of your mind," because your mind has a spirit. It has got an attitude. Be transformed there. How do we get transformed? *Romans 12:1-2*. We know that very well. This is how we agree with God, my dear brothers and sisters. That's what we're doing.

Romans 12:1-2

¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God...

So, when we've actually agreed with God's mercy, we've agreed that He should have died in my place. We have agreed with Him now that you have received God's mercy.

...that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The word 'transformed', rupaantaram. Rupa + antaram – rupaantaram. Savarna deerga santhi. Rupaantaram. It's like a caterpillar and a butterfly. That's the poem we have taught our children in our school – "A wormy caterpillar becomes a butterfly. Remember that whenever butterflies flutter by." Be transformed. Metamorpho. One of the Christian schools in Trimulghury, it's name is Metamorpho. I love that word. Of course, it's being run by a Pastor. So, he has to name it like that. "Metamorpho Learning Centre." That means, if you come and send your children there, you will be transformed. That's the point. How do you transform them? By the renewing of your mind. It's not the removal of your mind. That is problem that Pastor keeps telling. That's the problem with many Pentecostals. It is the renewing of the mind; not the removal of the mind. Until you have the mind of Christ, you start thinking the way God thinks. In other words, how could Paul write Scripture? Boy! Look at the autonomy. It's not that Paul agreed with God; God agreed with Paul. Which is better? Which is of the higher level? Just imagine – Pastor James and I. I am the assistant Pastor and Pastor is the senior. I'm just giving you an example. "I agree with Pastor." Big deal. You are the assistant and he is the senior. You have to agree with him. On the other hand, he says, "I agree with Vijay." In other words, "If I were preaching in Vijay's place, I would have said the same thing." That is agreement. Paul, he was writing so much of the Scripture. You know why? Because God says, "I agree with him. I agree." Amazing, isn't it? That's the reason why I'm baffled by this guy. What a guy! And he has the confidence to say, "We have the mind of Christ!" I don't know. Can we come to the point in our lives to have the audacity to say, "It is my opinion but I believe that I'm speaking the mind of Christ"? Boy! And God says, "Yes, that's true. Please, I agree. Write that. That's going to become Scripture now." Wow. You see, you think that God is a joy-killer. No. That He wants to take away autonomy. No, He wants to transform us so much into His likeness that He wants to begin to agree with us. "What do you think, Vijay? What should we do?" Can you imagine? "We have a situation here, Vijay. What do you think we should do?" "Lord, You know." "No, I just want to see." Just imagine that guy would say, "Okay, Lord. I think we need to do it this way." "Yes, I agree." That is where He wants to take us through. When we say, "He is going to confront us," it is good for Him to confront us. You know why? Because He wants to transform us into His likeness. And therefore, take every effort so that you can preserve this relationship. What? Make every effort so that you can preserve this relationship of walking with God. It's a privilege. It's a tremendous privilege. It's the humility of God. He says, "I want to walk with you. Can you walk with Me, please? But unfortunately, I can't change. You have to agree with Me."

2 Corinthians 6:14

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers...

Be yoked with who then? Christ. "Take My yoke upon you and learn." In other words, 'yoked to Christ' means, what? Be yoked to people who have Christ in them so that you can learn. Don't just get yoked to people who are Christian in name

Preparing Spiritually - 6

only. “Who is your friend?” “Mary.” But she could be very contrary. Just because she is Mary, doesn’t mean that she agrees with God. No. Yoked. Find yourselves people who can challenge you, who are at a higher spiritual level than you.

Deuteronomy 22:10

¹⁰ ***“You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.***

Who doesn’t agree? Donkey. Ishmael is a wild donkey of a man. First of all, God has to reject Ishmael and create an Isaac. We all have an Ishmael in us. Donkeys, we are. A wild donkey, accustomed to the wind, it says in *Jeremiah*. A wild donkey. The word ‘accustomed’ is – disciplined to the wind. It is disciplined to do the wrong thing. That is also a discipline. A discipline to do the wrong thing. Can an Ethiopian change his color or a leopard take away his spots? Can you do good, who are disciplined to do evil? You are disciplined. You are set in your ways. Think about it – donkeys can only agree with donkeys? No, they don’t. They are going in two different directions. That’s the reason why Ishmael is called a wild donkey of a man. Everybody’s hand is against him and his hand is against everybody. Donkeys don’t agree with anybody. They want to be independent, autonomous beings. Autonomous donkeys.

Let’s go back.

2 Corinthians 6:14

¹⁴ ***Do not be unequally yoked...***

In other words, it’s interesting, right? Don’t be ‘unequally’ yoked. That means – you cannot equalize it. It’s impossible. And therefore, He made a statement. What is that statement?

2 Corinthians 6:14

¹⁴ ***Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers...***

And then, he gives reasons as to why you should not do that.

First –

...For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?...

Nothing! It’s a rhetorical question! In other words, there cannot be any fellowship between righteousness and lawlessness. If you are righteous, you are not lawless. If you are lawless, you cannot be righteous. And what is God doing in us through the teaching of the Word of God? He is taking away the lawlessness in us.

Turn to *Romans 6:19-20*,

Romans 6:19-20

¹⁹ ***I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness...***

That is the reason why, “He, who is unrighteousness, let him be unrighteous still.” You are deceiving and you are being deceived. Both are happening simultaneously – you cannot deceive others and you think that you are not walking in deception. You are also being deceived. Unbelievable! You think when you gossip about people, do you think people are not gossiping about you? If that is not true, then is an inexorable law which is called – the law of sowing and reaping. If you sow slander, I don’t know what you are reaping. If you sow unbelief, whatever it is, lawlessness is leading to more lawlessness.

...so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

That means you are not even concerned about righteousness. You are free to do evil, as I said. You are free in lawlessness, whatever that ‘lawlessness’ was, whatever that ‘freedom’ was.

What about the fruit?

Romans 6:21-22

²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness...

What is holiness? Separation.

...and the end, everlasting life.

Let's go back to 2 Corinthians 6:14.

2 Corinthians 6:14-15

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

What happens is – light has to dispel darkness. Darkness should not overcome the light. No. Light has to dispel darkness. Therefore, they cannot agree again.

¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial?...

Can you accord with God?

What is Christ with Belial? I will show you. *Deuteronomy 13:13*. I will tell you who Belial is.

Deuteronomy 13:13

¹³ 'Corrupt men...

You know what the word 'corrupt' means? Belial. Sons of Belial.

...have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods" '— which you have not known—

What do they do? They entice you away from fellowship with God. They take you away. That's exactly the reason why they say, "The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches." The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, if that is your focus in your life, you know what has happened? You have become a partaker of Belial because those are worthless things. 'Belial' means – worthless fellows. That is the reason why Jonah has to say, "Those who pursue after worthless idols," what do they do? They forsake their own steadfast love, their own mercy. Sons of Belial. What accord! That means – if he's not taking me to God, I do not want to go there. That's a worthless thing – idols.

2 Corinthians 6:15-18

¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

What does God want to do? "I want to walk among you. So, create a tabernacle according to the specifications that I have showed you so that I can dwell among you." Therefore, you need a Betsalel in your life, who will create a tabernacle in your heart, in your life so that God can come and make His presence felt there and He can be comfortable there. You know what happens if that place is not according to the specifications and God comes? It is destroyed. That is the reason why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:7; he says, "You are the temple of the Living God. If you do not honor this temple of this Living God, God will destroy it." Why? The presence of God is there and it has not been prepared according to my specifications. When I come there, I'm going to fall on you and you will die." That's exactly the reason why He says, "Moses, you go. I will send an Angel.

Preparing Spiritually - 6

If I come, these fellows are stiff-necked people and if I come and dwell among them, I will fall on them and kill them.” But he says, “No, Lord. Please, Lord. You come.” Then, He says, “Okay, fine. You want Me to come? Then, you have to prepare a tabernacle according to My specifications.” And if you read the *Book of Deuteronomy*, after the tabernacle, He says, “According to the pattern showed in the holy mountain, Moses did everything according to that.” And Betsalel did everything according to what Moses commanded him and then, finally, the children of Israel finished the tabernacle according to the pattern shown to him so that God can come and dwell in their midst. That is the reason why we agree with Him. He doesn’t agree with us. He will only agree with us when we have become like Him. Otherwise, what will be our problem? What will happen? *Amos 3:4*. This is a rhetorical question.

Amos 3:3-6

³ *Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?*

In other words, change the statement – two cannot walk together unless they have agreed and therefore, I have to agree with God.

⁴ *Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey?...*

Answer? No. In other words, the lion will not simply roar. It will roar to scare first so that you can get a prey. That is the reason why the word is ‘heggei’ in the Hebrew. It says, “*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of the sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful but his delight is in the law of the Lord and the in His law that he meditate...*” You know what the word ‘meditate’ means? It means heggei. It means like a lion on its prey, you are growling and are eating it. Lions don’t eat normally. That is the reason why it’s called a ‘pride’. What is it called? Pride. It’s jealous for its name. That’s why it’s called a ‘sher’. So, when it’s eating its prey, it’s growling and eating it. And all the bunch of lions come together and eat it and the master fellow will come and chase all the fellows and eat it first – the male. The females do the hard work and the males come. Then?

..Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing?

No! You know what God is telling? “I’m roaring. I caught you. I trapped you in your homes. What are you going to do? I was the One who trapped you, not the government. I’m getting your attention.” He’s telling the Church, “I’m getting your attention,” my dear brothers and sisters. Jesus is saying, “I’m getting your attention. I want to give you attention. In order to give you attention, I’m getting your attention by doing what? By roaring.” What is this ‘roaring’? Sending a Corona Virus. Look at the next verse,

⁵ *Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it?...*

In other words, “I have set a trap for you. I’ve trapped you and if you go out, you will be spanked and sent back in.” Right, Roshan? And the police are going to spank you and send you back in.

...Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all?

Snare spring up from the earth. The trap. When will the trap make noise? Remember when we put rat traps on our attic and when it says ‘tap!’ what happened? It’s dead. I caught it. God is saying, “I caught you.” Then, He says,

⁶ *If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid?...*

And then, this is the katharnak thing, the icing on the cake.

...If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?

Adu dhan vishyam. That’s the thing. But thank God, we have been warned. By what? By who?

Amos 3:7

⁷ Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

You know what? We've been warned for a time like this. Thank God, as a Church. So, what is genuine prophetic ministry? Genuine prophetic ministry is something which will not take you away from God, which will warn you about who God really is. Who will warn you and we need to take warning, my dear brothers and sisters.

As I close, I want to show a very interesting episode in *1 Kings 22:16-22* and we will stop. You know this very well. I'm not teaching anything new, by the way. All this, I have learnt. I've been taught and I also teach. So, I've mixed it together like a jugaad and I'm giving it to you today. So, it says,

1 Kings 22:4

⁴ So he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

This is one king who is agreeing with a ridiculous alignment. And because of this, he brings the sin of Israel into Judah. Let's move on. And you know that, right? And then, he says, "Let us enquire from the prophet of the Lord." And all the prophets are prophesying, "Yes, go to Ramoth Gilead and you will get it." And Jehoshaphat said, "Do we find another man of God over here of whom we can enquire." And you know what Ahab says? "Yes, there is another man of God but he always prophesies bad things about me." That means, "I can't agree with him." Bahut Dukki ho jatha. Usko baath sunne, bagut dukki ho jatha mein. And you know what Jehoshaphat said? "Please don't say like that. Let us call him." Micaiah comes and everybody says, "Micaiah, everybody is saying this. You also say that." He says, "No, whatever the Lord says, I will say."

1 Kings 22:16-22

¹⁶ So the king said to him, "How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?"

So, Micaiah comes and says, "Yes, Ramoth Gilead! You are right. You go. You are going to win." Ahab knows, deep down inside of his heart, "Yaha par kuch tho gadabad hain." Then, verse 17 is powerful.

¹⁷ Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd..."

Thank God for us, right? Thank God for us. So many Churches have sheep without shepherd, who are wandering. Even if they have so-called Pastors, they are not Pastors; they are hirelings. Many of them. Sorry to say. This is just a fact. It's a fact. Pastors' Conference happens, right? I'm not taking out names. I know, it's so difficult. I know certain Pastors who have not changed over the years. They are the same old. Endhora mahan bhaavalu, andhariki naa vandanaalu. Even sarcasm, they don't get it. Unfortunate. They are set in their ways. That's what I say – they are disciplined in the wrong way. Now, when you are disciplined in the wrong way, train up a child in the ways of the Lord when he is young. When he is very, very tender. Otherwise, you will become like Ahab – you know what is right but you don't have the power to keep it and therefore, you want lies to be spoken. You want lies to be spoken into your life. It's not that you don't know what is true and what is false. No. You want lies to be spoken into your life. You want it. You have lost the ability to change because you have not agreed with God when you were tender.

¹⁷ Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'"

And then, look at this. This is the next verse. It's scary.

¹⁸ And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

But what are you doing? Don't you know that God, when he sends rebuke you into your life, He is visiting you; He is paying attention to you so that you can set your ways right? But you don't want to change. You are bent upon your ways. What will happen if you don't go to war? Sit down and get reconciled with God. Agree with Him. What will happen? What will happen

Preparing Spiritually - 6

if you don't work for a few days? What will happen? Sit at home and agree with God. Why are you bent upon your ways? Why are you bent upon evil?

¹⁹ Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne..."

I remember this beautiful example that Pastor taught us some time back. There was a court room on the earth. What was the court room on the earth? Full of false prophets and one true prophet. You know what the false prophets are saying? Zachariah will come and say, "You go to Ramoth Gilead. You will conquer it like this. Brother, you are the righteousness of God." There's a court room on earth which is justifying you but there is a court room in Heaven which is calling you a false. You are not justified in the court room of God. You are found wanting in the balances of God. And because you refuse to accept the truth about yourself, what will God send into your life according to *2 Thessalonians*, as we heard? A strong delusion. God has given you over to a lie now.

...I saw the Lord sitting on His throne and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.

And this is what I like that God is asking. Look at the next verse.

²⁰ And the Lord said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?'...

"What are your options? Can I ask the host of Heaven over here? What kind of options do we have? Can we send an angel and slaughter all this army?" "No, then, maybe, he will repent." "Should we send a pestilence among him?" "No. In a pestilence, there are chances that he may repent." The point is – he will not even repent. He is bent upon his ways.

...So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. ²¹ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, and said, 'I will persuade him.'

In other words, He wants him to go to battle and die. It's like the sons of Eli. The prophet comes and prophesies against the sons of Eli. It says, "The decree of God was that he should destroy them. Now, nothing is going to change."

²² The Lord said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the Lord said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.'

Sad. You know what happens is – the story is so pathetic. He still understands that it is true but he is still bent upon going to war. He is bent upon his ways. And then, he tries to camouflage himself. He wants to beat God. Can you beat God? No way. True prophetic ministry, my dear brothers and sisters, will make you agree with God and if you don't agree with God and if we are bent upon our ways, if we keep on sitting after we have received the knowledge of truth, there will be no more warnings. And when God sends us warnings, let us humble ourselves. Let us take the prophesy and begin to agree with him.

The lion has roared. *Amos 3:8*. The final challenge. I love this. This is the ultimate word. The lion has roared. Who is the lion? God. Will you not fear?

Amos 3:8

⁸ A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

Several days left for us and Pastor was saying, "Let us come out as a stronger Church through this time of crisis." And therefore,

Amos 3:2

² "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

Let us remove the word 'punish' and we will read it as 'pay attention'.

² "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will give attention to you for all your iniquities."

And you say, "Lord, come, Lord. I am attentive." Come, Lord Jesus. Let us be like Samuel who said, "LORD, Yes, LORD. Speak, Lord. Your servant is willing to hear. Speak, Lord, for Your servant is willing to agree with You." Let that be our prayer.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we just commit ourselves, once again, into Your hands, Lord. We want to set our lives in order. We want to bring everything. We want to set everything in order. Father, we want to agree with You. Challenge us this morning, O Lord, that we will come to a point in our lives – so transformed into the likeness of Your Son that You will say, "I agree with My son. My child over there, I agree with him. What he says is truth." Ultimately, our words will become Your words because we will be so in line with the Word of God, the truth of God and with the Person of Jesus Christ and with the Spirit of God. So in accord with Him that we will truly be the extension of You so that when we act, You act; when we speak, You speak. That's what You told Your disciples, "To whomever you say 'you are forgiven', they will be forgiven them. Whoever sins you withhold, they will be withheld." Because we have come to complete agreement with You in every area of our lives. Challenge us to that end, we pray. Yes, Lord, it is a long process but, Lord, speak, Lord; for Your servant. We are Your servants. We are hearing. Continue to speak to us, O Lord. Don't stop speaking to us, O Lord. Even through the evening meeting when Pastor comes and shares the Word, I pray, Lord Jesus, that You would grant us all that attentive ears that we will not leave Your presence until we have heard from You. Speak, Lord. Don't pass us by. We thank You. We praise You. For in Jesus' Name, Amen.