

Love Gone Cold?

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Father, we just thank You, we praise You, we worship You. You're a good God and Your mercy endures forever. We pray, Father, that even as we meditate on Your Word this morning, we commit ourselves into Your kind hands, all of us all around the world. We commit ourselves into Your hands. Father, unless You speak, unless You grant us revelation, unless You open our understanding like the way You opened the understanding of Your disciples at the breaking of bread that You opened the understanding of Your disciples when You went through the psalms and the prophets and the law, Father, I pray that You would open our understanding this morning. Father, we come to You. We humble ourselves before You and we acknowledge Lord, that all that we have, all the giftings and the intelligence and whatever You have given us O Lord and the training that You've blessed us with is nothing without Your anointing, O Lord. Father, anoint us this morning. Grant us grace that we will understand Your Word and that we will understand Your heart, because Your Word says that Your Word is Spirit and life. I pray, Father, even as we take part of Your Word this morning, we would be taking part of Your life. Your life would be eaten by us, not raw, not watered, but roasted in the fire of the Holy Spirit. Grant us grace to that end I pray. Therefore, anoint us this morning even the speaking and the hearing of this word. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Let's turn this morning to gospel according to *Matthew 24*. Let's read from verses 3 to 5. We will go there and read those verses and we will launch off from there to our text this morning.

Matthew 24:3-5

³Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" ⁴And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. (The ESV says, 'Take heed that no one will lead you astray.') ⁵For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. (or will lead many astray.)

That is what He answered and said, "This is primarily going to be the case in the last days." Pastor was telling us that it is those people who are in the Church who are vulnerable to deception. It is those people who are walking in the way who will be led astray. People who are not in the way cannot be led astray. They are already out of the way. So, it is people who are standing who will fall. It is those people whose names are written in the Book of Life God says, "I can strike your name out from the Book of life." So, it is those people who are in the Church who have to be careful and prepared and God is giving us the opportunity these days to be able to examine ourselves, study the word, meditate upon the word, receive the word by faith and even as we take part of the word by faith, we will be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians says, "Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit." And how are you filled with the spirit? "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." "Let the word of Christ," Colossians will say, "be dwelling in you richly." How? "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Therefore, we are vulnerable to deception and therefore we need to strengthen ourselves and that is what we are doing in these days so that we will not be led astray.

Turn with me this morning to *2 Thessalonians 2:1-11*. First, we will read verses 1-4 and then, to the next part of the message.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

¹Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

So there are two things over here: there is a coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and there is a gathering of us together with Him. Some theologians will say that there are two coming of the Lord where Jesus is coming for the first time for His Church and the second time He's coming along with His saints. We're not getting into those topics but we are looking at something else today.

²not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit (So you can be shaken by some spirit) or by word (Other translations use: by spoken word) or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed (other translations will use the word, man of lawlessness), the son of perdition, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

We'll come to that later. Let's go first part of verse 3. Let no one deceive you by any means. That's what Jesus enjoined us and Apostle Paul through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is writing to the Thessalonian Church telling them, "Let no man lead you astray or deceive you." Deception is in the heart. Once deception sets in, you are led astray from the path. Like Pastor was saying: there is a straight and narrow path, you can either go this side or that side, towards law or towards lasciviousness or licentiousness. One side is legalism and the other side is license to sin. And the straight and narrow path is walking by the Spirit and being led by the Spirit and allowing the life of Christ to be made manifest in you. That is the gospel essentially. So, don't be quickly shaken in mind.

Let's turn to *verse 2*.

² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled...

and he tells us how we could possibly be shaken. Three things.

...either by spirit or by word or by letter...

We can be shaken by a spirit. We can be shaken by a word or spoken word. Third: we can be shaken by a letter. Modern day: by an email or a WhatsApp message or whatever.

...as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

In this context, the Thessalonian Church thought that the coming of the Lord has already happened. They were a prepared Church. They were a good Church. There was only one Church about which Paul had so many good things to say. So, they were a good Church and they were troubled. The troubled are shaken in mind. The picture is that they're being tossed by a storm in the sea. That's the picture. You can be troubled or shaken in mind. You can be quickly shaken in mind by three things: by a spirit, by a spoken word, by a letter. So, in order not to be shaken quickly, the only way to counter deception is to have the strength of the mind. The word here 'mind' is rendered in some places as understanding like in *Luke 24*. You don't have to turn there, where Jesus opens their understanding so that they can understand the scriptures. So, don't be shaken in mind. Don't be shaken in your thinking, in your understanding or be troubled. How can you be troubled? You can be troubled by a spirit and therefore, you should test every spirit. In order to test every spirit, you should be filled with the spirit. And how do I know that I'm filled with the Spirit. We're looking at the first part: by a spirit. How do I know that I'm filled with the Spirit?

Turn to *John 16:9* onwards. *When the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgement, and verse 9 says—*

John 16:9

⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. ¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth (first thing); for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak (second thing); and He will tell you things to come (third thing).

So, in order for us not to be shaken by the Spirit, we should have the infilling of the Holy Spirit so that we already know what are the things which are going to come, like Pastor was saying, "The coming of the Lord is near, but this is not the coming of the Lord." These are only signs and labor pains. The only way for a believer to counter the spirit of the age is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. We were filled with the Holy Spirit one time, but you know what Paul says? Be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. Don't be drunk with wine in which is excess and debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit and how are you filling yourself with the Spirit? By giving yourself opportunities more and more so that by listening to the anointed Word.

Galatians 3:1-5

¹O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ²This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

How do you receive the Spirit? By the hearing of faith. When you hear the Word of God and you mix it with faith, there is a continuous outpouring of Spirit into your life.

³Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? ⁴Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? (Beautiful!) ⁵Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you...

Think about it. We know the tabernacle. The tabernacle had three parts: the outer courts, the holy place and the most holy place. And God says, "In order to hear My voice, you have to come to the outer courts. There is an altar over there. Sacrifice on the altar. And there's a laver in which you have to wash yourself." This is how the priest enters. How does the priest enter into the holy place? He offers the sacrifice and the blood and washed himself at the laver, goes into the holy place. In the holy place, there are three things. We have the lampstand, the showbread and we have the altar of incense. The altar of incense is absolutely close to the most holy place from which God speaks and He says, "The altar of incense has got seven lampstands. A center lampstand and other branches and you have to continuously keep pouring into the lampstand to keep them burning. And the light should never go out. You understand what I'm saying? The light should never go out in our life.)

...and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

What is light? It's essentially the Word of God. It's like the foolish virgins. Their lights were going out and they did not have oil. Notwithstanding the fact that they were virgins, they separated themselves, but one thing they did not do. They did not have a constant supply of oil in their lives. See, lamps should never be put out. And how do you make sure your lamp is not put out? There should be a continuous supply.

Galatians 3:5

⁵Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

That means there should be constant hearing of the faith, that means there should be a person who is preaching the Word of God, the anointed Word of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. Christ means the anointed word. Therefore, there should be somebody who's constantly pouring oil into your life. That is what we call as the preaching of the Word of God. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." Preaching and teaching, not discussion. No, I'm not saying that discussions are not important. But how is the word made manifest in our lives? How does the revelation of the Word of God take place in our life?

Titus 1:1-3

¹Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness,

This is a loaded verse. To unpack it it's going to take several hours, but I'm not going to unpack that.

²in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, ³but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;

It doesn't say manifested the word through discussions. I'm not saying we should not have discussions. Jesus also had discussions. He went to the Temple. He heard first and then He asked questions. It's not that we should not ask questions. It's not that we should not discuss the word, but there is a manifestation of the Word of God through preaching. We were discussing about Martin Lloyd Jones in the morning. He wrote a book called 'Preaching and Preachers', which I read through halfway and I think in one of his sermons also he mentions this, he says, "In these last days what has happened," he's talking during his time which was around 1980s. Somewhere around 1980s he died. I'm not very sure. He says, "Nowadays when he's observing the Church, the Church at large during his time, nowadays we have discussions and lectures. We don't have

preaching.” You know what preaching is? Preaching is declaration. It is not ‘let us have a discussion.’ It’s like a king has come. He has sent his angel to declare something. ‘Suno suno suno, gaaon log!’ (Listen all you people!). He’s a herald and he’s proclaiming what the king has spoken and it is not open to discussion. It’s not an opinion. It’s the truth that is being proclaimed. A lot of people want to have discussions. I’m not saying we should not have discussions. We have discussions, don’t we? Incredible discussions. Intense discussions. Sometimes Pastor and I, when we discuss certain things, we have really intense discussions. Different points of view. We’re not saying that. The point here is, the manifestation of the work of God comes through what? Preaching. And what has happened in these last days? The living word is not being preached. I mean, you have lesser and lesser time for preaching, because they say the attention span of people is very less. Instagram says you can’t upload videos of more than 20 seconds, I believe. Why? Because the attention span of a human being is 25 seconds or something like that. They did a recent survey. It’s not more than 20 seconds. That is the generation in which we are living in. But you could be a very distracted generation, but I believe the Word of God when proclaimed with authority can arrest the most distracted generation. The problem is not the generation. The problem is there is nobody on the other side who’s absolutely serious about it and saying, “Lord, grant us the grace so that we will have the authority of the Holy Spirit over our lives the anointing of the Holy Spirit, so that we could arrest the attention of a distracted generation. Why should we shorten God’s hand because of our unbelief? Does it not say Christ died for us notwithstanding the fact that we were sinner and that we were without strength? Without strength, meaning we don’t have the ability to concentrate for a long time. When we were sinners, when we were enemies, when we were ungodly, Christ died for us. That means, I have the ability to arrest you. The Holy Spirit has got the ability to arrest you. Pastor was saying yesterday, in the prison Paul and Silas were singing and the all the prisoners were listening. Earthquake took place. Chains fell off but they could have run away, but they were all there. He says, “We are all here.” They were arrested by the presence of God and by the authority of the Holy Spirit. The problem is do we have a set of people who have the anointing and the authority and the unction of the Holy Spirit over their lives who can arrest a whole generation, the Elijah generation. If Yahweh is God, worship him. If Baal is god, worship him. He says, “Do this Lord so that they can turn their hearts to You!” and you know what? He’s able to arrest an entire generation which was getting distracted by multiple Baals. Problem is we don’t have preaching, we have discussions. We have discussion groups. Sorry. It is primarily the preaching, not discussing. It is not giving you what we call as a motivational speech or a lecture. Lectures are given in colleges, not in Churches. In Churches what happens? Preaching happens. So how do you get the supply of the Holy Spirit? By subjecting yourself to anointed teaching. In other words, there should be somebody over your life who’s constantly pouring oil into your life through preaching. Think about it. I’m not interpreting the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. The virgins are there: five wise and five foolish. The wise virgins had oil. The foolish virgins did not have oil. The bridegroom had come and when they knew that the bridegroom was coming, their lamps were getting dim. They said, “Please give us some oil.” The wise virgins said, “We can’t. Go and buy oil.” Think about it. The bridegroom comes, the wise virgins are taken away. These fellows are going out to buy oil and somebody is still selling to them. The question is what kind of oil are they selling? Bridegroom has come and taken the Church away and still oil is being sold. What is this? What oil is that? I don’t know. It’s open for interpretation. That is the reason why he says, “Many christs will comes saying that we are the Christ.” Now, if I come and say, “I am Christ, you’ll say, ‘Go and jump in the lake.’” It’s not so easy to fool people saying, “I’m Jesus Christ.” There was one guy who went around on YouTube saying, “I’m Jesus! I’m Jesus!” They said, “C’mon!” Christ means ‘the anointed one.’ So, people will say we have the anointing. That is what they will say. They’ll say we have the anointing. And what happens? Lamps are being put out. These fellows have gone out to buy oil and there will be people with false anointing selling oil. I don’t know what it is. I’m just thinking about it. I could be wrong, while the bridegroom has come and taken the wise virgins away. The point is this. These fellows have gone. They’ve bought oil and come back in Matthew 25. By the time they came back with new oil, the bridegroom is already gone. So, what oil did they get? That’s the question I want to ask myself. It’s a very important question my dear brothers and sisters. So, my question to all of us is: do we have the desires and is there somebody over our life who’s constantly pouring oil into us? A priestly authority over our life who’s constantly pouring oil? Otherwise we’ll be soon shaken in the spirit, because we don’t have the Spirit to withstand the other spirit. If you are filled with the Spirit, you’ll not be drunk with wine. Drunk with wine means other spirit. That is also called spirit. Pastor said, “After you distil the whole things, what’s left is the spirit.” What spirit? False spirit. You’re not sober anymore. But what does the Holy Spirit give you? It gives you sobriety.

1 John 2:27

27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Love Gone Cold?

You see that? You need that anointing and a continuous supply of it. So that we'll not be shaken quickly in mind by another spirit. So how do we know what is the right spirit? Turn to,

1 John 4:1-4

¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; (why?) because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God...

In other words, you want to know whether that fellow has the Spirit of God in him or not, the true anointing. How do you know if he's got the anointing or not? This is how you know.

...Every spirit (Note the lowercase s.) **that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God** (first thing: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,), **³and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.**

Meaning, before the ultimate Antichrist comes, there is a spirit of Antichrist which is released in the world and which is already working in people, preparing their hearts for the coming of the ultimate Antichrist, the anti-anointing. Christ means anointing. It's completely contrary to the original. Messiah means the anointed one. Anti-messiah means anti anointed one. I find it very interesting. I'm not making a doctrine out of this. He talks about satan in *Ezekiel 28*. You don't have to turn there. You anointed cherub. Every other cherub we don't know, because they were cherubim which were covering and Michael was one of them. Was he cherubim or seraphim? So many cherubim are possibly mentioned in the Bible, but there is only one cherubim which is also called the anointed cherubim. That means he also has an anointing. The false anointing.

1 John 4:4

⁴You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

In other words, the spirit of the Antichrist is the spirit of the world and you should have sufficient deposit of the Spirit of God. It is called the earnest of our inheritance. Just a small deposit but that should keep increasing. If God has deposited, it should collect interest. And that means, we have to be constantly having more and more of the Holy Spirit so that we'll have sufficient amount of the deposit of the Holy Spirit, so that we can know what is the spirit of the Antichrist and the Spirit of God. What does the spirit of God confess? That Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Why is that important? Why is that important? It says, "Any spirit that does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is the Antichrist. Why is this important?"

1 Timothy 3:15-16

¹⁵but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. ¹⁶And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

In this particular chapter in *2 Thessalonians*, we also talk about the mystery of lawlessness. Here it is talking about the mystery of godliness. Now how does the mystery of godliness start?

...God was manifested in the flesh...

Who was manifested in the flesh? God was manifested in the flesh. The mystery of godliness starts with this confession that God was manifested in the flesh. And why is it important? What kind of flesh?

...Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

What kind of flesh?

Romans 8:1-4

¹There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness

of sinful flesh, on account of sin: (Whose sin? Our sin) ***He condemned*** (our) ***sin in the flesh,*** (so that) ⁴ ***that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.***

Verse 3 is a fantastic statement: *that God sent His Son in the likeness of flesh,* because the law could not achieve it. In the likeness of sinful flesh, meaning, Jesus had a kind of flesh which was vulnerable to temptation. He was Jesus. He could do whatever and that is the reason why He did not sin. He came in the flesh which was not only vulnerable to all kinds of temptation, but also vulnerable to all kinds of suffering. See, ultimately, He was beaten and broken. That flesh could suffer, something which could suffer. Suffering came because of sin. And He suffered in the flesh, that was sinful flesh, likeness of sinful flesh. Now what does that mean? That means Jesus had the capacity to be tempted and therefore, it says in,

Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵ ***For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses...***

Because we have weak sinful flesh which is weakness. Actually *2 Corinthians* in the last chapter, it says, *“He was crucified in weakness.”*

...but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

That is the point here. That means He had the capacity to be tempted and yet, He did not sin. Therefore, He became a type of a person of the overcome. He was telling us, “You know something? I came in this flesh. I was born of the Holy Spirit. And if you are born of the Holy Spirit, just as I was tempted in all points and did not sin, you also have the capacity to be tempted in all points and also not sin.” Therefore, what does the Spirit of God say? Anybody who has the spirit of God in him will say, “Brother, Jesus also came in the flesh, but He overcame sin and therefore, you also brother if you have the indwelling of the Spirit of God you can also overcome sin.” But what does the spirit of Antichrist say? No. No. Jesus did not come in the flesh. Therefore, you cannot overcome. God understands like Pastor was talking yesterday. Or you need to do works to find salvation. That’s what he tells the Church in Galatia, are you so foolish that you started in the Spirit and you want to be made perfect in the flesh? Who has bewitched you?

So, another place.

Hebrews 5:7

⁷ ***who, in the days of His flesh...***

You see that? Very clear, right? Who is this? Jesus, the priest himself of the order of Melchizedek.

...when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death...

What death? He was not talking about the death on the cross, He was talking about the death because of sin. And He was telling God, “I’m in this flesh and I’m surrounded by all kinds of temptations. I need You, Father. I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I need to have the fear of God in my heart, so that I will not sin against You. And if I sin against You, the whole of mankind is gone, because there will not be any redemption for their sin anymore. I should be the blemish-less, spotless ram.”

...and was heard because of His godly fear

Whenever they offered sacrifices, if you look at *Leviticus* you have to offer a lamb or a bull without blemish. You know the Telugu rendering for it is? You have to offer ‘nirdoshamaina jantuvu’ (spotless and without blemish). Without blemish means it should not have any kind of a disease. But in Telugu nirdosham means, you should be without sin. And Jesus had to be that kind of a sacrifice without any blemish in His character. And therefore, in the days of His flesh, He used to cry out saying, “Lord, keep me humble. Keep me humble. I should not get puffed up with pride.” Because He was fighting a different kind of battle altogether. He had to face temptations. He had incredible power. And He has to restrain Himself and not use His power. His battle was at a different level, Ph.D. level battle. Our battles are tiny battles, L.K.G and nursery level battles. He had a different level of battle and He said, “Lord, I should not sin.” And He overcame not because of His own strength, because He

Love Gone Cold?

depended on the strength which comes from above. And therefore, He suffered in His flesh. Suffering means denying. Don't allow or allow yourself not to sin. Allowing yourself not to deny God is suffering. In the original translation, he suffered means he allowed. Suffering means allowing not to deny God. Double negative. See that. He suffered and because He did that and He showed us this trajectory, what should you and I have? You should not be soon shaken in mind by the spirit. So what kind of a mind should we have? I'll tell you.

1 Peter 4:1; let's read it together. We have only few people over here.

1 Peter 4:1

¹Therefore, since Christ suffered for us (where?) in the flesh (How did He suffer?), arm yourselves also with the same mind...

He had a mind so strong which could not be shaken. ESV says, "Arm yourselves with the same pattern of thinking."

...for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin

What a verse! Ultimately, suffering in the flesh is to cease from sin. It says in *Hebrews*, "You have not suffered till the point of bloodshed. But look unto Him, Jesus, who never sinned and He is our example." And that is the reason why we have very few people who have the authority in their lives to say, "Follow me as I follow Christ." Because Paul also had this mindset, a mindset to suffer, to suffer in the flesh. So, whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so that he no longer wastes his time in the flesh for the lust of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough time (in sin), you don't have to turn there.

1 Peter 4:2

²that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

This is what it means to acknowledge the fact that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. And if He has come in the flesh and He has overcome sin we can also be in the flesh and still overcome sin. In the flesh means in the body of sin and still overcome. We can overcome all fleshly lusts by the Holy Spirit just as Jesus overcame. And we have to believe that and we have to be constantly be encouraged in that direction. For example, how do we do this? We need practical examples.

1 Peter 2:18-25; In the entire epistle of Peter the thesis is how to suffer successfully, that is essentially the thesis of the epistles of Peter. Having escaped the corruption in the world through lusts, right? We have exceedingly great and precious promises so that we can be made part of the divine nature, etc. So, the entire epistle of Peter, the thesis is this: how to suffer successfully and overcome sin and not become partakers of this world. Beloved I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts which war against your soul. How do we abstain? Look at one example.

1 Peter 2:18-25

¹⁸Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.

How do we have the strength of mind, how can we not quickly be shaken in the mind? I'm telling you. These are all essentially the practical things we need to do so that we have a strength of the character which is of the mind that we'll not be soon shaken. So we want stable minds? Why is headship given to the men? I'm just giving you an example. Men should be heads. That means, you should be people who are stable in your thinking. You cannot be easily moved. Once you set your course in one particular direction, nothing should change, set like a flint. You're not easily shaken.

¹⁹For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. (You see that suffering there?) ***²⁰For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.*** ***²¹For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:***

Look at here he gives you specifics as to how Christ suffered. Look at what it says.

²²"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";

He was in the flesh and committed no sin. No guile or deceit was found in His mouth. That means there was never a point that He said or did something to attract attention or to deceive people. In fact, He told the disciples very clearly, "I am not going to deceive you to become disciple. I will tell you clearly what it takes to become disciple. *If anyone desires to come after Me, he has to deny himself, pick up his cross daily and follow Me. For what profits a man if he gains the whole world and he loses his own soul? For what can you give in exchange for your own soul? If you love your father and mother more than Me, you cannot be My disciple. One who puts his hand on the plough and turns back is not fit to be My disciple.*" He gave us clear instructions as to how to be a disciple. He never deceived us. We deceive others but He never deceived us. What is the lamb? They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony and these are the 1,44,000 people (in *Revelation* it says), clothed with white garments and no deceit was found in their mouths. The bride also should be a set of people who have no deceit in their mouth. First He did not commit sin, second- neither was deceit found in His mouth. Third-

1 Peter 2:23

²³ ***who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return;***

He was firm but He would never retaliate. The ultimate retaliation is when these people come and Jesus says, "*Whom are you looking for?*"

"Jesus of Nazareth!"

Jesus says, "*I am!*" The moment He says, "I am", everybody falls down. At that moment, a small crevice is made in His flesh and a little bit of glory emanates from this crevice and they see that glory and they fall flat. Later on, He covers Himself.

"Whom are you looking for?"

"Jesus of Nazareth!"

"Take Me; leave them alone. Peter, put your sword back. If I ask My Father, will He not send a legion of angels to save Me?"

"Are you a king?"

"My Kingdom is not of this world."

"Should I not drink the cup that Father has given Me?" He never reviled.

...when He suffered, He did not threaten...

You see, we don't threaten but we will be looking for opportunities as how to make people fall. "How should I get back to this fellow?" Then he says-

...but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;

1 Peter 2:23 (ESV)

²³ ***When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.***

One of the ways we retaliate is by justifying ourselves. People point fingers at us and we do not want to be misunderstood by people. I told you so many times, right? Can you take the risk of being misunderstood? We know we are in the flesh when we constantly want to justify ourselves. *No weapon formed against you shall prosper and every lying tongue that is spoken against you, you shall condemn; for this is your heritage as servants of the Lord.* Why? It's because *our vindication is from Him.* See, we have only two ways for vindication. Either God vindicates us (justifies us) or you justify yourself. So, justifying yourself is called 'dignity' or you want to be dignified. If you want God to justify you, that is justification by faith alone. That was the 'nara' (slogan) of the reformation, of Martin Luther. 'Justification by faith alone, apart from the works of the law!' 'Alone' was added. A man is justified by faith and not by works. 'Not by works'- means not trying anything to prove to others and to yourself and to God that you are very good. No! It's a constant desire to vindicate yourself. That's what He fought every time, right?

John 7:1-4

Love Gone Cold?

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him. ² Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. ³ His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. ⁴ For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

Means- "Vindicate yourself!"

We constantly confess *Psalms 91: He who dwells in the secret place!* What is secret place? It is the place where God alone sees, when you are only interested in the opinion of God and not any other public opinion. That is of absolute safety! Do you know that secret place? Like Pastor was saying, can you give in secret? Can you pray in secret? Can you fast in secret? That is a secret place where you are only interested in justification by God and not by anybody else. It says, *He continued entrusting Himself to the One who judges righteously.* That is suffering in the flesh because flesh wants to justify every day. He says, Jesus came in the flesh and He always resisted the temptation to justify Himself, even on the cross.

"If you are the Son of Man, come down and we will believe."

Can you imagine? "Do you want Me to show you?"

Ultimate suffering!

Jesus came and suffered in the flesh. That is exactly what He is telling all of us also. Don't try to vindicate yourself. When people point fingers at you, the temptation is to vindicate yourself. Leave the vindication to God, especially in your company, for all of those who work in company. Of course now, I don't know whether you have company. You have left your company and you are in the company of God's saints. Hopefully! In this company, we don't care what your background is; we only care if you are a child of God or not. That's all! That's a qualification. We don't look at your color. That's what *James* says, right?

This is what we call as 'respector of persons'.

James 2:1-4

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. ² For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel,

In other words, 'gold rings and fine apparel' nowadays of course, we can give several connotation to that- with a degree from IIT or from MIT or from Harvard or IS officer or IPS officer- and you make him an elder. Why? That is what is 'giving the best'. They sit in your congregation doesn't mean that you empty the congregation and say, "brother, you come and sit here." No! You have committees. "Give me your resume!" It's like, "Send me your resume and I will shortlist you for eldership position." Shortlisting for eldership position has got different connotation completely in the Bible. Do you know what a 'busboy' is? A 'busboy' means the one who cleans and watches tables. To be a watcher at the table, you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. That was the qualification in the Church. How we have lowered the standards, my dear brothers and sisters, by justifying people who have no qualification at all to become elders in the Church! We have lowered the standards. Incredible, how we respect people, right? We need to respect the men of God. I am not saying that we are looking down upon people who are successful in the world. I am not saying that. That is not the qualification. The qualification is whether you love God or not love God. That's what we want.

² For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,

'Filthy clothes' meaning he has very simple outward. See, apparel doesn't necessarily mean outward apparel. Something that you put on! We put on attitude. Francis Bacon said, 'Apparel proclaimeth a man'. What kind of apparel? It doesn't mean that you should put filthy clothes when you come to Church. You should dress decently. Maybe that's a background!

³ and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place,"...

"Become an elder of our Church or become treasurer of our Church."

...and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool,"

Meaning, “you are not fit to be anything in our congregation.”

⁴ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Forgot about justification by faith completely now! God is no respecter of persons. God shows no partiality, means it could be Jew or Gentile, everybody has only one way- justification by faith alone; meaning, everyone who believes that he has to be justified by God alone is my brother. That’s the Spirit of Christ. *If any one does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him*, it says in *Romans 8*. Spirit of Christ!

Romans 8:9

⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

These words, ‘Spirit of Christ’ occurs only another time in the Bible. Do you know where else it occurs?

1 Peter 1:10-11

¹⁰ Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, ¹¹ searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

Where do you suffer? You don’t suffer in the spirit. You suffer in the flesh. Sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories! That is the Spirit! If you don’t have this Spirit, you will be soon shaken in your mind. Do we have that Spirit? Are we easily shaken? When people accuse you falsely and slander your name, do you say, “*rejoice and be exceedingly glad*”? Are you rejoicing?

Matthew 5:10-12

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

It’s amazing! This is what we call as ‘Christian hedonism’. Extreme poverty, great joy! Extreme slander, fantastic rejoicing! That is the reason why you have to suffer in the flesh. That is what suffering in the flesh means. You have this temptation to go all out and go to the law and say, “Defamation! He has defamed my name.” Case for defamation! In US and all, you can sue for millions of dollars if your name gets defamed. Can you imagine how much we owe God because we have defamed Him and we called Him evil and we crucified Him?

It’s very interesting, right? It says, *you should not bear false witness against anybody* in *Deuteronomy*. Unless you have at least two or three witnesses, you should not accuse any brother or any sister or any elder for that matter. Two or three witnesses are not there to accuse. If that fellow, the false witness has found out to be a liar, what he thought that he should do to this guy should be done to him. That’s what the law says. What does the law say? The law says, if the false witness bore false witness because he wanted to kill this fellow, he hated him and wanted to kill him, if people or the judges have realized that this fellow is a false witness, what he wanted to do to this guy, should be done to him. That means if he wanted to kill him, we should do what? Now when ‘kangaroo’ court came, there also so many false witnesses arose against Jesus, right? So many false witnesses arose against Jesus. What happened? Their witnesses could not agree. Ultimately, they crucified Him. Now if God were to judge Him by the law, what they wanted to do to Jesus, Jesus should have done to them. Can you imagine how much He suffered? Isn’t that amazing how much we owe God?

If one person says something against us, we just roll up our sleeve and say, “we will take him to court!” That is the reason why Paul says, “Brother taking brother to court! Why don’t just be defrauded? Allow yourself to be defrauded.” Have a mind for suffering. That is what we call as ‘mindset of suffering’. Do we have it? Otherwise we will be shaken. So don’t be shaken by spirit.

Love Gone Cold?

Second, don't be shaken by spoken word. What is spoken word? Test whether whatever you hear is truth or not or it is the Gospel or not. Today morning, we were listening to Leonard Ravenhill, just a snippet from Leonard Ravenhill. Do you know what he says? "There are not four Gospels. It is one Gospel rendered by four people." I like that. It is one Gospel rendered by four people. It is the Gospel according to Matthew. It is the Gospel according to Mark. It is the Gospel according to Luke. It is the Gospel according to John. Then he made a very interesting division. He says, "*Matthew, Mark and Luke* were kind of the outer courts. The Gospel according to *John*, from chapters 1 to 16 is like the holy place. *John 17:17* is the most holy place." Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke is calling all people from the outer court into the tabernacle. Gospel according to John is taking people into the holy place and then into the most holy place. I thought it was interesting. So, it is not just four Gospels; it is one Gospel rendered by four people. There is only one Gospel.

Galatians 1:6-8

⁶I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

What is a true Gospel? The Gospel is the salvation. *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek; for in it the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness which is by faith from first to last.* That means any other Gospel, which does not edify you and build you up in the faith but signifies 'works' is false Gospel. So, the question is: do we know what is the true Gospel and what is false gospel?

2 Corinthians 11:2-4

²For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. ³But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

How do we know which is the true Gospel and which is the false gospel? We know the false gospel by knowing the true. That is what we do. That is the reason why we give ourselves constantly to the study of the Word, for the ministry of the Word and to prayer, more and more. It is not reading the Word; it is the meditation on the Word. *Blessed is the man that meditates!* Lot of people say, "I don't have time to spend time in the Word. I don't have time to read the Word." Do three things and you will have time. *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of the scornful.* Three things we put away. There is lot of time waste, especially during this time, sitting and watching 'YouTube' and jamming our channel is very bad. Please! It is too much of load on YouTube. Do you know why? Sitting in the seat of scornful! *His delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law doth he meditate (not read) day and night.*

2 Timothy 2:7 (ESV)

⁷Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

When will you get understanding? When you think! When you are not meditating, will you get understanding? Lot of mothers would say, "I don't time!" Make time! How do you have time? By making time! See what we can put away so that we can make time for God. This is the acceptable time.

Psalms 32:1-6 (ESV)

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ²Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. ³For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah ⁵I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah ⁶Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

Love Gone Cold?

There is a plague going on around the world. Now the incubation period for the coronavirus in India is over. That means the cases will increase or decrease depending upon how it has been transmitted. You don't want that to happen to you? Surely! That should not come to you? What should you do? *Everyone who is godly offer prayer* means seek Him when He may be found. Seek the Lord when He can be found.

2 Corinthians 6:1-2

Working together with him,

I am working together with Pastor James. Both of us are working together with God, Christ Jesus.

...then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Therefore, today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. Give yourself time. Meditate upon the Word of God. This is the time you can do a lot of study, a lot of reading and lot of meditation. I think this is God given time. I remember in my own life. Everybody has to go through the wilderness experience. There was a time in my life when God shut down every door and all I had was one KJV Bible. I read from cover to cover, 6 months. Why? It's because God shut every other door. If there was any other door, I would have also said, "Lord, no time! I have to do research."

Spend time. Meditate upon His Word. Otherwise, do you know what? How do you know the false? By knowing the original! You will not be able to understand unless and until you know the original. It's like this. If you go to any class or any lecture, if you want to understand the 5th lecture, you should not enter into the course at the 5th lecture; everything will be bouncer. Why? You did not come to the first lecture. That is the reason why it says, *be careful as to how you hear. For to who has much, more will be given.* In other words, that means if you have understood lecture 1 and lecture 2 and you have done the assignments and you have done the homework and the quiz, by the time you come to lecture 3, you are set; otherwise you will drop the course. But unfortunately, in this you cannot drop. There is no drop! Know the original.

Third- don't be troubled by letter. If you have the Spirit and if you have the Gospel, you will not be troubled by letter. One email people read, they will go crazy only. So many emails are going on. So many 'WhatsApp' forwards are going on, designed to lead you astray, to shake you and trouble you. Be careful.

So we looked at the first verse today. Let's move on. Let's go back to *2 Thessalonians 2:3* now. How do we recognize? What are the attitudes we should have in order for us to be prepared for the Lord's coming and not to be deceived?

2 Thessalonians 2:3

³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

First, what should come? Falling away! I told you- to fall, you have to stand. What is falling away mean? The word 'falling away' comes from the Greek word 'Apostasy', which means divorce. How does it come? Falling away means divorcing God, being unfaithful to the covenant. That is the reason why it says—

Matthew 19:3-8a (ESV)

³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" ⁴ He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

That is the mystery of marriage. Paul says in *Ephesians 5*, *great is the mystery of marriage but I am talking about Christ concerning His Church.*

⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." ⁷ They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" ⁸ He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart

How do I know that I am falling away? If my heart is getting hardened! It's not getting softer every day! In other words, my heart is becoming more and more and more tender to the convictions of the Holy Spirit. For example, let's say in 2019, a small lie would convict you and you would cry and repent. In 2020, if a small thought convicts you and you cry and repent, do you know what has happened to you? You have soft. Hardness does not happen in a day. It's a series of choices you make over a period of time. Series of choices! Think about it. The sins that you committed a few years back and if you just by thinking of it, you would cry and now you are no longer bothered about them.

That's exactly what happened with David. He went to Saul and he cut off the edge of his garment. Edge of his garment! He came back to his cave and what happened? His heart pricked him and he wept and he cried and he said, "How could I touch the Lord's anointed?" Fast forward, his best friend, a person, who was one of the most loyal people he would have, (he was called one of the mighty men of David), loyal fellow who followed him, who learned about God from him, who was a Hittite, who was a Gentile, who became a believer and who clung to David; David takes his wife, realizes that he has got her pregnant, calls him, deceives him and finally murders him. See, what has happened to you? Heart has become harder or tender? Small thought convicts you! Small thought!

You don't become son of perdition in a day. Falling away doesn't happen in a day. Divorce doesn't happen in a day. Series of choices that you make and slowly the relationship gets more and more apart from each other, a point comes when you can't speak to each other, then there is wall in between. Walls! It's very difficult for you to be broken into. Not sensitive anymore to sin! One look from Jesus and Peter wept. That is the reason why *blessed are those who mourn*. Ask ourselves this question, my dear brothers and sisters. Sins that we committed, things which we did few years back and would convict us, now the same things we do and we don't get convicted anymore! We say, "It's okay! God understands." Heart is getting hardened. That is the reason why book of Hebrews will say, *we should give careful attention to the things that we have heard lest we drift away*. Slowly! You don't become a son of perdition in a day. Drawing back!

Hebrews 10:38-39

³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

What is He saying? Drawing slowly back! Smaller and smaller and smaller sins- what we call as 'sigma' sins! I will tell you something. How did David commit adultery with Bathsheba? One woman here, another woman there, another woman here and another woman there, now he had a summation of total women- 'Sigma woman'.

Richard Wurmbbrand gives a fantastic example. He says, a priest had two people who came to his confession box (now confession boxes are gone because of corona), when there was no corona. One lady was telling the priest, "I have done such a big sin. I am getting convicted. Please! It's like a heavy burden to me. Will the Lord forgive me?" Another woman also came. Her confession was not very big but the priest knew this woman was very, very bad gossipmonger. She would come and say, "I did some small things." She didn't feel the heaviness of her conviction. There was no heaviness of conviction. So do you know what he did? He took these two women to a large field. He looked at the first woman, who was under a tremendous conviction and said, "Go into the field and get the biggest and heaviest stone." This woman goes and gets the biggest and heaviest stone and she comes to the priest. And he says, "Take this stone and put it back from the place that you got it from." So, she takes the stone and she puts it back at that place. He says, "You are free. God has forgiven you. Load is gone. It doesn't matter how big your stone is; once you have come and accepted and confessed your sin, God has put away your sin." To the other lady, he said, "Collect at least a bunch of 100 stones from different, different places in the field." She went and she brought all these pebbles in the apron and she came to the priest. He told this lady, "Take these stones and put them back in the places where you got them from." She was shocked. Do you know what he said? "You think you committed small, small sins and this lady actually did a very small thing but she had very strong conviction in her heart. But you- one small sin, one gossip there, one slander there, one lie here. Small, small things accumulated over a period of time!" Which is easier? The first one or the second one?

That is how hardness happens. You lose conviction. Small things! Hardened! That is exactly what happened to Judas. How did Judas become the son of perdition?

John 17:12

¹² While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

How did he become the son of perdition?

John 12:3-6

³ Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. ⁴ But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, ⁵ "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" ⁶ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

In NIV, it's very interesting. It says, "He used to help himself." Five rupees here, ten rupees there, hundred rupees here and there; never settling accounts. One day, he went away from the presence of the Lord. In small things, not the big things but the small things. *He, who is faithful in little, is also faithful in much.* Otherwise, your heart will get hardened.

The second way the heart gets hardened is through offense. How will you draw back? Because of offense. *John 6:66*, we looked at it so many times but we will look at it again.

John 6:60-66

⁶⁰ Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" ⁶¹ When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶² What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? ⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. ⁶⁵ And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father. ⁶⁶ From that time many of His disciples went(drew) back and walked with Him no more.

Offense! You are offended many times and you carry huge offense and then you are seen no more. Sorry! That is the reason why you need to keep short accounts with God and with one another. *Let not the sun go down in your anger.* Keep short accounts with God. Otherwise you will just fall away, apostatize. The more you go away from God, the more lawless you will become.

Joshua 22:7-14

⁷ Now to half the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the other half of it Joshua gave a possession among their brethren on this side of the Jordan, westward. And indeed, when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them, ⁸ and spoke to them, saying, "Return with much riches to your tents, with very much livestock, with silver, with gold, with bronze, with iron, and with very much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren." ⁹ So the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, which they had obtained according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses. ¹⁰ And when they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh (What did they do?) built an altar there by the Jordan—a great, impressive altar.

Something interesting happens.

¹¹ Now the children of Israel heard someone say, "Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan—on the children of Israel's side." ¹² And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war against them.

Phinehas comes into the picture. My favorite character maybe we need to write a book.

¹³ Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, ¹⁴ and with him ten rulers, one ruler each from the chief house of every tribe of Israel; and each one was the head of the house of his father among the divisions of Israel.

Now, let me just put the context, we know it very well. They have fought and got rest and remember what God told Moses about Gad, Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh. You don't go to the other side you will be guilty of your sin and your sin will find you out and they said, "Okay fine, we will fight the war and we'll come back." Now the war is over, the fight is over, the Promised Land is possessed and now they are going back. And even as they are going back, just before they crossed the Jordan what do they do? They build a big altar. Now this news comes to the rulers. They say, the children of Israel, especially the Reubenites, the Gadites and half the tribe of Manasseh, they built an altar, very impressive. What is going on here, let us go for war but before we go for the war let us find out what is going on and they sent Phinehas.

Joshua 22:15-19

¹⁵ Then they came to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them, saying, ¹⁶ "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD: 'What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the LORD?' ¹⁷ Is the iniquity of Peor...

What is the iniquity of Peor? Remember, the Midianites they came and danced.

...not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed till this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD, ¹⁸ but that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? And it shall be, if you rebel today against the LORD, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, if the land of your possession is unclean, then cross over to the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the LORD our God.

Look at this, my dear brothers and sisters. You fought the land, you fought for the possessions and you want to go back? And Phinehas is saying, if you think you want to have a possession over here, who is stopping you? Why do you want to go away? They give an explanation saying that, lest we forget your brothers and you stop us from coming in and follow. If you think that we as brothers are a hindrance to you then why don't you come over to this side? Why don't you stay with us? Why do you want to go back? And next verse.

Joshua 22:20-23

²⁰ Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.' ²¹ Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel: ²² "The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knows, and let Israel itself know—if it is in rebellion, or if in treachery against the LORD, do not save us this day. ²³ If we have built ourselves

Now, they are trying to give justification. Their intentions could be absolutely right. But the point is this – if you really want to enjoy and be close to the tabernacle of God, then why don't you stay here? Who's stopping you? You have tasted the Promised Land, right? You saw it is beautiful? You still want to go back? Now, what is the danger of this? What is the danger of going away from the Promised Land? You have to compare Scripture with Scripture, right? This is Jonathan who attacks the Garrison of the Philistines and Saul blows the trumpet.

See that everybody?

1 Samuel 13:4-7

⁴ Now all Israel heard it said that Saul had attacked a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel had also become an abomination to the Philistines. And the people were called together to Saul at Gilgal. ⁵ Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth Aven. ⁶ When the men of Israel

saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), ***then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits.*** ⁷ ***And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.***

Look at this, war is where? In the Promised Land, it is not in your land. The moment pressure has increased in the Promised Land – you see lots of people are like that. They make safe havens for people to come on their side but they will never be loyal to God. That's how Apostasy happens. Don't fall away brothers; don't run away when pressure comes. Stick with God. What is falling away? You made a covenant with God and what kind of a covenant? In riches or in poverty, in sickness or in health, in good times and in bad times, forsaking all others I have made myself loyal to You. And just because bad times come, I'll not run away from You. I will stick to You no matter what. It is not during the good times but it is during the bad times your loyalty is tested. There's a very interesting poem in Telugu for those of you who don't know Telugu, I will just read it and then I will interpret it for you. It says, Appu is looking at me what I'm going to say. It says,

“Aapda ayina vela, narisimadhula choodu.
Bhayamu vela choodu bhantu thanamu,
Peda vela choodu pendlaamu gunamu,
Vishwadhaabi raama vinura vema.”

Vemana was a big philosopher. The meaning of this poem:

“You will know your true relative when you are in real trouble.
A true friend is known in adversity,
You will know whether your wife is really loyal to you or not when you are in poverty”

What a philosopher! In poverty, that why it says; wherever there is a will there are relatives. Apostasy happens my dear brothers and sisters when you have trouble times and pressure comes and you want to give up on God and what does God do? He takes us through testing after testing and you know what? There was one guy who would never give up on God. *I have known the secret of how to live in abundance, in poverty. In all things, I have known how to be content. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Can poverty separate me from the love of Christ? Can tribulation, famine, nakedness, peril, destruction, sword separate me from the love of Christ?*

That's what we are having famine, pestilence, destruction and there are so many things happening and he says, “*He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all. How will He not with Him give us freely all things?*” So, should I give up on Him or run away from Him? No! I will stick to Him. You know something? Trust and friendships, relationships are strengthened during times of intense difficulties and you stick together and you fight together. Our relationship with our brothers is a reflection of our relationship with our God. We will give up on God in good times. That's the reason why Job is a fantastic example. Should we accept only good from God and not evil? How long will you hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die, that's when you will know the real nature of your spouse, husband or wife when you go through trial and tribulation. Will we give up on God and fall away and apostatize? The question is, should we divorce our wife for any reason? What nonsense. No reason and you don't give up on God for any reason. That is the reason we have to make a covenant with God. God made a covenant with us; did we make a covenant with God? One of my favorite Psalms and I keep referring to it all the time.

Psalm 50:3-5

³ Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; A fire shall devour before Him, And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him. ⁴ He shall call to the heavens from above, And to the earth, that He may judge His people: ⁵ “Gather My saints together to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”

It is impossible to make a covenant with God without any sacrifice. One thing as Pastor said, “Even if You slay me I will still serve/worship You.” I've made a covenant, no turning back. The Cross before me and the world behind me, no turning back, no matter what, in good times or bad. Trouble times are ahead, famine is going to come. Will we give up on God? So, what is that the Lord is calling to this morning? He is calling us to surrender. Surrender. Let's go to *2 Thessalonians 2:1-4*,

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

¹ Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had

Love Gone Cold?

come. ³ *Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,* ⁴ *who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

That word, as God. What is it? He is an absolute rebel. And you know when this is coming? When the son of lawlessness has been revealed.

Matthew 24:11-13

¹¹ *Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.* ¹² *And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.*

This indicates that the heart gets harder and harder. And what will happen? There will be a lot of religion but no love.

¹³ *But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*

What is enduring and endure in what? Endure in love that he will guard his heart and keep it sensitive until the end and therefore. 2 Thessalonians 3:5 for the 250th time in all the services we have looked at.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

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

When bad times come, don't run away. Like Pastor mentioned, there are 3 kinds of dances – one is the dance of Salomi, the dance of the flesh. The dance of Miriam, which is the dance of the soul. When the good times come and when immediately God takes them for a three-day journey without water they said, why did you bring us out? To kill us? No food, why did you bring us out? To kill us of hunger. They said it all the time but there was only one guy who said, food or no food I love You Lord. It's not going to change. If You want to kill me starving, thank God. God is not going to do that. *"I have been young and I've been old but I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor gone hunger for bread."* We are not even concerned about bread – that's the point. Whether God feeds us or not feeds us, He is not going to separate us from the love of God. He still loves us because this is not the ultimate, our heavenly aboard is there. I think there too we will eat different kinds of food, some fantastic food and that time our appetite and taste buds will have different dimensionalities and we will be able to enjoy different kinds of food but the *Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking but is of righteousness, peace and joy.* May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

Let's pray.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we just thank You, praise You, worship You. Let us not forsake You, Father, in good times and in the bad. Enable us, Father, to deposit sufficient of Your Word and of Your Spirit during the good times so that Word and that Spirit will sustain us during the times of famine, so that even in the times of famine we will be givers because we have sufficient of the sustenance of God because we have a continuing, ongoing relationship with You tested through trial and through difficulties. We thank You. We praise You. For in Jesus' Name, Amen!